

CIRCUS SMIRKUS

 **CAMP** 

CAMPER & FAMILY HANDBOOK
2022

Welcome to SMIRKUS CAMP!

The entire Smirkus family is looking forward to another fun-filled summer of circus training, summer camping, and Smirkus magic with your campers in Greensboro, Vermont!

We have compiled all the information you need for an awesome camp experience in this handbook. Please read it thoroughly, even if you have been to Smirkus Camp before, and save it as a reference. Please feel free to contact us with any questions at any time!

Circus Smirkus is a nonprofit organization founded in 1987 to promote the skills, culture, and traditions of the circus arts, inspiring youth to engage in life changing adventures. At Smirkus Camp we emphasize the concentration and commitment required to pursue any art form in a non-competitive environment, while encouraging realistic goal setting and striving for accomplishment. Our goal is to teach circus and life skills to campers while providing a safe and fun place for kids to be themselves.

Smirkus Camp is located in Greensboro, Vermont, just four miles away from our World Headquarters at the Circus Barn where we've launched our Big Top Tour for over 30 years. Greensboro is a small town nestled in the magical area of Vermont called the Northeast Kingdom. Check out the "Plan Your Visit" section of our website at smirkus.org/smirkus-camp/visit to find a wealth of information including suggestions on where to stay and what to do while you're in the area.

In this Handbook you will find important information for both campers and their families. Thank you in advance for acquainting yourself with this important information.

Contact Information

camp@smirkus.org

Camp direct phone # after June 12:
802.533.2423

Rachel Schiffer
Camp Director

Doug Stewart
Assistant Camp Director

Jeremy Cifonie
Head Counselor



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Circus Smirkus Camp is located on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange among indigenous peoples and is the home of the Western Abenaki People. Circus Smirkus honors, recognizes, and respects the many great nations, especially the Abenaki, as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we gather and stake our tents. We acknowledge that we are guests on this land and that we must respect and protect all lands that we use.

PROMISE OF INCLUSION

Circus Smirkus celebrates all types of peoples, cultures, and skills to showcase the multifaceted triumph of human abilities, particularly among our youth population. Joining Circus Smirkus – as a participant, an employee, a volunteer, or an audience member – means you belong. And to all who join, Smirkus asks for you to embrace our values and to help us create joy and magic for everyone who encounters a Smirkus program. We commit to providing everyone equal opportunity to shine— both in and out of the ring.

Gender Inclusion and Pronouns

Circus Smirkus welcomes and supports participants of all gender identities and expressions. Pronouns are the words we use to refer to people in place of their names. The most commonly used pronouns are she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs. Increasingly, other systems of pronouns, such as neopronouns and noun-self pronouns, are also used. We require that all campers and staff show respect in using everyone's pronouns, and to make every effort to learn any individual's pronouns rather than assuming them. Smirkus will make every effort in registration and other materials to allow participants to specify the pronouns they use.

CIRCUS SMIRKUS VALUES

We Try New Things: We are prepared to show up and actively participate even when feeling challenged with new skills or ideas.

- We are respectful, playful, sincere, thoughtful, and curious.
- We are innovative, adaptive and resourceful.
- We commit to being successful and are willing to fail.
- We are adventurous.

We Rely on Each Other: Collaboration and teamwork facilitate the best process and results; Everyone's contributions matter.

- We are accountable to ourselves and each other.

- We are collaborative and team-oriented.
- We are honest about what we can and cannot do.
- We are trustworthy, trusting, authentic and reliable.
- We own our own mistakes.
- We know and respect that every job is an important job; Everyone here plays a critical role.

We Respect Ourselves: - We strive for balance (rest, work, play) in all things and show up as our best selves.

- We ask for help when needed.
- We communicate openly, honestly, and frequently.
- We use the Smirkus support systems when needed.
- We are never afraid to ask questions and state our needs.
- We assume positive intent in all interactions.
- We are willing to have tough conversations.

We Welcome All People/We Celebrate Our Differences: All Smirkos champion one another in and out of the ring.

