

## Cold Weather Camping Hints

**Camping Gear for New Boy Scouts** - Right now, anything camping is cool from your Webelos' point of view. So, right now your largest concern is to keep your son warm and dry at camp with as little expense as possible. Don't get new gear if you have gear already. Later, your son will want his own gear based on experience.

- I. **Weight considerations.** The general rule is that a child should not carry more than 25% of his weight. However, weight should not be your primary consideration. Most of the camping done by Boy Scout troops is called "Front country camping." That means you drive up to the site, unload, and camp nearby.
- II. **Sleeping Bags.** One bag needed for fall/winter/spring in the Hill Country and one for summer (Fleece bag - Wal-Mart).
  - A. Down or synthetic fill: Down is slightly warmer, slightly lighter, packs a little tighter, and much more expensive than synthetics. Down is useless when wet and must be dried by machine at home before it insulates again. Synthetic fill is cheaper, still insulates when wet, can be dried at camp, and is much more durable than down.
  - B. Get a 20-25 degree rated sleeping bag that weighs less than three pounds. If you think it is going to get colder, you can always bring a fleece blanket, or an inexpensive sleeping bag liner to put inside or over your winter bag on a January and February Camp out. No need to get a colder rated bag, as it is far more expensive, heavier, larger, and will probably be too hot most of the time. Unfortunately, you can't find good youth bags in town. All of the below can be purchased on the Internet. Go to the sites indicated and use the terms below to search the sites. Though I am sure there are other bags out there equally as good, there is a bunch of data you have to sort through before you find one. Each of these bags is a mummy bag about five feet long. A mummy bag is what the name implies—it wraps close around you like a mummy. A rectangular bag gives you more room to move your feet around inside the bag, but it requires you to heat more air than the mummy. The mummy bag is warmer and lighter since it takes less material to make. Since body heat is the only thing that keeps you warm in a sleeping bag, the idea is to get a smaller bag for your son that has less air for his body to heat. He will grow, but by the time this bag is too short or worn out, your son will have his own preferences. Use the language below and search the net. You may find it cheaper.
    1. Northface Tigger 20 degree bag. Campmor.com 2 lbs. \$70
    2. Coleman for kids Explorer 25 degree bag Wildernessessentials.com (Wt. Unpublished) \$40
    3. EMS Boreal 20 Sleeping Bag- Junior. ems.com 2 lbs. 15 oz \$89
    4. EMS Timberline 25 degree Junior Sleeping Bag ems.com 3 lbs. 2 oz. \$59 (Sale)
    5. REI Polar Pod +20 - Short rei.com 3 lbs. \$69
- III. **Backpack.** Get a 3-pound, youth, 2000-3500 cubic inch capacity lightweight backpacking pack (3 pounds when it is empty). Don't get a pack that is five pounds

empty. The way to grade a pack (besides price) is the cubic inches of space used for packing divided by the weight of the pack empty. The more cubic inches per pound, the better. It should have a hip belt (almost all do) to shift the weight of the pack to your son's hips off the shoulders and back. The rest of the stuff they advertise about packs is gravy. Again, by the time he outgrows the pack, it will be worn out, damaged, and he will have his own preference. Generally, there are two types of packs:

- A. External Frame Pack - has a visible metal frame with a pack attached to it. Normally has a place above and/or below the pack to tie on your tent, sleeping bag, and/or sleeping pad. Older design, and may be less expensive than internal frame pack.
- B. Internal Frame Pack - a frame is inside, so the pack is designed to get everything inside. Price is comparable to external frame, but usually lighter and more stable on uneven ground.
- C. Kids Pack Suggestions. All packs leak and covers leak too. Go cheap and use the plastic bag liners I suggest below. The market place changes quickly, so (surf) shopping is required.
  - 1. Kelty Long Trail - Junior External Pack 2000 c.i. / 3 lbs., 9 oz. ems.com \$50
  - 2. Kelty Yukon External Backpack- Kids 3200 c.i. / 3 lbs., 14 oz. Ems.com \$100
  - 3. EMS Ascent 3200 Backpack, Kids External Pack 3200 c.i. /3 lbs.11 oz. ems.com \$99
  - 4. Kelty Long Trail Scout External Frame rei.com 2900 c.i. / 3 lbs. 15 oz. \$75
  - 5. JanSport Scout Pack External Frame campmor.com /Academy 3850 c.i. / 3 lbs. 4oz. \$60
  - 6. Austin Clothing Internal Frame 5600 c.i. /3 lbs. 5 oz. Academy. \$59 (Adult size pack)
  - 7. Eddie Bauer Internal Frame Overnight Trek Pack 3280 c.i. / 3 lbs.+ eddiebauer.com \$49 (On sale now at website (\$79 at Academy)
  - 8. Eddie Bauer Highlander Internal Frame 3670 c.i. /3 lbs+ Academy \$79

