

# The "Shake-down" Before Backpacking

## A. Objectives of "Shake-down" Before backpacker

- Pack itself:** To insure that the Scout's backpack will do its job.
  - Fit: The shoulder straps must be padded and should cross the shoulder and run back to the frame of the pack parallel to the ground. The padded hipbelt should fit the Scout's waist so most of the weight of the back is on the hips rather than the shoulders.
  - Condition: all parts of the pack should be in sound condition.
- Gear:** To insure that each Scout has the correct gear for the trail and the expected weather and to discourage carrying unnecessary gear.
  - This task is aided by the Troop equipment list for the trip.
  - See attached handout on backpacking gear.
  - **IS THERE ROOM FOR PATROL GEAR?**
- How to load:** To insure that each Scout knows how to correctly pack his backpack with his personal gear and his share of the Patrol equipment and supplies.
  - Heavier items should be towards the top of the pack and nearest the Scout's back.
  - Items needed on the trail should be easily accessible.
  - Items external to the pack must be securely attached. Straps are superior to "bungee cords."
  - The pack - with a cover - should be able to keep out a heavy rain.
- Teach:** To teach the Scout how to accomplish the above objectives.

## B. Methods to Use in Shake-down

Scout reports for shake-down with his backpack loaded for the backpacker.

- Pack itself**
  - Carefully inspect the pack with particular attention to shoulder straps and waist belt. If it's falling apart now, it will only get worse.
  - Have the Scout put on the loaded pack.
  - Help the Scout adjust the shoulder straps and waist belt to a correct fit.
- Gear**
  - Be familiar with the appropriate gear for the backpacker.
  - Have the Scout lay out the contents for inspection.
  - Divide the gear into two groups: a) bring; and b) not recommended.
  - Help the Scout make a list of missing items.
  - Be sure the footwear (including socks) is appropriate.
  - **IS THERE ROOM FOR PATROL GEAR?**
- How to load**
  - Show the Scout how to correctly pack his backpack with his personal gear and his share of the Patrol equipment and supplies.
  - Does the rain cover fit?
  - Does all the gear fit?
  - Have the Scout done the loaded pack and jump up-and-down several times. Nothing should fall off or start to fall off.
- Teach**
  - Try to determine if the Scout is learning. The goal is knowledge and understanding. **Be respectful.** Embarrassing the Scout is a poor basis for learning and violates the Scout Law.

## Fall and Spring Personal Backpacking Equipment

### **INTRODUCTION**

Please remember three words when gathering your gear:

1. **Quality.** High quality - especially of boots and packs - is appreciated when price is long forgotten. Consider borrowing or renting.
2. **Weight.** The objective is to keep the maximum load to a limit of 25% of body weight. This objective will not be met at certain times. Watch the ounces. They quickly add up to pounds!
3. **Bulk.** It all has to fit in or on the pack, **including your share of crew gear** (pots, food, tent, rope, etc.). **Items which serve more than one purpose and shared items of gear can save space and weight.**



**If you have any questions about equipment, please ask at meetings or contact an adult leader.**

**THE FOUNDATION - BOOTS** -- Rugged, comfortable boots in good condition and with room for cushioning socks are essential to enjoying the backpacking experience. The most common medical problem for backpackers is blisters. Acquire your boots long enough in advance to have extensively used them with a fully loaded pack. Waiting to buy until the last few days before departure may create big trouble on the trail. On the other hand, don't make the error of buying too far in advance. Scouts -- and their feet -- grow, sometimes in spurts. **Boots should be rated for "backpacking."** A "rugged trail" or "off-trail" rating is better. **Lists of boots and ratings are available in L.L. Bean "Sporting Specialties" catalog, Cabela's catalog (800-237-4444), or the Backpacker Magazine "Buyer's Guide" issues.**

**Soles:** Trails can be steep, rocky and uneven. A mile can result in about 2000 to 2500 impacts on those rocks. The sole and shank of the boot must be stiff enough to protect the foot. A steel shank is best. In doubt? Try a test with a full pack (40 or more lbs.). Walk on some rough rocks. If it hurts here, it can hurt on the trail. "Vibram" (yellow label) is a high quality brand of sole. You need lugs or ridges for traction.

**Support of the heel and ankle:** The counter of the boot is the part that curves around the heel parallel to the ground in a "U." It must be stiff to prevent the heel from rolling over if you step on something uneven (a rock, hole, or root). The tipping or rolling of the heel is the beginning of a sprain. The boot top should reach above the shin, and the boot should have a contoured footbed to support the arch of the foot.

