

In One Day, Out The Next
Backpacking Hints and Tips
Troop 114

Think in Ounces!
But be Safe

Backpacking should be a fun and exciting way to see the countryside. To reach the summit of a mountain while “living off your back” should give you a true sense of accomplishment. But in reality, many boys will hate every step they take and profess to never attempt it again.

In my 2+ years with Troop 114, I’ve hiked around 200 miles (as of April 2003). Many of the problems I’ve encountered can be directly attributed to carrying too much weight. In the beginning I went out and bought all new equipment, clothing and gadgets. At the end of the trips I was putting away stuff that I never used. I kept doing this over and over thinking that a scout should “Be Prepared”. In retrospect I was doing more harm than good. I was relying on my surplus gear instead of my skills and intellect. I have found out that all that gear was not making my trip more enjoyable and definitely not easier.

- Each item you bring needs to be packed, lifted, carried, dropped, moved, unpacked, cleaned, put away...
- The heavier your load, the heavier your boots need to be. (more on boots later)
- The harder you have to work at hiking, the more prone to injury you are.
- With a lighter load you don’t need to hike faster, but you can. You can also hike farther which is why you are doing it in the first place.

Over the winter I decided to change my way of thinking. I decided to lighten up while keeping myself safe. I hope that what follows will help you to find enjoyment on your trip.

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What to Bring

Common Sense	Don't leave home without it. Do you need a parka in June? Does everybody in the troop need to carry a stove? Check the weather – do you really need a complete rain suit or will a trash bag work?
Map, Guide Book and Compass	Map and guide book for the area you will be in and the activity you will be undertaking. Bring a Compass and know how to use it along with the maps. Make copies of the section of the map and guide you will be hiking and store them in a Zip-Lock bag.
Water / Drinks	Probably the heaviest single item you will carry. Figure on carrying 2-3 liters for the day. Carrying a bit too much is actually easier on your body than not having enough. Drink a bunch on the drive to the hike. This will help hydrate your body in preparation for the hike. Hydration packs are a lightweight method of carrying your personal water. These packs slip into your backpack and have a drinking tube attached. Empty plastic soda bottles are also lightweight and easy to pack. A little powdered tang goes a long way to make pumped water taste better. Stay away from Caffeine – It is a diuretic. You may have noticed that when you drink a cup of coffee, that you urinate much more than the actual amount you drank. This is because the caffeine draws the water from your body. In order to replenish your body you will need to drink more water which means you need to carry more water
Food	Your portion of the planned meals & snacks as well as 1 extra day for yourself. The extra should be non cook items such as a bagel, Jerky, Snack bars, etc.. Be sure to repackage everything into Zip-Lock bags. If a box of noodles is 8 servings but you only need 6, then only bring 6. Don't forget the instructions. If you are snacking during the day, then your meals won't need to be all that large.

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Clothing	<p>Hiking Boots, Non-Cotton socks. What you are wearing (layers - on and off) plus what you will need to keep you comfortable should it be windy, raining, snowing, cold. Remember Cotton Kills! Use Polypropylene or Wool! When cotton gets wet it stays wet and loses it ability to insulate. Wool or one of the new “polys” retain much their insulating properties even when they get wet. They also dry much quicker than cotton.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra Hiking Shorts and/or Pants (going to get wet?) Swim Trunks • Extra T-shirt • Long underwear (uppers and lowers). • Extra set of socks. Two if you can. If your feet hurt nothing else matters. • Wind and Rain gear. • Cap & Mittens for cool weather • Sun Hat – brim keeps light rain off your face. • Bug net hat / jacket. <p>Think dual use with clothes. Can the swim trunks be used as an emergency pair of shorts? Get pants with zip off legs. You can use a large heavy duty trash bag for a rain suit. If it is too lightweight it will have a tendency to cling and be uncomfortable. A windbreaker and a long pair of underwear work great for those chilly spring nights. No need to carry an extra sweater. Use an extra shirt around your head when you are sleeping. This eliminates the need for a cap on those chilly nights. An extra pair of socks can be a substitute for mittens. Don't bring clothes to change into just because they are dirty. We are all dirty and smell by the end of the trip. It won't kill you.</p>
Shelter	<p>One of the following: Tent, Bivy Bag, Tarp. Don't forget any poles and pegs you may need. Split up the load – one boy gets the tent and poles. The other gets the rain fly, stakes and ground cloth. A space blanket is really lightweight and packs small. In an emergency these can be used for wind, rain, snow, signaling.</p>
Sleeping Bag & Pad	<p>Could also use a quilt in warmer weather. Pillow is nice, but extra weight. Closed cell pads are lighter than but not as comfortable as the self inflating ones. Sometimes a bit more weight is worth a <i>*good* nights sleep.</i></p>
Watch	<p>Does anybody really know what time it is? <i>No need for large multi function watches with 8 time zones. 2 miles for each hour hiked is a good pace.</i></p>
Flashlight / Headlamp	<p>The new LED models are long lasting and bright. Some weigh less than 1 oz! Don't forget extra batteries & bulb – or simply bring a spare “mini” light. <i>Princeton Tec Pulsar II Light weighs 7 grams and is bright enough for most tasks.</i></p>

