

Boy Scout Troop 5 Yonkers, NY
Camping Gear Guide
(Revised October 2010)

Boy Scout Camping

Unlike Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts focus much of their activity on outdoor camping. Learning to hike, canoe, swim, appreciate and conserve Nature, handle trail emergencies and injuries, make camp, cook food, and sleep comfortably outdoors are some of the principal goals of Boy Scouting.

There is often much confusion among parents and newer Scouts about what sort of gear is needed for camping with the Boy Scouts. There is also confusion about where to buy gear, how much it costs, and how to choose the best gear. This Camping Gear Guide for Scouts is an attempt to provide some advice, based on the experience of Troop 5 leaders, on these questions. (This Guide is not an official publication of the Boy Scouts of America.)

Taking some time to read this over before going shopping for camping gear can save you some time, money, and aggravation.

Gear Expense

If you go out now and buy all the gear that a Scout would find useful camping, you will spend some big bucks. A complete outfit could easily cost several hundred dollars. But you don't need to do that!

First, you don't have to buy everything new. You can ask friends, relatives, neighbors, former Scouts, and others you know who go camping to borrow some of their gear. Also, check the classified newspaper ads for used gear for sale. You can also check online, on websites such as www.eBay.com for used gear deals.

Also, you don't have to get everything at once.

Lots of camping gear is nice to have but not essential for a typical weekend Scout campout. We'll indicate below what you HAVE to have and what is NICE to have. Borrow or buy the basics and get the "nice" stuff as time goes on.

Where to Shop

Parents are sometimes bewildered about where to find quality camping gear at reasonable prices. While we do not endorse any retailer, we make suggestions about stores to consider for useable gear at fair prices:

-The Scout Shop, in Hawthorne, NY on 41 Saw Mill River Road, Open Mon-Fri 9:00am-5:00pm, is the local official Boy Scout supply site. It has traditional Boy Scout gear (not always state-of-the-art and not always inexpensive) that is always sturdy and time-tested. You can't go wrong there (but you can most times do better elsewhere) It is not my first choice.

-CAMPMOR, a one-of-a-kind camping superstore near I-80 on Rte. 17 in Paramus, NJ, a 1/2 hour drive from the G.W. THE BEST PLACE to get quality camping gear at reasonable prices from terrific salespeople-- world-famous for the largest. GO! (we get no kickbacks!) (You can also check online at Troop 5 Camping Gear Guide

www.campmor.com or call, mail order: telephone 1-800-CAMPMOR for a free catalog)

-Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS) in (Scarsdale) Eastchester, NY on 693 White Plains Post Road, is a nice outdoor gear shop with friendly/knowledgeable salespeople. Their gear is always high-quality but sometimes pricey. Check 'em out.

- Cabela's in East Hartford, CT on 475 E. Hartford Blvd., open Monday-Friday 8:00am- 9:00 pm, Saturday 8:00am- 9:00 pm and Sunday 10:00am- 8:00 pm. Its about 1 hour and change drive. Has nice stuff at a good price. I'm impressed. It's a haul but its worth the drive. Check 'em out.

NO SPORTS AUTHORITY AND WAL-MART UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!! BAD CUSTOMER SERVICE , POOR QUALITY PRODUCTS, SUBPAR INVENTORY OPERATION, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY- FANCY JUNK.

-REI, ON 189 Connecticut Avenue in Norwalk, CT (about an hour- maybe less away) the nearby store of a national campers co-operative selling quality gear(their own brand and others) at reasonable prices. Worth the drive.

-Army-Navy Stores has basic no-frills gear at reasonable prices gear, but selection is poor during cold seasons and sales help scarce. Their stuff will work but is not top quality or durability.

Suggestion: Buy the "big stuff" you'll use for years (backpack, sleeping bag, hiking boots) at Campmor, EMS, REI or Cabela's and get the rest where you find the best price and service.

-Key to remember, for camping for years, -as we hope you will---junk costs more than quality. If you buy poor quality in an essential piece of gear (say, a sleeping bag) it's worse than useless; because it's "almost right" you'll try to "make do" rather than replace it. We've seen too many boys shivering in cheap sleeping bags who think that it's normal to have to sleep with every stitch of clothing you have.

The old saying: buy quality once, buy cheap over and over, is true.

Better to borrow or buy used good-quality gear than buy new junk.