IV. **Other Equipment.** The troop has tents with floors, lanterns, dining flies, cooking pots, gobs of first aid stuff, cooking utensils, rope, and other items needed for front-country camping. The boys generally cook on ground fires. If you don't see a piece of equipment listed below that you usually take camping, it is because the troop furnishes it each camp out. No knives or other sharp things—your son is not trained yet. Label anything that you hope will come back from the camp out.

- A. Rain gear. Buy a \$1.00 emergency poncho from Wal-Mart or Academy. Keep it in the top flap of the pack. If it gets used, replace it. If it gets lost or damaged, who cares?
- B. Clothes.
  - 1. Take two pairs of long pants. One can be jog suit pants to block wind and some rain.
  - 2. Two long-sleeved shirts. Two pairs of warm socks and underwear (as if he is going to change underwear). We travel in full uniform (with hat)

to and from camp (that makes three sets of dry clothes). At camp we change into camp clothes.

3. Sneakers are fine. Lightweight boots if you want. No sandals (thorns and sticks stick into our feet). One extra pair of shoes packed. Light jacket. We use layers. Put them all on if you are cold.
  - C. Camp bowl type plate, cup, and eating utensils. Don't buy a "Mess kit". The pots won't get used (but the plate would). Lexan works nice. You can find Lexan utensils at Wal-Mart and Academy. Lexan cups and bowls are at Whole Earth Provisions at the Quarry market.
  - D. Three, 3 mil. contractor 40-gallon garbage bags (Wal-Mart/Home Depot). 3-mil. thickness won't tear. Put the clothes under "B" except one set of clothes above in one and put it in the pack. Put the second set of clothes in the bottom of the sleeping bag in another and put it in/on the pack. Put the last bag by the poncho in the pack to cover the pack at night or in the rain.
  - E. "D" battery Flashlight. Big "I lost it" item (If it is not left on all night). Go cheap and label. Side pack pouch.
  - F. Personal Items. Toothbrush, toothpaste, Purell hand cleaner. Get the small stuff at the travel area in the pharmacy at Wal-Mart. Camp towel in camping area at Wal-Mart. \$1.00 bandana (Wal-Mart) as a washrag and many other things. Small containers of sun block & insect repellent. Put all personal items in a medium sized, clear, re-sealable plastic bag inside the pack.
  - G. 1-liter water bottle in side pouch. There will be plenty of water available everywhere.
  - H. \$7.00 blue foam sleeping pad (Wal-Mart) cut in  $\frac{1}{2}$  and put  $\frac{1}{2}$  aside as a spare. Roll the  $\frac{1}{2}$  you will use up loosely and put in pack before anything else. Adjust it so it is firm against the sides of the pack. It will form a loose frame. Then, pack the rest of the stuff. A small travel pillow is optional (Wal-Mart) but if you don't have a pillow, you can use your clothes bag as a pillow.
  - I. Two small bungee cords to attach sleeping bag to the pack frame of an external pack.
1. **Keeping warm while you are awake:**
    - A. Stay dry. Wet clothes will not insulate; Cotton is not king; Think head and heart; something must stop the wind.
    - B. We keep warm by heating the air around our body. Water forces out the air from insulation making clothes and your sleeping bag less efficient. Wind blows warm air away; water evaporates on skin, even in winter, and makes you cold.
    - C. Your head is the center of your body where warmth is concerned. Keep your head warm with a wool, flannel hat, or baklava (mask). Cover your ears. Your head has many capillaries close to skin that give off heat. Your brain will draw warmth from other parts of your body if it is cold. That is part of the reason feet and hands get cold first.
    - D. Your heart is the second center of your body when warmth is concerned. Keep your heart and central organs warm with layers. Your brain instinctively knows that without the central organs working correctly, it will cease to function. It will draw heat from arms and legs if the central part of your body is cold.

