

Preparing for the Summer/Fall Backpacking Trip

The following list is the checklist I use while preparing for a summer/fall backpacking trip. Please feel free to use and adjust according to your needs. Think seriously about any adjustments that you feel necessary. Keep the following points in mind as you make adjustments.

Most importantly, weight is KING!!!! Keep it lightweight. Every item you put in the pack, think about what it's for and do I have something lighter that will provide me with the same benefits. Remember, sixteen ounces makes one pound. If you can save five ounces on three different items, you've saved basically one pound. Your pack should weigh no more than 25% of your body weight. A couple ounces here and there may not seem like much, but add them up. Seriously, just one time, write down the weight of everything in your pack in pounds and ounces and add it up! Don't forget the weight of the pack itself and your sleeping bag. The pack probably weighs between four and seven pounds alone. Sleeping bags are two pounds on the light end up to seven or eight pounds for sub-zero bags.

Your flashlight shouldn't take more than two AA or three AAA batteries. Don't forget spare batteries! I'd recommend taking the battery pack out of the headlamp when it's in your backpack. The point is to somehow disable the flashlight from operating. Flashlights have come on accidentally many times and the user doesn't find out until it's needed and the batteries are dead. Someone also told me a cool trick about using one of the really mini maglites (one AA cell) and tying it to the top of the backpack. I have one attached to the drawstring of the gooseneck extension collar at the top of my pack. I leave the battery in this one. This way, I am pretty much guaranteed to be able to find a light at night. I suppose that's as long as I can find my backpack! Also, if you're looking at headlamps, go LED and not incandescent. They're easier on the batteries.

Experience has proven that two, one liter water bottles are perfect. Fill them before the trip. You never know when you will come across water first. One water bottle is not sufficient. Also, the camelback has proven itself to be a bit of a nuisance. Wrap your water bottles with many layers of duct tape. Duct tape fixes everything and this is an easy way to carry the tape. This has been used to fix tents, backpacks, rain gear and even footwear! The bottles can be picked up at Meijer, Walmart, Dunhams and others for about five dollars apiece. Take a good look at how the strap to hold the lid on holds. Make sure it will handle swinging from a carabineer hooked to the backpack. I've seen some of them where the strap goes around the bottle top and connects to sort of a plug in the top. The plug falls out and the water bottle hits the ground.

As always, travel in Class A uniform and change when we get there. This means keep one of your shirts easily accessible. Remember weight! Long sleeve shirts are good for protection from wind, trees, shrubs, sun and provide more warmth than a short sleeve shirt. At least carry one of these. You can always roll up the sleeves for a short sleeve shirt. Some of the shirts have a small strap on the sleeve that allows you to button the roll up so it doesn't fall down. If you're looking for a place to start, check out the fishing style shirts. Keep the material to nylon or polyesters. They're lightweight (there's that weight thing again), dry fast and roll up small.

I like the pants with the zip off legs. They are lightweight, dry fast and roll up small. I have two pairs of the same size and type. I'll wear one pair of shorts and pack the other pair of shorts. Then I only have to pack one

pair of pant legs. Also, the socks you wear on Friday (preferably wool) don't count towards the quantity on the list.

One layer of insulation is a must for the cooler nights. If you need it, you'll be glad you have it! Put the hat by your pillow at night. If you get cold, put the hat on. Also, the fingerless gloves might sound a little weird, but if it's cooling off and your hands are cold, these things work great. Your fingers will still have the dexterity and touch to do things with. At the fall temperatures, they're perfect. You can also cut the ends out of some old wool socks and wear them as wristlets.

Low, insulated cups are my preference for eating out of. Get the kind with a lid. They are lightweight and work well in the winter also. I'll carry one of these for eating and then drink out of the water bottle, or in the winter, I'll carry one for eating and one for drinking. Stores like Meijer and Walmart have these for about four dollars apiece. The tall ones are hard to eat out of because the utensils don't reach far enough. Look for ones around four or five inches high. Typically these are the ones with wider bases which is also a plus.

If you still have some weight to go, a lightweight tripod seat or a self-inflating seat cushion is a plus for sitting on.

Again, don't forget the weight of your part of the tent and food items!

As organized as you Scouts keep your tents, make sure that your name is on EVERYTHING!

If you'd like to make additions these notes, please send them along and I'll include them for next time!

Summer/Fall Backpacking Checklist

- Loose items
 - Sleeping bag or blankets made into a bed roll
 - Tent or tarp to make tent out of
 - Ground tarp for under tent or tarp
 - Self-inflating mattress or mattress pad
 - Pillow case or stuff sack (stuff with clothes to make pillow)
 - Chair or sit-upon
 - Hiking stick
 - Hiking boots (or well fitting tennis shoes if necessary)
 - Class A uniform (worn during travel)
- Backpack containing the following
 - Clothing
 - Underwear (Qty 3)
 - Wool or wicking socks (Qty 3)
 - Switchback pants/shorts (Qty 1 or 2)
 - Nylon and/or polyester long sleeve shirts (Qty 2) (keep one handy for changing upon arrival)
 - Insulation - fleece jacket, fleece pants, wool hat, wool fingerless gloves
 - Substitute fleece with polypropylene long johns
 - Wet weather – rain gear (or poncho), duck back (or LARGE garbage bag) for backpack
 - Personal hygiene
 - Toothbrush, toothpaste, biodegradable liquid camp soap, non-scented deodorant & towel
 - Toilet paper roll in zip-lock bag, extra zip-loc bag and small shovel (gardening size)
 - Mess kit – utensils and one or two short, wide insulated cups (one for eating, possibly one for drinking)
 - Nutrition - Trail Mix or energy bars
 - Fifty feet of ¼" or 3/8" rope for bear bags and camp
 - Navigation – map & compass (adults – GPS)
 - Sun protection – sunglasses, sunscreen and hat (preferably wide brimmed)
 - First aid items – first aid kit, chap stick
 - Emergency items – emergency blanket, whistle, fish line and hooks in film container (or similar)
 - Fire starting items – fire starters, matches in waterproof container, fire'n'chit card
 - Illumination – small flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries
 - Knife, sharpening stone, tot'n'chip card
 - Pocket notepad & pen
 - Liquid type (non-aerosol) insect repellent
 - Scout Handbook
 - One liter nalgene bottles, filled at home (Qty 2)
 - Camelbacks are a nuisance. One bottle is not enough.
- Patrol Gear
 - Water purification items – Water filter or tablets (Qty 2)
 - First aid kit
 - Backpacking stove and fuel bottles (Qty 2)