



A CAMPING TRADITION SINCE 1936 — IN ALGONQUIN PARK, ONTARIO

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ACTIVITY LEADER JOB DESCRIPTION

The Big Picture

Ask any former Tamakwa camper what he or she remembers about camp and the answer will always include “learning to do something I never did before and having a great time.” ACHIEVEMENT, FUN, AND SAFETY pretty much sum up the main goals and objectives of an Activity Leader in a nutshell.

Whether it is something totally new to a camper like the trick to building a campfire from wet wood or improving on something s/he already knows like his/her skills at a water sport or land sport activity, the element of ACHIEVEMENT is an integral part of the Tamakwa experience. By the same token, it must adhere to camp’s SAFETY policies. The job of the Activity Leader is chiefly to combine the three... making “achievements fun and safe.”

It’s no easy task. It is, however, challenging and, if successful, will make yours the most popular activity in camp. Every activity on the list has at one time or another proudly claimed that title. It takes creativity, imagination, tolerance, and, most of all, you need to believe in what your activity has to offer in a camper’s development. In a limited number of hours, days and weeks, you can introduce to a camper something you love and appreciate. Not every camper will learn readily. It requires creativity to present a skill or project in a palatable, FUN way. How you package the information, like anywhere else, is very important. In a sense, you are a salesman who has to make your program interesting by marketing and P.R., using whatever means necessary: announcements at mealtime, special events, demonstrations, competitions, and clubs. In short, FUN gimmicks.

Tamakwa’s Activity Leader group consists of 18-20 heads of each activity at camp. Activity Leaders form an integral administrative group, not only in charge of their particular area at Tamakwa, but also as leaders around camp and as assistants to the programming department for evening programs and special camp-wide programs.

The Little Picture

Your typical day consists of 5 activity periods of approximately one hour in length. For the most part, this time is for teaching skills and the Activity Leader will have prepared an overall program by the first day of what the periods will comprise of, including which skills will be taught to which levels of campers, specific goals for various age groups, a repertoire of methods, plans for delegating staff members, specific procedures for safety drills, and alternate plans in case of unexpected changes. Rainy-day activities should always be in your back pocket. Activities continue come rain or shine at Tamakwa. An Activity Leader needs to be prepared with an indoor program, in other words, if a storm forbids sailing or a soccer game, there should always be something to be accomplished indoors.

PRE-CAMP ORIENTATION

The initial orientation of an Activity Leader begins in Pre-Pre-Camp when just the Activity Leaders will be at camp with just a small group of other staff. At this time, you will begin plotting your summer activity program. During Pre-Camp, once the balance of the general staff arrive, you will have time to meet with your staff, help with all physical preparations for your area, as well as plan and present an introduction for your activity including all the safety and programming ideas you have. Also, remember that every staff member coming to camp should be able to contribute to the activity program; sometimes they just need a little push. Pre-Camp should be fun, enlightening and high-energy! Also, time will be allotted to plan a camper evening program you will be organizing as well as staff programs, camp-wide events and other special events. Rules and regulations will be covered at length, don't worry.

ACTIVITY CALENDAR

Organization is the key to being a successful Activity Leader at camp. You will be given your Activity Calendar at Pre-Pre Camp. It will consist of the givens for your activity, i.e. the Drama Director will have the play nights programmed well in advance of the summer. This is your chance to come up with fun, zany, not-your-typical-day-at-Tamakwa activities and plan them in advance so it doesn't conflict with other zany fun...you get the idea. The Activity Calendar revolves around Tamakwa's schedule for canoe trips, a fundamental part of our camp program where all campers leave camp for at least 3-5 days at a time with their cabinmates for a great outdoor experience. You will learn more about that program when you arrive at camp.

SUPERVISION AT TAMAKWA

At your activity, you are the boss. You are there because of your expertise and your judgment of proper balance between achievement and fun. Each Activity Leader is assigned an activity staff who should then be informed by you about your goals and where they fit in to your activity's objectives. An activity's staff varies in size depending on the activity, comprised of Senior Counselors (ages 19+), Junior Counselors (ages 17-18), CIT's (age 16) and, in a few cases, Specialists. Typically, CIT's will be with you for two weeks at a time, while Senior Counselors and Junior Counselors are usually with you all summer, although there are some changes after the first month. Senior Counselors work at your activity during individual choice periods (1st, 2nd & 3rd periods) while Junior Counselors work with you all day, unless they need to cover for their Senior Counselors. Senior Counselors also go to instructional swim with their cabin groups. Specialists, who may or may not live in camper cabins, work on your activity every day and take Monday days off with Activity Leaders; like you, they also do not go on canoe trips.

