

Badgerdog Creative Writing Summer Camp FAQs

What's the schedule/locations for summer 2018?

We will be hosting two-week sessions: June 4-15, June 18-29; July 9-20; July 23-August 3. All workshops run from 9am to noon Monday through Friday. We have locations across Austin (Round Rock, Northwest Austin, Northeast Austin, Hyde Park, Central/West Austin, Downtown, and Southwest Austin). Only three or four locations will be running during each session.

Why did you switch to two-week sessions?

We know parents have very busy summer schedules, and our three-week sessions prevented some parents from accommodating Badgerdog camp among other family plans. The two-week sessions offer more scheduling flexibility for parents and allow us to serve more families during the summer months.

How much does camp cost, and do you offer discounts?

Each camp session is \$400 per student. We offer an early-bird discount of \$15 from February 1 to March 1. Parents who register siblings will receive \$15 off per child. (Discounts can not be stacked.)

What is your teacher/student ratio?

We assign one teaching artist to each classroom, and registration is capped at 15.

Do you offer scholarships?

We do offer financial aid (based on need rather than merit). We are looking for campers with a demonstrated interest in writing who would not otherwise be able to attend camp due to financial constraints. Email programs director Cecily Sailer to request a scholarship application: csailer@austinlibrary.org. Applications are due April 1.

Do you offer extended or full-day care?

Unfortunately, we do not, though we know how difficult this is for many parents. It's challenging for us to run a writing camp for a full day (who can write all day long?!), so we need to bring in partners to run afternoon camps. But, given the scope of our summer camp, this is a formidable challenge for us. But it's something we consider each year as we begin planning.

Which ages can attend?

Camp is open to rising 3rd through 12th graders, so students who are in 2nd grade through 11th grade today (during the 2017-2018 academic year), can attend camp this summer.

Do you divide the campers into age groups?

Of course! We group rising 3rd and 4th graders together (lower elementary), rising 5th and 6th graders together (upper elementary), rising 7th and 8th graders together (middle school), and rising 9th-12th graders together (high school).

What is your curriculum?

We don't have a camp-wide curriculum. Rather, we use a teaching approach that allows instructors to design unique and exciting lessons for each age group to match the group's unique personality, needs, and aspirations. We call this approach READ-WRITE-SHARE. We look at a text to learn how and why writers make certain choices; we talk about that text to better understand it; we brainstorm ideas for our own work; we write, drawing inspiration from the model text; and we share our work out loud with our colleagues. We also have a vast database of successful lessons developed over the years that our instructors can access.

My child doesn't like to write. Can he still attend this camp?

This is an ideal camp for children who feel intimidated or uncomfortable with writing. The reality is that we must all learn to write well in order to succeed and communicate effectively. Our camp offers a no-risk, no-fail, positive environment where students can build confidence, find the fun in writing, and receive total support without feeling corrected or not up to the task.

My child has dyslexia/dysgraphia. Can you accommodate him/her? Can they use a device for their writing?

We can absolutely accommodate your child. We've heard from parents of other campers with these challenges that Badgerdog is an ideal place to practice writing and learn new skills. Because campers can't get it wrong, they feel encouraged to continue trying, experimenting, finding their voices. We welcome technology that makes writing easier and more accessible for campers. We want to avoid the use of smart phones or anything that may distract other campers, but otherwise, such devices are encouraged. We can't provide them ourselves, but campers are free to bring their own laptops or iPads.

My child has ASD. Is this camp a good fit?

There is a good chance Badgerdog Summer Camp will be a positive learning environment for your child, but each child is unique (of course), so we ask that you disclose as much information and detail as possible to help us support your child in the classroom. We assign one teaching artist to each classroom of 15 students, so if your child requires intense one-on-one mentoring, our camp environment may not be ideal. But in most cases, Badgerdog has proven to be a good match for ASD campers. Our registration form will allow you to share information about your child with us so we can provide tailored support, or you can contact our programs director to discuss questions or concerns before signing up.

Will your camp help my child write a better STAAR essay or college application?

