

Troop 63

Gear Night

- ***Sleeping Bags***. The purpose of a sleeping bag is to create an insulating barrier, which will contain heat from your body. The key elements of a bag are the type and amount of fill as well as it's construction (to avoid cold spots)
 - **Types**
 - Rectangular. Good general purpose Sleep Bag. Often the kind used at summer camp or for late spring or early fall camping.
 - Mummy. Smaller area in foot. Easier to keep warm. Often have hoods. Best for cold weather camping.
 - **Fill**
 - Fill type is usually a polymer like "holofil" or other similar fiber. Goose down is also excellent however down loses insulation capacity when wet. For our use, polymer fills are usually best.
 - How much fill is a trade off between insulating capacity (often quoted as a temp rating when you buy one. For example 25degree or 10degree) size, and weight. For general camping approx 3 or so pounds is OK. For colder weather you might go with 4 lbs. For long range backpacking you would use a mummy with perhaps less than 2 lbs.
 - **Features**
 - Offset or alternate stitching. Stitches on outside do not line up with stitches on inside. This reduces heat loss. Cheaper bags (summer weight cotton bags) are often through stitched, which creates cold spots.
 - Draft shield. A gusset sewed in against the zipper, which prevents heat loss through the zipper area.
 - Hoods. Good for cold weather to cinch up around the head and prevent heat loss through your head.
 - Outside pockets. Very handy if you can find them.
 - Most bags are machine washable in a commercial type washing machine. **DO NOT PUT IN DRYER.** Bag should be hung outside in dry weather to dry.
 - **Cost**
 - Bags can run from \$35 to \$235. The range you want to be in is around \$90 to \$120 max. It is often far more practical to have two less expensive bags (one for summer one for winter) than try to buy one which will work in all cases. (They don't)

- ***Ground Pads.*** The two objectives of the ground pad are to provide insulation against heat loss to the ground and to provide a comfortable surface to get a good nights sleep. If you don't sleep well, you don't camp well.
 - **Types**
 - Closed cell type. These are a pad of flexible closed cell foam. They come in different thickness, and different storage formats (ie rolled or folded). They are lightweight, water resistant and provide very good cushion for kids. They are the pad of choice for backpacking. They are not the best for us Old Geezers however.
 - Open cell pad. These are often called self-inflating in that they have a valve, which allows air into the pad when opened. They use foam along with air to provide a comfortable surface. When not in use the air is forced out by rolling up the pad. These are excellent mattresses and are the choice for the Old Geezer patrol. It is best to buy a good quality pad. It will last you a long time.
 - **Cost**
 - Closed cell pads are less than \$40 or so. An open cell pad (recommend Thermo Rest) can cost over \$100. But it is worth every penny!
 - Open cell pads are also a bit heavier (and hence are not recommended for kids). However the extra weight is worth it for the OG's. Also consider an extra width size.

- ***Ponchos and rain gear.*** The objective here is to stay dry and comfortable in bad weather without restricting movement too much. Fabric choice is a key point here since you not only get wet from the outside but from the inside if the garment makes you sweat. There is nothing more miserable than being soaked while in the great outdoors.
 - **Types.**
 - Poncho type is just that, a poncho made of vinyl coated fabric or plastic. They have hoods and fit over the head and cover down below the knees. Your arms stick out the side and are mostly uncovered. They are usually very handy and easy to pack. Some can be a bit heavy however. The plastic ones are a waste of money. They will not make it through one bad day in the woods. If you go this way choose one that is a fabric type but not too heavy.
 - Jacket type. These range from simple vinyl jackets to more expensive Gore Tex type materials. Again for boys still growing choose a less expensive type. For adults Gore Tex is a great jacket. Gore Tex allows air to pass keeping you less sweaty. You can also get pants as well but would encourage you to leave them home on a hike. (You don't hike in long pants)
 - **Cost.** \$20 to \$120 (for a full Gore Tex suit)

