

# What You Need

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The troop provides for tents, stoves and other general camping equipment. All you will need is Personal Camping Equipment items. A complete pack list can be found for different types of camping in the 'Pack List' section. While these items are personal choice, we have provided a guideline of information below, such as Backpack and Sleeping bag selection.

## Personal Gear

Our troop is an outdoor troop and camps year-round. Neither rain, sleet, or snow will keep us at home, and our Scouts need to be prepared for anything that our Canadian Weather can dish out. Weather is not a concern if a Scout is prepared for both the expected and unexpected and has the proper equipment tools to ensure safety and comfort. An unprepared Scout also impacts on his troop.

The nature of our camps is varied. This troop has a lot of "carry it in" camping trips, ranging from a short hike from the car to a site a hundred yards in the woods, to full backpacking and canoe trips. Making the purchases necessary for a Scout to go out on his own can be difficult and is a very personalized thing. Space, weight and cost vs. quality are issues when choosing gear. The following is a guideline for you to build upon to create a smart camping kit. It is based on many years of experience and observing Scout's experiences.

## Special Item Considerations

### Backpack

There are many, many makes of backpacks out there. There are a few pointers to keep in mind when looking for a backpack to narrow things down. First let's talk about the suspension or the harness.

Above everything else, the **most important** thing to look at is the harness system the pack offers. A proper backpack will distribute and balance the load on a Scout's body so he can carry a load for longer periods of time without getting fatigued. There are three parts to the harness, the shoulder straps, hip belt and back pad.

**Hip belt-** Perhaps the most important feature on a backpack is the Hip belt. The hip belt is the main load-bearing component, not the shoulder straps. In this way, the weight of the pack is transferred to the bones and not relying on muscle strength. This is the secret, right there. It should have thick firm padding. Ideally, the hip belt should have some sort of moulded shape. The shape helps seat the pack firmly on the hips, reducing lateral movement and making the bag more comfortable. The clip on the belt should be sturdy and easy to engage, release, and adjust.

**Shoulder Straps-** Large packs have a shoulder harness that is designed to handle about 30% of the weight. Large pack's straps keep the pack centred and balanced to ensure the majority of the weight is transferred onto the hips.

**Back pad-** The back pad is literally the part of the bag the touches your back. This is often a closed-cell foam pad covered with fabric

One other point of mention when searching for a backpack is that the **shoulder straps are adjustable** and not sewn into the pack. This means that the location of the shoulder straps can be moved higher or lower depending on the **torso size** of the Scout. For body sizes of Scout age this is an important consideration. There is nothing I can do for a Scout that is having difficulty with a pack because his hip belt wraps too low around his waist.

With a properly fitted backpack, a Scout should feel little pressure on his shoulders and be able to handle his load for a long distance. This will make a huge difference when hiking your gear up a rocky trail for a few hours.

**Size-** Scouts will need a pack large enough to pack gear for winter camp to multi-day summer camps. On backpacking trips, Scouts will need room for items such as tents, stoves and food. I would suggest looking for a pack with a 55-70L capacity. While I do suggest looking for a large pack and we do know Scouts grow, don't go too hog wild on the size. Pack sizes that are built for expedition are too large for Scouts. Do keep in mind the torso length of the Scout. An expedition size pack is too large and a pack too tall or too large for his body, and a Scout will have trouble keeping balanced. Try on the packs when you shop. See what is the most comfortable.

A carefully chosen pack will last a good part of a lifetime. Internal frame packs are designed for alpine skiers and climbers, and are warm in the summer, but this is what I recommend for a number of reasons. They do not have any external frame to rip tents and pack better into vehicles. They are also more versatile in that they have one compartment and more efficient with space.

**Tip:** *Use see through mesh bags to organize the gear in your pack. This way you can easily get to what you need without having to dump everything out in your tent. Try that with more than one Scout in a tent! Large freezer Ziploc bags are useful for waterproofing clothing.*

## Sleeping Bag



A sleeping bag will be one of the first and important camping equipment purchases that a Scout will make. Scouts will be camping in the full seasonal range from summer to even camping outside in snow shelters.

There are three basic shapes of sleeping bags. Of the three, I recommend the **Mummy**. This design will get the Scout through the cooler season that Scouts experience. Mummy Bags typically have built in features that help reduce the loss of heat. They are made wider at the shoulders and narrower at the feet. Less air in the bag means less air that needs to be warmed by your body. Most mummy bags have a hood (50% of your heat is lost through your head) and a draft collar (an insulated tube which wraps around the neck and shoulders to keep the cold air out and the warm air in). These bags usually weigh the least and consume the amount of space. Please do not purchase a rectangular sleeping bag. Scouts are typically cold in them as they do not have the body mass to fill up the space and top is open. For a summer sleeping bag this is not a concern.

You will find sleeping bags with a nylon shell with synthetic filling like, (Primaloft™, Hollofil II™, Quallofil™, or Polarguard™) fill. These fillings are light in weight and pack small so your sleeping bag doesn't fill your entire pack.

Sleeping bags come with a temperature rating. Unfortunately there isn't a good standard between manufacturers to make a uniform comparison. However, you do typically get what you pay for. With my experience with the Scouts, I would suggest a rating of a min of -15 to -20°C. My experience is that a bag is comfortable 5-10 degrees above its lower rating. Bags that are rated lower start getting expensive and not very versatile. I would rather see another bag for summer camp, and could be mixed with the winter one if need be during the outdoor winter camps we can have in Jan.

Store your sleeping bag out of its stuff sack and in a larger laundry type bag so your bag will keep its loft. Do not fold your bag. A bag will get colder with age.

## Sleeping Pad

As important as a sleeping bag is, the ground pad beneath you is just as important to your night's sleep. Your body weight compresses the sleeping bag, reducing the air space and its insulating capabilities. Ground pads, with a core of foam and air, provide extra layers of insulation against the ground's chill. The ground draws heat away from your body. A mattress pad lifts you off the ground to create a barrier between you and the cold ground and smoothes out the rough edges around more rocky terrain. Self-inflating insulated mattresses are ideal and roll small in a pack. You will also see the blue foam mattresses. They are less expensive, thinner but harder. Younger Scouts won't feel it, but as older Scouts get heavier they will start to feel the difference.

## Rain Gear

This has to be one of the most overlooked areas in a Scout's gear and unfortunately can ruin his experience. Simply put, it isn't always going to be sunshine. Rain does not and should not stop us. Our activities do go on. Unless you like shivering in the cold because all of your clothes you packed are now wet then make sure you are Waterproof.

I would suggest a two piece raingear over a poncho. It is safer around camp and you can move around camp and do activities. Ponchos only work for hiking or standing around and make good sails.

## Whistle

A whistle will alert people to an emergency. It just might save your life one day. On the water it is absolutely mandatory. A 'Fox 40' whistle is loud and does not have internal parts that can get stuck if it gets wet.

## Fleece Pullover

Synthetic materials are a good replacement to cotton. Cotton as we know won't keep you warm and stays wet. (For a complete reading on cotton see 'Keeping Dry' in the 'Camping Tips' section from the homepage). Fleece Sweaters and pullovers are ideal. They are lightweight and do not soak up a lot of water and dry very quickly if wet.

Not all fleece is created equal. Tighter woven fleece will be warmer. Personally I have a light weight vest and a winter weight pullover fleece in my gear. Mix that with a windbreaker and the same items can take me year round with the addition of some thermals in the winter

For more information on building a camp clothing system that will be versatile see 'Keeping Dry' and 'Dressing in Layers' in the 'Camping Tips' section.

