

EDUCATION/CAMPS + CLASSES

Summer Camps That Teach Life Skills

Want kids to learn to cook, build, sew and fix? Try these

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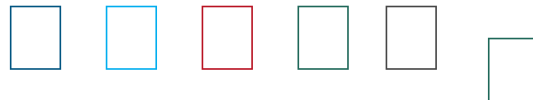


PHOTO: Learn your greens: Seattle Tilth camp Photo credit: Seattle Tilth

Nowadays, preschools have waiting lists, and high schools have entrance exams. High-stakes testing has parents booking tutors, and schools reconsidering recess. But when our kids finally reach that vaunted goal — college — will they be eating Top Ramen in unwashed clothes, wondering how to make dinner, patch their clothes or pay the electric bill?

Never fear: There are summer camps for that. These camps aim to prevent this parental nightmare by introducing kids to practical building blocks that stack up to real-life skills, from carpentry to finance. This summer, why not introduce your kid to the lost arts of adulting?

Build it, sew it, weld it

Most families are focused on helping kids eventually get a degree, but a college degree

won't teach you to fix your sink or build furniture. And not everyone is temperamentally suited to life at a desk. But even if your child is already coding up a storm, trade skills learned could give them a lifelong creative outlet. (Please note that traditional gender roles need not apply to traditional crafts — all of the following camps are coed.)

At [Camp Fire's Construction Camp](#) on Vashon Island (grades 9–12, \$500), teens interested in working with their hands get professional guidance in building or renovating a structure at camp. Because their finished project benefits the camp, they receive volunteer credits as well as practical skills. Traditional summer camp activities are part of the experience, too.

Younger kids can learn hands-on, practical woodworking skills, with an emphasis on the safe use of hand tools, from [Kids' Carpentry](#) summer camps offered around Seattle (ages 5–10, \$275). At the end of the weeklong, half-day camp, each child will have learned to use

day camp, each child will have learned to use tools such as saws, sandpaper and hand drills, and made and painted wooden toys. Registry is through Seattle Parks and Recreation's online SPARC system.

Whether you use a sewing machine to patch jeans or your kid has already included one in the business plan for his or her Etsy shop, sewing can teach kids valuable lessons.

“They’re developing skills and behaviors around patience, concentration, precision, math, dexterity, design and color values and the special relationship around how items are constructed to last,” says Keli Faw of [Drygoods Design](#) in Seattle’s Pioneer Square.

Drygoods offers summer camps (ages 7 and older; \$200, including materials) that blend structured activities and design time. Kids are given the power to choose their own fabric (with a budget) for each of the projects they will complete during the week.

Made
Sewing
Studio, with
locations in
Seattle's



Sew fun Photo credit: Made Sewing Studio

Ballard and
Greenwood
neighborhoods,

offers one-, two- or three-day camps during school breaks (minimum age is 7; \$150–\$250, plus materials). Each camp focuses on a single project, such as making pajamas, sweatshirts or doll clothes. This year, the studio is adding a yarn arts program and a kitchen camp, in which students will make an apron or chef's hat and then bake something with a professional chef. Except where noted, all camps are open to all experience levels.

Across Lake Washington, Sew Maris offers half-day sewing summer camps (ages 8 and

older, check back for 2017 rates), which are taught out of a home studio in Bellevue. Camps are available for a variety of skill levels and always include kid-friendly projects.

Money makes the world . . .

We all know how important financial skills are to success in life, but when it comes to money, we may not be our children's best teachers.

Only 57 percent of Americans surveyed passed the 2015 S&P Global financial literacy test. And if even if you're a financial whiz, it sometimes pays to outsource.

Fortunately, there are resources to help kids and their parents get a handle on money. "We are a hands-on, fun, activity-centered camp that focuses on philanthropy and encourages family discussion about money. The students ask questions to local entrepreneurs and learn firsthand how a business is run," says Kasey Hill of [Growing Wealth from the Start](#), an

Edmonds-based financial education company. It offers a number of products for families and teachers, but its signature program is, yes, [Camp Millionaire](#), a weekend camp that touches on all aspects of financial literacy — budgeting, saving, investing and giving back (ages 10–16, \$170). Facebook, “Growing Wealth from the Start”

[Future Investor Clubs of America](#) offers a deeper dive into financial education with its five-week modular curriculum of summer camps (ages 8–19, \$950/week). Locally, FICA camps are held at the University of Washington and, according to the website, move beyond personal finance to include business training and business-focused college preparation.