- E. Drink water and move. You can get dehydrated when it is freezing. Dehydration taxes your body and keeps it from generating heat effectively. Hot drinks help. Movement generates heat.
- F. Have extra clothes sets (shirt, pants, regular underwear) tied together or put in bags. Put one full change of clothes in the bottom of your sleeping bag before you roll it at home. It will be there when you get in the bag at night to change into. Pack your clothes in a garbage bag inside your pack. Put your sleeping bag in another garbage sack. Keep clothes and sleeping bag dry at all costs.
- G. Use clothes layers. Take them off, as it gets warmer. Don't sweat heavily as it will make you wet and cold.
  - 1. The layer next to your body (Wicking layer) - This fabric moves sweat away from your body. Trap air close to your body. Long underwear from Wal-Mart. Wear both pairs of pants if no long underwear. Not all cotton if possible.
  - 2. Middle layer Upper body (Warmth) - Also moves sweat away from your body. Fleece, flannel, or wool pullover. Cub or Boy Scout shirt. No cotton shirts. Cotton stays wet, and wet clothes are dangerous.
  - 3. Outer Layer (Warmth, rain, and wind protection) - Jacket with pockets for hands and Poncho. The \$1.00 poncho at Wal-Mart is all that you will need for a weekend trip.
  - 4. Gloves (warmth, wind and water protection) - Inexpensive gloves (you may lose them) adds to comfort greatly. Hands are exposed to wind. They get cold fast—faster if head and trunk are not warm.
  - 5. Pants. Cub or Boy Scout uniform pants, warm-up suit pants to wear over for wind protection if wind is severe. Not jeans if you can help it—cotton again. Use double layers to stay warm.
  - 6. If you get wet, change. Be careful about sweating in your poncho or too much clothes. Take off the layers.
- H. Keep your feet warm. Stay dry: stay out of wet grass, puddles, streams, and lakes. Move, move, move.
  - 1. Bring six pairs of thick socks (some in clothes sets) in addition to the ones you wear on Friday. They are small and you will need them because your socks will get wet. Wool is best, but expensive. You may lose them. Use what you have. Cotton is the worst fabric for cold weather; it gets wet through perspiration or puddles and stays wet. But don't go out and buy expensive socks.
  - 2. Carry two bread bags for your feet. Put them on between sock layers on a cold morning. It will create a vapor barrier and warm your feet very quickly. Your inside sock will become wet from sweat after awhile, but your feet will stay warm. On a cold morning, the difference is unbelievable. When it warms up, take the bags off, dry your feet, and change into one of those six pairs of dry socks.
  - 3. Wear one pair of shoes you are comfortable in. Pack another. Sneakers are fine if made of man-made material. Lightweight boots or trail runners made of man-made material are good too. Man-made material is more waterproof and dries faster than Leather or (Ugh!) cotton. Shoes get wet from dew in

grass, particularly in the cold morning. Stay out of wet grass. Plastic bags over socks are valuable here. Open wet shoes to dry in sun.

4. Don't put your shoes or boots near the fire while they are on or off. It won't dry them, it won't warm you, it can burn you, and will almost surely ruin your shoes. If your feet are cold, make sure they are dry, put bread bags on, drink warm liquids, and get moving. Movement generates heat.

2. **Keeping Warm while sleeping:** Stay dry-change clothes before sleeping, wear clothes while sleeping, and call for help if too cold.