The Camping Essentials

What does your son really need to have to go camping and have a happy outdoor experience? Here's the Basic Eight on the short list:

- Backpack
- Sleeping Bag
- Hiking Boots
- Raingear
- Meal Kit
- Flashlight
- Compass
- Appropriate clothing

We'll cover each in detail below:

The Pack

One of the things it's sometimes hard for younger Scouts to fully realize is that there are no bedroom closets or dresser drawers on a camping trip. You've got to take along with you whatever you want to have in the outdoors. What do you take that "stuff" IN?

That depends on how you're going to get "there". If you're going to drive to the campsite and then carry from the car to the tent is no more than a few hundred yards-- a situation that is frequent in Boy Scout camping-- you only need a duffel bag (a medium-to large-size canvas or nylon sack with a long zipper.) You can use an old suitcase if you want, although they may be hard to lug around, since they usually don't have shoulder straps. You want a duffel bag about 30 inches long and at least 12-14 inches wide, a dark color and a sturdy fabric. One or two pockets in the duffel bag are nice to carry small items. You can buy duffel bags in any of the stores noted Price \$20-60.

But if you can't get closer than that to the campsite than a mile or two (the Scout Leaders will let you know before you go), you'll need a backpack, not a duffel bag. A backpack has a system of straps and supports designed to make it relatively easy for you to carry substantial weight a long distance on foot. They aren't cheap but - along with a sleeping bag, hiking boots and raingear--they are the most important personal camping gear you need to have.

Key: Spend time shopping until you find the right pack, find a good salesperson (who camps themselves), and don't leave the store until you've thoroughly tested the pack, packed with a real load, walked around and the pack feels right.

Packs come in roughly three types: daypacks or knapsacks, external frame backpacks, and internal frame backpacks. Each has their best uses and ardent fans. (Another way of categorizing backpacks is manufacturer's estimates of the total volume of "stuff" you can stuff into them, expressed in cubic inches (cu.in.) Those numbers are approximate and not precise.)

All three types of packs are essentially bags made of various-strength fabrics, usually nylon, with fabric straps and (for framed packs) plastic or metal supporting pieces to balance the "load". The fabrics used range (in strength, weight and price) from fairly-thin "packcloth" nylon, to heavier "Cordura" nylon, to the strongest "ballistic" nylon (sometimes listed by "denier", a fabric-strength measurement, often from about 500-denier(packcloth) to 1000-denier (ballistic.) All are coated with a water-repellant.

A daypack or knapsack is a frameless bag (400 to 2,500 cu.in.) with straps, ranging in styles from "fanny packs" to traditional knapsacks (like the book bags used for school.) Most are made of lightweight packcloth but some are of tougher Cordura. A daypack doesn't need the stiff framework you need to carry a big, overnight load over a distance, so even if it had enough room you wouldn't want it on a weekend trip. But for a daytime hike, a medium-sized (about 1,800 cu. In.) daypack (like your book bag) is all you need. Useful stuff: some padding along the back so item don't jab you in the back while hiking, padded straps for comfort, inside or outside pockets. Price \$30-60.

For an overnight trip, you'll need something more. Most backpacks have for many years used an external frame backpack ("external") to carry their overnight "stuff". Externals typically are sized to carry anywhere from 3,000 cu.in. to over 6,000 cu.in. (the latter "expedition" size is for far more than you'd need to take on a weekend.) They are made from packcloth, Cordura or "ballistic" nylon and frequently have several outside pockets to store water bottles and other small gear. Some are a single bag, others are divided into an upper and lower compartment (with a sleeve running between them inside, for long items like tent poles.) Some have a single opening with flap at the top ("top-loaders") and some have a flap at the top and another zippered opening for the bottom ("panel-loaders").

The key ingredient of an external is its H-shaped frame, made of aluminum tubing, from which the bag hangs: the frame carries the load of your gear and through the geometry of the design concentrates that load-- with the help of padded straps and padded waist belt stabilizing the whole package--onto your lower back and hips, allowing you to carry more weight for longer distances than you could with a frameless knapsack (which places all the weight on your shoulders.) The frame also lifts the load off your back, aiding ventilation in summer. Frames come in a number of sizes and some are even adjustable for growing bodies. The pack bag usually occupies the top $\frac{3}{4}$ of the external frame, with the bottom $\frac{1}{4}$ of the frame available for convenient strapping-on of a sleeping bag and pad.

