

# BHS Guide to Outdoor Gear

Living and traveling in the wilderness can be challenging in many ways. One of the ways you can get the most out of this experience is to select the appropriate gear ahead of time and know how to use it correctly. This sheet summarizes some important tips on those preparations.

## Fitting and Breaking in Your Hiking Boots

Boots are your most important piece of equipment. If you have trouble with your boots, the result is often a great deal of discomfort. Therefore, there are two crucial things to understand and do regarding your boots: First, make sure that the boots you have or buy fit you well, with extra room for thick socks. Second, make sure you have broken them in well *before* arriving for our expedition.

We require a **medium weight leather hiking boot** with a Vibram or similar type sole. Be sure to tell your salesperson that you will be carrying moderately heavy loads on a wide variety of terrains and that good ankle support is a priority. When you go shopping, wear the same hiking socks you will be using during the trip. If your heel lifts or slips more than quarter inch in any direction, the boot is too big, and you may develop blisters on your heels. If your feet are different sizes, fit the larger one and wear an extra sock on the other. Stand on your toes, if your toes crunch up against the front of your boots, you will develop blisters when hiking downhill. You are better off buying boots that are slightly too big than too small. Some good brands of boots are REI, La Sportiva, Merrell, Montrail, Lowa, and Hi-Tec. In order to break your boots in, the directions are simple. Walk everyday with your boots on, up and down hills!

## Choosing and Sizing Your Backpack

Your backpack will be your home while in the backcountry, so you should choose it very carefully. Internal frame packs meet our needs, easy to pack everything inside and comfortable.

Your backpack must have a padded hip belt, and padded shoulder straps. A single compartment pack will suffice. Packs come in various sizes adjusting for back length and waist size. Make sure yours fits so you can draw it tightly around your hips, since the majority of the weight of the pack should fall on your hips, not on your shoulders. When you try it on, have someone put weight in it, and then walk around. The pack should not slip down or weigh on your shoulders. If it does, you need a different size pack. The hip belt should rest on your hip bones, **not below them**. In order to hold all the gear you carry, the pack must have a minimum 4000 cubic inch storage capacity. Other features that you may appreciate are accessible water bottle pockets and a detachable lid that can turn into a daypack. Some good brands of backpacks include Arc'teryx, Gregory, Marmot and REI.

## Sleeping Bag

You will need a good three-season, mummy style bag which will keep you warm to at least 15 degrees Fahrenheit. If you are someone who gets cold easily, you might consider buying a bag that has a rating of 10 degrees Fahrenheit. Your bag should also have a draft tube running the entire length of the zipper, since this is where most of the heat in a bag is lost. Be sure your bag is long enough so you can stretch out in it with the hood on. Draft collars also prevent heat loss through the top.

There are two types of bags currently available on the market, polyester and down bags. Polyester sleeping bags retain loft (hence warmth) when wet, are easy to clean, and are considerably less expensive than a comparable down bag. On the other hand, down bags are often lighter and warmer, as long as you don't get them wet. Do not buy a bag with sewn-through construction, as it will not keep the user warm enough. The total weight of your sleeping bag should be between 2 and 4 pounds. It should also be able to be compressed into a small nylon stuff sack.

Some good brands of sleeping bags include North Face, Mountain Hardware, Sierra Designs, Marmot, and REI.

## Rain Gear

The best way to stay dry is to wear a two piece suit consisting of a jacket and pants. The standard nylon coated waterproof/breathable variety is great for our purposes. It is light weight and durable. Gore-tex is similar, but a bit heavier and costs a lot more. Be careful not to buy plastic raingear which was not designed for hiking and camping. Such raingear often tears and traps moisture inside, often keeping you more wet than dry while hiking. Perhaps just as important as fabric in rain gear is construction, be sure that the seams of your gear are factory sealed.

Some good brands of rain jackets and pants include North Face, Columbia, Moonstone, Marmot, Mountain Hardware and REI.