

Special Days to Remember

Sports and arts events

Campers love horseback riding, waterskiing, sailing, and archery. But after several days, they can become bored with even those activities. To help break up your regular program, schedule some special days or afternoons.

Special events don't need elaborate props, tools, or costumes. With the proper planning, you can create a day that campers will remember. A successful special event includes three key elements:

- **Staff participation.** If staff play an active role in planning the event and are given a choice as to what they would like to do, they are much more likely to be emotionally and physically involved. The event will then run more smoothly. Also, staff will often vary the game slightly and come up with something even better!
- **Clear instructions for the event and a couple of days of advance notice for all staff members involved.** Make sure staff members know what their role will be and that

they have the proper information to complete their part in the event. Also, make sure staff know when the special event is scheduled.

- **Hype!** Get everyone at camp excited about the event. An amazing evening program can become mediocre due to lack of hype and enthusiasm. While with the proper promotion, a

twenty-four hour continuous singing of the camp song could become extremely popular.

Guinness Book of Records Event

Begin the event by deciding where the activities will be held and what type of activities campers will do. Tap your staff for more ideas and read the actual *Guinness Book of World Records*. Draw a map of the area where the events will be held. The map can then be copied on the back of a page listing activities and instructions. A larger version of the map and a schedule can be posted for the campers to refer to during the event.

Counselors should run the activities. As campers perform an activity, counselors should keep a record of each participant's score, level, or count. When all campers have completed the events, campers and staff should gather together and the records should be announced. Prizes can be awarded for the record holders if so desired.

Hype

During a camp meeting, have a few counselors start

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Photo courtesy of Bill Harwood

Juggling is only one of the possible activities you can include in your special event day. By tapping the creativity and talents of staff, you can create a truly unique experience for everyone involved.

throwing a water balloon back and forth over the camper audience. For a couple of days before the event, counselors should randomly try and set some record (the activity doesn't have to be one that will be offered). When a camper or staff member asks what the counselor is doing, he should just respond, "Oh, I just want to see how many times I can do this."

Record-breaking events

Hula hoop duration contest

Find a stopwatch and a hula hoop. Have campers see how many times they can do the hula hoop.

Watermelon seed spitting

You will need clean watermelon seeds and a measuring tape or yardstick to measure the distances. Ask campers to see how far they can spit the watermelon seeds.

Water balloon toss

Gather some water balloons and have campers work in groups of two to see which team can get the farthest apart without dropping the balloon. Counselors pace off the distance between the team members.

Playing card stack

All you need are several decks of cards and a flat, level surface. Campers compete to see who can build the tallest card house.

Tin can stack

Campers attempt to build the highest aluminum can pyramid. Make sure you have enough clean cans for two to three campers to do this activity at one time.

Inner-ear gyroscopic endurance

You will need an open area free of rocks and other materials and a rope. Make a circle on the ground with the rope. Campers spin in circles within the rope circle as many times as possible. Counselors record the number of 360 degree turns for each camper. Campers must turn at least five times in ten

seconds or they are disqualified. If a camper falls outside of the rope circle, their count is stopped.

Arrow toss for distance

Gather bows, arrows with blunt ends, and an open field. Campers shoot the arrows into the field. Counselors pace off the distance the arrow traveled and place a marker with the camper's name at the spot.

Juggling

You will need a watch and tennis balls or other juggling balls. Campers attempt to juggle for as long as possible.

Frisbee throw

Find some Frisbees and a measuring tape or yardstick. Campers attempt to see how far they can throw a Frisbee.

Consecutive free throws

Campers compete to see who can shoot the most consecutive free throws.

Soccer ball juggling

Campers compete to see who has the most consecutive body hits with the ball. All you need are soccer balls and an open area.

Tennis ball bounce

Campers see how many times they can bounce a tennis ball on the racket.

Arts Fest

Special days or afternoons tend to focus on sports. An arts fest is a change of pace and an effort to balance the program. The events and activities are set up like the Guinness Book of Records Event. The campers go to different activities as they might at a carnival. Two or three hours tends to be about the right amount of time depending on the size of the camp and the number of activities. An arts fest can also be done in a rotation manner over a longer period of time with fewer activities.

Another twist is to have a show and tell at the end, where campers show what they have created. If there are too many campers for this,

then the leader of each event can pick a few items to display. Tap the talents of your staff for this event!

For crisis control, have a few people move around the events to fill in if anyone needs assistance. If any one activity is mobbed, campers need to be encouraged to try another activity and then come back later.