Top chef skills

In these days of overscheduling, most of us struggle to find time to cook a healthy meal, let alone slow down long enough to teach our kids

knife skills. And if the kitchen isn't your happy place, it can be hard to instill the joy of cooking in others. But kids benefit in so many ways from learning to cook, from learning to follow recipes to developing math skills to the pride they gain from being able to feed themselves (or their family).

There are many local options for kids' kitchen education. Seattle's [Blue Plate](#) (ages 8–15, \$550) promises to turn enthusiasm into serious skills with its variety of small-group, weeklong camps. Blue Plate cooking camps are focused on cooking from scratch, and cover different cooking methods, knife skills, food safety and nutrition. Each camp includes a shopping trip to Pike Place Market.

Much-loved kitchen store [Sur La Table](#) offers three different weeklong cooking classes in the summer (ages 8–17, \$250) at its Kirkland location. Kitchen Fundamentals for Kids, Science in the Kitchen and Healthy Kids, [Healthy Planet](#) are each offered for both kids

...activity partners are each charged for both kids and teens.

The [Rainy Day Dinner Club](#) is a flexible camp that partners with organizations around the Puget Sound area, and it can accommodate vegetarians. The summer camp curriculum varies by location and partner (ages 5 and older, \$175–\$200). Camps for 2017 are still being scheduled, but will include a week of baking in Bellevue and on Queen Anne, and at least one camp that combines cooking with other activities, such as sewing and music, on Phinney Ridge.

Shop 2.0

Auto mechanics today may be a computer-driven field, but there's still value in





*Nailing it Photo credit:
Kids' Carpentry*

understanding how a motor works, and the hands-on aspect can be a great way for kinesthetic learners to connect with science and technology. In Bothell, Lake Stevens and Lynnwood, [Junior Mechanics Camp](#) (grades 5–9, \$140) lets campers spend afternoons learning about the inner workings of rally carts. (Note: The camp is only available as an add-on to the morning Off-Road Rally Karts Camp, \$179.)

If two wheels are more your family's style, [Cycle U](#) in Seattle's Laurelhurst neighborhood offers two half-day week-long camps (ages 7–13, \$225), during which kids ride local trails and roads, learn basic bike mechanics, receive instruction about safe commuting, make art and pick up the basics of racing.

Located in Seattle's Central District, [Coyote Central](#) offers hands-on, project-based courses in creative fields for youths ages 10–15. Its

classes cover most of the subjects already listed, plus a few that aren't offered anywhere else, such as welding, glassblowing and furniture making. Last year, summer camps cost \$215, plus various materials fees, but Coyote Central is dedicated to inclusivity and promises to provide every family with the scholarship support it needs.

Grow your veggies

While a small group of urban farmers is trying to achieve self-sufficiency, far more of us are turning to the simple backyard garden to reconnect with our food and natural processes. Plus, it's eminently practical.

In Woodinville, [21 Acres](#) is both a working farm and an education center dedicated to teaching people of all ages about local food, smart consumer choices, green energy and low-carbon transportation. Its agricultural summer camps (2016 prices were \$275/week) — with names such as “Farmer in Training” “Foods

names such as “Farmer in Training,” “Boss from the Fields” and “Pizza Organica” — strive to make each experience of green living fun and celebratory.

In Carnation, [Oxbow Farm and Conservation Center](#)’s environmental education programs connect kids with their food through hands-on, experiential learning. Activities are designed to teach environmental literacy and land stewardship while providing outdoor fun. It offers two themed camps (ages 4–12, \$230 half day/\$300 full day): “Farm and Forest Homes” and “Dig In.”

[Seattle Tilth](#) has been shocking city kids with the information that broccoli is a plant for 20 years. In addition to its classic farm camp in Wallingford, it now offers everything from parent-and-toddler flower camps to teen camp counselor training. The focus varies from bugs to food to plant science, and some options are offered at the Rainier Beach Learning Garden.

