

- Also attached:
1. Introduction to Outdoor Equipment for New Scouts
 2. Cold Weather Camping "Must Have" List
 3. List of Outdoor Equipment Suppliers
 4. Buying a Backpack, Sleeping Bag

Winter Trips: Staying Safe and Comfortable

1. STAY DRY AND KEEP YOUR THINGS DRY. Dampness makes you cold. Use outer shell layers of clothing that shed snow so you don't get wet. Tuck clothes in and zip up parkas. Lace boots up snugly and pull snow pants over the top or use gaiters. Don't get sweaty – take layers off as you warm up. Know where things are in your pack. Take care not to let things fall in the snow. If they do, brush them off quickly. Use Ziplocks and plastic garbage bags for dry storage.

2. IF YOU ARE COLD, TAKE ACTION RIGHT AWAY – DON'T WAIT.

- Put on more layers, including a hat and neck gaiter or scarf, zip up and tuck in.
- Run around for few minutes exerting as much energy as possible
- Have a high-energy snack and/or warm drink.
- If you are done for the day and you are wet, change into dry clothes.

3. EAT AND DRINK - THE MORE THE BETTER. **Food:** Gorp, granola, nuts, raisins, energy bars, candy bars, cheese, salami, goldfish or crackers are all excellent. Whatever you like that is high in calories. Cut things like cheese and salami up before leaving home – frozen food is hard to cut. **Drink:** Staying hydrated is critical to staying warm. Fill your bottle with hot water and drink mix. Keep it from freezing during the day by putting it inside your pack rather than in an outside pocket.

4. MOST IMPORTANT: WATCH FOR SIGNS OF FROSTBITE AND HYPOTHERMIA IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS. TELL AN ADULT IF:

- You can't feel some of your toes or fingers
- You see white splotches on someone's nose, cheeks or ears
- You or someone else is shivering and can't stop
- Someone is acting clumsy or is unusually quiet

Set up a buddy system before you go.

TIPS ON HOW TO STAY WARM AND COMFORTABLE AT NIGHT IN WINTER:

- Eat a big dinner and then eat a high energy snack right before bed.
- Bring an extra sleeping bag or a liner if you have a summer bag. Put one inside the other. Fluff out your bag(s) well before bedtime.
- Bring two foam pads to stretch out under your whole bag. Or put your empty pack under your lower legs and feet. Get your whole bag off the tent floor.
- Save a dry pair of clothes or long underwear for sleeping in. Wear your hat and scarf. Or, sleep in everything you have on, including snow pants, as long as they are dry.
- Safety pin your parka to your sleeping bag over your chest.
- If you have to "go" at night, don't try to hold it – you'll sleep better and warmer if you just get up and do it.
- If all of your gloves or socks or boot liners are damp, bring at least one pair into your sleeping bag to help dry them out.
- Be meticulous about keeping snow out of the tent.
- Leave an opening at the top of the tent door for water vapor to escape – the tent won't be so full of frost crystals in the morning.
- Make sure your spare clothes are protected from getting wet.
- Don't mix damp and dry clothes.

Introduction to Outdoor Equipment for New Scouts and Parents

The introductory information on this page is provided again for your review.

As with everything else, camping is more fun when you are prepared and have the right equipment. However, that does not mean that you have to go to REI and EMS to have them outfit you with all the best gear. Here are some guidelines and suggestions:

- Eventually scouts should have a full complement of equipment. For their first trip or two we want to make sure they are at least warm and dry. With a little experience, they will have a better idea what they need.
- The two places not to cut corners are on hiking boots and a sleeping bag. Unfortunately the boys are growing so fast that they will likely outgrow boots before they wear them out.
- Make sure boots are waterproofed and worn several times before they are worn on a hike.
- Official Boy Scout gear from the store is not necessary. See attached supply sites and watch for sales on-line.
- Backpacks are particularly difficult because the boys are growing. See attached discussion.
- Your son will not need a tent. The Troop owns tents.
- Avoid cotton, particularly in the winter. Historically wool has been the material of choice but it has largely been supplanted by fleece and polypropylene.
- Layers of clothing are better than one big, heavy jacket.
- Camping gear makes a great gift for birthdays and holidays.
- If you have any questions, please ask.

Personal Overnight Camping Gear -

The Boy Scout Handbook (page 224) is an excellent source for a list of camping equipment. The list below largely comes from the handbook. On the attached pages you will also find some additional comments and advice on winter camping prepared by Trina Waters as well as some recommendations for places to purchase equipment. Pack extra clothes in plastic bags. Ziplocks keep the moisture out, and can be vacuum packed.