- We seek out the contributions of all people and learn from one another.
- We take personal responsibility to welcome and amplify diverse voices.
- We support great ideas no matter where they come from.
- We are passionate, compassionate, sincere, and empathetic.
- We are an ally; We respect diversity, encourage inclusivity, and practice equity.
- We respect each other's identities and we do not tolerate discrimination in any form.

We Take Fun Seriously: We respect the calculated risk that is inherent on any circus lot during both training and performances so that fun can be maximized and a safe environment can be maintained.

- We take personal responsibility for our own safety and the safety of others. We respect and follow all established safety protocols.
- We know our role and do it well; We are accountable for what we promise.
- We work hard.

Purpose

Values clarification and identification is integral to ensuring organizational cohesion and a defined commitment to a shared purpose. These values were co-created by our community of alumni, staff, and the board. Adherence to and promotion of these values is integral to ensuring alignment with the spirit of Smirkus. Moving forward, we will hold ourselves and others accountable to these values.

YOUR CAMPER'S FIRST OVERNIGHT CAMP

Going to Smirkus Camp, or any sleepover camp, is an early step toward independence for your child. Overnight camp is a fantastic way for kids to develop self-reliance in a nurturing, safe, supportive, and – in our case – zany environment created just for kids. While many first-time campers may have concerns about being away from home before camp starts, we have found that nervousness evaporates within the first few hours here and is replaced by excitement and happy immersion into all of the great activities going on. But we know that it can often be more difficult for parents, driving away from the Big Top wondering: will she be able to sleep? Will they eat? Will he be happy? You love your camper – it's natural that you would have worries such as these.

Many experts say that children learn how to find their way through situations on their own – making decisions and problem-solving independently of their grown-ups – and that this helps them develop the confidence to become self-reliant adults. The fact is that you are providing a positive developmental experience for your camper.

Here are a few tactics you can try before and during camp that will help your child adjust quickly, and will also help you feel comfortable while your camper is away having a blast with us!

1. Discuss what Camp may be like beforehand, and visit [our webpage](#) to see pictures of happy campers in action.
2. Remember the facts about Smirkus Camp. We have been serving kids and families for over 30 years. We have a camper-to-staff ratio of 3-to-1, and over half of our campers each year choose to return again. Our staff is experienced and highly trained, our coaches are professional circus performers and the majority of our counselors started as Smirkus campers themselves. We put safety first, and have been held up as a model of camp safety and quality.
3. Ask questions of our staff. Email any questions to camp@smirkus.org and we'll be happy to respond. When you arrive with your camper, Camp Director Rachel Schiffer and Assistant Camp Director Doug Stewart will be available to meet you and discuss any particular concerns you may have.
4. Hang up the phone. We have found that phone calls can increase homesickness, rather than alleviate or prevent it. Thus, campers do not have access to phones or the internet during the camp session. Please make sure your camper understands this.
5. Post About It. We encourage campers and families to send written letters or postcards, and we make time for this at Camp. Be sure to pack postcards, stamps, and other letter writing supplies.
6. Send a Care Package. Some like to send care packages to their camper; you can arrange for a hand-delivered care package through the Smirkus Camp webstore at shop.smirkus.org, which will be online by June 1.
7. Emergency Contact. If there is a vital message for your camper, please contact the camp office, camp@smirkus.org or 802 - 533 - 2423, and we will happily pass it to them. Likewise, if there is any information or essential message that your camper has for you, we will get in touch with you promptly.

Smirkus Camp may look like fun and games, comedy and chaos... and it is! But the foundation for the magic that happens here is a mindful program design, curated and managed by a talented staff committed to creating a physically and emotionally safe place where kids can learn new skills, make new friends and be unique, self-reliant young people. We take our responsibility for your camper's welfare very seriously, and we have fun while doing so. We are kid people who know how to create happy campers!

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CAMPER

Campers do not have access to the internet at camp. If you have concerns regarding your camper or need to relay a message to them, please contact the camp office. We check messages throughout the day, including weekends, and will return your call or email as soon as possible.

Please send all camper mail to the address below. Please don't send mail to our Office Headquarters (on Circus Road) as the extra delay could prevent its arrival into your camper's hands while they are still at Camp. Mail that reaches Camp after the recipient has left will be forwarded to the camper's home address on file or returned to sender. Late packages will be returned to the sender or can be mailed home via COD upon request. Some families send a note in advance that is given to their camper on the first full day; others send care packages through the online camp store.

