



Preschool Parent Handbook 2020-21

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Flow of the Day

- 9:00am: Meet at the designated park for the week. (You'll receive an email about where we'll meet by the Friday evening prior.)
- 9:05am: After a greeting song, we say goodbye to parents and head off for our first free-play spot.
- 10:00am: Circle time. The children eat their packed trash-free snack, songs and stories are shared, and each child receives a job for the day.
- Adventure around the park for the day.
- 12:00pm: Lunch. Each child brings their own trash-free lunch, and we eat together in a circle.
- Explore and play before making our way back to our meeting spot.
- Closing circle. Each child shares a "thank you" for the day, and we sing a closing song.
- 1:15pm: We arrive at our meeting spot for pick-up. Please be there by 1:30pm.

Arrival and Departure

- All adults and children over 6 must wear face coverings at drop-off and pick-up.
- We meet at the same park for the entire week. The parks are within 20 minute driving distance of Palo Alto.
- Please plan to drop off your child at 9:00am every morning. Although teachers may be present before 9:00, we will be planning our day and cannot supervise children before that time.
- A timely arrival will maximize the children's time in nature, so be sure to arrive on time so we can begin promptly at 9:05am.
- If you will be late or need to pick up early, you may text the lead teacher to find out where we are in the park. Cell service is not always reliable in some areas. With advance notice, teachers can give you a general idea of where we might be.
- Pick up will be by 1:30pm every day. Please plan to arrive by 1:15pm if you would like to check in with teachers. There are no late pick-ups. If you are aware that you may be late, please arrange to have another parent or designated person care for your child until you arrive.
- Late Pick-Up Fees: Late arrivals will be penalized \$10 after 1:35pm and an additional \$15 for every 10 minutes after 1:45pm.
- Teachers are available for brief parent check-ins until 1:30pm, at which time teachers meet to debrief our day and plan for our next outing.

First and Last Day of Pathfinders

Traditionally, on the first and last day of the school year, Pathfinders families are encouraged to participate. On the first day, you will help your child adjust to the new environment and routine. On the last day, there will be a ceremony to celebrate children who will be graduating from the program.

We will make adjustments due to COVID when needed.

What to Bring

In order for your child to be adequately prepared for the day, plan to have the following items in their child-appropriate backpack:

- **16 oz water bottle.** Please pack water for your child. Do not pack milk, juice, or sugary beverages as these may lead to an increased risk of dehydration.
- **Trash-free snack and lunch.** Pack a nutritious trash-free snack and lunch for your child. Many of the wonderful places where we adventure do not offer trash bins, and it is very inconvenient for your child to repack unnecessary or messy debris.
- **Ziptop plastic bag or reuseable waterproof bag with a change of clothes.** As Pathfinders consists of many nature adventures, your child may get muddy, wet, or otherwise dirty. It is always necessary to have a complete change of clothes including socks, underwear, and a jacket in cooler months. Please check this bag at the end of each school day and refill the bag if necessary.
- **Any necessary medication or emergency items for your child.** If your child has any medical needs or life-threatening allergies, please send your child with the necessary medication in case of emergency. We are often more than 10 minutes from emergency or medical locations.
- **Seasonally-appropriate clothing.** Check the weather for the day, so your child will be comfortable. Layers are always a good idea.

A full gear guide is sent when you first enroll your child in the program. Please read over carefully for more information.

What Not to Bring

At Pathfinders, we enjoy the unique and fascinating surroundings of the natural world. Please do not pack toys from home, electronic devices, or any other similarly unnecessary items. These can distract from our adventures in nature. If you need your child to carry some form of electronic device for safety purposes, please inform a teacher so that we can make a suitable arrangement.

Please do not send valuable items with your child. Keepsakes, jewelry, or other important items may be lost or damaged.

Your child may bring a small lovey or comfort toy, if needed. You must let your child know that the toy may get dirty or lost. It is the child's responsibility to keep track of this lovey. If your child would like to bring a special book, please inform a teacher in advance so that we can preview the book and work it in to the day's curriculum.

Pathfinders is not responsible for the loss or damage of any personal items.

Hazards

- **Dehydration.** It's important that your child is prepared with enough water for the day. We suggest drinking plenty of water at home at dinnertime the evening before and before the start of the day. When drinking water, children should also consume adequate minerals (such as sodium, potassium, and magnesium) through a meal or snacks, which aid in maintaining proper hydration.

- **Sunburn.** Sunburns can happen any time of the year, including cloudy days. Apply sunscreen before drop off, and pack sunscreen if you would like your child to reapply. Sun hats, long sleeves, and long pants are encouraged.

- **Poison Oak.** This is a common hazard at all times of year. Dress your child in long pants and long sleeves in case they come into contact with this plant. If we think your child may have touched poison oak, we will wash their hands with Tecnu, a soap that breaks down the oils from the poison oak plant. We will inform you if your child has been exposed to poison oak.

