

**LESSON PLAN**  
**PACKING, DONNING, AND ADJUSTING FIELD EQUIPMENT**  
**(30 Minutes)**

**MATERIALS REQUIRED**

A typical set of personal field equipment including pack, canteen, personal first aid/survival kit, rain gear, mess kit, sleeping bag, and clothing suitable for a weekend camping trip.

**INTRODUCTION**

In addition to having the proper equipment, you must know how to pack it and how to don and adjust it so that it is comfortable and safe.

**PURPOSE AND MAIN IDEAS**

The purpose of this period of instruction is to teach you how to properly pack typical personal equipment carried on a weekend camping trip, how to put the equipment on, and how to adjust it correctly.

We will do this by covering:

- Identifying and preparing items for loading into the pack,
- Loading the pack,
- Donning and adjusting the equipment.

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

1. Identify personal equipment typically needed on a camping trip.
2. Prepare the equipment for loading into the pack.
3. Load the items into a pack so that any particular item can be quickly located and retrieved.
4. Don and adjust the pack and other equipment so that it is comfortable and safe.

**BODY**

**1<sup>st</sup> Main Idea: Identifying the Personal Equipment Needed on a Camping Trip**

Loading the pack does not mean randomly stuffing pieces of equipment into the pack. In fact, even before loading the pack, you need identify what you are going to carry and plan where you are going to pack it.

Depending upon the duration of the trip, the weather, and whether you will be hiking in or traveling by boat or other vehicle, the actual equipment you decide to carry will vary. However, there are *ten essential items of equipment* you should always carry:

1. Matches in a waterproof case (a sparking device such as the Strikeforce, is also recommended)
2. Fire starter (cotton balls impregnated with Vaseline)
3. Map
4. Compass
5. Flashlight with extra batteries and bulb
6. Emergency food (MREs, survival rations or high energy bars)
7. Extra clothing appropriate for the season
8. First aid kit
9. Pocket knife
10. Cord or heavy string (parachute cord is ideal)

Other items typically carried on a weekend camping trip include the following:

- Personal hygiene items (i.e., toilet paper, soap, towel, toothbrush and toothpaste, metal mirror, comb, etc.)
- Sleeping gear appropriate for the season
- Mess kit, food and water, and cooking utensils
- Insect repellent and/or sunscreen as appropriate for the season and climate
- Rain gear.
- Paper and pen or pencil.
- Shelter materials (i.e., a tent or a tarp and pegs and lines for rigging, a ground cloth, etc.).
- Other optional items such as cameras, binoculars, etc.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Main Idea: Preparing the Equipment for Packing**

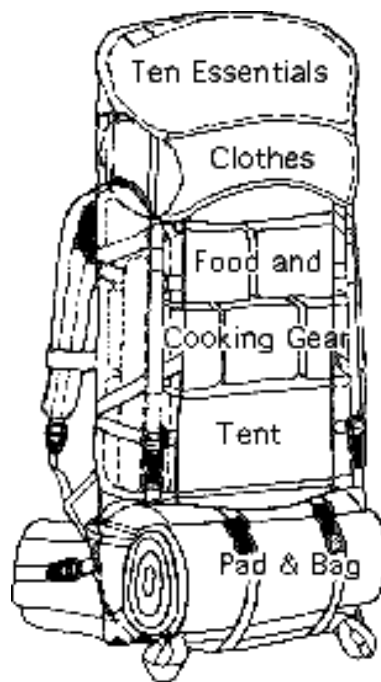
- Before you begin loading your pack, you should waterproof the equipment. One way of doing this is to place similar or related items into sturdy plastic bags. Label the bag if the contents are not obvious, and use different sized bags as appropriate for the contents.
- Identify items that may leak and pack them in double bags for extra protection.
- After placing items in a plastic bag, force as much air out as possible before sealing the bag. This will reduce bulk and give you more room in the pack.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Main Idea: Loading the Pack**

The next step is to load the pack. When loading the pack, keep in mind this simple rule: *Last needed, first in*. That is, equipment not needed until making camp should go in first because it will be needed last. Items such as first aid and rain gear should go in last so that they can be quickly retrieved if needed.

- Most packs will have at least one large main and several smaller outside pockets.
- Your tent (if you are carrying one) should go into the bottom of the main compartment, followed by your mess kit and other cooking gear, and then food items. Extra clothing should be packed above these items.
- Frequently needed items such as your map, toilet paper, flashlight, rain gear, and first aid kit should be placed just under the top flap or in the outside pockets.
- Your canteen or water bottle should be carried in one of the outer pockets or on the waist belt.
- If you are carrying fuel for a camp stove, reserve one of the outside pockets for the fuel bottle or cylinder.

The drawing below illustrates the general location of items in the pack.



If your pack has a sleeping bag compartment, pack the sleeping bag there. If not, after the main compartment(s) and outside pockets have been loaded, attach the sleeping bag or bedroll to the outside using straps or cords.

The actual construction of you pack will determine exactly where the items are packed but as a general rule:

- If you are going to be moving on relatively level terrain, pack the heavier items closer to the top to raise the pack's center of gravity. This provides the most comfortable load.
- If you are going to be climbing up and down steep slopes or traversing marshy or very broken terrain, stow the heavier items nearer the bottom to lower the pack's center of gravity. This is less comfortable, but is more stable.

## **4<sup>th</sup> Main Idea: Donning and Adjusting the Pack and Other Equipment**

Donning the loaded pack is accomplished as follows:

1. Stand in front of the pack with the straps facing you. Grab the shoulder straps and lift the pack waist high.
2. Flex your knees slightly and let the pack rest on your thigh as you slip one of your arms through a shoulder strap.
3. Swing the pack up onto your back, slipping the other arm through the other shoulder strap.
4. Lean forward at the waist slightly and hoist the pack high onto your shoulders.
5. Tighten the shoulder straps and, if your pack has a waist belt, buckle it.
6. When the pack is properly adjusted, it should ride high on your shoulders, not low down in the small of your back. There should be no space between the top of the pack and your back and there should be no forward pressure on the small of your back. In other words, the pack should not be bending you backward at the waist.
7. If the pack is equipped with a waist belt, adjust the belt so that it goes around your hipbones, not around your stomach. The belt and straps should be adjusted so that most of the weight of the pack is distributed to the strong bones and muscles of your legs, with your shoulders stabilizing the load, not supporting it.

If you are carrying other equipment, such as a camera or a pair of binoculars, sling the equipment so that its strap does not cross over the pack straps. In an emergency, you want to be able to get out of the pack as quickly as possible and you don't want the pack straps to get tangled or hung up on other equipment.

### **SUMMARY**

Before you begin the task of packing your gear, you must first identify what gear you will carry. After selecting the appropriate gear, arrange it in groups of similar or related items, then pack those groups in stuff sacks or plastic bags to protect them from water and to make it easier to locate and retrieve a particular piece of equipment.

When loading the pack, put those items that will be needed last into the pack first. Put frequently needed items into the outer pockets or just inside the top compartment under the flap. Put items that may leak in outer pockets also.

Consider the terrain you will be navigating in. On level terrain, pack heavier items to keep the center of gravity high. On rough or steep terrain, pack to keep the center of gravity low.

### **QUESTIONS FROM THE CLASS**

### **QUESTIONS TO THE CLASS**