Camp Mailing Address:

[Your Camper's Name]
[Session # and Counselor's Name]
Smirkus Camp
409 Breezy Avenue
Greensboro, VT 05841



CAMP PHOTOS

Smirkus Camp has a photographer on staff who will document the camp experience: kids having the time of their lives at Smirkus Camp! Our camp Blog and Flickr account share a curated snapshot of the camp experience from day to day, so the photos represented may not show each child every day. Fear not! Your camper is having a great time, and will definitely show up in pictures at some point during the week.

Shortly after registration, we'll provide you with a link to access our photo gallery. Updated nearly every day during the summer and easily accessed from our website, this provides an ongoing, fun, and informative glimpse into just what it is that goes on at Smirkus Camp.

We highly recommend packing a digital or disposable camera. Since phones are not permitted at camp, we encourage you to bring a camera so that you can capture and create your own camp memories.

PACKING GUIDELINES

Please be prepared for a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions. Vermont is known for its unpredictable weather: be prepared for hot, cold, wet, dry, and everything in between. For safety we require long leggings or workout pants for participating on aerial equipment. Clothing that is too baggy (extra-large shirts) or too tight (jeans) will hinder progress on most equipment.

Campers bringing giraffe unicycles, stilts, juggling knives, torches or other flaming objects, as well as fuel must check-in their props with the coaching staff at registration. These items will be stored in the training area and only used under coach supervision, regardless of the owner's skill level. Please do not plan on bringing personal circus equipment, without prior approval from the office.

****Labeling your clothes and valuables will help us return lost and found items to their owners****



Packing List

Please bring these items:

- Face masks (not gaiters or bandanas)
- Sleeping bag or twin-sized bedding (sheets and blanket) & pillow, twin-sized mattress cover and/or fitted sheet.
- Towel and toiletries (soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, etc)
- Closed-toed shoes or sneakers, and mud boots (please no Crocs or hightops)
- Clean socks and underwear for every day at camp (it doesn't hurt to bring extra ☺)
- Clothing for every day at camp (long workout pants, shorts, t-shirts & a sweatshirt)
- Raincoat or poncho (in the likely event that it rains, rain boots are also recommended)
- Swimsuit, sunscreen, and towel (for pie day festivities and water days, if applicable)
- Prescription medications (in camper's name only) to be given to the nurse at registration
- Black pants, leggings or shorts to use as a costume for the end of session performance (not required for Smirking Camp)
- Intermediate/Advanced campers should also bring a black t-shirt and tanktop/leotard
- Baseball cap or sun hat
- Labeled water bottle – we do not provide one.

Optional Items (not necessary to purchase if you don't have already)

- Ballet or dance shoes for tightwire; leotards and yoga pants for aerials
- Juggling equipment (clubs, balls, rings, diabolos, torches...) and/or unicycle
- Costume items for nightly themed dinner dress-ups (ex: superhero, decades)
- Camera (that is not a phone)
- Stationery and postage stamps for writing home, books and journal for quiet time, musical instruments (not for quiet time!), camera, flashlight, CD or mp3 player
- Oscillating fan, night-light and your favorite teddy bear!



Medication

For everyone's safety, campers may not keep any medications in their rooms or on their person. All medications, whether prescription or over-the-counter, must be given to the Camp Health Professional at drop-off and will be given to the camper as prescribed or as needed. This includes but is not limited to inhalers, vitamins, homeopathic remedies, cough syrups and pain relievers. A medical kit that contains all camper medications, as well as basic first aid supplies & over-the-counter remedies stays in the hands of the Camp Health Professional, who is always accessible 24/7.

Please note: We make every effort to work with families to accommodate unusual circumstances (medications, injuries, illnesses, recent death in the family, divorce, relocation, emotional difficulties, behavior extremes, etc.) but we cannot give your child the necessary support if we do not know the need. Please inform us ahead of time of any concerns you or your camper might have. The Camper Profile on [Campdoc](#) is the best place for this information.