**Weight:** Due to the way we humans are built, a pound on the foot takes as much energy to move along the trail as about five pounds on your back. Four pounds a pair should be about the upper limit. Two pounds a pair is really pushing the low end, except for tiny feet.

**Upper Materials:** Combinations of leather and nylon dominate available choices. All leather is good, but watch the weight. Gor-Tex is not essential but keeps water out. Look for heavy stitching.

**"Break-in":** New boots should be worn at least ten miles, preferably while wearing a fully loaded pack. Discover any problems here. All leather boots generally need much more "break-in" than cloth and nylon models; however, the problem may be a seam that rubs, not stiffness as such. You can practice around your block.

### **THE SECOND ESSENTIAL - THE PACK**

**Fit & Condition:** The pack must be sturdy and in good condition. It must fit comfortably. Try it out with a full load. Be sure no stitching is failing, zippers going out, or parts falling off. Check welds on metal frames.

**Size:** You must carry your share of crew gear - some quite bulky. Rough rule of thumb: external metal or nylon frame packs should have a capacity of at least 2600 cubic inches; internal frame packs should hold your sleeping bag plus 2600 cubic inches and have lash points to allow external attachment of a tent.

**Features:** The pack must have a padded waist belt (transfers weight to the hips) and well-padded shoulder straps. You will need lash straps (not "bungee" cords) to attach sleeping bag, pad, and crew gear to the pack. Even if the pack is "water-proof," a rain cover is needed (a couple of heavy plastic bags will do).

Cost: It is not possible to buy an adequate pack new for under \$50.00 unless you hit a 50% off sale at a reputable vendor. Suitable packs are available for under \$85.00. (Please ask adult staff about sources.)

## **AND THEN TO SLEEP**

It can get cold at night in the Fall and Spring. You need a bag rated for freezing temperatures, but it should not weigh more than five pounds. Since the body crushes the air out of the sleeping bag insulation under you, you also need a foam pad (or equivalent), which also helps with rocks, roots, etc.

## **OTHER PERSONAL ITEMS FOR THE TRAIL - WEEKEND OUTING**

This list is based on the experience of many backpackers over the years. You may be able to improve on it, but at least apply some thought and knowledge of the subject before rejecting its suggestions.

### Packing

- pack cover or heavy plastic bags
- plastic bags to keep items (**esp. clothes**) dry (2d line of defense)
- waterproof sleeping bag sack (best is plastic sack inside nylon stuff sack.)

### Clothes:

- brimmed hat to cover neck and ears (**not** a baseball cap)
- 3 changes of hiking socks (A set of socks may be more than one pair. It depends on the boot/foot combination.)
- 1 pair, long pants (Normal jeans are too heavy/too tight.)
- nylon** poncho or **nylon** rain suit
- insulation layer (Polyester fleece is best/ wool ok.)
- 1 extra pair underwear
- light sneakers to wear in camp
- sweat pants
- hiking shorts (Check expected weather.)
- light long sleeve shirt
- T-shirt
- lightweight windbreaker

### First Aid & Toiletries

- sun block (check weather)
- towel, small
- small (say 1-2 oz.) liquid detergent
- moleskin or molefoam
- tooth paste, small
- chap stick
- tooth brush
- comb, small
- toilet paper
- personal first aid items and medicines
- insect repellent, small (unless you're sure there are no mosquitoes)

### Eating etc.

- 2 sturdy, plastic, 1 qt. water containers with leak-proof tops
- spoon
- light cup
- emergency food (1000 calories)
- light, deep plastic bowl

### Other

- pocket knife
- hiking staff
- bandanna
- compass
- waterproof ground sheet, 5'x 7'
- sun glasses
- sponge (bathing & bailing out tent)
- \$10 in small bills
- candle
- whistle
- mirror (signal)
- flashlight AA or AAA
- extra batteries & bulbs
- 50' "parachute cord"
- 20-30 matches and striker that works in waterproof container

### Optional (watch the weight!)

- pad (small) and pen or pencil
- camera & film
- rubber bands
- watch, rugged
- bic type lighter
- light fishing tackle

## **A FINAL WORD**

Acquiring gear for backpacking is like buying anything else. Good quality gear can last a lifetime. Prices for the same item vary from source to source -- sometimes greatly. Your adult staff can help.

## **NOTES**

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