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First-Aid Kit	What do you really need for 1 night out? A Sam Splint is nice. Neckerchief, Gauze, Band-Aids, Anti-Inflammatory drugs. I normally bring a couple of large 4x4 bandages and several smaller ones along with some Ibuprofen and Anti-Diarrhea pills. I also have a short piece of “Ace Bandage” and some moleskin. All of this is kept in a Zip-Lock bag. Tweezers – Many knives have one included.
Pocket Knife	Keep it sharp! You don’t need one of those “All in one” Swiss Army Knives. A simple 2 blade knife is sufficient. Tweezers can be helpful. Remember – we are only 1 day out, normally within 6 hours of civilization. What is the worse possible thing that can happen?
Waterproof Matches & Fire Starter. A small disposable lighter works well.	A fire will keep you warm, provide light, dry your clothes, alert rescuers. Keep two sets of these. One for normal use and one as an emergency. Keep them in separate waterproof container. Your normal use could be in a Zip-Lock bag. The other should be more durable.
Whistle	More directional then yelling and easier on your lungs. A sturdy plastic one is lightweight and will last for years.
Bug Repellent & Sunscreen	Find one of the combined lotions and pack a small amount in an empty film canister. You don’t need a months supply for 2 days. Bug repellent that contains DEET works well for ticks.
33 Gallon Heavy Duty Trash Bag(s)	Really lightweight Shelter, Ground Cloth, Rain Suit, Pack Cover, Bear Bag Bring 2 and you won’t need a rain suit.
Prescription Medicine	Inhalers, Bee Sting Allergy, Insulin – Only bring what you need.
Cup & Spoon	These along with your pocket knife are all you need. If possible, plan the meals around a cup and spoon. Leave the separate fork and knife at home. You can eat most anything out of a cup.
Soap	Alcohol based antibacterial cleaning gel– these need no water to use. Cleanliness is essential in the woods. Especially after “Scratching the litter”. Good for cleaning out cuts and scrapes as well. Bring only what you will use. You can normally find travel sizes in the drug stores.
50ft 1/8” rope	Tents, Tarps, Slings, Straps
Toiletries	Toothbrush, Toothpaste, Toilet Paper (In a Zip-Lock bag). Cut the handle off of the toothbrush or leave it at home. It is only one day. Don’t pack a whole roll of TP – Remove the paper tube so you can flatten it out to save space. Leave the deodorant at home.
Zip-Lock Bags	Handy for trash, wet clothes, severed fingers (just checking to see if you are reading this). The nice thing about Zip-Locks is that you can squeeze the air out and compress the items inside down to their smallest possible volume.

