



How to...



POPULAR PASTIME
Nearly 50 million people in the US said they go camping at least once a year.

Go camping outdoors

Pitch a tent and spend some time in nature this summer.

People enjoy camping for many different reasons. Spending time outdoors, including overnight, helps you appreciate all the sights and sounds of nature. It's a fun way to catch up with family and friends. It's also an affordable option for taking a vacation. If you and your family want to try camping, here are some suggestions for getting started.

Locate a campsite

If you've never camped before, you could start off by camping in your backyard or a nearby area. You'll get the experience of sleeping outdoors in a tent under the stars, but it won't require as much time or gear. Many county and state parks allow people to camp overnight on their grounds. Contact the park office to find out. If you'd like to venture farther from home, websites such as reserveamerica.com, koa.com, and campjellystone.com offer many options.



Backyard camping is fun.

Get the gear you need

The most important gear you'll need is a tent. You could purchase one from an outdoor store, but you could also borrow one. Practice setting up your tent at home so it's easy to do on your trip. You'll also need a sleeping bag and pillow, a flashlight, food, and cooking gear. Pack clothing for warm days and cool nights, a rain jacket, and sturdy shoes. Don't forget a first aid kit, too.

Plan your food

Making a meal plan ahead of time can help you make sure you pack everything you need. Aim for simple meals that don't require a lot of ingredients. For example, an adult could use a camping stove to cook scrambled eggs for breakfast. You could pack peanut butter, jelly, and bread to make sandwiches for lunch.

For dinner, you could grill hot dogs over a campfire.

Canned or premade side dishes, such as baked beans or a pasta salad, can round out meals. Put marshmallows, graham crackers, and chocolate bars on your grocery list so you can make s'mores over a campfire for dessert. Pack your food in coolers, and follow all rules at your campsite for storing food. These

rules are meant to keep animals from entering your area. Some sites have special food lockers for storing food.

Have the best time

Once you're at your campsite and have everything set up, it's time to have fun. Many campsites and parks have hiking trails you can follow and lakes and streams you can swim in. After a day of exploring, gather around a campfire for classic camping activities, like telling ghost stories and singing favorite songs. Also, bring items such as books and a sketchpad so you can enjoy time on your own as well.

4 delicious twists on tasty s'mores

On a camping trip or anytime, try one of these variations on the classic outdoor treat.

Switch chocolates

Trade the traditional chocolate bar for another type of candy, like a chocolate peanut butter cup or a crispy rice chocolate bar. A variety pack of mini chocolate bars could also work well.



Wrap up a banana

With an adult's help, use a knife to make a slit down the front of a banana peel.

Stuff the banana with mini chocolate chips, mini

marshmallows, and crushed nuts. Wrap the banana with foil, then roast over a campfire for 15 minutes.

Get dipping

With help from an adult, melt 1 bag of chocolate chips with 1 tablespoon of butter in a skillet. Add a bag of marshmallows to the melted chocolate, then cover and cook for 7 minutes. Transfer mixture to a bowl. Use graham crackers to dip.



Make bars

With an adult's help, melt 1 bag of chocolate chips with 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil. Remove from heat and add 2 cups of mini marshmallows and 2 cups of Golden Grahams cereal. Combine and press into a square baking pan. Let set. Slice and enjoy.