Minimum Requirements:

- Scout Handbook
- Pocketknife (*sheath knives are not allowed*)
- Personal first aid kit (*see first aid requirements page 289*)
- Rain gear (*poncho is easy to pack and very useful*)
- 2 pairs extra poly/wool socks (*poly sock liners are great for warmth and to prevent blisters*)
- Hiking boots (*waterproofed and broken in*)
- Extra clothing appropriate for the weather (*see below*)
- Water bottle – 1 liter
- Flashlight with fresh batteries and extra batteries
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Compass with a base plate and orienting arrow
- Backpack (*see suggestions below*)
- Rain cover for backpack (*plastic trash bag works*)
- Sleeping bag appropriate for the temperature and rolled in a waterproof bag (*Put a kitchen size trash bag in the stuff sack before stuffing in the sleeping bag.*)
- Sleeping pad – Foam or Therm-A-Rest
- Eating utensils (*I would not recommend a mess kit but rather suggest a heavier weight, Lexan-type plastic bowl, plate spoon and fork and a plastic insulated cup*)
- Personal care items

Cold Weather Camping “MUST HAVE” List:

Always check the weather forecast when you pack and again before your leave, and always remember it can be wrong. It's most useful for deciding how warmly to dress and if there might be ANY chance of rain or wet snow. The colder or wetter, the better organized you and your pack need to be. No matter what the forecast in winter bring everything listed below.

If your scout doesn't have something below, consider adult items you might have. Better to have too much than too little, within reason. Bring options to the pack check or ask. Need we add this isn't a fashion contest.

- Warm 3 season mummy-style sleeping bag rated to 20-25 deg. minimum. Rental possible. Beefing up your mummy bag is possible: add a liner, a lightweight down summer bag, pin your parka across your chest, increase the padding under you, wear more dry clothes inside your bag, even slippers.
- 1 WARM hat that covers ears. A spare is recommended.
- 2 pr. WARM mittens or ski gloves minimum, more would be better, especially a light pair for dexterity. Gloves get wet quickly and are hard to dry out. Shelled mittens and gloves are better, but fleece is ok as second or third pair.
- 1 scarf or neck gaiter
- Long underwear top and bottom
- Insulated winter boots or high-top waterproof hiking boots worn with two pairs of warm socks (with two changes of socks). Boots with removable liners are ideal
- 3 pairs or sets of warm socks. Tip: bring a couple of plastic bags to use as liners to protect your dry change of socks if your boots are soaked. This is Craig Weeks' trick and scouts say it works.
- Insulated snow pants, or warm fleece pants with shell
- 2 fleece or sweater layers
- Winter parka that fits over other layers
- Complete change of clothes, for sleeping or emergency. A second set of synthetic long underwear is ideal, cotton is OK.
- 100% waterproof rain jacket and pants if there even a 1:1,000 chance of rain or wet snow. Big enough to fit over several layers.
- Water bottle filled with WARM drink – tang or lemonade are good
- Snack foods – Lots! High energy = high calorie. Gorp, nuts, crackers, cheese and salami, granola bars, candy.
- Other standard personal camping equipment as listed in scout handbook, p. 224.

Note: Cotton is not recommended as a material on outdoor trips, summer or winter. When cotton is dry it's fine, but when it gets wet, it loses all of its insulating properties, and is extremely hard to dry out. No cotton sweatshirts, jeans or socks. Cotton is OK for a spare pair of clothes.

Recommended but Optional Winter Gear:

- Gaiters – tubes of nylon with velcro or zippers that keep snow out of boots.
- Breathable nylon shell clothing. Trina's eternal mantra: It's impossible to keep scouts out of the snow, but it's important to keep snow off the scouts. Scouts get hot, take off their parkas, play in the snow, snow collects on their fleece, melts, and voila, there they are, all wet while winter camping, which is a big NO NO for safety and comfort. A light shell layer prevents this.
- Ski poles or hiking poles with baskets – very helpful with snowshoes when you get into one of those “awkward” situations.
- Headlamp – keeps hands free to work in the dark, or dark corners of the hut.
- Slippers or booties (luxury item)
- Earplugs for hut (adults take heed)

Buying a Backpack

External vs. internal frame backpacks:

When you start to do backpacking trips, even into a hut, it's time to find a backpack with a hipbelt. If you aren't ready to buy one, the troop has several backpacks to lend out, and packs can be rented from EMS and REI. If you are ready to buy, read on:

Backpacks have either an "external frame" (where the frame, usually aluminum, is visible) or an "internal frame" (where the frame is built into the pack). External frame packs are increasingly being supplanted by internal frame packs. While we used to recommend external frame packs for scouts, now it's a toss-up.

External frame packs are somewhat easier to adjust to a growing body, large in capacity, and easy to access due to outside pockets. Their main disadvantage is they are not always comfortable, and the frame can get in the way when scootching over boulders or down steep trails. In the past, internal frame packs have tended to be more expensive, had less volume, and have been less accessible and less adjustable for growing bodies. However, there is now at least one internal frame pack that has overcome most of these restrictions. Internal packs tend to be more comfortable, and this is what most adults now buy unless they are hauling extremely heavy or unwieldy loads.

External frame choices:

There are several external frame models on the market. Whether to get a medium or large frame depends on the size of your child. If at all possible, go large. Look at packs online and then pick out one or two to try at stores before purchasing. At the store load up the pack with weight (25-30 lb. - they will have bags of sand or similar), and fit the pack with store help. Make sure the weight of the pack can rest entirely on the hips with just a t-shirt on by cinching up the hip belt strap, and that the frame is big enough for several years of growth (distance between hip belt and shoulder strap must be expandable).

