

## Gear and Clothing List for Backpacking

This is a listing of recommended items for backpacking trips, along with some advice on how to save weight, stay safe, and reduce your impact. Remember the Scout Motto: “Be Prepared” and the 1<sup>st</sup> principle of Leave No Trace: “Plan Ahead and Prepare.” Use this list to plan carefully, ensuring that you will have everything needed for a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience. If you are packing items not on this list you should question whether you really need them (enough to carry that extra bulk and weight).

Be aware that the troop has some equipment (e.g., tents, packs, and stoves) that you can borrow, particularly for new members who may not stick with scouting. Refer to this guidance when purchasing any gear and be sure to check out the local stores and discount retailers. Local stores include EMS, REI, Dicks & Target. Discount retailers include Campmor (800-226-7667, [www.campmor.com](http://www.campmor.com) (see Hot Deals and Web Bargains, they deliver in 2-3 days), and [www.sierratradingpost.com](http://www.sierratradingpost.com), [www.sportsmansguide.com](http://www.sportsmansguide.com), and [gear.overstock.com](http://gear.overstock.com).

### Personal Equipment

#### Clothing

**General Comment:** Stay away from cotton for all clothing, summer or winter (and that includes blue jeans and socks). Cotton absorbs and retains water; synthetics, such as polyester (e.g., Coolmax) and fleece, absorb very little water, insulate even when damp, and dry fast. If you don't have a waterproof pack cover they should be kept in plastic bags (waterproof packs are not very waterproof). Follow the clothing guidance for the appropriate season, using judgment on some items depending on how cold it's expected to be:

#### Summer

Short-sleeved shirt (2)  
Long-sleeved shirt  
Fleece pull-over shirt (if at higher elevations)  
Lightweight wind proof jacket, preferably w/hood  
Underwear (2)  
Shorts (2)  
Long pants (wind proof, zip-offs are great)  
Socks - 2 pr of thin liner wicking socks and 2 pr of thicker boot socks  
Sun hat with a bill; if it doesn't cover ears remember to cover ears with sun lotion  
Rain jacket (preferable) or poncho  
Rain pants (preferable but optional)

#### Fall & Spring

Short-sleeved shirt  
Long-sleeved shirt  
Light to medium weight coat or fleece pull-over  
Lightweight wind proof jacket able to fit over all of the above, preferably w/hood  
Underwear (2)  
Long underwear top & bottoms  
Long pants (lined nylon exercise pants are great)  
Socks- 2 pr of thin liner wicking socks and 2 pr of thicker boot socks  
Insulated hat, fleece is more comfortable & wind-proof than the knit yarn types  
Gloves (liner or medium-weight)  
Rain jacket (preferable) or poncho  
Rain pants

**Winter:** Augment the Fall/Spring list with more bulky, warmer versions of clothing. Dress in many layers to trap air and allow you to regulate your temperature. Add layers during inactive periods and remove them when hiking to prevent sweatiness that will dampen clothing and make you colder. If it's also windy you will want some kind of face and neck protection (balaclava, face shield, scarf) with a lightweight hooded wind parka. Liner gloves and mittens are warmer than heavier gloves. If there is a potential for wet snow or freezing rain you will need a hooded raincoat. A lightweight insulated hooded coat and ski pants will keep you warmer at camp and even at night in your sleeping bag. Fleece or down vests are also great. Keeping feet warm is a particularly critical challenge. Bring a couple pairs of the chemical heat packets that are made for use inside boots (they also make them for hands). Change into dry extra pairs of bulky socks when you reach camp. At night add a larger (adult) pair over these or

consider purchasing some goose down, Polarguard, or fleece booties. Another option is to zip up your

coat and pull it over the foot of your sleeping bag - this also keeps the condensation on tent walls from wetting the foot of your sleeping bag at night. Wear your hat and liner gloves at night. On really cold nights I dress with just about every dry item in my pack!

Added insulation under your sleeping bag is also critical. Consider purchasing a thicker full-length sleeping pad or bring two thin shorter ones. Place your backpack or any clothing that you are not wearing under your lower legs and feet. The 1x1 ft Bluefoam pads our troop has for kneeling in canoes are also great for sitting or standing on or placing under you at night. If you do all these things you should be fine in a sleeping bag rated to 20 degrees down to about 15. Any lower than this and you will need to purchase a 0 degree sleeping bag.

### **Footwear**

Hiking boots - they must fit well. If leather, waterproof them with Nikwax or similar product before every trip; if nylon or fabric, waterproof them with two coats of silicon spray before each trip. Get insoles made of closed cell foam (like neoprene) to insulate your feet from the ground for winter trips. Tennis shoes, sandals, or moccasins w/soles - something lightweight  
Gaiters - these are ankle wraps that keep mud, water, and snow out of your boot tops (optional)

### **Backpack**

External or internal frame pack big enough to hold your gear, generally 2700-4000 cu in for youth and 4000-6000 cu in for older youth and adults. Most folks are opting for internal frames these days. A starter backpack should be around 3.5-4.5 lbs and typically cost \$60-80. For young scouts I strongly recommend purchasing a pack with an adjustable torso range so that it will "grow" with your boy (some range as much as 13-19 inches). Consider going "ultra-light" with the new backpacks that weigh less than 3 lbs if you can keep pack weight below 30 lbs. Nearly all the pack weight should be carried by the hip belt so make sure it is comfortably padded and properly sized for a **very** tight fit. The shoulder straps should fit the width of the shoulders, and when viewed from the side, should be level (or a little upward) from the shoulders to the pack. Waterproof pack covers are useful but not necessary; pack things inside a large trash compactor bag (best), heavy-duty trash bag, and/or assorted zip-lock bags inside your pack.

