

Hill House Virtual Summer Camp - FAQ

1. What is Hill House Virtual Summer Camp and how is it different from what my child did for school this spring?

We believe summer camp has 3 goals—to build skills, make and maintain friendships, and have fun. Virtual summer camp is no different. Our summer camp programming is happening real-time on Zoom and it emphasizes interaction and tons of fun. Unlike school, our online programs' first priority is to make sure your child is engaging with their peers, our instructors, and the camp counselors while having a great time. The groups are smaller and they are having hands-on learning that emphasizes creativity, social time with their peers, and joy.

2. But is it really summer camp?

Yes, it is really summer camp and we are actually very, very excited to develop a whole new way of interacting with your child this summer as we are no longer bound by geography in terms of exploring new worlds. Your favorite school-year instructors will be here to teach, plus a lot of new counselors and other friends (see our note on adult safety in point #5). Our camp schedule will include age-appropriate art, music, fitness, games, cooking, and some new programs such as karate, chess, dance, gardening, and environmental education, plus so much more. We'll still be doing circle games and songs, all camp events, and other well-loved traditions for which Hill House summer camp is known. Plus, we are planning weekly virtual/interactive field trips from all over the country--and there are tons of new surprises (llama visits? a zombie apocalypse? s'mores and ghost stories? a glow party?—you'll only know if you join us) we have planned to make this virtual summer extra special.

We'll have curb-side pick up at the Firehouse (127 Mount Vernon St) of some of the harder-to-get/specific supplies they will need each week and all campers will still be receiving a Hill House summer camp t-shirt. We'll send out instructions beforehand as to how to stop by and pick-up your weekly camp supply bag.

LITs will also play an important role. They will still be learning important curriculum such as leadership, behavior modification, child development, program building, etc., while also helping us deliver programs and play an important role as a fun mentor who can bring youthful exuberance to the experience.

It's going to be amazingly fun this summer with Hill House and you kid(s) won't want to miss it!

3. My kid experienced “screen-fatigue” this spring with all their school Zoom classes and google meet-ups (and so did I!) and I am worried about how much time they will be spending online—how does Hill House Summer Camp address that?

Our camps are different from school (and your online work meetings) in that they aren't just sitting in front of a computer and listening to a teacher and/or doing assignments. Our campers will be creating, competing, joking with their friends, and getting physical exercise. If you participated in any of our spring online programs, you know what an incredible job our instructors did. With Hill House summer camp, your child have lots of choices throughout the week of all kinds of programs with breaks built in and outdoor time as components of most of the classes.

4. The weather is so nice, though—shouldn't I just send my kid outside to play?

Of course your child should have outdoor time in the summer. We are weaving outdoor components to all our programs to ensure your child has time to get that all-important vitamin D and fresh air. But, because there may not be as many opportunities to play with other kids outside (there will still be limits to group sizes and thus will limit opportunities to socialize with others while practicing social distancing—it's going to be tough to be outside with no one to play with all day) and let's face it, kids can get bored, want to see other people than their families, and need a ton of attention (and many of you will still have to work from home). Our online programming fills a critical gap both in terms of ensuring kids have something meaningful to do while being able to socialize with their friends—all while being supervised and entertained by caring and well-trained adults that they've grown to know and trust over the years. Plus, our camp schedule emphasizes flexibility and choice—so there is plenty of chances to fit unstructured outdoor play into their day.

5. What about online safety?

This is an important point that we implemented with our spring programming and will continue with the summer camp. There are always two Hill House adults for each program. All our staff have criminal background checks conducted before they can work for us and are well-trained not only for high-quality content but also safety and behavior. And, while one adult is responsible for delivering the program's material, the other is there to ensure that there is emotional and online safety for all those participating. The private chat is disabled and if any behavior problems arise, the other adult will be there to ensure those issues are handled appropriately. We'll also have an online waiver form for you to sign.

6. Can I see a sample of the online schedule? I am still having a hard time visualizing what Virtual Camp means and how it is structured.

Yes, please [click on this link](#) and it will show you the schedules we created for our first two weeks of camp in June. You'll see it is divided by ages and lots of choice and flexibility. The fees you've already paid include all the programs that have been scheduled for your child's age, so they can participate in as many or as few as you wish. Our staff will send you links to all the Zoom sessions so that your child can drop in with as many as they'd like.

7. Are you opening in-person camp later this summer?

That is our plan—though the date is still uncertain given that the state hasn't provided the guidance we'd need to determine what that date will be. We will only open in-person camp if we are confident we can follow the CDC guidelines on how to ensure safety and social distancing for all staff and campers.

We've decided that Weeks 1 and 2 in June (June 15th and June 22nd) will be completely virtual. We may extend full virtual camp to more weeks in July depending on the guidelines. Safety and social distancing always will be the priority. We love our community and want to play our part in keeping everyone healthy and safe.

When we do open in-person camp, one plan we're leaning toward is to do a blend of virtual and in-person split schedules each day so that we can do group games outside and some of the more enrichment-type programs online. Rainy days will be full-virtual days. Parents can also opt to continue with full virtual camp all summer if they are concerned about their kids being in

group situations. That way, kids are still getting important exercise with peers while not being indoors with too many other people.

8. Are you still accepting registrations?

Yes!

9. Will you still require all those online forms you usually ask for?

Camp Paperwork for in-person camp (registration form, health form, and immunizations form) is still required for all campers who attend in-person camp and those attending virtual camp, as well as the online waiver. We are asking for this paperwork by the June 1st deadline so that when/if we transition to in-person camp with approval from the health department, we can do so quickly.

10. Are your fees still the same for Virtual Camp?

Yes. If you look at the number of high-quality programs you'll child will have the option to participate in each week, the value is far greater than if they were to sign up to each of the programs individually. Plus, our staff is still putting in the same amount of time (if not more) in creating high-quality content. There are still supplies we are providing, camp t-shirts, plus all the other expenses that Hill House is responsible for year-round as an independent nonprofit community center (facilities, utilities, insurance, etc.). We do not make a profit from summer camp. We are confident that we will deliver fantastic programs and your kids will be happy and tired at the end of each day!

11. Are you accepting scholarship applications?

Those who submitted scholarship applications before our March 1 deadline will receive first priority in funds allotment. If there are still funds available, we will consider new applications on a case-by-case basis but cannot guarantee funding.

12. Is the Hill House staff excited for Virtual Summer Camp?

Without a doubt! We see this challenge as a real opportunity for adventure and fun. We can expand our borders and programs like never before. During our planning sessions, ideas kept flowing out as to how we can make this summer a bright spot—a unique and memorable experience that everyone will love during a period where there have not been many good times. We miss you all and we can't wait to see everyone again!!!