Size and fit are very important for an external frame backpack (or for an internal frame backpack.) If the pack is not the right size for your body (and, if you're growing, it might not stay that way for long), the load will hurt your shoulders, back and hips and you will tire easily. If you buy a bag that has too much capacity for the weekend trips common in Scouting (like one of the 6,000 cu.in. monsters), you will throw in so much stuff that the weight alone will collapse you in a few miles of hiking. If the straps and belts are not adjusted properly or you pack it improperly, even the right size backpack will hurt your body and tire you out.

Packing an external frame backpack properly requires thought: for the weight to be distributed properly to your hips, most of the heavier gear in an external-frame needs to be near the top and close to your body. Stand the pack up for loading. First, lash your sleeping bag (packed as recommended below) and sleeping pad onto the bottom of the pack frame, below the pack bag. Second, line the entire inside of the bag with a plastic trash bag to waterproof the contents. Next, load in the lightest-weight, bulkiest stuff (clothing, etc.) in the bottom of the bag, placing a soft, fluffy item closest to your back for comfort. Then, load the mid-weight gear (personal items, flashlight, camera, heavier clothing, etc.) in the middle part of the bag. Finally, the heaviest items (meal kit, food, stove/fuel, etc.) into the top portion of the bag, placing your raingear on top under the flap. If you're packing a tent, lash the poles and tent bag onto the frame above the pack bag. Water bottles, maps, rope, matches, compass, first aid kit, etc. go in the external pockets. Long items like a collapsible fishing rod get lashed onto the frame. Secure everything tightly. Have someone help you into the pack.

Internal frame backpacks("intervals") have now overtaken externals in popularity among active campers. While externals are great for lugging heavy loads on mostly-flat trails, they have one disadvantage: when packed properly, the heaviest gear is at the top (where the frame channels the load to your hips) and can start the whole apparatus swinging and swaying if you lean too far one way or the other on uneven terrain. Internals solve this problem by moving the load-steadying framework inside the pack itself, using aluminum or plastic straws sewn into the back fabric of the pack. Internals are designed for the gear to be stuffed tightly inside the bag and cinched tight against your back with a number of straps and clasps, thereby eliminating the swaying found in externals and making internals superior for cross-country hiking on uneven terrain. Internals snag fewer tree branches and get through tighter spots than do externals. But with the gear against your back, ventilation suffers in summer (lessened some by meshwork that lifts the pack a little.)

And internal frame packs are generally more expensive. Internals tend to have larger listed capacities, because they differ from externals in that sleeping bag is packed inside an internal's bag, not outside on a frame as with an external. So when comparing capacities of externals and internals, subtract about 1,200 cu.in. from the internal's stated capacity to allow for storage of the sleeping bag. Internals, usually have few, if any, outside pockets. Also remember: internals are harder to pack correctly and harder to access bottom-stowed gear than externals.

Packing an internal frame backpack is different from loading an external. Without an external frame, the contents of an internal are part of the load-bearing structure. Therefore, everything must be packed very tightly. Lay the pack down on its back for loading. Try to pack a layer of soft clothing against the side of the pack that will be against your back. Pack the densest, heaviest, items near the bottom and against this

soft layer, as close to your back as possible. Fill in the rest of your stuff so that the entire pack is tightly packed. It is very important to use all the straps and buckles on an internal to secure the load properly, as close to your body as possible. Make sure an expert salesperson shows you how to do this the right way before you leave the store.

So, with limitations to both externals and internals, which type backpack to choose? Ah, that's a perennial debate among backpackers we can't solve here. The short answer is: many beginning backpackers find externals easier to pack and easier for carrying the heavy loads they stuff into them (often because they've packed more than they really need!), while many experienced backpackers prefer to carry less by packing more thoughtfully into an internal. The "best one" is the one that fits your boy best!

Backpack recommendations:

-If you want to buy an external frame backpack for an 11-16 year old boy Boy Scout: Look for an adjustable aluminum frame top-loading bag with a capacity of about 3,000-4,000 cu.in. made of packcloth (or Cordura, if you can afford it), with 4 or 5 external pockets. Quality brands include Camp Trails, Kelty, or REI Price \$80-150.

-If you want to buy an internal frame backpack for an 11-16 year old Boy Scout: Look for a Cordura or "ballistics" nylon bag in a capacity of about 4,000-5,000 cu.in, with good straps for adjustment. Quality brands include Kelty, Gregory, Osprey, ArcTerxx, or REI. Price \$100-250.

