



RESOURCE LIST

Special X Summer Survival Series Part One: Virtual Summer Camps

Created: June 6, 2020

It's that time of year again, parents! School is ending, and many open weeks of summer loom ahead. The pandemic has added an unforeseen twist to this challenge. But never fear! We've put together several options for virtual camps that can fill those long hours with learning, social interaction, and even exercise. Whether you are seeking just a few hours a week or a full-day program, we've got you covered.

Please note that many camps are awaiting state and local guidelines before determining their summer programs, so we will continue to update this list as camps announce their plans.

Takeaways

- Don't be afraid of the idea of virtual camp! MFT Debbie Steinberg Kuntz and Dr. Temple Grandin suggest we get creative about the otherwise overwhelming thought of having camp at home, and instead **approach this summer as an “experiment.”** Ask your child, “How can we fail better every week?”
- **There is something here for everybody.** We found camps across a range of subjects and formats, from physical activity to STEM to improv, so focus on your child's strengths, preferences, needs, and interests to find the right match.
- Some camps, such as the ASTEME Learning Center and Bloom OT, send out supply boxes of supplemental materials with different themes — or, in the case of ASTEME, **mystery activity boxes** — that your camper can look forward to using at camp (and which you won't even have to think about providing!).

Contents

Choosing a Summer Program that Fits Your Child’s Needs	3
Camps for Social Skills	4
The Help Group	4
Zip Zap Zop	6
Leaps N Boundz	7
Rich & Associates	8
Therapeutic Camps	9
Bloom Pediatrics	9
Hiller Therapy	10
OT 4 Kids	11
Camps for Physical Activity	13
Leaps N Boundz	13
Camp Nugget	14
OMG Youth Sports	15
Camps for STEM Learning	17
The Help Group	17
ASTEME Learning Center	18
Additional Resources	19

Choosing a Summer Program that Fits Your Child's Needs

Find the right fit. Dr. Katrina Rydzewski of [CARE-LA](#) recommends getting feedback from your child's teachers and therapists first. "Ask teachers and therapists who have worked with the child in virtual sessions to give you feedback on what they're capable of," she says. "If they burn out on Zoom quickly, choose a short program and supplement with non-screen activities. Some kids need a full day of structure, and for them a longer guided curriculum might be a better choice."

Reframe the summer as an experiment. "Instead of using this time to shore up deficiencies, use this as a blank slate to explore and expose your child to their interests," recommends Debbie Steinberg Kuntz, Marriage and Family Therapist. Kuntz collaborated with Dr. Temple Grandin on how to approach this summer's unique challenges. They recommend working with your child to create a schedule that helps broaden and expand what being at home means. Share with your child that this entire summer is an "experiment." Ask your child, "What do you think we should add to this experiment to help you to get the outcomes you want this summer?"

Find ways to stay social. If your child craves in-person social contact but being online causes anxiety, suggest tiny changes to help them stretch. For instance, check out an [Outschool](#) class that connects children with similar passions. Try telling your child, "Let's run an experiment. Let's find the people who like to do what you do online (such as LEGOs, painting, etc.). Let's try it once and see what works." Online improv classes are another fun way to broaden social skills in a format that feels like play.

Screen time concerns. As you are choosing online camps, don't think of screen time as entertainment time. Kids are cut off from what is considered their typical life right now, so parents must get creative as to how screens can fill that need. Allot different "bubbles" for the day: learning time, creative time, social building time, and entertainment time, just as you would in a typical summer.

Admit that this is hard. Virtual camps might not work for your child. For help structuring your child's summer offline, stay tuned for Part Two in our Summer Survival Series. Meanwhile, acknowledge that we've never had to do anything like this before and we need to get creative. Dr. Grandin suggests saying to your child, "How can we fail better every week? We will fail, fail again, and then fail better."

Camps for Social Skills

The Help Group

Our kids are craving connection. This summer, The Help Group is offering two virtual options to fulfill your child's need for socialization. Contact Nicole Webb at (818) 778-7136 or nwebb@thehelpgroup.org to determine which program is the best fit. She told us that they are very flexible; if a program doesn't work for your child, they will offer refunds.