- **Stinging Nettles.** This plant leaves a painful sting after being touched. The sting fades within 24 hours, but can be bothersome in the meantime. Long sleeves and long pants help avoid being stung when coming into contact.

- **Ticks.** Ticks are common year round, but especially in the fall and spring. Long sleeves, pants, and closed shoes are the best prevention. We will also apply an herbal insect spray on your children's shoes, the rear waistband of the pants, and at the back of the neck.

Check your child for ticks at the end of every day. Ticks in our area can carry Lyme disease. Look under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and in the hair. If you do find a tick on your child, remove it right away, making sure that the head and mouth are removed. You can keep the tick and send it in for testing.

In most cases, the tick must be attached for 36 to 48 hours before the Lyme disease bacterium can be transmitted. Immature ticks called nymphs are the most likely to spread Lyme disease; they are most active during spring and summer.

- **Wildlife.** Although very rare, there is a potential to encounter rattlesnakes, bobcats, coyotes, or mountain lions. In the rare case that we do encounter one of these animals, teachers will be sure to avoid all possible dangerous interactions.

Child Illness Policy

Our illness policy is in place to protect the safety of your own child, as well as other children and the teachers in the program. If your child exhibits any of the symptoms listed below, your child will not be able to attend Pathfinders that day. As illness is unanticipated, no refunds will be offered. If your child is sick and cannot attend, please inform the lead teacher well ahead of our 9:00am drop-off time. This should be communicated by text as soon as your child becomes ill or by 8:45am at the latest.

Please keep your child home if they are experiencing:

- A fever of 100 degrees or higher.
- A runny nose with thick green or yellow mucus.
- A cough with mucus secretion.
- Contagious skin ailments such as cold sores, ringworm, fever blisters, or lice.
- Recurring diarrhea.
- Continued vomiting, or vomiting paired with a fever, stomach ache, sore throat, or fatigue.
- Pink eye.
- Any contagious diseases.
- Jet lag.
- Allergic reactions.

Upon completion of a complete day of wellness, or confirmation by a medical professional, your child may return to Pathfinders. Due to concerns around COVID, if your child has a fever, they must be fever free without medication for 48 hours before returning to the program.

If you are unsure about any condition not listed above, please call or text the lead teacher in advance in order to determine the best course of action for your child.

If you believe your child or a member of your family has been exposed to COVID, or if a member of your family receives a positive COVID test, you must inform the Pathfinders staff immediately.

Staff Illness Policy

The child sick policy helps to ensure the wellness of our teachers. On the rare occasion that the teachers are unable to host a Pathfinders session, you will be notified a minimum of 12 hours in advance, assuming there are not sudden medical emergencies. If this does

occur, please understand that your child will not be cared for by the Pathfinders Staff on that day. As these days are unanticipated, there will be no refund offered. We will make all efforts to avoid class cancellations.

Possible Program Closures

Be aware that there may be times that we have to cancel the program for the day:

- During fire season, we will cancel if the air quality is "unhealthy for sensitive groups" (AQI 100 or above).
- Because being indoors (such as inside a visitor center) during the pandemic isn't possible, we will also cancel if it's raining so hard that it's not comfortable or enjoyable to be outside.
- We'll also cancel if there is a COVID exposure within the program.

Local and National Emergencies

There is a potential for national or local emergencies. The most likely emergency situations to impact Pathfinders are unsafe road conditions due to high winds, flash flood or other flood warnings, fires, smoke, or earthquakes. Pathfinders staff will notify families as quickly as possible if we need to cancel class for the day. If you have questions or concerns about sending your child with Pathfinders in particular conditions, please feel free to reach out the teachers and determine the best course of action.

Parent Participation

Parents are invited to come out the Pathfinders once or twice in the school year. Be sure to check in with the teachers to schedule your outing. You are welcome to bring books, tell stories, or lead a game or art project. All activities must receive teacher and director approval and should be child-centered and focused on the outdoors and nature.

On a parent outing day, you will operate as another staff member and will be asked to assist all of the children with the activities of the day. Your role is to support the whole group, to gain insight into the program, and to get a new understanding of your child's adventures.

Children's Birthdays

If you would like to do something special on the day of your child's birthday, you are welcome to. Please reach out to lead teacher in advance in order to coordinate the celebration.

Parent Teacher Conferences and Communication

Parent Teacher Conferences

- Conferences will be held twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring.
- The fall conference will help the teachers gain a stronger sense of your child. This will be an opportunity for you to share information about your child and understand how they are adjusting to the program.
- The spring conference will focus on your child's development over the course of the year as well as kindergarten readiness, if appropriate.

Communication

- Text is preferred for notifying teachers of illness, absence, or late drop-offs.
- Email is the preferred method of contact for questions that do not require immediate response or need a longer response.
- If you prefer to have a phone conversation, please arrange this in advance.
- If your child will be absent due to illness, text as soon as your child becomes ill or by 8:45am at the latest.
- In cases of medical emergency, please do not hesitate to call at any time.