

Basic Outdoor Equipment List

Buying camping equipment is a tough process. Just like anything else, everyone has their own personal preferences as to what they like, and prices range all over the place. In some areas, it definitely pays to get better quality equipment, such as with winter sleeping bags, backpacks, among others, while in other areas going as cheap as possible is fine. Also, remember that boys do sometimes break or lose things, so cheaper alternatives for things such as flashlights may be fine for a while until the boy learns to be responsible for his equipment. You do NOT have to invest a fortune to get good equipment for a boy. However, cutting corners such as by not purchasing a properly rated winter sleeping bag can not only possibly put the boy in harm's way, but also turn him off to camping or even Scouting completely if he ends up having a bad experience. Take your time when learning about these items. Your time will be well spent resulting in the enjoyment that your son will have during his Scouting experiences. Some of the things in this list are of a higher importance than others. Items in bold are a minimum for most overnight trips:

General:

Hiking boots – Water proofed and broken in! see section later

Back up set of properly sized laces

Canteen/water bottle – see section later

Mess kit – see section later

Silverware – see section later

Sleeping pad – see section later

Flashlight – Spare AA batteries, spare light bulbs, see section later

Rain suit/poncho – a low cost 'emergency' style poncho is light & small but very useful

Pocketknife – (for during or after Totin' Chip is earned) folding type only; 3" blade max; lock blade types are preferred. Sharpening stone & honing oil.

Ditty bag – simple travel bag to carry toiletries, available at Walmart/Dollar Store

Items to fill it: go to a Rite Aid/Walgreens and head to the sample/travel sized bins:

deodorant; toothpaste; toothbrush: travel size/style or cover for toothbrush from home; **hand soap** in a baggie (bar size from hotel rooms); **Chapstick; mirror** (travel size like your Mom's make-up mirror or the ones from the orthodontist); mouthwash; shampoo (also can just use soap, or bottles from hotels); dental floss packet; Q-tips; contact solution: small travel bottles; spare contacts; contact container; glasses case (hard case, if possible); retainer box; toothpicks (individual wrapped like from restaurants); hand sanitizer; calamine lotion; hand lotion

Backpack – see section later

Compass – a compass that lies flat with clear, see-through scales

First Aid Kit – you can make this yourself using the lists in your Scout Handbook (Second Class requirement #6B)! **Band-aids:** travel size package; **mole-skin; ace bandage**

Fire starter kit – a homemade package that can be stored in a 1 quart zip lock: dryer lint, twine, shredded newspaper; steel wool; steel & flint pieces; strike-anywhere type matches stored in a waterproof container such as a 55mm film holder

Large zip-lock bags – put clothes in these bags and press out the air. By squeezing out the air they pack smaller, plus if the backpack gets wet from rain, snow, or water in a tent, clothes will still stay dry in the bags. Plus it keeps dirty/damp clothes away from the clean ones.

Pillow – there are some good small pillows that are perfect for camping, one brand is 'Slumberjack', it comes with a stuff sack. They are inexpensive, light, and compress

fairly small. However, by stuffing clean and dry clothes into a sleeping bag, sleeping bag stuff sack, t-shirt, or even coat can make an improvised pillow.

Summer:

Socks – thick soled

Sleeping bag for spring/summer/fall weather – rated to at least 25° F (winter bag will suffice for summer use).

Winter:

Socks – thermal and thicker, better quality athletic socks

Inner socks – polypropylene

Outer socks – heavy wool or polypropylene

Sleeping bag for winter weather – rated to 0° F for snow camping; a less expensive alternative would be to add a fleece liner to a summer bag for winter weather

Insulated under wear – such as Under Armour/Duo Fold brands, synthetic material

Underwear – synthetic material – *avoid cotton*

Stocking cap – many types are available, a tight knit wool or synthetic type is best, make sure it fits!

Hoodies – great for sleeping in to keep the ears warm and won't fall off like a stocking cap will.

