

## PERSONAL EQUIPMENT FOR CAMPING AND BACKPACKING

by Troy Hayes

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As a Boy Scout you will be going hiking and camping every month. Living in the outdoors requires the right equipment. This list will supplement your Boy Scout Handbook, which discusses the Scouting Outdoor Essentials and clothing in the hiking chapter and overnight gear in the camping chapter. As a young Scout you will do mostly car camping, but as you get older you will do more backpacking. **The following suggestions are for lightweight equipment that is suitable for car camping and backpacking.**

**All you really need to get started is a uniform.** There are substitutes for most pieces of camping equipment that you can use until you have the time to get your own. Keep this list and show it to your parents when your birthday or Christmas is coming up.

BOOTS - Boots are expensive, and boys will outgrow them quickly. Consequently, you will most likely have to get along with whatever outdoor shoes you have. Wet feet are not the end of the world, as long as you have a dry pair of socks to put on at the end of the day. Mr. Hayes wore running shoes to Philmont with no worries, but he kept his pack weight light.

CANTEEN - Actually, a one-quart (or one liter) plastic bottle of water or sports drink works well. They are light, cost nothing, and can be replaced when they get funky. Take two when backpacking (some trips may require a third quart)..

CLOTHING - Since activity levels change and since the weather may change, **a Scout who is prepared dresses in layers, allowing him to adjust to changing conditions.** Thus, a lightweight shirt, a synthetic sweater, and a waterproof jacket are more versatile than a single heavy coat. Try to avoid clothing that is largely cotton. Synthetic materials such as acrylic fleece will still keep you somewhat warm when they are wet. Cotton will not. Wool still works, but is more expensive and harder to dry. **Thus, if you are going on a rainy or cold weather trip and all you have is cotton, then make sure you bring extra clothes.** Synthetic fleece jackets are light, warm, and dry quickly if wet. Everyone should own one as protection from hypothermia.

COMPASS - Should have a round part that rotates on a rectangular plastic base. The Silva Polaris is a good model for around \$13.

EATING GEAR - For backpacking you need a plastic bowl, a plastic cup, and a spoon.

EMERGENCY GEAR - A lawn-size plastic trash bag can serve as an emergency poncho. A lighter or waterproof matches and fire starters (made on troop campouts) are a must. Some people carry an emergency blanket (4 oz, \$5) is waterproof and windproof and reflects heat back to the body.

FIRST AID KIT - The patrols have a patrol kit. You should make a pocket first aid kit (Second Class requirement 6B). It should have adhesive bandages, antiseptic cream, moleskin, and perhaps aspirin.

FLASHLIGHT - A small LED flashlight is sufficient and lightweight. Use fresh batteries. Some prefer a small headlamp for the flashlight, since hands-free operation is really nice for camping.

GLOVES/MITTENS - Gloves will work on most Scout trips. If your gloves are not waterproof, then carry an extra pair. Mittens are warmer, but have to be removed to use your fingers. For more severe weather, use

waterproof gloves or mittens. For really cold weather, you may wish to wear a pair of thin liner gloves inside a pair of mittens.

HATS - Use your Scout cap for sun protection. Some prefer a hat with a brim that covers the sides and back. For cold weather a sock cap made of acrylic fleece or other synthetic is good. For severe weather the balaclava style is excellent.

INSECT REPELLENT - Essential during the summer months because of ticks and mosquitoes. Deet is the active ingredient. Use a repellent with at about 30% Deet. A pump spray allows the stuff to be sprayed clothing to repel mosquitoes and shoes and socks to repel ticks.

KNIFE - It should be considered part of the Scout uniform. It must be a folding knife (sheath knives cannot be used by Boy Scouts). A lightweight single blade is really all you need. To keep your knife from getting lost, make a leather belt pouch for your knife at summer camp. For adults who love gadgets, the Swiss Army Huntsman is a nice model, though too heavy for backpacking.

LONG UNDERWEAR (optional)- For really cold weather trips. Cotton is cold if it gets wet, but better than nothing. Wool tends to be scratchy. Hence, the synthetics are best. Polypropylene was the original high tech solution, but it could not be put in a drier and required special soap to remove body odors. Polyester-based products such as Thermax, Capilene, and Comfortrel are among the newer products that solve the problems of polypropylene.

PACK COVER - This is used to cover the bag at night when there is no room for it in the tent and when hiking in the rain. For weekend trips, a lawn-sized plastic garbage bag works just as well as the store-bought model. Or, use waterproof bags for clothing and forget the pack cover.

PACK - This is not essential for car camping, but will become essential later when you begin to backpack seriously. Internal frame packs ride great but are somewhat more expensive. External frames work fine as well. The essential feature of a good pack is a padded hip belt that goes completely around the hips. This allows the load to be carried on the hips instead of the shoulders. The problem is that many young Scouts have hips too narrow for most adult hip belts. Hence, you either you buy a Astarter pack@ or else just wait a couple of years. Philmont recommends that a pack have a capacity of 4000 cu.in. if an external frame and 4800 if an internal frame. Seek the advice of a **knowledgeable** salesman for the proper fit. Good stores will ask you to try on a pack loaded with sandbags to see how it feels. Expect to pay \$80 to over \$150 for a good adult external frame backpack. Substitution: for car camping, virtually anything that gets the gear the short distance from the car to the tent. Non-owners will need to borrow or rent for a backpack trip. The troop might be able to help with loaners.

