

LESSON PLAN
INTRODUCTION TO FIELD EQUIPMENT
(30 Minutes)

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Typical Packs	Typical Rain Gear
Typical Sleeping Bags, Liners, and Pads	Typical Mess Kits
Typical Canteens	Typical Tents and Ground Cloths
Typical Personal First Aid Kits	

INTRODUCTION

Back in 1912 it was not unusual for a Scout to roll a shirt and pair of pants and a piece or two of cooking gear into a blanket, tie it over his shoulder, and set out for the woods. It wasn't that the Scout couldn't have used more equipment, there just wasn't much equipment to be had.

Today there is a vast and bewildering selection of very specialized and often very expensive equipment available.

PURPOSE AND MAIN IDEAS

The purpose of this period of instruction is to familiarize you with the basic personal field equipment you should have to camp comfortably for up to a week.

We will do this by covering:

- Personal field equipment you should have,
- Pointers on selecting particular items of equipment,

Packing, donning, and adjusting equipment will be covered in a separate period of instruction.

Upon completion of this period of instruction you will be able to:

1. Identify the items of basic personal field equipment a Scout should have.
2. Know what to look for in selecting particular items of equipment.

BODY

1st Main Idea: Suggested Minimum Items of Personal Field Equipment

There are six items of personal field equipment every Scout should have to comfortably camp. These items are: A pack, a sleeping bag, a canteen, a personal first aid kit, rain gear, and a mess kit. In addition to these items, many Scouts prefer to have their own tent.

2nd Main Idea: Selecting Items of Personal Field Equipment

As mentioned earlier, there is a vast array of equipment available on the market, much of it quite expensive. However, a very good outfit can be had relatively inexpensively if care is taken in selecting it. One of the things you should do before purchasing any equipment is to consult with other more experienced Scouts like your patrol leader and the Junior Assistant Scoutmaster, and with your adult leaders. They can show you examples of equipment that they have and advise you of the advantages and disadvantages of the different types available.

The most important item of personal field equipment is the pack.

- The pack will hold most of the other items of equipment.
- In many cases, you may want to have two or three different sized packs. For example, you may want a small “day-pack” for hikes where you do not intend to spend the night, a medium-sized “patrol” pack for a two or three-day camping trip, and a larger “expedition” pack for trekking or long term camping.
- In selecting a pack, you must consider your size. If a pack is too large for you, you cannot properly adjust it for safe and comfortable wear. Before buying any pack, try it on, preferably with a load, to see how it fits.
- There are three basic pack designs: Those without frames, those with internal frames, and those with external frames.
 - (1) Packs without frames (usually referred to as rucksacks or haversacks) are essentially large sacks with shoulder straps. Smaller versions are often called “day packs” because they are used for outings that do not involve spending the night in the field. The chief disadvantage of this type pack is that they place most of their weight on the shoulders. The larger the pack, the more strain on the shoulders and back.
 - (2) Internal frame packs employ a built-in frame consisting of stays permanently sewn into the pack. The frame distributes the load into a padded hip belt so that the strong bones and muscles of your legs support most of the pack’s weight. Other advantages of the internal frame pack are that the pack generally keeps its shape whether it is empty or loaded and it is relatively compact, compared to external frame packs.
 - (3) External frame packs are attached to a rigid frame. The frame serves two purposes: it helps distribute the weight of the pack more efficiently, and it also provides a small space between your back and the pack. The space reduces chafing, protects your back from hard objects in the pack, and makes the pack a little cooler. Another advantage of external frame packs is that the pack can be detached from the frame so that the frame can be used to carry other types of loads.
- No matter what size pack you get, it should have several pockets or compartments to enable you to keep related items together and to quickly locate a particular item without having to empty the pack. The pack should also have loops for straps for attaching other items of equipment to the exterior of the pack.

The next most important item of personal field equipment is the sleeping bag.

- A good sleeping bag, appropriate for the season, can make a tremendous difference in how much you enjoy a camping experience – if you don't sleep well, life can become pretty uncomfortable.
- As with packs, you may want to have several different types. For example, you may want a “mountain” bag for camping in very cold weather and a lighter “intermediate” bag for backpacking and fall or spring camping trips. For camping in the summer, a “poncho liner” (a type of military blanket) may be all you need.
- The warmest sleeping bags are filled with goose down. “Down” refers to the fine, soft, fluffy feathers underlying the contour feathers in adult geese. When dry, it is relatively light, and provides excellent insulation. However, if down becomes wet it loses its insulating capacity and it becomes very heavy. It is also expensive.
- Most modern sleeping bags use a synthetic fiber, often referred to as “hollow fill.” This new material retains its insulating capacity wet or dry, but is slightly heavier than down. Synthetic-fill bags are generally preferable to down-filled bags for most activities Scouts will be participating in.
- Unless you are going to be camping in extremely cold conditions, an “intermediate” weight bag good for temperatures down to 20° will be adequate for most outings. If the temperatures are expected to be below 20°, the bag can be augmented by adding a fleece liner or a wool blanket.
- A fleece sleeping bag liner has the additional advantage of providing a lightweight sleeping bag for late spring, summer, and early fall.
- An excellent alternative to the sleeping bag liner is the military “poncho liner.” This very lightweight blanket is made of synthetics. It is amazingly warm, compact, dries quickly if it becomes wet, and is very durable.