Gloves – fit well, no holes, waterproof

Inner gloves/mittens – 2 pr, wool or polypropylene

Outer mittens – waterproof

Extra gloves – warm & waterproof

Wool shirts/sweaters/sweatshirts

Boots – with felt liners, winter mountaineering boots (waterproofed)

Polar fleece or wool jacket

Pants – skiing pants/polar fleece/wool/powder pants

Hooded parka – waterproof

Handkerchiefs – disposable tissues are not something we stock for the boys, and in winter weather they will get runny noses!

Gaitors – wrap around the top of the boots and legs below the knee. They greatly help to keep the legs dry and are another layer of clothing.

If you have any questions regarding the type or style of the above equipment, please contact any older Scout or adult leader. The Boy Scout Handbook is also a great resource and has extended lists. Please check out Chapter 9 "Camping" of your Scout Handbook for additional lists.

This may seem like a lot of equipment, but it will all be used. You do not need to run out and buy all this equipment now. It will be needed before you can go on some of the outings (especially late fall, winter and early spring campouts). Again, if you have questions about equipment or clothing contact any of the Troop Leaders.

The Bare Essentials:

As you shop for equipment this is the order of importance in which you should buy it:

Boots: The single most important piece of backpacking equipment there is and essential for a safe, comfortable camping trip. Once again, they range in price from cheap to outrageous. Watch for sales. Also, please, please don't buy the boots too big thinking he will grow into them. You might buy them a little large, but have him wear two pairs of socks. The last thing that you want is to have your son's boots sliding around when he walks. This will cause serious blisters, back pain and various other aches and pains for your boy. Make sure that the boots are waterproofed. A water repellent spray applied a day or so before each use is best. Always have a spare set of new laces that are of proper size and length for the boots your son has. Make sure the boots are broken in properly prior to sending him out with them. Wear them around the house here and there, go for some walks around the block or short hikes to break them in before summer camp or a long hike is attempted. If they aren't broken in enough before the event, your son will end up breaking them in the hard way, and that's with plenty of misery.

Canteen/Water Bottle: This should be a good quality water bottle that will fit easily into a backpack and *will not leak*. Wide mouth Nalgene type bottles work the best. Page 209 of the *Boy Scout Handbook* shows a good water bottle, but we recommend a larger opening. When camping, the larger opening allows filling of hot chocolate from a ladle. The smaller neck can cause spilling a hot liquid all over the Scout's hands. A Nalgene bottle will not crack or break (but will melt in very high temperatures). A 32oz bottle is perfect size for most boys to carry on a hike. The Nalgene brand also has an inexpensive 'splash guard insert' that keeps the liquid from drenching the boy as he goes to take a drink! The bottle can be hooked onto a backpack or belt loop with a karabiner through the lid loop. At times though, it can be a little big and awkward when full, so he might also like to have a second, smaller 14 or 16oz bottle. Another reason this type of bottle is best that the lid is always attached, it does a fair job of insulating hot liquids to the hand, keeps cold liquids reasonably cool, and liquids rinse out very easily. Always wash these bottles thoroughly after a campout and let dry out with lid off. For most boys, this bottle also replaces the needs for a 'cup' in a mess kit.

Mess Kit & Eating/Cooking Utensils: For all campouts a good Stainless Steel or Lexan mess kit (plate, bowl and cup) is required (paper products are not provided unless an emergency need occurs). Lexan is good because they will not rust, melt, or get too hot to hold. Drawbacks are that they come in bulky and separate pieces which easily get separated and lost, you need a separate container/bag to store, they can get dirty in a backpack before the Scout even eats, and now he has to wash it first. A cook kit should consist of at least 1 pan and 1 bowl, in a size for a single person meal and is easy to pack away. A cook kit made from stainless steel will last longer and is easier to keep clean. We recommend that you "DO NOT BUY ALUMINUM!" Aluminum reacts to certain foods and can taste BAD. Also, anything EXCEPT the BSA endorsed type! The old military style is relatively inexpensive, compact, simple and durable, most silverware fits inside, it closes up to keep eating surfaces clean, inside is open for storage of condiments, silverware and or any medium sized cooking utensils, it can be used as a pan, bowl, or plate. Disadvantages are that they are not always easy for a youth (or adult at times!) to maneuver and can easily tip a full plate of food over if not careful.

