

WHAT TO GET a NEW SCOUT:

April 2009

➔ WRITE YOUR SCOUT'S NAME ON EVERYTHING ◀

DON'T spend a lot of money on hi-tech camping equipment. It's a learned art to care for your things in the woods and an art to bring them home again. Some are slower with their art than others. You need inexpensive things because you may need to buy some of it again. Besides, your scout may not like camping at all.

EATING GEAR: Get a plastic bowl with a lid (Chinese carry-out is great); Lexan (plastic) knife, fork & spoon and a plastic 8- or 16-ounce cup with a handle (plastic measuring cups from the Dollar store work just fine). I usually carry two 16 oz. plastic measuring cups and a large Lexan spoon and sometimes the carry-out container.

WATER: He'll need 2 – 3 liters of water for most camping trips. If he likes Camel pack-type drinking bladders, that is fine, but he'll still need at least one liter bottle. I recommend the wide-mouth one liter bottles you can find at 7-11 with soda or water in them. They are easy to fill, lighter than the commercial water bottles, and they come with something to drink. It's also not as big a deal when the Scout loses it.

SLEEPING BAG: Get a synthetic mummy style sleeping bag that is warm to 40 degrees and weighs less than 3 pounds. It needs a stuff sack and a storage bag.

The stuff sack should be large enough to easily “stuff” the sleeping bag in it. If the sleeping bag comes with a stuff sack, you will probably want a larger one.

The storage bag should be a large laundry bag that allows the sleeping bag to air between campouts. (And, if you stick a dryer-sheet in the bag it will help to keep it smelling nice, too).

For cold-weather campouts, a 40-degree sleeping bag may need to be enhanced. A synthetic fleece blanket (the ones from Target work fine) is a great choice. This is where the larger stuff sack is handy, especially if it will fit both the sleeping bag and a fleece blanket. Pillows are nice but bulky. The stuff sack with a jacket or extra clothes can be a pillow.

SLEEPING PAD: Your scout needs a pad not so much for a cushy bed as for insulation from the cold ground. Get either a closed-cell foam pad (one that does not soak up water like a foam sponge) or a self-inflating air mattress with foam insulation inside it. A foam pad may not be as comfortable but they are more durable, lighter, and less expensive. You can get them with a waffle pattern that is as comfortable as an air mattress.

BACKPACK: Your scout needs a large, light-weight backpack that fits his body. It needs padded shoulder straps and a padded hip belt that fits his hips. If the hip belt is too large, you don't have the right pack.

I recommend starting with the Jansport “Scout” external frame backpack. It holds 3,853 cubic inches and weighs 3 lb. 10 oz. It is the largest per pound bag that I know that will have a chance of fitting. It's adjustable to fit a wide range of torso lengths (13-17”), so it should last through a number of growth spurts. Prices range from \$50.00 (on sale) to \$100, which is in the range of most beginner bags. Don't spend more on a backpack than you need to because you will not get your money's worth.

The backpack will probably need at least two nylon straps to attach the sleeping bag and pad. These are extras and don't come with the pack. Take the pack and the sleeping bag and pad to the store to make sure you get straps that will work. Straps that are too long are always better than ones that are too short.

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BOOTS: This is a tough one since the scouts' feet grow so fast. Hiking boots should be larger than regular shoes. Your scout needs to wiggle his toes in them while wearing a light pair of synthetic socks under a heavy pair of wool socks. If you get them too big, your scout can always wear two pairs of wool socks for a month or so until his feet grow. Ideally the soles should be fairly stiff, so they can give his foot a stable platform when hiking over rocks. Leather is preferable to synthetic material. Any leather can be water proofed, while synthetic boots may not. Gore-Tex boots are popular but I would avoid them. They make the boot more expensive and also a little hotter. A scout will outgrow his boots long before he outwears them. Save the money for a new pair.

RAIN GEAR: Poncho or rain coat – it is a personal preference. Both are okay. Pick either one with a coated nylon fabric. Plastic rain gear will not survive and you'll spend more in the long run replacing them. Avoid PVC coated gear. It is too heavy. Breathable rain gear, like Gore-Tex, can be too expensive and it gets a hole from a campfire spark just as quick as a coated nylon from a discount store. A large-brimmed rain-hat is nice, too, but you can wait until your scout learns the art of bringing his stuff home - unless that's his only hat.

HAT: They need a hat on every outing. It has to be season appropriate and should give protection from the sun and the elements. **Please don't let him go on any outing without a hat.**

FLASHLIGHT: I recommend a small handheld LED flashlight that uses either AA or AAA batteries. The Princeton Tec "Attitude" is a fine example. You can find it (stores/online) for about \$15.00. It gives good light, is water proof, uses 4 AAA batteries that will last 150 hours, and has a lanyard to help keep the scouts from losing it. Headlamps are fine, too. Stick with ones that use LED and AA or AAA batteries.

WAIT TO GET THE FOLLOWING ITEMS: a **Compass, First-aid kit, Stove, Lantern, Tent, Tarp, and Knife/Saw/Hatchet/Ax.** The Scouting program will teach them how to use and care for all of these items. Let them learn first, so they are better enabled to select what they need to buy.

NOT RECOMMENDED: Don't get a **metal individual cook kit.** Most Boy Scout cooking is done on a group (patrol) basis, not on an individual basis. They don't need an individual cook kit -- and metal plates, bowls and cups just suck the heat right out of food, especially if they are camping in cold weather.

SCOUTING EQUIPMENT RESOURCES

EXCELLENT PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

REI	http://www.rei.com/
EASTERN MOUNTAIN SPORTS	http://www.ems.com/
HUDSON TRAILS	http://www.hudsontrail.com/
CASUAL ADVENTURE	http://www.casualadventure.com/
Gives 10% discount to scouts on non-BSA stuff)	

GOOD PRICES

DICKS	http://www.dickssportinggoods.com/
Note – Web site is not the same as the retail store but carries most of the same merchandise.	
SPORTS AUTHORITY	http://www.sportsauthority.com/

DISCOUNT PRICES – LIMITED SELECTION

BJ's WHOLESALE	http://www.bjs.com/
COSTCO WHOLESALE	http://www.costco.com/

MAIL ORDER – EXCELLENT PRICES and SALES:

SPORTSMANS GUIDE	http://shop.sportsmansguide.com/
SIERRA DESIGN	http://www.sierradesigns.com/
CAMPMOR	http://www.campmor.com/