

Camping and Equipment

Summer Camp – Troop 119 goes to camp for two weeks in the summer. The first week is at Camp Bell in N.H., where scouts will participate in patrol-based activities during the day. The patrols cook for themselves as well. The second week is at Camp Hidden Valley, where scouts focus on earning merit badges. Both camps run a First Year Program for new Scouts, which teaches basic camping skills, and would help new Scouts on their way to Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class ranks. Camping forms are due in March, so be sure to check out the forms section on this website for more information!

Equipment – There is a lot of equipment you need to go camping, but that does not mean that you have to go out and immediately buy a lot of expensive gear. When looking for camping equipment keep in mind two things: (1) new Scouts start off small and grow rapidly (a sleeping bag that fits today will be too small tomorrow) and (2) new Scouts will not be doing major hiking or extreme weather camping their first year. More information about equipment is available on our Forms&Info web page. You will find a Personal Equipment List there and Winter Camping Information.

Troop and Patrol Gear – Troop 119 owns tents and cooking gear that are supplied to the patrols. Patrols generally have to supply their own food. The patrol plans meals during regular troop meetings and appoint a Grubmaster to purchase the food and pack it into a cooler. The Troop also issues a lantern to each patrol to use when cooking.

Backpacks – DON'T BUY A BACKPACK RIGHT AWAY!!! Since the distance most first year Scouts have to travel is from the back of the car to the tent, a duffle bag or a daypack (like a backpack used for school) is usually sufficient and packs well in car.

Sleeping bags – A 25° (F) sleeping bag is more than adequate for most of the trips a new Scout will do in the first year. Even when the temperature goes down to zero the Scouts will be sleeping inside tents with other Scouts, dressed, and with a bag liner or blanket inside the bag. Sleeping bags filled with down are to be avoided. Although they are the “warmest and lightest” they lose almost all of their insulating ability when they get wet (a common occurrence for new Scouts) and cannot be dried out on a camping trip. The new synthetics are almost as good as down, retain most of their insulating capability when wet, and can be dried on a camping trip. Mummy bags are good because they heat up faster, are lighter and easier, and usually come with a hood to keep the head warm. They can sometimes be uncomfortably for new Scouts, however, because they feel constrictive. If you would like to try out gear before purchasing, visit REI in Reading – they rent out equipment.

Boots - Boots are an essential for camping. Sneakers do not provide any ankle support and quickly get wet with a little rain. Boots should go above the ankle and should have a gusseted tongue (the tongue has extra material to the sides that attach to the boot) so that water and dirt are kept out. Look for a minimum number of sewn seams (because they all have to be waterproofed) and a cemented or sewn sole. Get a good foot liner to

help wick moisture out of the boot. See pages 200-201 of the Scout Handbook for more information about boots and socks.

Socks – Always pack extra socks. Socks should be made of polyester or wool. Once cotton socks become wet (sweating), they stay wet, but polyester and wool socks wick the moisture away from the skin. Even in mild camping weather, feet can become extremely cold with cotton socks! Scouts should have a fresh pair of socks to change into at night, and another pair for the morning.

Flashlights – Many scouts use headlamps, which allow you to use the lamp and still have both your hands free. The headlamp is particularly convenient when Scouts are finishing cleaning up after dinner at dusk.

Mess kits – Don't go out and buy those army style mess kits where everything fits inside everything else. They are made of metal which lets the food get cold quickly and easily get bent out of shape. What you want is a good sturdy plastic plate and bowl that will not break when dropped or stuffed into a pack on the way home. Utensils can be any old mismatched set of knife, fork, and spoon that you won't worry about if it doesn't come home. For drinks use a good plastic mug. Don't get a collapsible cup. Many of our Scouts have plates and bowls made of Lexan polycarbonate.

Raingear – Almost everyone goes through what we call an “evolution” in raingear. First year Scouts usually wear a poncho. It's easy to pack, quick to put on, and works for about five minutes in a downpour, unless you're hiking. By the second year they've switched to a plastic or rubber coated rainsuit. While this offers more protection Scouts eventually realize that they are sweating inside as much as it's raining outside. Finally they end up in a nylon or Gore-tex rainsuit that lets the body breathe and also serves as a jacket when it is cooler. By this time, the Scout has grown significantly, and hopefully will be able to use this rainsuit well into young adulthood.

Water Bottle – A water bottle is essential for camping. Most of our scouts carry Nalgene bottles and clip them to their belt loops with carabiners.

Who packs?? – Never let someone else pack for you, not even your parents!!! You are the one going camping and in the middle of the night when your flashlight dies and you need your spare batteries, you are the one who needs to know in what pocket of the backpack they are in. Your troop guide or one of the other older scouts should be inspecting your pack for the first campout or two to show you how and to make sure that you haven't forgotten anything. Also, if it has a battery in it and it is not your flashlight, leave it home. Game boys, i-pods, etc. are not allowed at camp. Never bring anything camping that you're not afraid of losing or