- A. Insulate yourself from the ground. Get a \$7.00 ½ inch thick blue foam pad from Wal-Mart. Cut the foam to fit the length of the person. The ground will sap the warmth out of you drastically if you do not insulate with foam. Why waste energy warming the ground? The pad will just bounce the heat back to your body. Air mattresses and cots, though comfortable, keep air around you at night you have to warm with your energy. A mattress of leaves below the tent helps.
- B. Unroll your sleeping bag and fluff it up well before you go to bed. It does not keep the heat of the day while it is rolled up. Loft or thickness of your bag equals warmth because it traps more warm air. Let it rise.
- C. Go to the bathroom before you go to bed. It takes energy to warm the extra water you have in your system if you do not. More importantly, it is VERY uncomfortable to get up in the middle of the night and go to the bathroom, or to have to go, but don't because it is too cold to get up. The night is very long when this happens. An empty soda bottle with a screw top and good aim can be an emergency option. Put the top on tight. Many scouts walk outside in the middle of the night in their socks they are wearing for warmth and get them wet. Not good for later warmth in your sleeping bag.
- D. When you go to bed, change into the clothes you are going to wear tomorrow and wear them to sleep (not just clean underwear). You are sweating all day in your clothes. They have water in them. Change. The clothes you wear to sleep will increase the warming power of your sleeping bag. Sleep in your middle, warmth layer, and/or jacket, in addition to your clothes, if you are very cold. You can take off as many layers off as you need to later in the night if you start sweating. Keep them in your sleeping bag when you take them off to keep them warm and dry. Wear gloves if you want. It is nicer to get out of your sleeping bag in the warm clothes you are going to wear, rather than putting on cold clothes in the morning. Cold clothes take your energy to heat them in the cold morning, just when you need all the heat energy you can get.
- E. Once you change clothes before bed, do some quick exercises, and make your body generate some heat. Not so much that you start to sweat. Do pushups in your bag or, after other exercises, get right into your bag and let it trap the heat.
- F. Keep your head warm at night but don't bury it in your sleeping bag. Make a pillow from unused clothing, wear a wool hat to bed, pull it over your face, wear a wool face mask, wear something on your neck for warmth, wear the hood on a pullover shirt, put your head in the hood of your sleeping bag, wear gloves to bed, wear the bags over your feet. All of these are clothing/sleeping bag options open to you to keep warm at night. Use what you have and find out what works best for you. But, wear nothing wet. If you put your head in your sleeping bag

(burrow to the bottom of the bag to sleep) the water from your respiration overwhelms your bag's ability to wick moisture out. OK for a night, but each night you do this, your sleeping bag and clothes you sleep will become wetter and less efficient.

- G. Vent your tent. No, I am not crazy. The human body gives off up to two pounds of water through perspiration and water vapor through breathing at night. That is why you weigh less in the morning. That warm water vapor goes up in the air, condenses (forms) on the cold fabric inside of your tent (just like how water forms on the outside of a glass filled with ice water). The water runs down the inside of the tent walls and gets stuff wet. This can be the end of your sleeping bag, your pack, your shoes, your clothes, or anything else you touch to the tent wall or keep on edge of the tent. If you vent the tent, part of the water vapor is wafted away before condensing. Leave the window open unless there is a big freezing wind. If you close your tent up, the air temperature inside will be warmer, but prepare for the water you will find in your tent around the edges. By all means, put the rainproof fly on your tent when you set it up. All the heat will rise out of the top of the tent if you don't and, more importantly, rain in the middle of the night will make you miserable.
- H. We stay warm by trapping warm the air around our bodies. Why heat more of the sleeping bag than you need to with your heat energy at night? If you are short, fold the end of the sleeping bag that is too long underneath. There will be less space to warm and more insulation from the ground. Pull the bag closer along your sides for the same reason. Cinch the top of the bag to cover your shoulders if you have a cinch rope. Put a garbage bag over the bottom end of your sleeping bag for extra insulating power for your feet. Put a space blanket or poncho around your bag for extra warmth. This works great, but plastic over your bag might make the bag damp where the plastic traps moisture.
- I. Put your muddy shoes in a plastic bag inside your tent when you sleep. Open wet shoes up in a dry place in your tent to dry a little at night. If you have very wet shoes, open them up and let them air dry in the sun the next day. Wear the spare. Don't let water condensation, dew, or rain wet shoes. Keep them in a dry place. On a short weekend, you don't have to hang wet clothes out, put them in a plastic bag, and take them home. Wear the spares.
- J. Air out your sleeping bag in the sun each day in camp after sleeping when the day gets warmer and dryer. Bring a piece of cord to hang it up or put it on a tree branch or rock in the sun and wind. Open the bag up completely and put the inside, dark, or wet side toward the sun. This will let the water vapor and any other water it absorbed at night evaporate out. You will sleep warmer the next night. Don't leave it out when the dew falls or if it rains