Camp Sunshine

At Camp Sunshine, counselors help kids “build confidence and self-esteem, practice important life skills, and take steps toward independence while making new friends and having fun.” Their daily activities include sports, music, games, art, drama, and other virtual events. To apply, submit an online application [here](#) and the camp will schedule an online interview.

WHEN



June 15–August 21



10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.



1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

The program is divided into two time blocks per day. Parents can choose from a 3- or 5-day schedule and can opt for one or both sessions per day.

AGES



6–21

Grouped by age and ability. The camp director said it generally has a “teen vibe.”

GOOD FOR



AAC



autism



higher support needs



building social skills

Kids with autism, ADHD, Down syndrome, genetic disorders, aphasia, and others who require help with socialization skills and who have significant support needs in an online environment. Most will require at-home parental or aide support to attend this camp. They are happy to work with AAC if the child can connect their verbal output on Zoom.

COST

 \$105–\$350 per week

Depends on sessions chosen.

Village Glen Camp

Village Glen Camp provides a structured curriculum of social development through engaging activities like drama, music, games, arts and crafts, contests, and other virtual events. Counselors trained in social skills development assist campers in “conversation, theory of mind, team-building, non-verbal communication, anger management, frustration tolerance, organization, emotional development, and creativity.” To apply, submit an online application [here](#) and the camp will schedule an online interview.

WHEN

 June 15–August 19

The program is divided into two time blocks per day. Parents can choose from a 3- or 5-day schedule and can opt for one or both sessions per day.

 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

 1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

AGES

 6–18

GOOD FOR

 AAC

 autism

 building communication skills

 building social skills

Kids with autism or who require help with socialization skills. They should be able to follow basic directions in a group setting and independently interact with peers and staff in a virtual environment. The Help Group is open to allowing parental aides if they feel they can keep their child on task. They are also happy to work with AAC if the child can connect their verbal output on Zoom.

COST

 \$90–\$300 per week

Depends on sessions chosen.

Zip Zap Zop

Maja Watkins' popular [Zip Zap Zop](#) improv classes have been a hit for some of our Special X families. The company returns in a virtual format this summer with Social Skills Saturdays.

Contact maja.zipzapzop@gmail.com for more information.

[Social Skills Saturdays](#)

Through improv, kids learn to go with the flow, practice conversation, and work on flexibility. Social Skills Saturdays allows children to learn by using each other's strengths and helping each other through improv games. The class is inclusive and open to all abilities. Zip Zap Zop works with families and their therapists to help fine-tune each week's goal-setting to match each child's needs and abilities. Along with the Saturday classes, the tuition includes access to the program's Executive Director, Oscar Madrigal, for consultations and parent training.

WHEN



Saturdays in June

Starts June 6.



11:00 a.m.–11:45 a.m.

AGES



7–13

They are flexible with developmental stages.

GOOD FOR



AAC

They are open to all needs and learning styles and are happy to support kids who use AAC.



social anxiety



building communication skills



building social skills

COST



\$220 for four Saturdays

Leaps N Boundz

[Leaps N Boundz](#) has created a social skills telehealth program in place of their popular in-person camps this year. For more information, contact program supervisor Heather Merritt at (213) 292-6976 or heatherm@leapsnboundz.com.

Social Awareness Curriculum

Leaps N Boundz' telehealth social skills program focuses on six areas of social awareness: self, others, emotions, memory/cognition and group skills, play, and vocational. Similar to their clinic services, telehealth sessions include a movement activity in addition to conversational games, read-aloud story times, and virtual field trips. During the intake process, they ask to meet virtually with the parent and child and discuss a series of questions to determine communication style and assess potential behaviors or barriers to participation. In addition, they have a parent assessment form that helps determine which groups would be ideal for the child and their social needs.

WHEN



Ongoing: Mon.–Fri.



Varies by age

Preschool and kindergarten groups meet Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays with morning or afternoon times to choose from. Elementary groups meet on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays in the afternoons at various times. Middle- and high school groups meet Mondays through Thursdays at various times.

AGES



Preschool–high school

GOOD FOR



AAC



building communication skills



building social skills

Leaps N Boundz is “extremely flexible” right now. They welcome AAC and other communication devices. In most sessions, parents support children as needed — some more than others. Some participants sit for the entire session and actively participate, some watch, and some move around or play while the session is going on. Groups are determined by age and the social needs of each participant.