The eating utensils should have some way to attach/secure to/fit inside of a mess kit. Again, the military style has holes in the handle that fit over the handle of the mess kit

during washing and store inside the mess kit (you can pick up the military type mess kit with silverware for easily under \$10 at military surplus stores, or even eBay). The BSA type is good as the fork, knife & spoon interlock together. Regardless of your selection, use a very permanent marker or etch the Scout's name into the pieces and make sure they get washed thoroughly after a campout and let them dry out separately.

Sleeping Bag: The basic piece camping equipment is . . . a good sleeping bag, which is a must. But you don't have to spend a great deal of money to get a decent one. We recommend a bag that is rated for at least 0° F weather.

What should the bag be filled with? A synthetic filled bag is recommended. Dryloft, Polarguard, and Qualofill are the leaders of the synthetic bags. A down filled bag is not recommended for scouts due to the amount of moisture they hold.

Why? If a synthetic bag gets wet, you can hang it up and it will dry in a couple of hours even if there is only a slight breeze and little sun; but with a down filled bag you must wait a LONG time for it to dry and without proper drying, it will never get the loft back.

How warm should the bag be? A sleeping bag that is rated to 0° F is best. Although a 20° F bag will do with a liner, it is best to go with the 0° F from the beginning.

Should I buy a MUMMY or a RECTANGLE BAG? A mummy bag is best due to the lesser amount of space to heat up. Most new mummy bags are really comfortable and allow room for rolling. Do not buy a sleeping bag that is too long for the user. The longer the bag the more air space that has to be heated in order to stay warm.

Are there any other features that I should look for? Yes. Look for a bag with an adjustable hood to prevent heat loss. Also look for a bag with a good zipper. You don't want to wake up at 3 a.m. with an un-zipped or broken zipper. However, zippers will break every now and then. If that happens, try and gather all the parts and take it to any leather/tent repair shop and they can repair or replace it usually fairly cheaply (there's a great shop in Lake Cable shopping plaza that does this!).

What type of material should the sleeping bag be made from? Nylon type materials for both the outside and inside seem to work best. Nylon is a lighter and very durable fabric. Cotton canvas is heavy and bulky. Nylon inside the bag will wick the moisture away and it will also allow the youth to roll around without the bag sticking to him.

If the bag does not come with a stuff sack, then buy one. This will keep the bag clean and dry as you son comes and goes from a camping trip. Remember that if your son is going to backpack with the troop the lighter and smaller the bag is the better.

(Be prepared to spend anywhere from \$40 to \$200 on a sleeping bag. Stay away from the bulky \$20 bags; they are the WORST thing for backpacking and provide no warmth whatsoever. *In a nutshell you probably want: A synthetic filled, 0° F, mummy bag.*

Please note: As important as the purchase of the bag itself is how you store it! Make sure the bag is NOT kept rolled up or stuffed in the stuff bag when not in use. Hang it up immediately after each and every use and leave up until packing for the next campout, or throw in a loose pile in a corner or in an open garbage bag somewhere after it is completely dry. They will absorb moisture in the air of damp basements or garages. If it is rolled/folded the same way each time the material will flatten and crease, which diminishes the insulating capabilities and weakens the fabric (think about how your favorite pair of jeans wears over time). That's why it's called a 'stuff' bag, when packing for a campout your sleeping bag

should not be folded and rolled into it – but wildly stuffed! And believe it or not, it's actually easier to just stuff it in - try it!

Sleeping Pad: for placement underneath your son's sleeping bag. This is necessary not only for cushioning, but for warmth. Without a pad your son is sleeping on very cold or frozen ground. However, DO NOT send him camping with a mattress! They can wick moisture and dampness right to the sleeping bag, plus they don't go on a backpack very well. You want a 'closed cell' pad. It does not have to be thick to work and a suitable pad can be found for under \$10. More high tech pads can be found at any sporting goods store, such as a self-inflating type. Pads should be small and very lightweight (most are only a few ounces) and take up very little space.

