

# Buying Equipment for a New Boy Scout

Boy scouts spend a lot of time in the outdoors. To participate on most outings, the Scout is required to have certain basic equipment items. The list that follows is a good starting point (see detailed descriptions below). All items can be purchased at most sporting goods stores (see suggested supplier list at end of the document):

- A good sleeping bag and a sleeping pad (foam or inflatable)
- A strong backpack
- Comfortable hiking boots or suitable footwear
- Personal mess kit
- Scout "Ten Essentials" (see list)
- Items for maintaining personal cleanliness (seldom used by most Scouts, but parents feel good about their scouts packing them.)

**NOTE - Troop 689 provides tents, patrol boxes, stoves, cooking gear/utensils, axes and hatchets, lanterns, and rope. This is covered by the scout's dues or Troop fund raisers.**

## **SLEEPING BAG and PAD**

Sleeping bags come in numerous types and at various price points. The most important factor in choosing a bag for the new scout is temperature rating. As we will be camping in both warm and cold weather environments, the bag should have a low temperature rating of at least 20°F. Lower ratings offer more warmth in extreme cold conditions but can also be uncomfortable in warmer conditions. Mummy style bags are the most compact and lightweight and tend to be warmer with less open room inside but can be claustrophobic for boys who move a lot in their sleep. As a rule, the bigger the bag relative to the boy, the harder it will be for him to stay warm in the cold. We recommend against down filled bags as they are not only expensive but lose all their insulating ability if they get wet.

Sleeping Pad: Closed cell pads come in two lengths (48 and 72 inches). They last forever, so buy the longer one because your Scout will grow eventually. There is also a type of inflatable pad called a Therm-a-Rest, which are very comfortable, but more expensive.

## **BACKPACK**

Since the majority of the troop's outdoor adventures are car camping type outings, the backpack will usually serve as a "suitcase" for the scout's clothing and supplies. A medium sized duffle bag will suffice temporarily for a new scout but generally won't accommodate the sleeping bag and pad. There WILL be outings that require the scout to carry ALL of his gear some distance from car to campsite IN ONE TRIP and as the troop does occasionally engage in backpacking outings, a good backpack is the recommended choice. A good backpack will also offer compartments for segregating the gear including places for the sleeping bag and pad.

We recommend visiting your local sporting goods store to have him fitted for the right size and style pack. Pack capacity should be enough to accommodate weekend camping (i.e. enough to pack a weekend's worth of cold weather clothes, sleeping bag/pad and a few supplies for most outings). Most modern backpacks have some size adjustability built into them so consider the fact that your son will grow into his pack as he ages.

## **BOOTS AND FOOTWEAR**

For outings and day hikes, a Scout should wear appropriate boots – those that offer solid ankle support and traction. Loose fitting sneakers are HIGHLY discouraged. 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." Too much room in a hiking boot is a recipe for blisters and sore feet. Consult with the supplier for proper fitting.

Good quality socks are also important for hiking comfort. "Smart wool" socks for example are very comfortable and have wicking properties that help prevent blistering AND they retain their shape and resist sagging during wear (which results in rubbing and blisters), a common problem with cotton socks. Quality hiking socks also are great for keeping the feet warm during cold nights.

## **EATING GEAR**

Each Scout should have a full mess kit including fork, spoon, knife, plate, bowl and cup. There are all manner of types of mess kits available but consider weight, durability and space saving in this purchase.

## **TEN SCOUT ESSENTIALS**

### **Water Bottles**

Scouts should have 2, 1 liter Nalgene type water bottles to bring with them on every trip.

### **Personal First Aid Kit**

The Scout Handbook describes the requirements for a personal First Aid Kit, including band aids, moleskin, antiseptic, pads and tape. Consider compact size for packing in a backpack.

### **Whistle**

Simple sounding device for use in an emergency.

### **Compass**

A liquid filled compass with a clear rectangular base plate (clear for interfacing with a map) and direction arrow, legible numbers, grid lines and a scale meets the requirements. See pics below for examples of acceptable compasses.



### **Waterproof Matches**

For use in lighting camp fires and lanterns/stoves. Quality "strike anywhere" waterproof matches are best.

### **Flashlight/Batteries**

Think small. The new Photon micro-lights are very popular. Scouts should always carry spare batteries for their flashlights. Mag lights generally have an extra bulb hidden somewhere in the flashlight which is a handy feature. Headlamps are also very popular with the Scouts. These items are prone to damage/loss on outings so don't buy the most expensive item in the store.

### **Rain Gear**

A lightweight waterproof hooded shell and waterproof pants work best. Cheap ponchos are discouraged as they tend to be good for one use and are difficult to store after use but a decent heavy poncho is acceptable on a budget.

## **Sun Protection**

A small tube of high SPF sunscreen should accompany every scout on all outings. Scouts prone to sunburn should also have a hat for shading the head and face (troop hats are available to all incoming scouts.)

## **Trail Food**

The 13<sup>th</sup> point of the scout law is "A Scout is HUNGRY". As such, compact, energy storing food is something every scout should have to carry on hikes. Power bars, nuts, jerky, trail mix etc are all great options. These can obviously be acquired prior to each outing.

## **Pocket Knife**

A folding "Swiss Army" type knife will meet all of the Scout's needs. The blades should be stainless steel to prevent rusting and limited to no longer than 4". It is BSA policy that Scouts not carry sheath type knives (non-folding blades), switchblade-type knives or spring loaded stiletto-type knives. Any such knives brought on an outing will be confiscated by the scout's adult leader(s).

## **PERSONAL ITEMS**

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

Write your Scout's name on all his gear and clothing (sharpies usually work great). Most of his gear will get mixed up with other Scout's gear and some inevitably gets left behind when he is picked up. Labeled gear is much easier to identify and return.

## **SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT CLOTHES**

Whenever possible – Avoid cotton clothing for cold weather camping. Cotton retains moisture which makes staying warm nearly impossible in the cold. LAYERING is the method of choice for dress in the cold and wicking type material for underlayers is ideal. Better to have 2-3 layers with a medium weight jacket or wind breaking shell than one shirt and a heavy jacket in the cold. Use what your scout has presently to start but plan over time to augment his clothing collection for proper cold weather layering.

Please - No clothing with inappropriate messages or images.

You don't have to spend a fortune to equip your scout but don't scrimp either. Good gear should last at least as long as it fits!

## **RECOMMENDED GEAR SUPPLIERS**

REI / Sportmart / Sport Chalet / Big 5 / Campmor.com (online catalog)

Feel free to consult with any of the adult leaders in the troop if you have questions about gear for your scout.