- **Hiking Boots.** Your scout will need a decent quality boot with a heavy lug (thick sole) and good ankle support, which fits well. You do not need to go broke buying super hiker boots because they will out grow them very rapidly.
 - **Types**
 - All leather. These are more appropriate for adults and older boys who have more or less stopped growing “footwise” These are outstanding boots with good comfort and will often last 10 years or more. They can be resoled as well.
 - Combination of leather and fabric. These are a good choice for growing boys who tend to put “a lot of mileage” on shoes. The key point is that they fit well and provide good ankle support. This is very important when backpacking since your feet are the most important part of your body when hiking and a blister or hot spot on your foot is like a blow out on the highway. It’s not fun and it affects the entire hiking unit.
 - Mostly fabric boots. These are ok for summer wear or “light duty” Not a bad choice for boys who are going through a shoe size every 6 months. Not the best however on a tough hike.
 - **Features**
 - Thick sole. (We walk on rocks, often jagged ones)
 - Good laces
 - Good fit.
 - Don’t go out of your way to buy boots made of Gore-Tex for waterproofing.
 - **Cost**
 - Boots can range from \$45 to \$200. If you are a hiker go ahead and treat yourself. They will require break in period but you will have your leather hikers forever. Bear in mind they can also be resoled. For boys it’s a better idea to stay with a modest but decent quality hiker. The advantage of the leather / fabric combination is that they do not require as extensive a break in period. (One rule of hiking. **NEVER**, I mean **NEVER** go hiking with a new or unbroken in pair of boots.) Blisters are not an if in this case but when.
- **Socks** for hiking and backpacking. It’s best to have socks that fit well with few seams, wick away moisture, and slip somewhat against the skin.
 - Best bet is a combination of a thin liner, made of polypropylene or silk, combined with an outer rag or wool sock.
 - A single wool type sock (like Merino wool) is also good.
 - The worst is a cotton sock. Cotton holds on to water and chafes the foot, which can lead to blisters.
 - When hiking it’s also ok to bring a very small container of cornstarch. (Not perfumed powders)

- **Packs.** This is one of the most important pieces of gear. It will be with you and your scout for your entire scouting career. A good quality pack can be passed on to their kids as well. The objective is a balance of having one
 - Big enough to carry what you need,
 - Fits well, is comfortable on your back,
 - Is made of a rugged fabric with good quality zippers and closures,
 - Is as light as possible given the first three.
- **Types.** There 2 types of pack. Internal frame and external frame.
 - **Internal.** The pack is basically a formless bag with metal rods or strips, which form a kind of backbone. The pack takes shape as it is packed. They usually have multiple compartments (at least two). These packs tend to be narrower and taller, and fit closer to your back. They can be comfortable when hiking and carry weight well. They have several adjustment straps to level your load. They have a disadvantage in that since they rest against your back you tend to sweat a bit more.
 - **External.** The pack is fastened to metal or polymer frame, and take the shape of the frame. They look like a pack even when empty. They tend to be wider rather than tall. They also have multiple compartments and outside pockets as well. Rather than resting against the back the have a mesh fabric between the two side frames which your back contacts. The pack is held a few inches from the back and allows some air in between. Many are adjustable to expand as your scout grows. You can also lash more stuff onto the frame if needed.
- **Features to look for.**
 - Durable fabric. Normally rip-stop nylon with plastic zippers and guides. Solid closures.
 - Lots of outside pockets. The more, the better.
 - Pocket for water bottle. Either on top or bottom. You want access to water without taking your pack off.
 - Good suspension system. Thick shoulder pads, hip pad and belt with strong clip closure. Sternum strap is very handy. If you chose a pack without one you can buy a kit to add one.
 - Adjustable. Grows with your scout.
 - Pack cover is a nice idea.
- **Pack shopping.**
 - Don't go to Sport's Authority or Dick's or other mass merchandisers.
 - Go to a reputable shop that knows packs and will spend time fitting a pack properly. EMS, LL Bean, Campmor, Outdoor World.