COST

 10 sessions for \$395;
single sessions are \$45

They accept Regional Center clients as well as private pay. The private pay rate is offered in prepaid packages at 10 sessions. They offer free trial sessions and consultations as well.

Rich & Associates

Dr. Erika Rich is a trusted psychologist who offers summer social skills programs for kids. Contact her at (310) 749-6427 or erika@socialskillsgroup.com.

Summer 2020 Virtual Social Skills Camp

Dr. Rich's camp, usually titled "Friendship Island," has been redesigned this year as a virtual social skills camp offered through Zoom. The camp's aim is to offer physical movement along with emotional guidance and social skills growth under the leadership of experienced counselors. Daily themes include perspective-taking, emotion regulation, coping skills, executive functioning, flexible thinking, thinking traps, social problem-solving, and more. Children are grouped with three to five other children of the same approximate age and one counselor, who receives advanced training and supervision with a licensed psychologist.

WHEN

 July 6–August 14

Monday through Friday with screen breaks.

 9:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

AGES

 5–11 or entering 6th
grade

A program for ages 12–15 is being developed.

GOOD FOR

 executive function
 building communication
skills

While a parent or aide can be present to assist their child, the camp is designed for kids to be able to participate independently.

 building social skills

COST

 \$395 per week

EARLY BIRD SPECIAL: \$325/WEEK UNTIL JUNE 15.

Note: Superbills are provided and are usually reimbursed.

Therapeutic Camps

Bloom Pediatrics

Dr. Adriane Ransom and the staff of therapists at [Bloom Pediatrics](#) will be hosting virtual camps and workshops this summer. For details, contact Dr. Ransom at (424) 229-2570 or info@bloompediatrics.com.

[Virtual Summer Camp](#)

Led by an occupational therapist, this camp is geared toward young children and includes a morning circle time with books, music, and dancing, while infusing social thinking and zones of regulation concepts. There is an emphasis on fine and visual motor skill development through art projects and [Handwriting Without Tears](#) curriculum. Kids will be led in mindfulness exercises, games, socializing, and physical exercise. Enrollment is limited to four children per group. Screen breaks will be built in. Each week will include a Bloom Box full of supplemental materials for the weekly theme.

WHEN

 June 15–September 11

 9:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

AGES

 Pre-K to rising
kindergarteners

Flexible; generally ages 4–6.

GOOD FOR

-  higher support needs
-  building fine motor skills
-  building gross motor skills
-  building vision skills

Bloom Pediatrics serves typical kids as well as kids with physical disabilities, cerebral palsy, and genetic disorders. Parents will need to be on standby to assist in implementing activities. Dr. Ransom is willing to be flexible in offering extra support for kids with higher support needs. Contact her to discuss appropriate fit.

COST

 \$400 per week

Hiller Therapy

[Leah Hiller](#) is a pediatric occupational therapist who specializes in working with children with autism and other sensory processing disorders. For details, contact her at (323) 641-3662 or leah@hillertherapy.com. Their office will be reopening on June 29th for one-on-one occupational therapy. She has also been making short OT videos on [Instagram](#).

Executive Chef Camp

This camp is designed as a cooking game show where kids will “build executive functions, sensory strategies for self-regulation, and social skills.” From their own kitchens, kids will develop recipes to share with their families while solving brain teasers and working collaboratively. They will make edible recipes, kinetic sand, and glow-in-the-dark slime. Your child will learn to make your family dinner! There is a 2:1 student-to-OT ratio.

WHEN

 July 6–July 23

July 6–July 23 on Mondays and Wednesdays for 6 sessions (ALMOST FULL); July 27–August 13 on Tuesdays and Thursdays

 July 27–August 13

 2:30 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

AGES

 7–11

GOOD FOR

-  executive function
-  sensory integration
-  building social skills

Hiller Therapy designs their camps around the clients they have. The variable would be how much “standby assistance” is needed for kitchen safety. Leah considers this an opportunity for families to help create adaptations for cooking in their home. Check with Leah to discuss fit.

COST

 \$480 for the six-part series

EARLY BIRD SPECIAL: \$450 UNTIL JUNE 19. Note: Superbills available as needed.