Do NOT Pack

- Candy, Sugary Snacks, Soda,
- Electronic Games (Nintendo, etc), Portable DVD Players, TVs,
- Jewelry (including earrings),
- Knives, Weapons,
- Illegal Substances,
- Pet Snakes, etc.



These items will be put away in a safe place and returned at the end of the session. iPods or mp3 players are allowed for music only. We also ask that you hand in your cell phones, tablets, and any electronic devices that connect to the internet

Our Philosophy on Personal Electronics

We know that many young people are used to having electronics with them at all times. Usually, we are deliberate about excluding them from Camp for a number of reasons:

- **No child left inside:** Our hilltop campus in Greensboro, Vermont is a beautiful location where nature abounds. We want our campers to experience this and to spend as much time outdoors as possible.
- **Healthy use of free time:** Living life unplugged at Camp sets the stage for more physical activity and for active involvement in Camp social life, which are two of the things that make Smirkus Camp fun and memorable.
- **Adequate rest for active kids:** Sleep and down time are key ingredients of a positive Camp experience, so we don't want anyone staying up late on their phone or their iPad.

We want all of our campers to be with us in the here and now, fully involved in the fun, games, learning, belonging and the crazy joy of circus on our beautiful hilltop in Vermont. Please make sure your camper knows ahead of time that we are an unplugged camp.

Something to consider: To better prepare your teenager for an unplugged camp experience, challenge your camper (or entire family!) to a tech-free day prior to camp. Learn more at: [turned-off-how-teens-respond-to-a-no-tech- challenge/](#)



DROP-OFF

Registration is from **2:00–4:00 pm** on **Sunday**. Please arrive between your designated time frame according to your **last name** to help the check-in and move-in processes run smoothly and efficiently.

A – F 2:00 - 2:30 PM
G – L 2:30 - 3:00 PM
M-R 3:00 - 3:30 PM
S-Z 3:30 - 4:00 PM

PICK-UP

On the final Friday of each session, friends and family are invited to attend a skills rotation showcase (session 1) or show (all other sessions) starting at **1:00 pm. Please plan to arrive at 12:30.**

Campers will have their belongings packed and ready to go; you will be able to depart soon after the end of the performance.

Anyone attending Camp closing shows will be required to show proof of vaccination against Covid-19 or proof of a negative test result, and must wear a mask.

Families must RSVP no later than 48 hours before the performance with the number of people in their party attending the performance.

DAILY SCHEDULE

7:00 Rise and Shine

7:30 - 8:15 Breakfast

8:15 - 8:40 Warm Up/Morning Run

8:40 - 9:25 Circus Training Rotation 1

9:25 - 10:10 Circus Training Rotation 2

10:10 - 10:30 Snack Time/ Bathroom Break

10:30 - 11:15 Circus Training Rotation 3

11:15 - 12:00 Circus Training Rotation 4

12:00 - 12:45 Lunch

12:45 - 1:20 Quiet Time

1:20 - 1:45 Strengthening & Conditioning

1:45 - 2:00 Trick of the Day/Choice Time Announcements

2:00 - 2:30 Circus Choice Time 1

2:30 - 3:00 Circus Choice Time 2

3:00 - 3:30 Circus Choice Time 3

3:30 - 4:00 Circus Choice Time 4

4:00 - 4:15 Afternoon Snack/Transition

4:15- 5:00 Afternoon Activity

5:00-5:35 Dress Up/Dorm Time - Dress up to selected themes such as superheroes, pirates etc.(wardrobe available).

5:40 - 6:20 Dinner

6:20 - 7:00 Downtime /Chores/Store Time

7:00 - 8:30 Evening Activity

8:30 - 9:00 Relax before bedtime

9:00 Lights Out

this is a sample schedule and is subject to change. The schedule for Advanced Camp is a bit different and includes extra training time.



CAMP STORE

Smirkus Camp has a Camp Store that carries a variety of snacks, Smirkus-branded merchandise, circus equipment, costume items, and basic toiletries. Grown-ups have the option to purchase store items and care packages for their campers to receive during their stay. This year we will have an **online care package ordering form** where you can purchase goodies to be sent to your camper's room. You will receive the link in your pre-arrival email. You may also leave cash spending money in your camper's Camp Store Account so they can visit the Store at scheduled times during the session. We ask that campers not keep cash on their person or room – camper cash is held in an individual account at the Camp office during each session. The Camp Store accepts cash and checks.