Flashlight: (and extra batteries & bulbs) The troop puts out lanterns to light the campsite at night, but those after-dark trips to the outhouse or trying to find that 'daggone other sock' makes the use of a flashlight in a tent necessary. Also, it is against BSA policy (and safety rules in general) to have lanterns (flames) inside tents. His flashlight will be the only way your boy will have light in his tent and/or be able to find his way to the outhouse (or the nearest bush) in the dark. The Maglight is most reliable and durable brand, and they come in all sizes. Mini-Mags are a favorite. They use AA batteries and all Mag models have a little compartment in the handle to store a backup bulb.

Backpack: come in 2 different styles: Internal and External Frame. Page 228 of the *Boy Scout Handbook* shows a picture of an external frame pack. These are the least expensive and easiest for the boys to use. Page 229 shows an internal frame pack. This type is best for hiking as it hugs the body but it can be difficult to pack because most brands have only one large compartment. Also, internal frame packs can get a little pricey.

Which one is better to buy? There are some very good youth backpacks available. If you want a lower cost pack for the beginner buy an External Frame backpack, which is easier to load and manage. Often it weighs and costs less than an Internal Frame. But try and think ahead to what they boy may do down the road. If you want a pack for a more active or advanced hiker, buy an Internal Frame. It is easier to move around in because you can move your arms and the pack stays close to your body for a secure feeling.

Go to the stores and try several styles and types. Walk around in it, jump with it on. If the pack feels unstable, it may be too large or not adjusted correctly. Make sure you can tilt your head back to look at the sky. The straps should all be adjustable. As your son grows, a backpack should be adjustable to his body size. Make sure the salesman shows you how to adjust it to fit now and as he grows! A backpack that is not adjusted properly or off balance is miserable to hike with.

The best size for a backpack is anywhere from 3,500 to 5,000 cubic inches. Check out garage sales for used ones or family/friends may be able to loan you one until you feel a little more comfortable in knowing what type you want – or more importantly – what type you DON'T want. Look at the older Scouts and ask them about theirs to learn more. A good pack can make the difference for your son between a miserable experience and a great adventure in the wilderness.

When selecting a pack:

DO:

- Have your son try on the pack at the store.
Have store personnel load it up to verify the fit.
- Make sure the pack is adjustable to fit snugly around your son's hips. This is where he will carry the total weight of the pack and it is essential that the waist strap fit well.
- Make sure the pack is not too big and roomy.
This leads to the temptation to overload it.
- Remember that the total weight of the fully loaded pack should not exceed 30-35 pounds (or 1/3 your son's body weight). 25-30 pounds would be best for some of our smaller kids.
- Keep in mind he is growing, get a pack that will shrink and then grow by adjusting the straps.
- Watch for sales. Decent packs range from \$75 to \$150 (new). Stay in the cheaper range.
Your boy will outgrow his pack in a few years.

DO NOT:

- Get confused between a backpacking pack and a daypack. Ask store personnel for help. Sorry, but do NOT get a backpacking pack at Target.
- Borrow a pack from an adult and expect it to be usable by your boy unless he is a teenager (AKA a boy in an adult body). If you must borrow one, adjust it to fit. Be alert to the fact the waist strap MUST fit snugly.
- Let you son wear the waist strap under his belly. Some guys have tummies already and wear their pants underneath their gut. They cannot wear their backpack like this as it will put the weight of the pack on their shoulders. Make sure they know to put their packs on with the buckle over their belly buttons.
- Let your son overload his pack and don't YOU overload his pack. He really won't need that Army blanket (The blanket is too heavy).