Once trips go out and days off begin it may get a little challenging due to the fact that staff may not be as abundant as they were in the beginning of the summer. Activity Leaders should be flexible to be able to handle staffing shortages and request extra staff when necessary. Be sure to let us know if you believe your staffing may not be adequate to run the activity. SAFETY is paramount.

To be successful, activities need people who are motivated about what they are doing and have some knowledge. They need to be able to work both as a team and individually, with little or no supervision or prompting. You should have regular supervision meetings with your staff collectively and individually. Once a week you should plan a formal verbal supervision meeting with each staff, and at the end of each session you will be required to fill out a written evaluation of all your staff handed in to the Camp Director. Make sure when you evaluate people you always let them know both the positive and negative aspects of their performance. It is not always easy being honest but in the end it always proves to be worthwhile.

No one can do everything themselves. With proper delegation, you can obtain assistance for almost every task covered in this job description. After delegating a job to a staff member, you must then supervise that individual so the job gets done satisfactorily and the desired result is obtained. First delegate, then supervise, then if it is necessary or desirable, you can summarize and/or evaluate so the same procedure will bring even better results next time.

SAFETY AT TAMAKWA

Here enters the critical element of SAFETY. Discipline is one of the skills you offer. As an example, the skill of a boxer is that s/he understands how NOT to get hurt. And, a skillful archer possesses the discipline of waiting his or her turn to shoot and waiting until all archers have finished before retrieving a single arrow. It is the Activity Leader's responsibility to see to it that Tamakwa's high standard of safety is kept at all times. It also entails making sure your staff members are doing their part. That sometimes means playing the role of "bad guy" when it comes to getting other staff members to be alert. The buck stops with the Activity Leader, and you cannot emphasize enough to the staff and campers that there is NO COMPROMISING OF SAFETY.

AWARDS AT TAMAKWA

Where standards and achievements are measured, records of each camper's progress are also the responsibility of the Activity Leader. Every camper is eager to obtain activity awards at camp and it is your duty to record the awards campers have achieved at your activity. Each award is recorded on an award sheet at each activity and a record of the earned awards is also kept in the office. At the end of each week, usually on Sundays before you leave on your day off, the names of the campers who have achieved awards must be recorded in the office or submitted to the office to be recorded for you. We will go over this process during Pre-Camp. It's very important to help motivate campers to work on various award levels at every activity, especially the higher awards. Some campers need a bit of a push and they will appreciate your help and passion for assisting them to attain their awards. Occasionally you will announce significant awards to the camp after meals in the Dining Hall.

The camper's schedule includes frequent free periods during which s/he may return to a particular activity for additional instruction or coaching. This gives the Activity Leader an opportunity for individualized attention to that camper. That same time is perfect for the other staff members to come to you for work in perfecting their own skills. One of camp's goals is to provide enjoyment for the staff and they are encouraged to participate in the activities. By improving their skills, you are also equipping them to teach the campers. Delegating staff members with teaching and supervisory responsibilities is crucial to a successful program, since you are responsible for the overall program and cannot be everywhere at one time.

EQUIPMENT, INVENTORY AND SUPPLIES

The equipment you are responsible for is always first-rate. At the beginning of the summer you will have an inventory of all supplies and any new equipment that camp may have purchased for your program. Treat it as your own, we take pride in all the facilities at Tamakwa and are constantly upgrading our equipment. You will be asked to keep an inventory of your supplies and if you have any problems with the equipment or need more supplies for your program, speak with the Camp Director immediately to ensure it will be fixed. Be sure to place requests as early/quickly as possible as some purchases and repairs could take some time. At the end of the season we will require a complete Inventory and a Wish List of items you think would benefit your program. Also, we will ask for ideas on how to improve this Activity Leader job description and the one specific to your activity so we can use them to better orientate the next Activity Leader in your specialty (if it isn't you).

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Like everyone in camp, the Activity Leader has a 24-hour job. You are also an assistant to the Program Director, helping in the planning, organizing and execution of evening and special all-day programs. Even if a particular program does not involve your specialty, you will frequently be asked to contribute using any other skills and interests you might bring with you to camp. The best programs are those in which everyone gets to add his/her own individual flavor.

DAILY RESPONSIBILITIES

MORNING MEETINGS

A meeting is held for Head Staff and Activity Leaders each morning after we have breakfast, raise the flags, and send off any leaving canoe trips. In the meeting we go through the day's schedule, duties & programming information and we also glance ahead to the next few days of camp to make sure we're all in sync with each other and the Program Director. Another reason for this meeting is to juggle staff to activities that are short-staffed due to days off and canoe trips.