- **Mess Kit.** You don't need as much as you think.
 - Basically all you will need is a bowl, spoon, cup, and water bottle. Most meals made on campouts and hikes are made to be eaten with a spoon.
 - Best bet is a Lexan set of bowl, spoon and cup, and a Nalgene water bottle. The Lexan stands up to high temperature better than plain plastic; it also will not transfer heat as fast as aluminum and is safer. A Nalgene bottle is best since it has a volume scale on the side (can be used to measure for cooking) works well with most water filters, and fits into the water bottle pocket on most packs
 - Small Tupperware bowls or containers also work well. Forget the lid.
 - Aluminum tends to bend easily, and transfers heat too fast. (Hot food placed into an aluminum bowl will be too hot to touch in a few seconds)
 - LABEL ALL MESS GEAR. Everyone's green Lexan bowl and gray Lexan spoon look alike. Put your name on it; carve a weird shaped in it or otherwise put "your brand" on your stuff.

- **Toilette Kit.** Bring only what you need and will use.
 - "Store bought" toilette kits are often too big, have too much of what you don't need and not enough of what you do need.
 - A good kit you can make yourself.
 - Start with a plastic or plastic coated canvas bag that can get wet.
 - Small (travel size) bar of soap.
 - Small bottle of shampoo
 - Small tube toothpaste
 - Toothbrush with cover (for the bristles).
 - Small collapsible cup
 - Comb or small hair brush
 - Small pack towel. (Lightweight polymer towel) For summer camp or camps where you can take a shower bring a larger bath towel.
 - Small tube of hydrocortisone for bug bites etc. (optional)

- **Clothing.** Key words “Be Prepared” Bring what you need depending on the season and the altitude. Also remember that even in summer it can get downright chilly. Particularly if it rains.
 - **Cold weather** Late fall to Early Spring
 - **Underwear**
 - There is a saying that “cotton kills”. Not that it is life threatening it’s just not a good idea at all to wear it. Particularly in cold weather. It absorbs moisture and doesn’t let go. As a result you end up clammy and cold.
 - Your best bet for cold weather undergarments (including long John’s) is polypropylene. Because of it’s ability to wick away moisture and release it to the air it keeps you drier.
 - The other choice is silk. It has the same properties but is a bit pricier.
 - They are also thinner and lighter than cotton and take up less space.
 - **Socks**
 - Again your best choice is a combo of Poly liner with rag or wool or a Wool blend.
 - **Outerwear**
 - Avoid Jeans. They are like wearing a cotton towel in the shape of pants.
 - Wear poly blends.
 - Shirt can be cotton for just camping. For hiking we recommend a poly top or light fleece pullover.
 - For a jacket, fleece is the best choice. It’s light, warm and can be combined with your rain poncho or jacket for extra warmth.
 - Hat. Yes bring one. Especially at night. A skullcap worn at night is the single biggest difference between staying warm or freezing. (You lose most body heat through your head at night.). You may also need a hat during the day to shade sun or act as a rain hat.
 - **Gloves**
 - Often a great idea. Depending on how cold it really is they may very well be a necessity.
- **Warm weather** Spring through Summer and early Fall
 - **Underwear**
 - Cotton is OK for summer although Poly is still king especially for T-shirts where there is a lot of physical activity. Hiking, Canoeing etc.
 - **Outerwear**
 - Light Jeans are OK if you must but again the poly cargo pants are the way to go. Especially ones with zip off legs. They are worn as shorts during the day and as a long pant at night to keep the Mosquitoes at bay. They are light and dry quickly.
 - Cotton T-shirts are OK for around camp. Poly is better for physical activity.
 - Light fleece jacket or pullover
 - Hat is often needed for shade and as a rain hat. Not at night.
 - **Socks**
 - Same as above, although cotton is fine for around camp.
 - **Gloves**
 - Believe it or not light work gloves come in handy. Especially when cutting wood or doing a lashing project.