Additions:

Tony's Picks:

-The A.L.I.C.E. Pak- It Retail between \$50-75. If you pay more for it, you're getting ripped off. I find it comfortable, well rugged, and suited for bigger guys like myself. It's better made than your Keltys, Ospreys, REI's, Gregory's etc.. It's nearly \$50-70 cheaper. You'll find it at any military-Army/Navy surplus store. Although there aren't too many around, but an abundant amount of on-line military-Army/Navy stores exist on the Internet.

-A.L.I.C.E. Paks will not be sold "brand new". They get "re-conditioned" and sent out to military retailers. In my book, they are just as good as new. I swear by this pack. There are too many pro's to list in this guide and no cons to think of for the ALICE pak. In case you're wondering, I got mine at "The Duffel Bag" in Patterson, NY at 1270 Rt. 311(Intersection of Rt. 311 and Rt. 22) It's an old-fashioned military surplus store and the last of it's kind! Although it's about the size of your normal garage, it's got some other good stuff too! About an 1 hour ride---well worth the trip (Call 845-878-7106 for hours and directions) One more thing about the A.L.I.C.E. pak, make sure you get the medium size- small is "too small". Large is "too big"- Medium is just right. Boy Scouts won't be able to take the large's weight.

-The Kelty Trekker 3950 - I had it as a Scout. Retail for about \$140. You can normally find it at EMS. In a pinch-must-have go to Kelty.com This pack has been around for more than 5 decades. It's a simple, comfortable, lightweight,external frame favorite.

The Sleeping Bag

A bad pack will make you tired and bad boots will make you limp, but a bad sleeping bag will make you miserable- for at least 8 hours, in the dark. And if it were really cold, a bad bag could endanger you.

What kind of quality sleeping bag you need depends upon how you intend to camp. If you will be camping in the New York summer and never in the rain, almost any inexpensive sleeping bag (or even a couple of wool blankets folded together) will do. But if, as boys in most Scouts troops do, you plan to camp during the Spring, Summer and Fall, on clear evenings and in cold, damp downpours in a tent, you

a little better. To buy a sleeping bag wisely, you need to know something about what they're made of and to know how your body keeps warm while sleeping:

Don't let your boy go camping with a poor-quality cotton-filled sleeping bag from Uncle Bob that rolls up to the size of Mt. Everest and won't keep him warm!

How To Sleep Outside: Sleeping bags don't "keep the cold out", they keep your warmth in. If you go to bed with a cold, damp, thirsty, un-fed body, nothing will keep you warm. Always go to bed after a warm meal, a drink of water, a brisk walk, and in clean, dry clothing. Wear a hat if it's cold: half your body heat escapes from your head (as grandma said "if your feet are cold, put on your hat".)

So how's a sleeping bag keep you warm while sleeping?

INSULATION: The thicker and puffier the materials around your body while you sleep, the warmer you will be. Regardless of the type of insulation, the thicker it is, the warmer you are. The two kinds of insulators used in sleeping bags are natural goose down and synthetic, high-tech polyester fiber (of various brand names.)

Neither is perfect and each has its strengths. (Avoid any sleeping bag stuffed with generic "polyester" or cotton: it won't keep you warm and is too heavy.)

Ounce-for-ounce, goose down is the best insulator in the world. It is lighter (it's mostly feathers!) and lasts longer than any other insulator. It also costs more. And it is completely useless if you let it get soaking wet. (So: DON'T!)

High-tech, synthetic polyester fibers (brand-names like Polarguard, Primaloft, LiteLoft, Microloft, Quallofil and Hollofil) still work (a little) when wet and cost less than down, but require more thickness to provide equal insulation and go flat (and useless) in a few years of use.

Sleeping bag manufacturer's list a "temperature rating" on their labels, like "for down to 20 degrees F." or "for down to -5 degrees F." You should take these with a grain of salt, because there is no industry standard for testing such claims and because every person sleeps differently as to "cold" or "hot". You can use the temperature ratings to roughly gauge the "warmth" of the various models within a manufacturer's line but they are not much good for comparing different brands' models. In general, thickness of the bag is the key warmth factor: you'll need at least a thickness of 3-4 inches of insulation over you for sleeping outdoors in New York from late Spring until early Fall, more if you intend to sleep out in November or March (cold Winter camping requires a bag at least 6 inches thick.)

Regardless of the type of installation stuffing a sleeping bag, better-quality bags will have a nylon fabric cover. Good fabric features to look for include: "rip-stop" type weave, "micro fiber" fabric (inherently wind-and-water resistant), a water-repellant coating for damp weather, or (for considerably more money) a breathable waterproof fabric (such as Goretex, DryLoft, or DWR) lets sweat vapor out and keeps dampness out. The bag should also have a "draft tube" (a stuffed interior flap) along the inside of the zipper and around your neck area to keep out cold drafts.