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Cooking & Cleaning	Pots (need 2 for cleaning & rinsing), Scrubby, Utensils, Biodegradable soap, Grabber. Can you get by with tin-foil? How about meals that you only need to boil water to eat. Scrubbing a pan takes all the fun out of the meal.
Water Filters & Jugs	We use filters to remove Giardia from the water. The filters can be split up so two boys can carry one. Iodine pills can be used as an emergency backup. They are slow, but better than catching "Beaver Fever". Collapsible polyethylene water jugs are lightweight and can be strapped to the outside of your pack.
Stove & Fuel	Split this up between two boys. Remember – Liquid fuel is to be used with adult supervision.
Bear Bag	A trash bag works – you need to tie it up between two trees.
Saw / Hatchet	Neither is normally needed on a backpack trip. A saw is lighter and more useful. Many places don't allow open fires.
"Extras"	Lip Balm, Contacts & Cleaner, Glasses / Sun Glasses, Camera, Binoculars, Towel, Hiking Stick

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What to Wear

What you wear depends on several factors. The weather conditions are at the top of the list. You also need to take into consideration your tolerance for hot and cold. In the following you will find generalizations and recommendations based on my experience.

- Footwear** This single item can mean the difference between an enjoyable hike and one you will regret with every step you take. If you are new to backpacking or have weak ankles then a heavier leather boot with high ankle support is probably best. It should be waterproof with a semi soft sole. The downside of leather boots is that they are heavier than some synthetics. On a typical 1 mile hike you will take approximately 2400 steps. If each of your boots weighs ½ pound more than mine you will lift 1200 pounds more than I will for each mile hiked. Multiply that by 16 miles and you see how that 1 extra pound adds up to 9.6 tons. It doesn't matter if you are carrying the weight on your back or on your feet. You are still carrying it.
- Socks** Use wool or wool blends. I personally like the SmartWool brand. I also use a thin non cotton liner between my foot and the sock. Socks can be rinsed out in a stream and then hung inside out on your pack to dry.
- Pants / Shorts** No Cotton – this means no jeans if possible. Jeans are heavy, soak up water and take a real long time to dry. Nylon blends are great because they are durable and dry quickly. Zip offs give you the best of both. Light colored clothing makes ticks easier to spot.
- Shirt(s)** No Cotton – Polypropylene is great because it wicks the moisture away from your skin to the surface of the cloth where it is allowed to evaporate. You can layer with a T-shirt next to your skin and then a long sleeve over top of that.
- Shell** Jacket, Windbreaker, Rain Jacket – Something to keep the wind from getting through and the heat from getting out. Wear this over top of your shirt layers. In colder weather you could wear a poly fleece between your shirts and the shell. If you are positive that it is going to rain then forget about using the trash bag and use a rain poncho or jacket.
- Hat** A lightweight hat with a brim can help with the sun and rain. A wool / poly cap will help keep the heat in while sleeping. It is also an easy way to regulate your body heat during hiking. Some people hike with simple ear covers. This will keep your ears warm while letting the excess heat from your body to escape through your head.
- Mittens** Wool is best.

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What to Eat

I found most of this list on the internet, but it is actually quite good. I have actually used many of the items at one time or another.

<u>Breakfast</u>	<u>Lunch</u>	<u>Dinner</u>
Cold cereal (dried milk)	Peanut Butter	Instant soups
Instant cereals (oatmeal, cream of wheat, etc)	Cheese	Dehydrated dinners
Breakfast bars	Crackers	Instant mac/cheese
Bagels	Rice Cakes	Burritos
Dried fruit	Bagels, cream cheese	Bread sticks, rolls
Orange/apple	Beef Jerky	Instant rice mixes
Juice	Canned meat (chicken/tuna/ham)	Dried noodle mixes (Lipton noodles)
Nuts	Dry salami/pepperoni	Canned chicken/ham/tuna, etc
Beef jerky	Summer sausage	Frozen foil dinner, pack in dry ice
Precooked Bacon	Instant soups	PBJ
Pancakes/syrup	Apples/orange	Quick Cook Chili mix (add summer sausage)
Instant cocoa	Dried fruit	MRE
Powdered breakfast drink	Carrots	Jambalaya or red beans & rice mixes
Dehydrated eggs	Chips, canned dips	Instant mashed potatoes
Muffins	Powdered fruit drinks	Fresh vegetables to sauté
	Pita bread	Pre-made frozen chili, pasta, etc.
	Nuts, trail mix	Instant desserts, Cookies
	Cookies	Spaghetti/canned sauce
	Energy bars	Baked potatoes in foil on campfire
	Quesadillas	Pizza