RULES & POLICIES

Camper Guidelines

Grown-ups and campers, please read this section together. These guidelines apply to all campers and staff.

1. Be respectful and kind to fellow campers and their belongings, the staff, the circus tents and equipment, and to yourself! Please refrain from inappropriate language or touching, or subject matter that is inappropriate for camp.
2. Be known! Your counselor needs to know where you are at all times. Please ask them if it is okay for you to go somewhere.
3. Campers are to be in their respective dorms 15 minutes prior to lights out.
4. Campers are to sleep in the room they are assigned to.
5. Be clean! Shower regularly, use soap, and wear clean socks and underwear on a daily basis! Brush your teeth! Your rooms should be kept clean and orderly as well, so as to not attract skunks or other critters.
6. Be healthy! Campers are expected to eat three well-rounded meals every day in order to participate in circus activities. Get plenty of sleep; bedtime is set to ensure the proper amount of rest to participate in training. Please report all injuries or illnesses to your counselor or the Camp Nurse as soon as possible.
7. Be safe! If you aren't sure about something, please ask a counselor or coach.
8. Follow all Smirkus values and camp rules!

Covid 19 Guidelines and Waiver

Please read the accompanying COVID-19 Protocols document thoroughly and carefully and let us know if you have any questions.

Discipline Policy

We realize that children often exhibit uncharacteristic behaviors when they are in new surroundings. Inappropriate behaviors are addressed using the following stepped up approach:

1. Private talk with the camper and counselor/coach.
2. Camper sits out of activities for a designated time and makes restitution/apology as appropriate. Parent/guardian(s) will receive a phone call from the Camp Director for serious problems (verbal abuse, ignoring safety rules, repeated offenses).
3. Discussion with relevant staff, Camp Director or Assistant Director, and camper, followed by a phone call to the parent/guardian(s) by the camper.
4. Dismissal from Camp.

Dismissal from Camp: We expect campers and staff to behave courteously and respectfully towards themselves, each other, as well as towards Smirkus Camp staff and property. The following is a list of actions that will result in immediate dismissal from Camp:

- The possession and/or use of tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs or weapons.
- Disregard for safety.
- Inappropriate actions towards other campers and/or staff (verbal and/or physical).
- Behaviors or conditions that can jeopardize the health and safety of the camper or other campers (such as, but not limited to: lice, chicken pox, harmful impulsivity).
- Leaving dorms past bedtime.
- No behavior of a sexual nature will be tolerated.

Dismissal from a Smirkus Camp session does not exclude the camper from attending future Smirkus Camp sessions. If it is safe and healthy for a camper to return to Smirkus Camp, we are happy to work with each individual in completing a successful Camp experience.

FITNESS

We recommend that you begin getting ready for more intense training than you may be used to (i.e. running, stretching, strength training, eating well, sleeping, etc.) prior to your arrival at Camp. For some of you, this may be your first time learning circus skills and working with your body. Learning new skills can be challenging and we want each of you to come physically and mentally prepared for this wonderful, fun and rewarding experience. Here are some suggested activities and exercises you can do at home, to get your bodies moving and circus energy flowing:

Aerobic Activity for 20-30 minutes, 3-5 times a week (i.e. biking, running, jumping rope, etc)

Conditioning Activities 3-4 times a week such as

- Push ups: Can you do 10 in a row?
- Sit ups, or crunches: Aim for at least 20 to each side (middle, right and left)
- Pull ups: If you have a safe bar to hang from can you do 1? 3? 5???
- Tuck jumps: Just how high can you pounce?

Stretching Activities 3-4 times a week, after conditioning for example. Remember to hold for at least 20 seconds.

- Pike stretches (toes pointed and flexed)
- Straddle stretches (center and to each leg and side)
- Rock and Roll to elongate your spine



DIRECTIONS

*****Smirkus Camp is easy to find at [409 Breezy Avenue, Greensboro, VT 05841](#)*****

Please note: Camp is NOT held at Circus Smirkus Headquarters at 1 Circus Road in Greensboro!