Following the sleeping bag in importance is the canteen.

- Your canteen can vary from a simple plastic water bottle to very sophisticated “hydration” systems worn on the back.
- The typical 1-quart military canteen, with its cup and case, worn on a web “pistol” belt is an excellent choice since other items of equipment such as a knife, personal first aid kit, personal survival kit, compass, etc. can also be attached to the belt. The belt allows these items to be carried comfortably and securely, and is especially convenient when carrying a pack is not feasible or desired.
- Another popular design is the so-called Scout canteen. This type of canteen is carried by a strap worn over the shoulder.
- There are also a number of plastic water bottles and carriers available that more or less approximate the utility of the military canteen and belt.
- In the desert, or when engaged in very strenuous activities in which it is desirable to be able to drink while keeping your hands free (such as biking), a so-called “hydration system” may be appropriate. These systems feature a large-capacity water bag and carrier that is worn on the back or inserted into a pack. A tube with a “bite-valve” runs over the shoulder and is positioned near the mouth. To drink, one has only to turn the head slightly, bite down on the valve to open it, and suck.

Of equal importance to the canteen is the personal first aid and survival kit.

- A small first aid and survival kit should be carried at all times when in the field.
- There are a number of small, personal first aid kits available, but they will require some modification to become combination first aid and survival kits. In addition to the typical first aid kit contents, the kit should be augmented with a knife, signal mirror, matches or other type of fire-starting gear, some cord, a pencil and paper, insect repellent, and sunscreen. The contents of a good personal first aid and survival kit will be covered in detail in a later period of instruction.
- The most important consideration in selecting a personal first aid kit, therefore, is its carrier or case. The carrier or case should be sturdy, large enough to carry plenty of items, and should be able to be attached to a belt. Small camera bags make excellent cases for a build-it-yourself personal first aid and survival kit.

After the first aid kit in importance comes rain gear.

- There are two basic choices for rain gear: the rain suit or the poncho.
- Some advantages of the rain suit are that it provides full coverage of the head, torso, and legs and it can be donned incrementally (e.g., only one component can be worn depending upon what you are doing). Disadvantages include the fact that when worn it does not cover other equipment and it offers very little in the way of alternate use. Also, in hot, humid climates, full rain suits can be very uncomfortable.
- Advantages of the poncho include its ability to be worn over a pack, the fact that it can be used as a tarp to cover other equipment or to construct a shelter, and that other items can be rolled up in it to protect them from rain and snow. An additional advantage is that the military “poncho liner” can be tied into the poncho to form a good sleeping bag. Disadvantages include the fact that it does not cover the legs well and that it somewhat restricts arm movement.
- Many people prefer to carry both types of rain gear, particularly when engaged in long-term camping.

Last in the list of truly “individual” equipment is the mess kit.

- As with the other items of equipment, mess kits come in a variety of sizes and styles.
- Most mess kits do not include cutlery – although you can make do with sticks, a fork and spoon will make life a lot more pleasant.
- Although slightly heavier, stainless steel kits are preferable to aluminum kits in most cases.
- If the kit does not include a cup, make sure you have one in your pack.

Most troops furnish tents but, if you wish, you may furnish your own tent.

- The military style “shelter-half” system was once very popular, but it is not very well suited to “leave no trace” camping. It is not recommended.

- If you plan on doing a lot of backpacking, weight is a primary factor. Otherwise, size and durability (i.e., materials and construction) are most important. For one or two persons, small “dome” tents are a good choice. These are self-supporting structures that offer excellent protection from the elements and a fair amount of room.
- Remember this rule of thumb: Reduce the number of people the tent is rated to sleep by half. That is, if a tent is advertised as “sleeps four comfortably,” it will really sleep two comfortably.
- For backpacking expeditions, many people prefer the so-called bivouac bag or “bivy shelters.” These are one-man, tube-type tents that will provide protection from the elements while sleeping, but have little or no room for equipment. You crawl into the tent to sleep – that’s all. They are not well suited for general camping and are not recommended except for backpacking trips where weight is a primary consideration.
- In addition to the tent, a good plastic ground cloth should be carried. The ground cloth protects the floor of the tent from abrasions, helps keep it clean, and separates it from wet ground.

SUMMARY

Each Scout should have six items of basic personal field equipment: A pack, a sleeping bag, a canteen, a personal first aid and survival kit, a mess kit, and rain gear. Some Scouts prefer to have their own tent as well.

Before purchasing any equipment, talk to other Scouts and with your adult leaders. Find out what they recommend and why. Take your time in selecting equipment. It does not have to be very expensive, but it must be comfortable and durable or you will have wasted your money.

Whenever possible, try on the equipment before you buy it. Make sure it fits and is not too large or too small for your size and the equipment you expect to carry.

QUESTIONS FROM THE CLASS

QUESTIONS TO THE CLASS