Clothing Suggestions And Hints:

Rule No. 1 in hiking and camping clothing is "AVOID COTTON." Cotton holds moisture and dries very, very slowly. In cold weather, cotton gets damp (from sweat or moisture in the air) and since it will stay wet for a very long time, can cause hypothermia. Here is a quick list of clothing made of cotton:

1. Jeans
2. T-shirts
3. Sweats
4. Underwear

In the summer, the above-listed clothing is okay. But for cold weather camping and especially backpacking, try to avoid cotton. In general, unless they are very well worn and comfy, jeans are not good for hiking due to chafing. Like other camping gear, you can spend a fortune on high-tech camp clothing. However, you may have to make do with what you have available. Check your closets (or his floor or under his bed) for the following:

- ✓ Nylon mesh – commonly used for sport jerseys. The nylon dries very quickly and is warm. The mesh allows sweat to evaporate.
- ✓ Nylon warm-up suits – these are great since they are very warm, lightweight, comfortable, and will also dry very quickly.
- ✓ Poly-blend sweats – check the label for fabric content. Much of the sweat wear available is 50-60% poly with the rest being cotton.
- ✓ Wool Pendleton-type shirts and pants – wool is nature's "high tech" fabric. It will stay warm even when it is very wet and it dries quickly.
- ✓ Athletic socks – those Nike (or other name brand) socks your kid insisted on having to be cool are great. Unbeknownst to your son, not only are they hip, but they are made to keep sweat from being a problem. Wet, sweaty socks are the leading cause of blisters.
- ✓ Fleece wear – again, this stuff is warm, lightweight, NOT cotton and very likely to already be in your son's wardrobe.

Shopping:

Good places to shop for various gear include:

Appalachian Outfitters:

www.AppalachianOutfitters.com

Gander Mountain: www.GanderMountain.com

Alps Mountaineering:

www.AlpsMountaineering.com

Dick's Sporting Goods:

www.DicksSportingGoods.com

REI: www.REI.com

Backpacker magazine's Gearfinder:

www.Gearfinder.com

Bob Wards: www.BobWards.com

L.L. Bean: www.LLBean.com

Kames Sport Center, 8516 Cleveland Ave. NW
North Canton, OH 44720 330-499-4558

Galyans Trading Company: www.Galyans.com

Camping.com: www.Camping.com

Major Surplus & Survival:

www.MajorSurplusSurvival.com

Cabelas: www.Cabelas.com

Duluth Trading Company:

www.DuluthTrading.com

Backcountry: www.BackCountry.com

eBay: www.eBay.com

There also are consignment sporting good stores around that handle camping equipment that are in good condition but no longer needed. Get your Scout in the habit of using a backpack for every campout because he will be able to keep all his gear together instead of having it tossed around loose – a sleeping bag here, a duffel bag there, a sleeping pad who knows where. We do hike to campsites at summer camp and sometimes at weekend campouts. The boy should be able to pack everything he needs for a weekend in a backpack with no other bags needed.

Summary:

Here are a few tips to help you select the proper equipment for your son to use on campouts and backpack trips with the troop. You can equip your son for a very reasonable price, and you don't have to buy all the equipment at once. Garage sales are good places to pick up some great deals but take care not to waste your money on outdated or worn out gear. Since there are literally millions of Scouts and since they ALL camp, the major camping gear makers (especially Coleman) carry special lines of good, boy-sized equipment at affordable prices. Much of it even has the word "scouts" or "scout sized" on it.

To get started and since you may not know what brands of equipment are good for your son to use, you may want to consider renting equipment. Appalachian Outfitters will rent equipment, and the rental fee goes towards the purchase of their equipment.

As you shop, do not hesitate to ask store personnel for suggestions or tips. Also feel free to ask any of the Troop Leaders about suggested gear for boys. But your best reference guide on clothing needs and camping gear needs is – ta-da – the Boy Scout Handbook. Not only does it show the equipment but it also describes use and proper care. At our weekly meetings we sometimes will discuss equipment and gear so you may want to consider sitting in on those nights to see what other members of the troop use.

Since your son is getting older, it may be a little difficult to know what to get him for Christmas or birthdays - he is getting too old for toys but still too young to really want clothing. Camping equipment is the best gift, especially because of the range in price from a dollar or two to, well, up there. So the next time Aunt Martha or Grandma asks for a gift suggestion, mention padded hiking socks or a self-inflating sleeping pad.