We don't design our lessons to specifically prepare students for these writing assignments, and most of our writing activities do not look like those on the STAAR essay exam or college applications (ours are more fun and interesting, but possibly just as challenging). That said, the writing we do build essential writing skills that translate to more academic writing assignments—using specific detail, prioritizing ideas, developing characters, setting a scene, telling a compelling story, using interesting and precise language. In this way, Badgerdog is likely to help your child perform better on these exams (because they will be better writers in

general), but camp is not specifically working toward the goal of helping students with these types of essays.

Do you send home progress reports or assign homework?

We don't do either of these. We want camp to be FUN! A writing workshop feels a bit like school as it is, and we want campers to feel like they're at CAMP (no offense to school!). We want to create an experience that helps campers see writing as exciting, interesting, fun, creative, and totally possible. We don't want to add additional pressure in the form of assignments, grades, or progress reports. However, campers will take home their notebooks at the end of their session, and parents can see everything their child has created, as well as comments and feedback from teaching artists.

How does publication work?

In the second week of camp, campers will choose the piece they would like to submit to our summer anthologies (*Rise and Emerge*). We will spend time in the classroom revising and editing our work. Each teaching artist will collect and type each student's submission and send these to Badgerdog for inclusion in the anthologies. The books are typically ready in October, and we celebrate their arrival at the Young Authors Reading, our annual book-release party. This year, we will do the event a bit differently, with only four campers reading, a talk from a local writer, a few other bits of literary entertainment, and refreshments.

Who are your teachers?

Our teachers are most often writers with bachelor's degrees (at least) who are continuing, or have already completed, their apprenticeship in graduate programs like UT's Michener Center or Texas State University's creative writing program. However, we also have writers who are already working in a professional setting or as freelance writers, but who may not have graduate degrees. Some are writers who are becoming teachers of writing, some are people with extensive teaching experience who are now becoming writers themselves, and some are writers/teachers who have been working with us for several years. When hiring, we are looking for people with significant experience in teaching or writing, and with a passion for both. All of our summer teaching artists attend a training session and go through a background check before teaching summer camp.

If my child attends two sessions in one summer, will she have the same experience?

Because of our teaching approach, each classroom experience is unique and different, so your child can attend two sessions and not feel as though she's repeating summer camp.

Do you prorate the cost of camp if we miss a week?

Families who miss a week of camp must still pay full price—because a camper attending one week is still using a whole spot in the classroom that can not go to another child.

My child is advanced for her grade-level. Can she attend the older age group?

We take these requests on a case-by-case basis but generally want campers to remain with their age group. Contact the programs director if this is a concern: csailer@austinlibrary.org.

What do we need to bring to camp?

Badgerdog provides a notebook and creative supplies. Each camper should bring writing utensils (pencils or pens), a snack, and a water bottle.

Can my child attend with a friend?

If both campers are in the same age group (described above) and register for the same location at the same time, they can request to be in the same age group. Most camps only have one classroom per age group, so the campers will be grouped together regardless. If you're attending the Austin International School, however, you may need to request that two campers be placed in the same classroom. Contact the programs director to make this request: csailer@austinlibrary.org.

If my child misses a day or two, will he feel lost when he returns? Can he/she do make-up work while he/she is away?

Most days of summer camp are self-contained. If your child misses the activities for a day or two, it's not a problem—those missed activities will not be essential to understanding the new lessons they'll experience when they return. In terms of make-up work, we are focusing all of our energy on the laboratory that is the classroom, and we prefer that campers not feel they have to catch up while they're away. We of course encourage campers to continue writing, wherever they may be, but they are not required to complete missed assignments, and we prefer not to set aside missed assignments for campers who are missing the workshop.

What is your refund policy?

Full refunds, minus a \$50 processing fee, will be granted for requests made more than 30 days prior to the start of the summer session. A partial refund of \$100 per registration will be granted for requests made between 7 to 30 days prior to the start of the summer session. Refunds are not granted for requests made within 7 days of the start of the summer session.