Hype

Spread rumors that famous artists are coming to camp. Construct some monstrous sculpture and during a camp meeting have staff make comments about it, admiring it. Staff go can do this as a full skit or just background action. On the day of the event, staff should wear tie-dyed shirts. At a camp meeting, have a staff member become possessed, interrupt the speaker, and start telling a poem about some aspect of camp.

Artistic Events

Batik

Run this activity as a collaborative project where campers just stay for a short time. A camper is assigned a square and works on that section.

Foil sculpture

You will need an industrial-size roll of aluminum foil. Campers can craft small animals or figures from the foil. Beads, pipe cleaners, pieces of cloth, and paper can be added to make more elaborate sculptures.

Fruit printing

Paper, a stamp pad, some fruit, and some carving tools are all you need. Be careful that campers are not injured when working with sharp tools.

Bubbles

Make your own bubble solution and have various items available to blow small and gigantic bubbles.

Grass sculpture

Use dead limbs, hay, and rope to make life-sized figures – dragons, bugs, sheep, hippos, or whatever your imagination can devise! The finished products make great camp

decorations. They can also be used as “fire spirits.” Campers place written wishes (that can’t be for personal gain) in them and the fire spirit is set alight at night to carry away the wishes.

Nature weaving

Find two trees that grow close together and construct a loom-like lattice work between them with heavy twine. Only items available from nature may be placed in this loom. The finished product is often breathtaking.

Toothpick art

Campers see what they can create from toothpicks, Popsicle sticks, and glue.

Musical saw

You will need a violin bow and a saw with a wooden handle. Run the bow between the teeth of the saw.

Bend the saw for variety in the sound. It’s not as difficult as you might think.

Puppet show

You will need pipe cleaners, fabric scraps, glue, Styrofoam balls, other craft supplies, and wooden dowel rods cut into various lengths for the handle, main stick, and limbs. Once the puppets are finished, put on a puppet show.

Poetry, songwriting, and storytelling

Find a member of your staff whose hobby is one of these topics and have him lead campers in writing and reciting poems or songs or in telling the best story.

Jug band

Gather jars, pans, glasses, spoons, and other items from the kitchen and you’re ready to play a tune.

Photo shoot

Do you have a costume room or extra clothes that you use for skits? Let campers dress up in wacky outfits and then take their pictures. Give them a copy and save one for the yearbook or brochure!

Totem poles

Create the pole by inserting six wood dowels into a wood base and covering it with cardboard and heavy duty paper. Gather a few art supplies and let campers add their artistic touch.

Water glass symphony

Fill a variety of wine glasses and other glasses with water, grab some spoons, and make some noise!□

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Special Meals

A unique meal can be a memorable experience for campers and a rejuvenating experience for the staff. Conducting these about once a week for a change of pace adds a lot to the campers' experience. As an added benefit, much to my surprise, the staff seized upon these events (which were often more work) as an opportunity to recharge their enthusiasm. Hype isn't as necessary for special meals. Often the complete and utter surprise is more valuable than what may be gained via the preludes.

For all the meals, as many counseling and non-counseling staff as can be spared are waiters and waitresses (they arrive a few minutes early to eat and get dressed). Have all the tables completely set up with plates et cetera. Serving the food depends on logistics, how brave you are, and your chef's temperament! It has worked exceptionally well to have the waiters take orders from their tables and then retreat into an area where they prepare the plates. Drinks are also served by the staff. Eleven waiters (and three kitchen staff) managed to serve 80 campers and twenty staff in about 20 minutes.

Other ideas for special dinners include: Toga Party, Jazz night, Jimmy Buffet Night, Dinner Theater, & An Enchanted Evening. Also, it is quite a nice campy surprise to wake up for breakfast in the morning and find all the tables and chairs arranged nicely outside!