ACTIVITY PERIODS

Each regular day at camp has 5 activity periods. Periods 1, 2 & 3 are for individual choice. Once a week, campers select activities for those periods and then attend those same 3 activities for a full week. Junior Tamakwans (ages 7 – 9) have two individual choice periods as their 3rd period is always instructional swimming. Camper attendance must be taken each period to ensure everyone's safety. Periods 4 & 5 are "block schedule" periods. These are assigned by the Program Director. Campers go to "block schedule" activities in cabin groups with their Senior Counselors. This schedule will be handed out each week and will also be posted in the office for easy reference. All cabins must attend block periods. Block Schedule gives campers the opportunity to try every activity at camp over the course of each month and it also provides for increased cabin unity. Be sure to have different lessons/games/ideas for your activity depending on the age of campers coming to your activity each period.

ACTIVITY SET-UP

Each Activity Leader is responsible for the set-up of their own activity's equipment, arts & crafts supplies, ropes belay systems, etc. Whatever is needed for the activity that day should be set-up in advance of the arrival of campers to your activity.

ACTIVITY CLEAN-UP

At the end of each day, all Activity Leaders are responsible for cleaning their activity area. It's a necessity to keep your area clean because if you let it go for a few days it can really get out of hand. It is recommended that you tidy between each period just so you don't leave all your cleaning till the end of the day, leaving you more time to do other things.

LOST & FOUND

Every Activity Leader is responsible for collecting lost & found at the end of each morning and afternoon and placing it into the main Lost & Found box located on the Dining Hall Porch. Unfortunately, campers and staff leave clothing and towels behind quite often. The best way to avoid excessive lost and found is to remind the campers at your activity at the end of every period.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

After meals there are announcements. A quiet Dining Hall is essential so everyone can hear special programming information and changes and also award recognition, which is done only

during breakfast announcements. So save up your award recognition and make those announcements at breakfast. The kids love to hear their names in the Dining Hall.

DINING HALL

In the Dining Hall, trying to satisfy 400 hungry people and use the time to make announcements can be quite a challenge. Everyone has to pitch in to keep order in the Dining Hall and the Activity Leader is looked upon as an example. You will be designated a specific area to monitor and ensure that everyone is following the basic simple rules (i.e. keeping food off the floor, clearing tables, keeping everyone quiet during announcements, etc.).

TWILIGHT

After most dinners there is a scheduled free time called “Twilight” for campers, which for the most part, is set aside for special activity events planned by Activity Leaders or Section Heads – everyone takes their turn. This twilight time runs until the beginning of evening program (usually around 20–30 minutes). Furthermore, besides special events, this time can always be used for extra help, award completion, advanced classes, tournaments and first-come first-serve participation. During Pre-Camp you will be given a schedule for Twilight activities, but it should really be used as just the bare minimum of your planned Twilight activities.

EVENING PROGRAM

Activity Leaders often play an integral role in ensuring the success of an evening program. Whether you’re assisting in planning an evening program for a few days leading up to it or not, you are usually helping implement most evening programs. There will be some evenings when your assistance will not be needed. Also, some nights the Activity Leader group will do an activity apart from the rest of camp or just rest. We will spend quite a bit of time on the planning of evening programs during Pre-Pre-Camp and throughout the summer.

WEEKLY RESPONSIBILITIES

INDIVIDUAL CHOICE SIGN-UP

Once a week, each camper will fill out a request form to plan his or her individual choice activities for the following week. This allows each camper to have the same activity periods for 1st, 2nd & 3rd period for one full week, allowing for greater teaching and activity skill/award achievement or completion of a creative project. At one meal each week, Activity Leaders eat a bit early and campers are called out to main camp by cabin group to sign-up for activities. Campers may only choose an activity for one period each week. Sometimes activities are full and campers need to try to get their second or third choices for an activity period. These camper choices, like the block schedule, are also posted in the office for easy access.

Each week, you will give the program director your list of offerings for 1st, 2nd and 3rd period for the following week of individual choice. This is required the day before the campers select their activity periods each week. Activity Leaders have to “sell” their activity to campers, sell ideas for different individual choice periods. Dress up, plan a week long event that culminates with a champion, be creative... have some “schtick” to your program, do something fun. We’ll help you!

STAFF DAY OFF REQUESTS

Once a week, Activity Leaders collect day off requests from their activity staff. It is up to the counselors to make sure that they are not requesting the same day off as their co-counselors. You need to make sure that no more than 2 staff members from your activity are off on the same day.

COOKOUTS

There are two types of cookouts at Camp Tamakwa: Monday cookouts and non-Monday cookouts. We feel that at least once a week, counselors and their kids should get away from the camp routine and be responsible to cook their own dinner in a wilderness setting. Cooking outdoors teaches resourcefulness and appreciation, in addition to being fun for the cabin groups. So every Monday, while Activity Leaders are on their days off, campers and counselors leave camp for 5-6 hours to campsites on our lake or on adjacent lakes for a dinner cookout.

