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Buying Equipment for a New Scout

The Scouting program is aimed primarily at the outdoors. To participate on most outings, the Scout is required to have certain basic items of equipment. The following list is a good starting point.

Whenever possible – No cotton!

No camouflage!

A new Scout has to be able to carry 100% of his gear (in one trip)!

Most Troops provide tents, patrol boxes, stoves, cooking gear, cooking utensils, axes and hatchets, lanterns, and rope. This is usually covered by your dues or Troop fund raisers.

Scouts need to have the following equipment: a good sleeping bag and comfortable sleeping pad, a strong backpack, comfortable boots or suitable footwear, personal eating gear (plastic bowl, fork/spoon, cup), inexpensive compass, **Scout "Ten Essentials"** (personal first aid kit, pocket knife, extra clothing, flashlight, water bottle, rain gear, sunscreen, emergency food, matches, compass and map) and items for maintaining personal cleanliness (seldom used by most Scouts but parents feel good about buying them).

SLEEPING BAG and PAD

Sleeping bags are available in many sizes, fabric, fill, color, and most notably price. Most Scouts are fine with a synthetic bag in the low-middle price range. The bag should have a "low" comfort limit around 20 degrees F (2.5 - 3 lbs.) fill weight, 5 1/2 to 6 inches of loft, generally. **Down bags are discouraged because if they get wet they will not dry out. A wet sleeping bag on a cold night can be life threatening.** A "mummy" style bag is smaller and lighter to backpack; most have drawstrings at the head for maximum warmth but they can be claustrophobic for boys who move in their sleep. Two-way zippers (can be opened from either end) allow ventilation of the foot-end of the bag without completely unzipping the bag.

Foam Pad: Closed cell pads come in two sizes (48 and 72 inches). They last forever, so buy the longer one because your Scout will grow eventually. There is also a brand of air mattress called a Therm-a-Rest, which are self inflating and very comfortable, but more expensive.

EXTERNAL FRAME BACKPACK

For new Scouts on "Sierra" type trips, external framed backpacks are usually best. External frame packs consist of a metal frame with a cloth "bag" attached (as opposed to one-piece "internal" frames, which are just a bag.) Internal frame backpacks are designed for more strenuous adventures requiring flexibility and balance. Generally they are more expensive, which is why stores will try to steer you in that direction.

The most popular low-to-middle priced external frame backpacks are aluminum. The frame should have three or four cross bars, and if welded, the manufacturers' tag should say welds are "heliarc welded." Watch for cracks in the welds, especially if you are buying a used pack. The bottom cross bar should be curved to protect the back. These bars keep the pack away from the Scout's back, allowing for air circulation and keeps odd shaped objects contained in the pack from poking him. The frame will



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be equipped with padded shoulder straps, and also a padded hip belt. The idea is that 75-90% of the weight will usually rest on the hips, not the shoulders. The shoulder straps simply hold the pack upright. Some packs also have load control straps that pull the straps up and away from the shoulders.

Generally, the more adjustments the frame is capable of, the better. Be certain to work all of the pocket zippers. And be sure the frame allows sufficient space and tie-downs to accommodate the sleeping bag and pad. An adjustable backpack should be checked every year. As the Scout grows, the backpack must be adjusted accordingly.

For "car-camping", a duffel bag is OK, but since large duffel bags are not easily portable, Scouts will have trouble carrying them farther than the edge of the parking lot.

BOOTS AND FOOTWEAR

For outings and day hikes, a Scout should wear appropriate boots – that are higher than the ankles. Lack of proper footwear can result in blisters, turned or broken ankles and just plain aching feet. Hiking/backpacking boots should be purchased to fit the Scout now, as opposed to buying boots he can "grow into." However, you can purchase boots sized with two (2) pairs of socks on his feet. On hiking trips, heavy hiking socks worn over white sock liners allow the perspiration to "wick" away from the foot, and reduce friction to prevent a blister. (The socks rub together, as opposed to a sock rubbing against the foot - thereby reducing the possibility of blisters). **MANY BLISTERS ARE CASUED BY NOT WEARING THE RIGHT SOCKS.**

EATING GEAR

Each Scout should have a fork, spoon, and plate or sierra cup. The fork and spoon can be made of plastic and the plate should also be plastic. Do not buy a metal mess kit! The Tupperware storage container you have in your kitchen works just fine as a bowl.

TEN SCOUT ESSENTIALS

1. Personal First Aid Kit

The Scout Handbook describes the requirements for a personal **First Aid Kit**, including band aids, moleskin, antiseptic, pads and tape.

2. Pocket Knife

A standard folding knife with a 2 1/2" blade will meet all of the Scout's needs. The blades should be stainless steel to prevent rusting. It is BSA policy that Scouts **not** carry sheath type knives (non-folding blades) and that includes his grandfather's Scout knife from the 1950's.

3. Extra Clothing

Scouts generally wear some version of their uniform (usually a tee shirt on outings) and need one full additional set of clothing for changing if necessary. Avoid cotton if possible.

4. Flashlight

Think small. The new Photon micro-lights are very popular. If you buy a mag light or traditional flashlight, the Scout should always carry spare batteries. Mag lights generally have an extra bulb hidden somewhere in the flashlight.



5. Water Bottle

One quart, **wide mouth**, nalgene plastic water bottles are preferred (clear – not white). Small mouth bottles or canteens are problems on long term hikes because it is difficult to pour Gatorade or lemonade powders into a small-mouth bottle.

6. Rain Gear

A hooded poncho is very useful. Some hardware stores offer inexpensive plastic ponchos, which aren't much good in a heavy rainstorm but are fine for most weekend outings.

7. Suntan Lotion

Doctors usually recommend at least an SPF of 15 or more.

8. Emergency food

Candy, granola bars, power bars, or other transportable foods are always nice to have.

9. Matches (a big box)

Usually matches can only be used by Scouts who has their Firem'n Chit card.

10. Compass

A liquid filled compass with a clear rectangular base plate and direction arrow, legible numbers, grid lines and a scale meets the requirements. Do not buy anything complicated or expensive.

Maps will be provided by the Troop if required.

10. PERSONAL ITEMS

A Scout's personal items include toothbrush, toothpaste, soap (biodegradable is good) , some kind of disinfectant (like Purell), and a small hand towel. A small roll of toilet paper can be useful on long hikes.

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Write the name of the Scout on all gear and Scout clothing. (Sharpies work great.)