What kind of sleeping bag to buy? Campers have debated this forever. (Remember the "internal frame - external frame" backpack debate?) Some say only synthetic makes sense for the often-wet climate of New York (but how did you get your bag wet anyway?-- see Sleeping Bag Care, below.) Others say one down bag for \$300 in 15 years is a lot cheaper than the 4 or 5 \$100 synthetic bags you'll have to buy over the same period.

What is the most important to you: durability, price, wet use , weight?

Sleeping bag recommendations:

-If you're on a tighter budget (and don't mind buying another bag in 3 or 4 years), look for a good-quality, "mummy"-style synthetic bag stuffed with Polarguard, Primaloft or Microloft (the more-durable synthetics ,avoid Hollofil and Quallofil), focusing on bags with listed temperature ranges of between "+20 degrees F." and "+5 degrees F, depending upon how close to Winter you intend to camp out. Quality brands include : The North Face, Marmot, Mountain Hardwear, REI (avoid Slumberjack or Peak) Price \$150-250.

-If you can afford it, buy a "mummy"-style goose down or better-quality synthetic-fill bag, including a sturdy fabric from a good company, focusing on bags with listed temperature ranges of between "+20 degrees F" and +5 degrees F", depending upon how close to Winter you intend to camp out (bags with **higher-temperature ratings will be too cold in the Spring and Fall, those with ratings of "0 degrees F" or below will be too hot in summer.**)

Quality brands include: The North Face, Marmot, Moonstone, Mountain Hardwear, REI, (avoid Slumberjack and Peak ,poor durability.) Look for end-of-season sales and closeouts of last year's models (quality doesn't change) for better buys. Price \$200-350.

REMEMBER: for the first few camping trips, you can always borrow a good-quality sleeping bag from other Scouts or family/friends, rather than waste money on a new, cheaply-made sleeping bag that your boy will shiver in!

Key buying tip: It's essential when buying a sleeping bag to climb right into it there on the store's floor, roll around and make sure you have enough room in the shoulders, hips and feet. (Sleeping bags come in T

the preferred “mummy” style that has a stuffed “hood” for your head and that hugs your body for warmth but has less “toss-and-turn” room and “rectangular” hood-less style that lets you roll around but sleeps much colder.) You want some extra room at the bottom for growth and to stow your boots or a water bottle if you want to keep them from freezing overnight. You can get a sleeping bag with the zipper either on the left or right side, as you prefer. And make sure the zipper moves easily without snagging the fabric. Does it fit easily in its “stuff sack?”

-Sleeping bag Care suggestions: More than for any other gear, sleeping bag care is crucial.

-Packing the bag properly for a trip is most important: first, stuff (we mean “stuff” like stuffing a sausage) -never try to neatly fold a sleeping bag into its sack) the bag onto its stuff sack (it should fit fairly easily - if you didn’t check this before buying, go buy a larger nylon stuff sack for it now) next, place the packed stuff sack inside a sturdy plastic trash bag, twist the top closed and tie it off with strong cord or shock cord (cut off the excess plastic bag material); finally , place the whole package inside a slightly-larger nylon stuff sack (available at the recommended stores, price about \$7.) (You now have a completely waterproof container for your sleeping bag, with the plastic-bag liner protected from abrasion inside and out by 2 nylon bags- so how can your goose down bag get wet now?)

-Use a sleeping pad (the self-inflating Therma-Rest pad from Cascade is the preference of most backpackers, price: about \$60) to keep rocks out of your back and increase the warmth of your bag by lifting it off the cold ground. You can also buy a less-expensive RidgeRest closed-cell roll-up pad for about \$20 , that’s only a little thinner/harder but works fine.

-When you get to your campsite and erect your tent (or at least an hour or two before you go to bed), get that bag out of its stuff sack and shake it out- it’s the fluffiness that keeps you warm, so don’t keep it crammed-up.

-Never sleep with your tent sealed-up tight: condensation from your breathing will shower your bag with dampness. Keep a flap cracked open a few inches near the peak on each end of the tent to encourage ventilation.

-If you’re camping for more that a few days - especially if it’s been rainy- air-out the sleeping bag on a line between trees or on a sun-drenched rock. Water and condensation will rob its insulation of its warmth.

