Camping Safety Checklist

A Family Camping Safety Checklist

Four parts of any camping trip, and the safety basics worth checking at each one.

Trip: _____ Dates: _____

Before You Go

- [ ] Walk the site with your toddler and point out the tent, the car, and the "stay where I can see you" zone
- [ ] Set up a portable fence or a clear perimeter — a line of camp chairs or a rope strung between trees
- [ ] Pack a blackout option for the tent (a tent-fitted liner, or tape a dark towel over the mesh window)
- [ ] Bring the sleep setup that makes their bed recognizable — a specific blanket, a stuffed animal, a nightlight

Sun, Bugs & Heat

- [ ] Pack broad-spectrum SPF 15–50 sunscreen and reapply roughly every two hours
- [ ] Check the bug spray label — no OLE/PMD under age 3; 10% DEET □ 2 hrs, 30% DEET □ 5 hrs
- [ ] Treat clothing and gear with 0.5% permethrin before you go, and shower within two hours of coming in from the woods
- [ ] Know the heat-illness line: shade and fluids for 30 minutes with no improvement means call for help

Water Safety

- [ ] Assign one adult as the designated watcher near any lake or river — no other jobs while on duty
- [ ] Use a properly fitted life jacket for any activity in natural water, not only boating
- [ ] Remember: swim lessons help, but they don't replace active supervision
- [ ] Treat "no lifeguard, natural water" as its own category — unpredictable bottom, hidden currents, poor visibility

Tent & Campfire

- [ ] Never run a heater, camp stove, or charcoal grill inside or near your tent — even briefly
- [ ] Keep the fire a real distance from the tent and from where kids play, and assign one adult to it
- [ ] Make sure the fire is completely out — doused with water and stirred — before anyone sleeps
- [ ] Put a sleeping pad or mattress between your toddler and the ground

Not every trip needs every item — check what applies to yours (no lake nearby? skip Water Safety).