A Medieval Affair

- Music** Renaissance or ancient Irish or Scottish music makes for a good background. The soundtrack from Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves can work as well.
- Waiters** Counselor wenches are the servants of choice. The term "wench" can be replaced with many more appropriate terms, such as servant or Miss. However, if gender or logistics make that impossible, slaves and pages may be used. This is a very easy meal to serve because of the menu and location of the tables. Very simple dresses (preferably white, brown, or gray) for females and tunics and tights for men make for good garb. There is some liberty depending on the era you are shooting for. Help in any regard is available from your local chapter of the Society for Creative Anachronism (a world wide organization – www.sca.org).
- Events** During the feast (make up an occasion like the winning of a battle or a feast day) some events should occur to keep things lively. A jester should be called to entertain the king and his court. The town crier can announce things of importance sporadically. A toast can be offered a couple of times. A duel to the death with broad swords amongst knights is a must (tin foil makes great armor). A joust on the field of honor is also a nice touch. Make up rules like whenever the king stands everyone else must do so as well, or when the king asks for silence, it must be obeyed immediately. The king will of course need some men at arms to help campers (and staff!) with court civility.
- Decorations / Setup** If possible, place all the tables in an oval so that everyone is essentially seated at a giant round table. The king and his court are seated at one end of the oval. Since this is a medieval dinner, a plate and a goblet should be all that are supplied with which to eat. Small plastic goblets are very cheap and add to the atmosphere. Campers can be told to dress grunge style for dinner, but not told why. For history buffs, yes, several inaccuracies exist in this scheme, but some of the best from several eras makes for a more theatrical dinner.
- Menu:**
- corn on the cob
 - turkey and chicken legs
 - A vegetarian alternative (quite an anachronism!)
 - bread you rip
 - butter
 - potatoes
 - wine (red juice and lemonade for red and white)

French Dinner

Music	Some fine piano music works well. Most anything quietly classical suits the purpose.
Waiters	The campers are attending a five star restaurant. Thus, the waiters and waitresses need to be in their finest attire. For the men, coats and ties are nice, but at camp that is often untenable; instead, slacks, dress shoes, and a nice dress shirt will work. For the women, something they might go to the theater in works well. They must maintain a professional manner the whole time. You might want to mention that they are in a French restaurant and NOT in France, therefore they are not rude waiters.
Events	Some dinner skits by the staff have tended to work out best. With a couple of days notice and assigning staff into skit groups of three, the results have been outstanding. Breaking out into song, making comments about the horrible kitchen conditions, or a mini-dinner theater segment are some of the things that have been done.
Decorations / Set up	Table cloths are a nice touch. Wholesale stores often sell decorated plastic table cloths in several yard rolls. A small vase with a flower or flower arrangement. Candles are a classy touch. Small food tin cans make excellent pin hole candle containers. Use an ice pick and great care to create the holes in some pattern. Scented votives work well. A folded napkin on the plate or in the glass is a nice touch. Give chef's hats to the cooks. Make sure the wine/juice is chilled in the walk-in fridge ahead of time.

The campers can be told to dress in their finest for dinner. The excuse has been used that there was a problem with the food order not arriving in time and thus the camp has made arrangements at a restaurant for the entire camp. If your camp is too large to make that plausible, inform them that you are having dinner catered.

If possible, have the dining area sealed from camper eyes. When it is time to eat, have the waiters stand in a line in front of the camp and announce that the restaurant (give it a French name) is open. Have the waiters call cabins down one by one and lead them to their tables.

Large stand up cards are placed at each table with the following French words so that the campers may talk to their waiters and each other in French.

Garson	Waiter
Maitre D	Shows you to the table
Bon Apetit	Enjoy your meal
Voici le diner	Here is your meal
Au Revoir	Good-bye
C'est bon, c'est bien	This is good
Je m'appelle _____	My name is
Quel temps fait t'il	How is the weather
Le diner est pret	Dinner is served
Bonjour	Hello, Good day
Quel heure est t'il	What time is it
Qu'est que c'est	What is it

Menu:

- Beef on a bed of rice
- Bleu Cheese Egg Plant
- Salad with choice of dressing, parsley, and a decorative orange slice
- Dessert: Chocolate mousse in dixie cups

Grease Dinner

Music	Soundtrack from the movie Grease.
Waiters	Guys (T-Birds) wear jeans and a tight white t-shirt with their hair slicked back. Girls (Pink Ladies) wear skirts and pink tops if available.
Events	After the food is served and things are calmer for the staff, Summer Loving is played and the two pre-selected stars act out that scene in the movie. After desert is served, Greased Lightening is played and a race is conducted on Thunder Road with all the kids watching and cheering. Cardboard cars can be made and decorated that the racers hold up.
Decorations / Set up	The dining area is decorated like a 50's diner with checkered table cloths and a sign declaring the name (e.g. - The Frosty Palace).

Menu:

- Polar Burgers (with or without cheese)
- Veggie burgers
- Fries
- Dessert: Choice of cherry coke or root beer float

International Day

A Sample Time line:

- 2:00 - 2:20 Get everyone down at 2:00 and explain the afternoon, what group they are in, and then send them off to activities
- 2:20 - 3:00 Game I
- 3:10 - 3:50 Game II
- 4:00 - 4:40 Game III
- 4:50 - 5:30 Game IV
- 5:30 End activity - have last group help you clean up

The Japanese Experience

Supplies: Calligraphy Pens, Origami paper, Green Tea, Plastic cups, White paper, Japanese music, & stereo

Events: Japanese language, Origami, drinking Green tea, and Writing Japanese characters

Instructions: This could be winged, but Japanese or someone who knows Japanese really makes the activity.

