

CIRCUS SMIRKUS

CAMP

CAMPER & FAMILY HANDBOOK
2021

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 casual and 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 families and campers. Thank you in advance for acquainting yourself with this important information.

Important Contact Information

camp@smirkus.org

Camp direct phone # after June 14:
802.533.2423

Joshua Shack
Director of Programming/Interim Camp Director

Doug Stewart
Assistant Camp Director/Head Coach

Grace Leishman
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.

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, Interim Camp Director Josh Shack 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 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 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, and a 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 YOU CAMPER

Campers do not have access to the internet at camp. Campers will have scheduled times to communicate with home on Saturdays. If you have concerns regarding your camper or need to relay a message to them, please contact the Camp Director. 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 (Circus Smirkus, 1 Circus Road, Greensboro) 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 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.

****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 tightrope wire; 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 Nurse at registration 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 Nurse, 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, 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.

This year, campers will be able to use their devices to communicate with home at specific times on Saturdays. 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/](#)

CAMP STORE



Smirkus Camp has a Camp Store that carries a variety of snacks, Smirkus-specific 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 throughout the time they are here. 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 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 dorm they are assigned to.
5. Be clean! Shower regularly, use soap, and wear clean socks and underwear on a daily basis! 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.

Covid 19 Guidelines and Waiver

You should have already received the Covid-19 Prevention Protocols. Please read the 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 in the following steps:

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 key 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, and the circus equipment, 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 on or around the equipment and dorms.
- 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).

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.

INCLUSION

Throughout history, the circus has sought out and celebrated all types of peoples, cultures, and skills to showcase the multifaceted triumph of human abilities. It is fundamental to our values to welcome participants and audience members of all backgrounds with the curiosity, respect, and awe human diversity inspires.

Joining a Circus Smirkus program means you belong. Bias, prejudice, racism, and hatred have no place in our tent. As a company, we are required to follow all applicable laws that prohibit discrimination based on such factors as race, religion, national origin, gender or gender orientation, et al. As a proud upholder of circus tradition we commit to providing everyone equal opportunity to become a star.

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. Multiple other invented gender neutral pronouns exist. We ask that all employees and participants show respect in using everyone's pronouns, and to make every effort to determine individual preferences before using pronouns. Smirkus will make every effort in registration and other materials to allow participants to specify the pronouns they use.



GETTING HERE & ARRIVAL



Arrival Day

Please check the Drop off schedule for your camper's name and arrive at the appointed time. Drop off procedures will be different this year than in past years.

- Families will stay in their vehicles and must wear masks
- Please remember your quarantine log and test results
- Circus Smirkus staff will help your camper to the dorms and help them get settled in

Directions

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

*****Smirkus Camp is easy to find at 409 Breezy Avenue, Greensboro, VT 05841*****

Use this 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 and Shuttle Services

Due to COVID protocols, Shuttle Service from the airport to Camp cannot be provided for the 2021 summer season. We may be able to assist with return flight drop-off. This will incur a \$75 charge. Please contact camp@smirkus.org to make specific arrangements. 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.

Pick-up

Please refer to 2021 Covid protocols.

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