-DON’T store your sleeping bag inside its stuff sack between trips! - it will quickly lose it’s ability to “fluff-up” and you’ll be cold. Store the bag opened flat on a closet shelf or inside a large cotton bag (or large pillowcase), so the bag can sit uncompressed.

-Wash your sleeping bag as infrequently as possible (keep dirt and mud off it in your tent) because detergent and dryers can break down the bag’s insulation until it’s useless. NEVER dry-clean any sleeping bag (the dry-cleaning chemicals with ruin the insulation fibers.) When absolutely necessary, wash the bag in a large front-loading washer at a Laundromat using cold water and a little mild detergent like Ivory dishwashing;; dry the bag for 60 minutes or so (don’t over-dry) at the lowest (or “air fluff”) heat setting in a large-size Laundromat dryer (check the dryer after five minutes to make sure the heat is really only “low”.) Throw in a few tennis balls to help fluff up the bag while it dries.

-Replenish the water-repellency of the sleeping bag fabric by annually spraying it with a water-repellant labeled “sleeping bag safe” available at the stores noted above.)

Hiking Boots

You can go hiking or backpacking in basketball shoes or the shoes you wear to school-- but you probably

Won't want to do it again! Walking with a 30lb. Pack on your back over uneven ground is a lot different than walking to the 7-11 store. Adequate hiking boots are as important to a camper as a comfortable pack and a warm sleeping bag.

Everyday shoes or sneakers lack 3 things that you need for your feet on the trail: a rigid, traction sole, ankle and arch support, and water resistance. Good hiking boots have : stiff soles to protect from rocks, with lugs on the bottom for traction on rough terrain, firm arch support in the midsole, high tops that steady your ankles, and some good, top-grain leather or some kind of waterproofing to keep your feet dry in the mud. And, yes, they do cost more (so do doctor bills for leg injuries.)

Hiking boots come in several types: lightweight, non-waterproof, with flexible soles and made of cloth or cloth with leather parts(for day hiking on dry, flat trails without a backpack) ; mid-weight made of cloth and leather for all-leather, with thicker soles and waterproofing (for backpacking on rougher trails and in wet weather); and mountain or heavyweight, all-leather, with very thick, lug soles (for mountain climbing or hiking cross-country off-trail.)

The best type hiking boot for most Boy Scout backpacking is a mid-weight all leather ("Full-grain leather" is best) water-resistant boot. (Lightweight boots made with cloth are not sturdy or durable enough for rough trails and are never really waterproof, no matter what their makers claim-- only all-leather boots are. However, cloth-and-leather boots may be a necessary evil if growing feet preclude the higher cost of all-leather boots for a teenage boy- and cloth-leather boots are much better than trying to hike in sneakers. But buying a new pair of \$40 lightweight boots each year can cost more than buying one pair of \$75 leather boots that last 4 years. It depends on how fast your boy's feet are growing.

Even more than for a sleeping bag, shoe testing in the store and having qualified sales help is crucial. Go to the store late in the day (when your feet are somewhat swelled.) Wear medium wool socks or heavy acrylic hiking socks (Thorlo is the best brand). Try on different brands and styles (all "size 8's don't feel the same) Ask the salesperson questions. Resist the urge to buy the first pair you try on.

Make sure the boots have a waterproof treatment. (if they are cloth-and-leather) or are good-quality, fully-grain (shiny) leather with as few seams of stitching as possible (stitching can leak). Walk around the store in the boots- even wear a backpack - for at least a half hour. While you will need to break-in any hiking boots (by wearing them for a few days around town before the hike) , hiking boots like all shoes, should feel right in the store. If they feel bad in the store, they'll never feel better on the trail!

Fit: Lace the boots snugly. You want some room in the boot, but not so much that your feet will move around so much you get blisters. The "rule of thumb" is to try for about your thumb's width of room between your biggest toe and the front of the boot. Another test is to knock the point of the boot on the floor: if you can almost feel your biggest toe touch the front, they're probably about right (provided you don't slide around in there too much, you may want to leave a little more room for growth and because boots shorten a little with wear.) Don't get boots that are too wide: boots widen a little as you wear them. **Walk up and down an incline: your heel should stay rock-steady and not slide or lift-up when you walk.**

Hiking Boots recommendations:

-If your budget allows, look for the most comfortable full-grain, all-leather ankle-high, water resistant hiking boots with lug rubber soles (Vibram soles are good.) Quality brands include: Vasque, Asolo, Merrel, Salomon, REI. (Unlike basketball or running shoes, Nike and Reebok don't make very good hiking boots.) Price \$75-200.