Use the camp address to obtain directions from websites such as Google Maps or from GPS devices, however to ensure a safe and surprise-free trip, we recommend ALSO using the following directions (smirkus.org/directions) since GPS can be unreliable in this part of Vermont.

From Interstate 91 & 93, St. Johnsbury area

Smirkus Camp is 26.5 miles northwest of I-91 Exit 21. Follow I-93 to I-91 North. On I-91, coming from north or south, take Exit 21 (St. Johnsbury), then follow Route 2 west for 9.5 miles through Danville to West

Danville and the intersection with Route 15. Turn right onto Route 15 and go 10 miles. Just past the Moose Horn Cafe turn right onto Route 16. A mile and a half later turn left onto Main Street, which descends a hill, crosses a bridge and curves sharply to the right as it turns into E. Church Street, and then into Hardwick Street. After going less than 4 miles on Hardwick Street there is a stop sign near an athletic field, at the intersection of Hardwick St, Center Road, Lake Shore Road, and Breezy Ave. (Firehouse on your right.)

Turn right onto Breezy Ave and descend a gradual hill towards the center of Greensboro.

Immediately on your right, on Breezy Ave., past the intersection with Country Club Road, you will see Smirkus Camp on the right (look for a big Smirkus sign, and dorms just past the trees.)

From I-89 North, Montpelier area

From I-89 Exit 8 (Montpelier), follow Route 2 East for 9 miles to East Montpelier, then follow Route 14 North until you get to Hardwick. Go through the blinking light, and then take the first left at the Hardwick Inn, a big yellow building on your left, onto Main St. Take your first right onto Church St, which curves around and turns into Slapp Hill, which turns into Center Road. Take Center Road approx 5.5 miles until the intersection with Breezy Ave, Hardwick St and Lake Shore Road. (Ball field

will be on your northwest corner, firehouse on your northeast corner.) Continue on Breezy Ave and descend a gradual hill towards the center of Greensboro. Immediately on your right, on Breezy Ave, past the intersection with Country Club Road, you will see Smirkus Camp (look for a big Smirkus sign, and dorms just past the trees.)

From I-89 South, Burlington area

From I-89 Exit 10 (Waterbury), go north on Route 100 for 19 miles to Morrisville. Take Route 15a for 1.6 miles, then turn right onto Route 15 East for 12 miles to Hardwick. Continue on 15 through Hardwick, turning left at the blinking light (intersection with Route 14.) Then take the first left at the Hardwick Inn, a big yellow building on your left, onto Main St. Take your first right onto Church St, which curves around and turns into Slapp Hill, which turns into Center Road. Take Center Road approx 5.5 miles until the intersection with Breezy Ave, Hardwick St and Lake Shore Road. (Ball field will be on your left north corner.) Continue on Breezy Ave and descend a gradual hill towards the center of Greensboro. Immediately on your right, on Breezy Ave, past the intersection with Country Club Road, you will see Smirkus Camp (look for a big Smirkus sign, and dorms just past the trees.)

Or: Continue on 15 out of Hardwick for 2.4 miles and turn left onto Route 16. A mile and a half later turn left onto Main Street, which descends a hill, crosses a bridge and curves sharply to the right as it turns into E. Church Street, and then into Hardwick Street. After going less than 4 miles on Hardwick Street there is a stop sign near an athletic field, at the intersection of Hardwick St, Center Road, Lake Shore Road, and Breezy Ave. (Firehouse on your right.) Turn right onto Breezy Ave and descend a gradual hill towards the center of Greensboro. Immediately on your right, on Breezy Ave, past the intersection with Country Club Road, you will see Smirkus Camp on the right (look for a big Smirkus sign, and dorms just past the trees.)

Airport Shuttle Service

With advance notice, Smirkus Camp can provide a shuttle service to and from the Burlington, VT airport. This will incur a \$75 charge each way. Please contact camp@smirkus.org to make specific arrangements, and confirm with us **before** booking your flight. When booking flights to and from Smirkus Camp, please be aware that the Burlington Airport is two hours from camp. It is recommended that you allow at least 3.5 hours between leaving camp and the time of departure when possible.

Thank you for reviewing this handbook. Please email camp@smirkus.org if you have any questions or concerns.