

GUIDE TO CAMPING

Dear Scout and Parents,

The troop leadership has recognized that you may not be aware of some of the outdoor activities that we do or what your scout needs to be prepared for these activities. Although we make every effort to instruct the scout on what should be brought, there are those continual responses when asking why a scout does not have his raincoat on: "I didn't bring one", or when asked where his spare pair of shoes is: "I didn't bring any". As leaders, we do not want our scouts unprepared for our outdoor activities or have to send your scout home sick.

EQUIPMENT NEEDS

The Sleeping Bag

Nothing is more discouraging than to go on a campout only to discover that your sleeping bag is not warm enough for the temperature. Anyone who has spent the night shivering knows the feeling. The scout tents, although durable, are made of nylon, and do not retain heat well. A warm place to sleep is an absolute must. Sleeping bags come in all shapes, sizes, and weights. Most parents do not know that it is the weight of a sleeping bag that will determine its warmth. Not everyone can afford that sleeping bag that is good to -30 degrees. However, if the sleeping bag that your scouter has is a summer weight sleeping bag that is good to 50 degrees, consider sending a wool blanket or a second sleeping bag. Just like dressing for winter, layers work well in keeping you warm while you sleep. Combining a wool blanket, long underwear, socks and a knit hat for the head, your scouter will be warm for most of the camping the troop does.

Foot Gear

Next to good sleeping accommodations, good footgear is most important. Now, we are not recommending going for the designer hiking boots but it is very important that the scout's feet and toes stay warm and dry. You can never send enough socks. Dry feet are an absolute must both in the shoes and in the sack. With the changing weather and the proximity to lakes and streams, either a pair of waterproof boots or a change of shoes is a must. Too many times scouts do not have a spare pair of shoes, or for that matter, socks. It may seem strange to send multiple socks in the summer or a spare pair of shoes, but the weather can change instantly and wet feet lead to blisters and shivers.

Rain Gear

How wet do you want your scout? The troop has a generous supply of plastic bags, which we have occasionally turned into raincoats. This procedure is not recommended because we usually do not make these coats until after the scout has already been saturated. A simple plastic raincoat will do for most conditions. We try to avoid ponchos; they're cumbersome and dangerous around campfires. The rain gear should be one of the first things accessible to the scout. This also proves to be a useful thing in the middle of a wet snowstorm.

Change of Clothes

No campout is complete without some scout coming to a leader to say, "I do not have any extra pants" especially when he has just come down the muddy hill on his bottom. Only you know your scout and how many changes of clothes he needs on a weekend. We are not making the recommendation that the scout brings his entire wardrobe; however, he needs sufficient changes to survive from Friday night until Sunday at noon. A scout should know that going to bed with dirty filthy clothes does not help conserve heat. One recommendation is to give your scout some plastic bags. They can be used to store the clean clothes as the outing starts and store the dirty and wet clothes as the outing proceeds through the weekend. Another recommendation is to take a laundry marker and mark your scout's clothes with his initials. It is amazing how much paraphernalia the leaders collect during the course of a campout.

Cooking Utensils

The troop does provide equipment for cooking and preparing the meals eaten on the campout! However, it is each scout's responsibility to provide the plate, knife, fork, spoon, and cup for use during the meal. In the event a scout forgets to bring his own utensils, he has been taught skills which should enable him to improvise. There is usually plenty of aluminum foil from which a cup and plate can be fashioned. Twigs and branches oftentimes make good silverware. If all else fails, fingers work well.

Conclusion

The above are a few basic guidelines to go by but the best by far is common sense. In cold weather the object is to stay warm and this includes things like bringing gloves for the little fingers. On the other hand in warm weather it is a good idea to put in a pair of long pants as the evenings can get chilly and it is also a good way to keep the bugs from leaving too many bites. You can also refer to the Scout Handbook for additional recommendations.