-If you need a lower price, try a good-quality cloth-and-leather ankle-high hiking boot from the same brands noted above. Price \$50-100.

-An even lower-cost option is to get a good-quality, comfortable pair of ankle-high waterproof construction-worker boots (those light-tan ones?) at Army-Navy Store, Sears, or a discount store (they're not as sturdy as real hiking boots but they work much better on trails than do sneakers: you can replace them with "real" hiking boots when your budget allows.) Price \$50.

Suggestions:

Clean your boots after every campout (dried mud ruins leather) Re-waterproof your boots at least once a year. NuWax makes a great, easy cleaner/waterproofed available at the stores we noted.

Raingear:

Most boys hate raincoats. But the wet New York outdoors is no place to be caught without clothing to keep the rain, sleet and snow off you. Persuade, beg, demand your son buy and pack good raingear for camping. We have found in the Boy Scouts that few things can ruin the camping experience faster than a soaker, cold boy shivering and dripping at the end of the day. Fail to take raingear and your son will come home hating camping.

The traditional Boy Scout poncho is available but is not recommended: it blows in the wind, gets muddy easily, and is hard to wear with a backpack on the trail. A better choice is a waterproof-coated nylon or vinyl rain jacket and rain pants. (Rainpants aren't essential-- you won't get chilled just because your legs get cold and wet -- but are nice. Lightweight raingear is always desired, but should be not so thin as to tear easily.

Raingear recommendations:

Look for a lightweight, polyurethane-coated nylon rain jacket with a hood and - if your budget allows-- a pair of lightweight rain pants, available at any of the stores noted above. You don't need expensive Gore-Tex, Price \$30-70 for jacket, \$30-40 for pants.

-If you want the best raingear: quality Gore-Tex "breathable" is popular with avid backpackers and is dryer when sweating during a hike, but is very expensive. Price \$250 for a jacket, \$90 for pants.

-Get a rain hat (I know: boys hate them- but do they like hypothermia?) Rain jacket hoods can get hot and restrict vision. The best kind of rain hat is the old fisher-man's style, with the brim going down your neck. Price \$30.

Okay: we've covered the Big Ticket stuff, What's left to get?

Meal Kit

Except at summer camp, Boy Scout camping trips usually do not include Troop-provided plates, cups, or eating utensils (though sometimes the Troop will tell boys that we'll be providing disposable plates, cups and utensils on a particular camping trip, when we want to save clean-up time or when we're just making a single meal on a brief trip.) While on most camping trips the Troop provides the pots and pans, cooking tools, stoves and dishwashing gear, Scouts must bring their own plates, cups, and utensils on most camping trips. And on backpacking trips, when must carry everything on our backs, the Scout must carry not only his own plate, cup and utensils, but must bring a 1 qt. metal pot with lid and also a share of the Troop stoves, fuel and food.

Recommendation: Buy the following for meals, at any of the recommended stores (total price \$40)

-a Swiss Army knife, a minimum 2-4 inch main blade (the other tools are frills but useful are:scissors, screwdriver, can opener) (NO sheath knives are permitted in Boy Scouts !) TONY'S PIK :The huntsman swiss army model .It has everything on it a scout needs—except a corkscrew! But what's a scout gonna do with that in the middle of the woods or at home as well!

-Lexan plastic spoon (no fork needed)

-a flat bottom bowl that will hold at least 16 oz. of liquid (get them at the supermarket or discount store)

- a plastic insulated cup/mug that'll hold 12-16 oz of liquid (get them at the supermarket or discount store)

(You can substitute for all of the above, the classic "Boy Scout Mess kit" and the classic "Boy Scout penknife", available at the Scout Shop for \$50 total- but the suggestions above are more useful/durable are less expensive.)

Carve or use permanent marker to affix your boy's initial's to all Meal Kit items (everybody's looks the same in the Troop dishpan!)

Flashlight

Boys forget there is no electricity on the trail. A good flashlight is essential. Extra batteries are also a must: low temperatures and late-night giggle sessions can kill batteries in a few hours.

Recommendations: Buy (at any store)

- a good quality 2 AA-size flashlight (small, light, not as bright) or

-a 2D-cells flashlight (heavier but longer-lasting and brighter)

Price for either sizes \$3-10, TONY'S PIK : A MAGLITE--- retails for about \$10 with the holster, It's made of aircraft aluminum so it won't rust and has a spare bulb in the battery cap(stock) it's lasts forever takes a beating and is weatherproof !