To try on external frame packs, the Scout Store probably has the best selection. Campmor mail order has good prices. Kelty is one reasonably priced, reputable brand. The Kelty Yukon 2900 with telescoping frame is probably a good bet, \$100 at Scout store, \$80 at Campmor. Youth and adult versions. Avoid cheaper plastic external frames, such as those made by Outdoor Products, unless you just plan to use it for short trips for a year or two (OK for first year scouts who aren't passionate about hiking and backpacking).

Internal frame choices:

One internal frame pack in particular stands out for younger scouts: the Kelty Coyote 4500 or 4750. It is comfortable, adjustable for growth up to about 5'8", can take small or big loads, has functional lash points, and is reasonably priced. Perhaps best of all it has 4 large outside pockets that improve accessibility. This is a very versatile pack, not too heavy or gimmicky, and well made. Chris Waters has been using his for 2 years and swears by it – he won't hike in anything else. Find last year's 4500 model now at Sierra Trading Post for \$90, and the 4750 at the Scout store for \$130. The Kelty Red Cloud 5000 or 5600 are also worth looking at, though I haven't seen these up close. There are of course hundreds of packs out there to choose from.

When you buy a pack also buy 1- 2 pairs of 1" nylon straps with fastex buckles (36-48" length). These straps make it easy to securely attach pads, tents, snowshoes, and other bulky gear. About \$2.00 each.

Buying a Sleeping Bag

As Gini writes in the introduction to gear, a sleeping bag is something to invest in – you'll have it for a long time. Buy a warmer adult-sized 3-season mummy bag with quality synthetic insulation (Delta, Polarguard, Holofil or similar. Not down!) which is rated to at least 20 deg. or less. The insulation will lose its loft (and thus warmth) over time – inevitable. You can always unzip the bag in summer if it's hot. A draft tube along the zipper, and a way of making a hood at the top with a drawstring are must-haves. A baffle ringing the neck/shoulder area is a nice extra, but not common. The bag should weigh between 3 - 4.25 pounds and should compress down to backpacking dimensions. A stuff bag with compression straps helps. Look for sales and at outlets. Some mummies are tighter widthwise than others, but for most scouts this isn't a problem. The scout should be comfortable in the bag with a full set of winter clothes on. Expect to pay \$100-120 on sale for a good one. Less if you are lucky.

Sources for Outdoor Equipment

BEST BETS:

Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS) 781-229-9797 www.ems.com

91 Middlesex Turnpike (same strip mall complex as Tower Records and Staples)

The closest outdoor equipment store, and they rent Troop 119 equipment for free, so let's patronize EMS when possible! They have an "organization day" when everything in store is 20% off, and may be providing us with coupons occasionally. Limited clothing in youth sizes - adult small often works. EMS has other stores in the area.

Recreation Equipment Incorporated (REI) 781-944-5103 www.rei.com

279 Salem St., Reading. Take exit 40 off 128, go ¼ around circle. REI is less than 100 yds down on the left, next to the DMV. 15-20 min. from Lexington.

REI is a large national chain that also does mail-order. More selection than EMS. If you join the co-op (not mandatory), you get notice of sales and about 8% back at year end. Check out REI OUTLET tab at website. Avoid shipping fees by picking up mail orders at the store! REI has other stores in area.

Campmor 1-800-CAMPMOR www.campmor.com

Mail order company out of NJ that provides a gigantic selection of camping and outdoor equipment at fair or discounted prices. Photos online are better than thumbnail sketches in newsprint catalog, but catalog is very comprehensive. Campmor brand (basic but functional) rainwear, gaiters, etc. is some of cheapest around.

BSA Scout Shops National Sales/Catalog: 1-800-323-0732 www.scoutstuff.org

Closest store: 23 Turnpike Road (Rt.9), Southborough, 508-229-2396

Good for backpacks (though full price), one stop shopping

OTHER OPTIONS:

Sierra Trading Post 1800-713-4534 www.sierratradingpost.com

Mail order company out of Wyoming that carries brand name gear at discount prices – closeouts, etc. Some good deals, particularly on synthetic long underwear.

Bob Smith's Wilderness House (formerly Wilderness House) 1-617-277-5858

1048 Commonwealth Ave (In BU area off Storrow Drive)

Best selection of top-line (and pricey) outdoor equipment.

Decathlon Sports 781-270-9200

43A Middlesex Turnpike, behind Market Basket on Lowell St.

Sometimes has good prices on outdoor clothing, footwear and synthetic socks.

Old Navy oldnavy.com

43 Middlesex Turnpike, in same strip mall as Market Basket

Convenient, cheap source for fleece, and often for nylon pants, etc. Watch for cotton linings though.

Costco At present Costco has 3 packs of wool hiking socks for \$10. Head brand. Size Medium for most scouts.

Play it Again Sports 781-438-2399

62E Montvale Avenue, Stoneham; ½ mile or so after passing under I93 in Plaza on right.

Used sports equipment, including cross country ski, downhill ski and snowboard equipment. Shop pre-season for best selection.

Wal-Mart Good prices on car camping equipment such as Coleman stoves.