OT 4 Kids

[OT 4 Kids & Therapeutic Learning Center](#) is a Santa Monica–based center for occupational therapy run by Dr. Kimberly Koretoff. For details, contact her at (310) 344-2276 or kimberly@ot4kidstlc.com.

Get Set for School

This camp is designed to prepare young children for writing by using the [Handwriting Without Tears](#) curriculum. The camp will introduce uppercase letters, numbers, and shapes. Groups are limited to four children and are led by occupational therapists. Children will learn letter and number recognition, formation of upper and lowercase letters, sizing, spacing, control, and line adherence. Emphasis on socialization will take place within exercises for fine and visual motor development.

WHEN

 July 6–31

 August 3–28

 9:00–9:30 a.m.

Groups meet Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
There are two sessions.

AGES

 Preschool, TK (Ages 4–5)

GOOD FOR

-  ADHD
-  autism
-  sensory processing disorder
-  visual processing disorders
-  building fine motor skills

Groups are paired with kids of similar abilities. Children can have a parent sit with them to help them but they will need to be able to follow auditory directions in a virtual environment.

COST

 \$500 for 12 sessions

Insurance accepted.

Kick Start Kindergarten

Rising kindergartners will be prepared for elementary school writing with the help of this camp, which uses the [Handwriting Without Tears](#) curriculum. Kids will continue to strengthen uppercase letters and learn lowercase as well. Groups are limited to four children and are led by occupational therapists. Children will learn letter and number recognition, formation of upper and lowercase letters, sizing, spacing, control, and line adherence. Emphasis on socialization will take place within exercises for fine and visual motor development.

WHEN

 July 6–31

 August 3–28

 10:00–10:30 a.m.

Groups meet Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

There are two sessions.

AGES

 Kindergarten (Ages 5-6)

GOOD FOR

-  ADHD
-  autism
-  sensory processing disorder
-  visual processing disorders
-  building fine motor skills

Groups are paired with kids of similar abilities. Children can have a parent sit with them to help them but they will need to be able to follow auditory directions in a virtual environment.

COST

 \$500 for 12 sessions

Insurance accepted.

Camps for Physical Activity

Leaps N Boundz

[Leaps N Boundz](#) is a great resource, and they are offering free virtual community workouts this summer. All activities can be done at home. Suggested (but not required) equipment: a chair, a yoga ball, weights, and a yoga mat. Mark your calendars!

Community Workout: 10 years and under

WHEN

 Wednesdays

[Zoom link](#); meeting ID: 928 0914 3052; password: 0Erw8N

 1 p.m.

AGES

 10 years and under

GOOD FOR

-  all abilities
 -  building gross motor skills
-

COST

 Free

Community Workout: 11 years and older

WHEN

 Tuesdays

[Zoom link](#); meeting ID: 767 0596 3834; password:
4rGBHR

 1:30 p.m.

AGES

 11 years and older

GOOD FOR

 all abilities

 building gross motor skills

COST

 Free

Camp Nugget

Many Special X families love California State Long Beach's [Camp Nugget](#). While this beloved swimming and exercise program might not be meeting at the pool this year, they will be providing a virtual online camp via their [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) channels. Activities will include fitness, yoga, and dance, will not require any equipment, and can be done with limited space. Sessions are archived and can be viewed at any time on their YouTube channel. For more information on their summer program, contact campnugget@csulb.edu.

WHEN

 June 15–July 20

These 30-minute live sessions will be broadcast Tuesday through Friday. Friday sessions will include bilingual instruction in Spanish.

 1:00 p.m.–1:30 p.m.

AGES

 5–12

GOOD FOR

 all abilities

 building gross motor skills

COST

 Free

OMG Youth Sports

[OMG Youth Sports Virtual Camps and Clinic](#) is offering daily sports training and physical conditioning classes through Zoom with a live trainer. Scholarships and grants are available with quick response times. Contact (323) 314-8593 or omgyouthsports@gmail.com.

[Special Needs Virtual Skills Development Clinics](#)

This is a motor skills and physical development class for children with disabilities. Children use equipment that can be found at home, such as a medium/large ball, tennis ball, two or three floor markers (cones, chalk, socks, etc.), and a floor mat.

WHEN

 Ongoing; Tuesdays,
Thursdays, Fridays, and
Sundays

 9:00 a.m.–10:00 a.m.