Compass

An essential tool while hiking, a good compass is inexpensive and easy to learn to use (we teach all Scouts how) DO NOT BUY A COMPASS WITHOUT A BASEPLATE !!!!!

Recommendation: good model compasses for Boy Scouts are-

-Silva "Polaris" compass, at \$12 ("Starter" model is cheaper but harder to use) or

-Suunto M2-D "Locator", at \$16.

Appropriate Clothing for camping

The most frequent mistake younger campers make is wearing/packing the wrong clothing for a campout. It's a shame, because unlike packs or sleeping bags, they probably already have the right clothing in their closet. Here's a brief summary of the proper clothing to pack for the two types of weather we usually encounter camping in the Northeast:

Key Concept: Layering. The key to comfort outdoors is wearing/packing different kinds of clothing to

layer one on top of another, so that you can add on or peel clothing until you feel comfortable. Bulky winter parkas don't work as well on the trail, for example, as layers of polyester underwear, fleece mid-layer insulation, and a nylon wind-halting outer layer. One fabric to avoid in Spring, Fall, Winter is cotton: it becomes dangerously cold when wet. Denim is particularly awful when wet: leave your blue jeans home. Layers are particularly useful when hiking: it involves sweat-producing exercise alternating with chill-

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producing rests/meals.

Layers, layers, layers...

Clothing for Spring or Fall campouts:

Outerwear: sturdy nylon windbreaker/unlined parka,raingear
Insulation: fleece (Polartec 200 a neat fluffy synthetic) or wool (not cotton) sweater (or 2)
Underwear: polyester long underwear - NOT COTTON.

Socks: NOT COTTON!! (seeing a trend) SMARTWOOL Hiking weight merino wool socks (this is the best brand hiking sock, period) or heavy acrylic socks (Thorlo brand is good)

Shoes: Hiking boots & Sneakers (as SPARE shoes only)
Also bring: wool cap, baseball cap, gloves(ski-kind, that can get wet)
Shirts: long-sleeve polyester or wool:cotton or poly T-shirts (for hot sunny days)
Pants: long nylon or polyester blend (NOT JEANS!) , and a belt.

Clothing for Summer Campouts:

Outerwear: nylon windbreaker and raingear
Insulation: fleece (Polartec 200- NY evenings can get cold even in August)
Underwear: regular cotton underwear (summer ONLY) a pair of polyester long underwear
Socks: Medium Acrylic (Thorlo) or SMARTWOOL brand lightweight wool socks
Shoes: hiking boots &sneakers (as spare shoes), boat shoes or sandals (for waterfront)
Also bring: wool cap, 2 baseball caps, bathing suits, cheap work gloves (for camp projects)
Shirts: a long-sleeve polyester or cotton: some cotton T-shirts
Pants: cotton shorts (NO JEANS!), a pair of long nylon or polyester blend, and a belt.

Other Stuff to Pack on any camping trip:

Water Bottle 1 qt. plastic (Nalgene brand is best)
Matches wooden kitchen kind
Plastic trash bag weightless and always useful
Small nylon stuff sacks really helps organize gear inside your pack
Soap in a plastic dish or bag
Deodrant non-aerosol - the unscented kind keeps critters way
Toothbrush and toothpaste
Towel usually only need a hand towel-size one (even for a quick shower)
Comb or hairbrush
Book to read at night
Boy Scout Handbook, there's good stuff inside
Camera small, unfeasible, with film
Small games, travel chess or cards, for rain or boredom.

Leave your Walkman, Gameboy, CD player, etc. at home: outdoors is always wet, hard and tough on

expensive gizmos.

Putting It All Together

After you have acquired all this camping "stuff", it's important to practice packing it all in your backpack. For a backpacking trail hike where we'll be toting all our own stuff on foot, you want your pack to weigh no

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more than you can carry. (since you'll be lugging your share of the Troop's gear, too, like pots, camping stoves, food and tents.)

For a typical 11-14 year old boy, this means his pack, BEFORE loading in his share of the Troop's gear should weigh less than 25 lbs. (so his total will be under 35 lb., the maximum a boy should lug.)

REMEMBER:

Leave non-essentials at home- there's plenty to do outdoors.

Simplify. Simplify.

And don't forget to have FUN in the outdoors!

LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS-- TAKE ONLY MEMORIES.

Questions? Contact a Troop 5 adult leaders, Scoutmaster, the Senior Patrol Leader, or your Patrol Leader.

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