Early bird gets the deals

Starting to plan for summer camp right after spring break used to count as planning ahead, but if you wait until April this year, you might find your options limited. Many of these camps have already opened registration for summer 2017. **Early planning is doubly rewarded**; not only does the early bird get first pick of the camps, it often gets discounted tuition rates.

Survive in the wilderness

Most of us love the Pacific Northwest's amazing natural environment, but many of us are raising tech-savvy kids who have a nature deficiency. Really exploring the great outdoors as a family is easier when your kids are excited about it and able to make themselves useful.

[Wilderness Awareness](#) offers both day and

overnight camps in the summer (ages 4–18, \$285–\$765) that cover topics such as wilderness safety, animal tracking and plant identification, while nurturing kids' self-confidence, healthy risk taking and curiosity.

[Wolf Camp and the Conservation College](#) has been teaching kids and adults earth skills such as wilderness survival, herbology, and search and rescue for 20 years. Its summer camps (ages 6–17, \$275–\$725) are located near Lake Sammamish and in the South Sound. Like Wilderness Awareness, it offers both day camps and overnight camps, in addition to weeklong camps for the whole family (\$270/person).

The [YMCA](#) runs outdoor leadership camps through its BOLD & GOLD (Boys and Girls Outdoor Leadership Development) programs (grades 6–12; \$725–\$1,875 sliding scale, scholarships available) that take youths on one-, two- or three-week outdoor expeditions around the state and even into Oregon

around the state and even into Oregon.

Campers sleep outside and combine outdoor skills such as hiking, fishing, rafting and rock climbing with other activities, such as art and creative writing.

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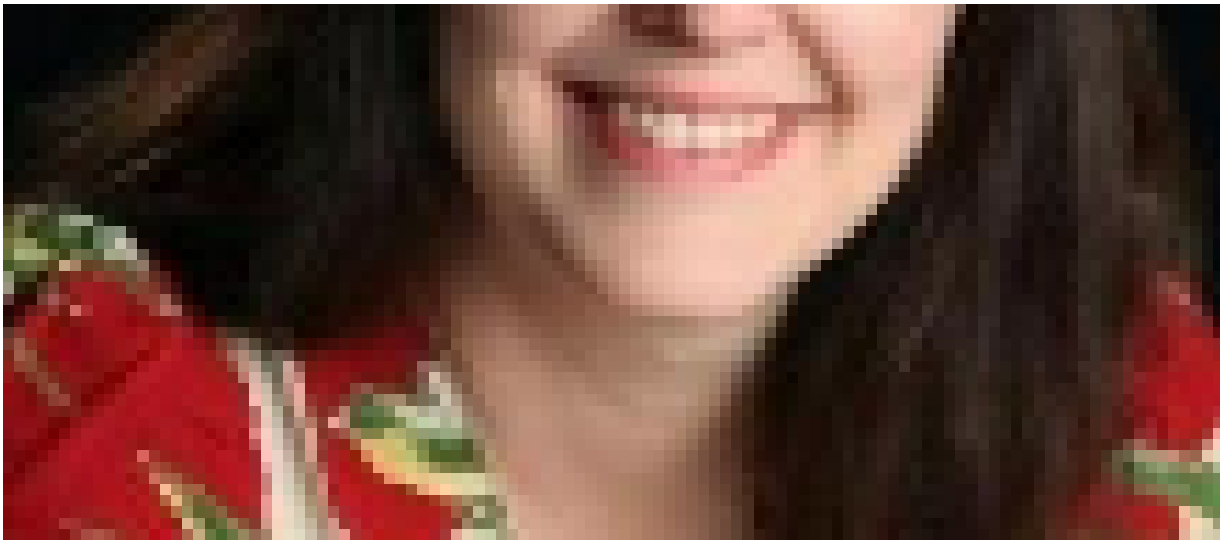
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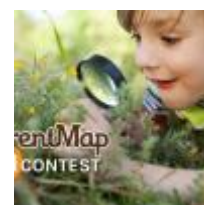
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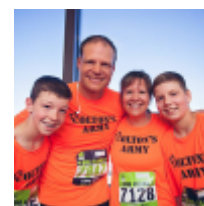
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