The Outback Aboriginal Experience

Supplies: Earth tone paint, boomerangs, q-tips, roll of white paper, clay, didgeridoo

Events: Boomerang throwing, Aboriginal dot painting, didgeridoo, clay press

Instructions: Three keys to boomerang throwing are: 45 degree angle, release just above the horizon, and the correct amount spin with the wrist (average). Clay press: give them a ball of clay to flatten out in whatever shape they want (no bigger than 4" by 4" or so) and they can decorate it in whatever manner they like with what they can find around the area. They can draw on it with sticks or press things into the clay. A didgeridoo can be fashioned out of pvc pipe, but you need someone who knows how to play. Dot painting involves drawing of animals and landscapes with unconnected dots.

Sumo Wrestling

Supplies: 2 lengths of rope to make two 15 yard rings, 4 pillows, 4 sleeping bags, & rope/string to tie padding on kids

Events: Sumo wrestling, cheering on the wrestlers

Instructions: In a nutshell, there are 2 rings so 4 people can be sumo wrestling at any one time. There needs to be a staff judge at each ring with an assistant who is helping to prepare the kids with padding and telling them how to behave. The easiest padding involves cramming pillows under shirts. At the start of each groups arrival, the staff can go through a match so everyone knows how to play. Watching an actual sumo match is best, but strict sumo rules don't need to be adhered to. The only points of contact are the padded bellies. Combatants must kneel away from the ring and offer a prayer before the match begins. They enter the ring and instead of shaking hands, they scream at each other in an effort at intimidation. Just before the match begins, grandiose foot stomping is performed followed by a salute to the judge who then begins the match. No part of the body may exit the ring and only the feet may touch the ground inside the ring.

Cricket

Supplies: Cricket bat, wickets, & a cricket ball.

Events: Cricket

Instructions: If you have some international staff that know the rules, you're set. Otherwise, consult a book of games as the rules are too numerous to explain here.

Italian Animal Ball

Supplies: Water polo ball or volleyball

Events: Italian Animal Ball

Instructions: This is really just another name for water polo. Instead of swimming, the ball has to be held completely under water when being transported. The ball can still be thrown. There is a goalie and a shot on goal can be done out of the water.

Canadian War Ball

Supplies: A playground ball.

Events: Canadian War Ball (a.k.a. solo bombardment)

Instructions: This is bombardment, but every person for themselves. A gym, playhouse, or tennis court works well. The area needs to have solid boundaries. Anyone can run anywhere on the playing field. A counselor starts the game by tossing the ball in the air. When a person gets possession of the ball, they get 3 steps before they have to throw the ball. However, once per possession of the ball, they can bounce the ball off of a vertical surface, regain possession of the ball and then take another 3 steps. No head shots are allowed and unnecessary force results in an automatic out. The game moves very fast and with 20 people, there should be a survivor after about 5 minutes. When people thin out, a counselor moderator yells out a larger number of allowable steps. Music playing in the background or adding more than one ball can add spice to the game. Once, a drama person was moderating the game and he made everyone move ballet style which was very funny and fun!

The Israel Ga Ga Game

Supplies: 2 playground balls, jambox, hard rock music, 2 benches or barriers

Events: Ga Ga (like solo bombardment or Canadian War Ball)

Instructions: The game is played a lot like Canadian War Ball. Half a tennis court or a playing area as described before is utilized. The ball stays on the ground the whole time. The ball can only be hit with an open hand. The ball can be tapped once before being hit towards someone. So, there are no steps because the tap is used to move the ball closer to your prey. People run around bent over a lot. If you have enough people, a human wall can be formed around the action and that wall can become tighter and tighter as fewer people remain. As the game gets old and/or there aren't many people left in the game, add another ball to the play so there are 2 or 3 balls going at the same time. If you have any Jewish staff, they will likely know the game, which has many variations.

Your staff will likely be able to come up with other ideas as well. More games that staff have come up with for this event include: Scottish Strongman Games, English Eton Wall Ball, East Indian Kabbadi, and a Mauri Sticks game.

HYPE!!

- Play national anthems during a meal time.
- Display international flags around camp.
- Have a couple of international counselors (or some dressed and speaking as if from a certain country) get up in front of the camp and spontaneously start reminiscing about their favorite games that aren't played over here.