Organize each meal in a large Ziploc bag with all ingredients you need for that meal. After that meal, the Ziploc bag can be used as a garbage bag, easier than carrying a large garbage bag tied to the outside of your pack. Don't over pack food – what you don't eat you have to carry out

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How to Pack

(Stolen from bettercamper.com – easier than typing it)

1. Whether you have a Down Sleeping Bag or a Synthetic Sleeping Bag, it should go into a stuff sack lined with a garbage bag (To keep it dry) or a waterproof stuff sack. It should then go into the bottom of your backpack since it is one of the last items you will need during the day.
2. Heavy and dense items, such as food, should be kept in the middle of the pack and as close to your back as possible. This helps maintain good balance.
3. Items that you may need in a hurry should be at the top of your pack. For example, first aid kits and rain gear should always be handy.
4. Other items that will be frequently used should also go near the top of your pack. For example: map, compass, snacks, sunscreen, a warm layer, camera, iodine tablets, etc.
5. Keep your food above the fuel bottles in case there is a leak. (Trust me, you don't want to eat fuel- soaked food)
6. Break down larger items into smaller parts. For example, pack the tent body, the fly, and the poles all separately rather than in one large sack.
7. Stuff the tent body and tent fly into the empty spaces that are left in between other items in your pack. The best way to do this is to simply start with one corner of the fly or tent and start cramming it into the bottom of the pack where there is a lot of empty space.
8. Leave no dead space. Fill containers such as cook pots, bowls, and mugs with food or spare clothing. For protection and to save room it is a good idea to pack your stove into your cook pot if it will fit.
9. For internal packs, try to keep everything inside the pack. You will have a more balanced pack. Things are less likely to come up missing, and it just looks better.
10. Tighten your pack's compression straps to make the load more balanced and compact.

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When Nature Calls

Most of the places we camp on the AT have privies (outhouses) available, but there will be times that you will need to “scratch the litter”. Always dig your “cat hole” at least 200 feet from any water source or campsite. The hole should be 6-8 inches deep. This will allow the microbes in the upper part of the soil to break down the waste. Any deeper and there soil is “dead” (you need oxygen for proper breakdown), any shallower and animals may dig it up. Use of leaves, rocks, snow is preferable to TP. I have found the privies to be somewhat lacking in the sanitation area. Paper seat covers help – just remember to pack them out. **And DON'T FORGET TO WASH YOUR HANDS!**

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Staying On the Trail

The Appalachian Trail is marked with white blazes. Side trails are identified by a blue blaze. The blazes (white rectangles / squares) are normally spaced within ¼ mile of each other. If the trail is clearly defined, the blazes may be spaced farther apart.

Mud and Guts

Often times the trail will be wet & muddy. As hard as it may be, you should continue walking through the mud and not go around it. If you walk around the puddle, you are damaging new ground and little by little ruin the experience for others. If going through and area is simply not possible (due to safety / injury) then pick the path that would produce the least damage. Step on rocks when possible.

Switchbacks

A switchback is a zigzag trail up a steep section of the trail. They are created to ease your climb and minimize the damage on the trail due to erosion. Do not stray off of the switchback and attempt to head straight up the incline. You will start a new trail which will fill with rain and then wash out everything below.

Crossing Streams

There are times we need to cross streams. Most of them are shallow and you can easily use rocks or logs to get across. There are times though when the stream may be too deep to use the rocks. For crossing larger streams, face up river. If you have a partner, interlock arms and move across together. Try to use small steps, and slide your feet along as much as possible. Move you lead foot towards the bank you are headed for, then bring the other foot over to it, but do not cross one foot in front of the other. This temporarily leaves you standing on one foot. If you attempt to take full steps, you could loose you balance and fall. A strong current can sweep you off your feet quickly.

Note: rocks & logs in and near streams and waterfalls can be very slippery. A thin coat of algae can be almost invisible.