

How to Run Summer Camp Classes with Bobbi from [Fascination Fabrics](#)

C&T: How do you run your summer sewing program?

1. I start thinking about camps over Christmas break. I ask the girls and sometimes boys in my class what camps they enjoyed and what camps they would like me to offer in the summer. My students are 5 - 13 years old.
2. I send my completed camp brochure to the director of summer camps in January and she inserts it into her camp brochure.
3. I run 2 camp sessions per day from the beginning of June to the end of August. The morning camp runs from 9 - 11:30 am and the afternoon camp runs after lunch from 12 - 2:30 pm. Times vary from year to year based on where the camp is located.
4. Each camp is usually themed to pique the interests of the kids. Teddy Bear Picnic, Sewing for your American Girl Doll, PJ Party, Sewing on the Go Camp, Beginning Quilting, and Sewing for the Beach are a few of the camps I've had in past years.
5. After I've chosen the theme for each camp, I begin to look for projects to sew in each camp. I plan on 2 projects per day (1 big project and 1 small project). If there are projects that I know will take several days, I might look for several small projects as fillers. (Always plan to have more projects for the faster sewers and several projects that you can gear down for the slower sewers in the group). The past 2 years I have based the whole camp on Fun Stitch Studio books and have had the books as part of the camp price.
6. After I've chosen the projects, I shop, sort, and make all the kits. Kits make the classes run smoothly and there is peace of mind knowing that the sewers have everything that they need for each project. If kits are not used, then I make out a detailed supply list for the camp.
7. When kids sign up, I welcome them with a letter and acknowledgement. I add new clients to my newsletter. Recently I have had my web developers design me

a Spotlight template for Constant Contact to highlight a camp or a book we are using in camp for the summer. Word of mouth seems to be my best advertising since I am small.

8. Camp weeks usually run from Monday - Friday. Kids bring a snack and if they are staying for both sessions they bring a lunch. I bring all the machines and sewing equipment for the kids to use in addition to all the kits to be used during the week.

9. During each session we have several short breaks to relax. I encourage the kids to engage in conversations and to share their ideas while we are sewing. Even with kits there are plenty of ways to personalize their projects based on individual personalities.

10. I try to take pictures during the week to share with the parents and I love to take pictures of projects for my picture gallery on the website.

11. Some years I have given out certificates at the end of camp for a job well done and I always write thank you notes to parents and kids for attending my camps.

12. Recently I have been keeping a journal about each camp for use in planning future classes.

C&T: How many kids sign up for your camps?

Because I continue to be a small business, I can offer small classes and personalized attention. Because my sewers are so young (5 years old - 13 years old) I try not to take more than 6 sewers unless I have some experienced sewers in the group. Most of my classes run with 2-4 sewers and I will run a class with only 1 sewer if that's ok with the child and the parent. I don't want the child to be disappointed and have the class canceled.

I realize for some shops having so few kids would not be profitable, but for me it works, and my kids learn to love sewing and enjoy the attention. And there are exceptions like this year my first doll class in June has 8 girls and the other is filling fast.

C&T: Do you have any tips for other shops to run a successful Summer Camp Program?

1. Find a teacher that loves working with kids.
2. Research what's going on in your area and what the kids like including colors they like which changes frequently!
3. I highly recommend the Fun Stitch Studio books for camps. Everything is there for a successful camp and based on the projects you choose in the books your camps can be beginner or intermediate/advanced. Lots of pictures to help the kids learn the techniques and many of them have sections on how to use the sewing machine (I spend a lot of time on this in all my classes).
4. Make samples! The earlier the better so you can advertise the samples with the camp info. I don't always accomplish this task myself in a timely manner but when I do it's amazing the results I get in increased registrations.
5. With kids always have extra projects for the sewer that understands the projects and techniques and finishes before the others.
6. Always be ready to step back and let slower sewers enjoy their experience without feeling like they are behind or not able to understand what you are teaching. I keep telling my students that sewing is a learned experience. I can teach you to sew but you must experience it in order to master the art of sewing!
7. Always have extra of everything needed for the projects.
8. Keep the parents informed. Send out some emails with pictures of camp projects. Let the parents be part of the camp experience. Let them see what the kids are learning.
9. Encourage the kids to show their projects to family and friends. Learning to sew is a big accomplishment and a lifelong learning skill. Let them be proud of their work and their newfound skill.
10. Enjoy the feeling that you are passing along lifelong learning skills that are not taught in most schools or even at home by parents and grandparents. It's such a great feeling to see the look on a child's face when they make that first

pillow or learn to master a certain stitch.

11. Encourage the kids to talk and have fun. Sewing bee's used to be the way women got together to stitch and talk about everything that was happening. My students do the same thing and it's important that they realize that sewing is a social and very enjoyable activity.

12. Make sure to tell parents that you offer sewing classes during the year. If you sell machines please have a kids class if at all possible. Kids thrown in with adults is very frustrating for kids, and I usually end up having a private lesson with moms and kids to learn a new machine after they have been to the dealer for class.

13. If you can, have sewing machines that the kids can use. Most parents don't sew or have machines. If they do have machines they will usually be 20 years old and a pain to use for both you and the kids. Having all the same machines will also make it easier for you to teach and to troubleshoot. And, using your machines will also result in some sewing machine sales if the kids enjoy their class experience.

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