 3:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

AGES

 7–17

Average age is 7–13.

GOOD FOR

 ADHD

 autism

-
-  learning disabilities
 -  speech delay
 -  building gross motor skills

COST

 \$20 per session

First session is free

[Physical and Motor Skills Camp for Children on the Autism Spectrum](#)

This week-long camp focuses on motor skills development, physical activity, and building confidence in overcoming obstacles. While this camp is best suited for ambulatory children, they are creating an Adventure Club program for children with orthopedic impairments, which “allows children to pursue their passions in art, athletics, and adventure.” Their director notes that this program includes some light exercises, but is non-athletic. The kids mainly participate in virtual games and field trips via Zoom. This club has not been added to their website yet, so call or email for more information.

WHEN

 July 20–24

 9:00–10:00 a.m.

 10:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

AGES

 7–17

GOOD FOR

-  AAC
-  ADHD
-  autism
-  speech delay

The activities are best suited for ambulatory children. The ability to use Zoom unsupervised is not a requirement. In fact, it often helps when the child’s parent participates and provides feedback. They “absolutely take kids that use communication devices, as long as it works with Zoom and they can follow along with the exercises and activities.”

COST

 \$225

Camps for STEM Learning

The Help Group

[The Help Group](#) is a non-profit organization that supports children, teens, and adults with high-functioning autism, ADHD, and other social and learning differences. For more information, contact Dr. Ellis Crasnow at (818) 623-6386 or ecrasnow@thehelpgroup.org.

[Stem3 Academy Summer Camp](#)

The Help Group's Stem3 Academy is offering a two-week virtual summer camp called "STEM! Art! Design!" The camp focuses on boosting STEM thinking, building confidence and self-esteem, and providing a safe and structured environment for kids who need support. Each day children will engage in a variety of age- and skill-appropriate experiments and activities that allow them to imagine, explore, and think outside the box. They will design, make, and learn while developing skills and techniques essential in science and art alike. Activities include Rube Goldberg machines, chemistry and physics in the kitchen, and more. Applicants must apply online [here](#).

WHEN

 June 22–July 3

Meets five days a week.

 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

AGES

 7–13

GOOD FOR

 ADHD

 autism

 learning disabilities

 building social skills

Kids should be able to work independently in a virtual environment.

COST

 \$400 for one week; \$700 for both weeks

Sibling discount available: 10% off the total cost.

ASTEME Learning Center

ASTEME is a non-profit learning center focused on supporting students who are struggling in math or are ready for greater challenges. ASTEME stands for “Advancement of Science, Technology, and Engineering in Math Education.” Their goal is to help children see the value of math, so they offer classes in a range of themes such as music, art, and nature to open children’s hearts and minds to math’s value and how it impacts all aspects of our lives.

Virtual Summer Programs

Each week of ASTEME’s virtual summer camps has a different theme (some fun ones include Harry Potter, Star Wars, and Disney+), and they send out mystery activity boxes to students with supplies for each camp. To learn more about each week’s theme, check out their [detailed brochure](#).

WHEN

 June 15–August 7

There are built-in screen breaks and social time.

 9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

AGES

 Kindergarten–9th grade

Kids are separated by age and grade level.

GOOD FOR

 ADHD

 autism

 dyslexia

 learning disabilities

Kids will need to be able to work independently in an online environment with minimal parental supervision.

COST

 \$275 per week

Additional Resources

The [American Camp Association](#) has created a [virtual camp listing page](#) and will be updating it as more camps announce their plans for the summer.

UP NEXT in Part Two of our Summer Survival Series: At-home activities for parents to implement. Coming soon!

A word on possibilities and limitations: We are here to help you navigate the system, save you time, bring you clarity and confidence, and connect you with the best available information and resources. Please be aware that Special X does not officially endorse or represent any of the resources, providers, services, schools, or clinics we reference or suggest. We are not authorized to provide legal advice. Any information, documents, or communication provided or exchanged between Special X and users of Special X's services does not constitute legal advice or create an attorney-client relationship, nor is it covered by attorney-client privilege or confidentiality. If you need legal advice, please consult with an attorney. Ultimately, all care decisions must be made by you in concert with your child's school district and their healthcare, insurance, and other service providers.