RAIN GEAR – Insures against hypothermia (primary function) and hopefully keeps you dry (secondary function). A poncho allows air to circulate so you don't sweat to death (coated nylon is best). Rain suits work better in windy weather, but can be sweaty in warmer weather. Vinyl products work, but don't hold up. Coated nylon is durable, lightweight, and reasonably priced. Waterproof-but-breathable rain suits allow *some* of the moisture out, but are more expensive and heavier. Waterproof-but-breathable brands include the Gore-Tex and store brand equivalents. In an emergency, a large garbage bag with holes for head and arms will substitute for a rain jacket or poncho. For non-blowing rain, an umbrella keeps the rain off and allows the sweat to evaporate. Mr. Hayes uses the umbrella backed up by a lightweight coated nylon rain suit.

SLEEPING BAG - Avoid bags that are too heavy, too warm, and too expensive. Aim for a lightweight bag rated for about 25-35 degrees. Such a bag will handle 9 out of 10 Scouting trips. For the one trip a year that is really cold, simply bring along a couple of extra blankets or sleep in a sweat suit. Keep in mind that sleeping inside a tent counts for 12 degrees of warmth. Although the mummy design takes a bit of getting used to, it saves weight and is warmer than rectangular bags. Down is the lightest fill, but it's expensive and loses all ability to insulate if it gets wet. Synthetic fiber fill insulation is only slightly heavier than down, but still insulates when wet, and is reasonably priced. Boys grow quickly, so buy a bag that fits a six-footer. Substitution: one or more blankets.

SLEEPING PAD - The sleeping pad goes under the sleeping bag and insulates the sleeper from the ground (primary function) and provides some comfort (secondary function). It also provides insulation from ground currents produced by lightning. Most serious backpackers choose the three-quarter-length size to save weight. A jacket goes under the feet and a tee shirt full of extra clothes serves as a pillow. The three-quarter length Ridge Rest Z-Rest and the 48-inch Ridge Rest Foam Pad (9 oz) are good choices for Boy Scouts. Similar pads are also OK; just make sure that any substitute is closed-cell foam and rated as flexible in cold temperatures. Do not substitute a conventional air mattress, which is a poor insulator in cold weather. Adults may be willing to pay the cost and weight premium of Therm-a-Rest mattress. Always comfortable, the Therm-a-Rest provides adequate insulation even when sleeping on snow.

SOAP - A small (2-oz or less) plastic bottle of biodegradable soap is lighter and easier to use than bar soap. A pocket breath freshener bottle makes an excellent bottle for soap.

SOCKS - Wool, polyester, and blends are good. For those prone to blisters, try a thin liner sock under a heavier hiking sock and carry moleskin. Carry extra socks and change if your feet get wet. .

SUN PROTECTION - Use a waterproof sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. By the way, Scouts, it doesn't work if you don't put it on! A hat also is quite helpful.

TENT - Some troops own them; some don't. If you choose a 3-season backpacking tent, you can use it for car camping as well. Incidentally, you can use a 3-season tent on Scout winter trips, since we avoid exposed mountain tops with potential high winds. Look for a tent with a breathable roof and a waterproof fly. Weight should be around 5 pounds for a 2-person tent.

#### GENERAL SUGGESTIONS:

Put your name on your equipment with a permanent magic marker.

Keep boxes of 1-quart, 1-gallon, and 2-gallon (Safeway) heavy-duty zip-lock bags on hand. They are essential for keeping clothes and books dry as well as handy for keeping small items together, such as toilet articles.

See the gear lists in the Scout Handbook. Note that the Scout Basic Essentials should always be carried on outdoor adventures. Previously called the Scout Outdoor Essentials, the list of 10 essential items derives from a Seattle-based organization called The Mountaineers, which created the list from an analysis of mountaineering accidents. Scouting combined map with compass and matches with fire starters, but added water and raingear.

## LOCAL STORES

Appalachian Outfitters  
938 Chain Bridge Road, Oakton  
(Route 123, about 1 mi N of I-66)

Hudson Trail Outfitters  
Fair Oaks Mall or Fairfax Circle (much bigger store)

REI (~10% dividend at end of year if you become a member) –Fairfax.

Sonny' s  
Bull Run Plaza, Sudley Rd & Sudley Manor Dr, Manassas

## MAIL ORDER

The following companies will take credit card orders over the phone or web, deliver gear in about a week, and stand behind their products absolutely

Campmor ([www.campmor.com](http://www.campmor.com)) 800-526-4784  
Note: Order from Campmor through the troop and get a 10% discount.

LL Bean ([www.llbean.com](http://www.llbean.com)) 800-221-4221

REI ([www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com)) 800-426-4840

## EQUIPMENT FURNISHED BY THE TROOP:

Tents and dinning tarp  
Stoves and lanterns  
Cooking gear  
Eating gear

Group first aid kits  
Axes and saws  
Purified water