We try to provide everyone with breaks from the routine which is why additional cabin, section and activity cookouts are not only welcomed but encouraged. When you are going on an activity cookout please start planning at least 48 hours in advance and fill out a cookout food request form (please see the Program Director when planning a cookout to make sure it does not pose a conflict with other programming). In fact, you will be given a tentative schedule for activity cookouts. Enjoy this time away from your activity. It can be great for you and your staff too. When leaving for a cookout, you **MUST** sign-out with the office by completing an out-of-camp list and sign back in upon your return. We need to keep track of where each camper and staff member is at all times. More information on this process will be passed along to you during Pre-Camp.

STAFF MEETINGS

Plan regular weekly staff meetings and constantly check in with each staff member individually on a regular basis. Positive reinforcement can go a long way and you don't want to face a staff member one-on-one for the first time and explain to them why their evaluation was not exemplary. Motivating staff can be challenging but is so crucial for your activity. Activities can be very repetitive, it requires staff members who are both motivated and committed to working hard everyday. If you go out of your way to help your staff and appreciate your staff, they will in turn appreciate you, respect you and work that much harder for you. An open relationship with your staff members to make sure they're happy will lead to an easier time making sure they do a good job. Be their friends, but make sure they respect you for your position and will listen to you when you need them to. Have clear expectations, make sure they understand them and make sure they live up to them.

SERVING DUTY

Activity Leaders will have serving duty on most Friday night dinners. You will be split into 2 groups and each group will alternate Friday nights. This will be explained in more detail during Pre-Camp.

MONTHLY RESPONSIBILITIES

STAFF EVALUATIONS

Activity Leaders are responsible for completing written staff evaluations at the end of each session that will be handed in to the Camp Director. At the end of first session, Activity Leaders review these written evaluations with each of their staff members and has him/her sign them. At the end of second session, Activity Leaders do not show the staff evaluations to their staff. **It cannot be stressed enough that aside from these formal/written evaluations, Activity Leaders must provide constant feedback to their staff members as a group and individually.** This makes for a happier and more helpful staff. Also, Activity Leaders should not hesitate to involve the Camp Director in any problems with individuals or their collective staff groups. The same evaluation process is in place for CIT's at the end of each activity rotation.

SUPER DUTY

Super Duty is to make sure that the staff members assigned to Night Duty are doing their jobs properly and to make sure problems and/or emergencies are responded to efficiently and effectively. More information about this important function will be forthcoming during Pre-Camp. But you can expect to have this night time responsibility approximately twice per month. (Night Duty is a time when assigned staff members make sweeps of the camper cabins during bedtime hours while the rest of the counselors are enjoying some down time.)

END OF SUMMER RESPONSIBILITIES

ACTIVITY LEADER CHECKLIST

This is paperwork required of you at the end of camp, which includes your activity inventory, wish lists, suggestions for improving your activity and suggestions for improving camp. We would like you to put some effort into performing this task because these lists get used for future years at camp. A sample set of the forms are in your Activity Leader Staff Manual and some of the lists can actually be started in the first week of camp if you have some great ideas for future summers.

EQUIPMENT

At the end of the summer, some activity supplies will be put away and some will be left out for our fall rental groups. You will receive instructions about your specific activity towards the end of the summer as to what needs to be put away for the winter.

PLAQUE & BANQUET PRESENTATION

On the last night of camp we have a final banquet to culminate the summer. Each Activity Leader makes a presentation to present high level awards to campers as well as any special end-of-the-summer awards. Activity Leaders also present an activity plaque for camp to be put up in the Dining Hall. More information will be given during second month.

IN CONCLUSION

This is probably an overwhelming amount of information, but we're just trying to make you as prepared as possible. No need to memorize any of it, but having an idea of what goes on can really help you get a good jump-start from the minute you arrive at camp.

You should come to camp energized and ready to jump into learning more and more about being an Activity Leader and running your activity. You should arrive with ideas on how to motivate and teach beginner, intermediate and advanced classes as well as some fun and innovative games and activities. Also, having a few rainy day activities in your back pocket can only help you too.

This generic job description has hopefully given you some further insight towards your position as an Activity Leader and there will be much more specific information leading up to the summer that will help you run a successful program for the summer. There is also a specific job description for your activity. We hope this information helps prepare you for an incredible summer with Tamakwa.

In closing, the responsibilities of an Activity Leader at camp are endless. You will constantly be supervising your staff, making sure of the safety of your program and, of course, teaching the kids new skills they will have with them forever. An incredibly challenging, exciting and fast paced summer for sure...and let's not forget, HAVE FUN!