### **Sleeping Gear**

Rectangular slumber party bags are too heavy and bulky for backpacking so one of the more important big-ticket items to consider purchasing is a lighter mummy style sleeping bag. If you buy one that fits to 6 ft it can be used for a long time, including trips outside of scouting. Sleeping bags must be rated for the lowest temperature at which you will be camping; I recommend a 15-20° rated bag for trips our troop does. These can be unzipped and are still fine for summer use. The Polarguard 3D insulation is currently the best trade-off between price, weight and compressibility (\$70-100 on sale). Look for bags under 3.5 lbs. Down bags are lighter and stuff smaller but are also pricy and are useless if they get wet. Unless you can put the bag inside your pack it should be stuffed inside a nylon sack lined with a plastic garbage bag (even if the stuff sack is "waterproof" - they aren't). There is nothing worse on a camping trip than sleeping in a wet sleeping bag... If your sleeping bag is too bulky you can purchase a "compressor" type stuff sack to make it smaller.

Sleeping pads should be lightweight and with as little bulk as possible. The inflatable Therm-a-rest Ultralight  $\frac{3}{4}$  length pad is my personal favorite but they are costly (\$40). Check these for leaks before outings or bring a patch kit. My second choice is the Ridge Rest Z-Rest because of its compact stored size (\$20). Other closed-cell foam pads are fine but somewhat more bulky. Consider a thicker, full-length pad for winter, or two overlapped  $\frac{3}{4}$  length pads. Thick open-cell foam pads are comfy but they are very bulky and absorb and retain water.

### **Miscellaneous**

Personal eating utensils, I recommend a large plastic bowl and cup, and heavy duty plastic fork and spoon  
Pocket knife - small and lightweight  
Plastic or Nalgene water bottle (1 liter)  
Small first aid kit w/Band-Aids or moleskin for blister hot spots  
Toilet articles - toothbrush, paste, comb, biodegradable soap, medications (inform adult leaders), ½ roll of TP, face cloth (optional - to dry hands & face)

Flashlight or head lamp - small and light weight  
Compass and topographic map(s)  
Matches in waterproof container, lighter  
Plastic bags, assorted sizes  
Chapstick  
Sun screen (in small container)  
Ear plugs (for trains & talking/snoring campers)  
Camera (optional, small & lightweight)  
Sunglasses (optional)  
Watch (optional)  
Notebook and pen (optional)

## Group Gear

Shelter – tent, tarp, hammock, or bivy sack. Tarp shelters are far lighter on a per person basis than tents (bring plastic ground sheets to go under you). However, they must be set up properly (low) to keep you dry in a driving rainstorm and don't protect you from mosquitoes. The troop has some tents but if you buy one be sure that it weighs less than 3.25 lbs/person (e.g., a 2-person tent should weigh less than 6.5 lbs). The Hennessy hammocks are great as you can cook under them in the rain.  
Cooking pots (1 or 2) of sufficient size for your cook group with Scotchbrite scrub pad and fiberglass screen (1x1ft) for straining wastewater (folded and enclosed in a zip-lock bag).  
Water carrier and water filter or purification tablets  
Lightweight camp stove (check fuel level – bring more for longer trips)  
Food, repackaged to reduce trash and bulk  
Group First aid kit (about 1 per 10-12 people)  
Small trowel for digging cathole latrines  
Cord (3/8") for clothesline or hanging bear bags (50-100 ft for bear bags)  
Trash bags – can be used during food preparation to catch crumbs and spills and to pick up trash  
Insect repellent (optional)  
Cell phones and troop roster w/parental contact info

## Pack Weight

A general rule is that total pack weight (including water, food, and shared group gear) should not exceed 25% of body weight. Most people make the mistake of carrying too much stuff; examine every item you plan to take to determine if you really need it or if you can find a lighter or less bulky substitute. I've always been fond of the following adage: "*The more you carry, the more you will enjoy camping. The less you carry, the more you will enjoy hiking!*" If you're going to do serious backpacking, you better enjoy your hiking... Wintertime trips are a possible exception to this rule due to the additional clothing.

## Things to Leave at Home

Axes and saws of all types are never necessary (use smaller diameter dead/down wood if you have a fire)  
Pillows - make one with clothing in a stuff sack or T-shirt  
Radios and other electronic gadgets (like Gameboys) , fireworks  
Negative attitudes - no complainers, you *will* have fun, rain or shine!

## Gear Care

Immediately after every trip you should un-stuff, clean (as necessary), and hang all tents, tarps, and sleeping bags and pads until completely dry. Store loosely, un-stuffed, in a dry, mouse-proof, dark location. Your camping gear's worst enemies are mildew and sunlight.