



Sleepaway Survival Guide

Be it summer camp or a trip to Gram's house, a kid's first extended stay away from home is a big deal. Here's how to prep for this important milestone.

BY STEPHANIE ECKELKAMP

are you about to send your kid on her first week away from home (gasp!)? Michele Borba, Ed.D., author of *The Big Book of Parenting Solutions*, offers these tips to make the experience pleasant for all. **Preempt potential problems by making note of rituals and routines that keep your kid happy.** Does she sleep with a nightlight? Tell Grams she'll need one, or send her to camp with a flashlight to put under her pillow. Is she a picky eater? Pack snacks she likes. The key is to keep her routine as normal as possible without disturbing her host or violating camp rules. **Emphasize the fun stuff your child has to look forward to.** Maybe Grandpa plans to take her to the ice cream shop down the street or bring her to the zoo. Find something to get her excited about (of course, make sure it's actually doable). For camp, look online for a list of activities—many offer arts and crafts, hiking,

canoeing, and swimming (rope swing!). There's bound to be something your kid will like, so be sure to talk it up!

Limit TV or tech beforehand. The grandparents won't be pleased if their granddaughter is happiest in front of a screen, and some camps may not allow kids to bring their tech gadgets. It's good for everyone if you wear her a bit from technology in advance. That way, you're not cutting her off cold turkey, and she'll be more open to making connections with people.

Expect that she'll get homesick—it's totally normal. If you're on the phone with a sobbing child, the best thing is to stay calm and positive. And if you're the one who's feeling a tad lonely, don't tell her! She needs to feel secure and know that you're just fine. So grab lunch with a girlfriend, get your nails done—just find a way to stay busy.



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