

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT SOCCER CAMP

Here are some questions to consider when selecting a summer soccer camp. Visit camp websites for answers or call and ask to speak with the Director.

1. **How does the camp recruit, screen and train its staff?** Make sure to ask for a camp date specific staff list. Camp staff is always subject to change so look to see staff lists from previous years. Are criminal background checks conducted on all staff? Is specialized medical staff available?
2. **Are the coaches qualified and can you make special requests for coaches?** Your experience will be greatly influenced by your coach. Make sure your coach(es) will have the experience to improve your skills. How many coaches will work directly with you? **Don't be afraid to request a particular coach ahead of time!** If you are interested in being recruited at a camp, make sure the staff includes active (not retired) college coaches that are working the duration of the camp (not just visiting for a few night games).
3. **How are the facilities?** You need to consider the sleeping, eating and training facilities and their proximity to one another. Make sure you are comfortable with the sleeping arrangements (e.g. are roommate requests accommodated, how many campers to a room, are semi-private bathrooms available). Is air-conditioning available in the dormitories, dining halls, etc.? Keep in mind that you may need to escape the summer heat! Will you eat in a dining hall with multiple dining options? Can food allergies be accommodated? Where are the training facilities and can visitors watch your games? Are night games played under the lights? Consider the proximity of dorms, dining hall and training facilities, as some camps require long walks or busing to and training facilities?
4. **What does a typical daily schedule look like?** Will you be running training drills three times a day? How many games are played? Will the schedule provide you ample opportunity to be seen by college coaches (if applicable) and also, is there enough down time to let your body recover? Is there specialized goalkeeper training? Consider whether you will be happy with the level of physical activity or the amount of time devoted to playing verses training.
5. **Who attends this camp?** What is the age range of the campers? Where are they from? What is their level of play? Are you looking to play with local friends or are you interested in going farther away for a new experience?
6. **What's the camp's philosophy?** Are you comfortable with it and does it address your goals? Is competition emphasized? If you're looking at a camp that touts an affiliation with a celebrity athlete or coach, how much time, if any, will you have with that individual?
7. **What's the ratio of coaches/staff to campers?** For camp licensing, most states require a 1:10 for children ages 9- 14; and 1:12 for ages 15-18. Will your team include both a coach and an assistant?
8. **What do you take home?** You will most definitely play lots of soccer during camp but what happens after? Reputable camps should provide player evaluations at the end of the camp. How many evaluations will you receive? Who will complete them? What is included on them (e.g. areas for improvement; recommendations for college level of play)? Ask the director for a sample. Are take home materials such as recommended workouts provided?
9. **Are references or testimonials available?** If you know someone who attended, ask him/her about the experience. If not, look for testimonials or ask the camp director for a reference. While it's true that a director is likely to give you the names of campers who had good experiences, you'll be able to get a fuller view of the camp by asking the right questions.
10. **What medical staff and resources are available?** While most states have regulations for camps, there is no federal oversight of health and safety policies for summer camps. Most states require overnight camps to have a licensed physician or registered nurse on the site every day. If your take medication, have food allergies or other medical conditions, be sure you are comfortable with the available medical resources. If you need special attention like ankle taping, will a trained medical staff person be available to assist?
11. **Is the camp accredited or licensed?** Ask the director of any camp you're considering how long it's been operating and what licenses it has. You should be aware, however, that state licensing requirements vary widely, and in many cases, are minimal.
12. **Is travel assistance available?** It is more and more common for campers to travel across state lines or even internationally to attend summer camps. Many camps offer private shuttle service to and from major points of transportation such as airports. Contact the camp director to discuss travel options available to you.
13. **What's the refund policy?** Make sure you understand the refund policy for the camp. If you are injured during the spring season and cannot attend camp, will you receive a refund? If you qualify for regionals or nationals and the dates conflict, can you cancel without penalty?
14. **What extracurricular activities are offered?** What is there to do in between sessions? Are these activities optional? Will coaches interact with you during these activities?