

THE CAMPSITE

Finding a suitable campsite is not only important for comfort but may affect one's safety and well-being. The criteria used for campsites for Award Expeditions may differ considerably from holiday camping, but care taken in choosing the right location will be amply repaid in comfort and freedom from unexpected and unwanted happenings during the night or the following morning. A campsite suitable for mobile lightweight camping must fulfill a number of criteria. It should be:

- Able to provide shelter from the wind.
- Permissible to camp on the site.
- Free from objective dangers.
- Able to offer some degree of privacy.
- Within easy reach of water.
- Reasonably level.
- Able to provide a secure anchorage for the tent and sufficiently soft to offer the prospect of a good night's sleep.

Able to provide shelter from the wind - Award participants with lightweight tents will be concerned with finding shelter from the wind, which will not only significantly reduce the possibility of the tents being flattened, but will facilitate cooking and make life around the camp site more enjoyable. This usually means seeking lower ground, hollows or the lee side of a ridge, hill, wood, hedge or wall. However, in spring and autumn under clear skies, cold air can sink down slopes and collect in hollows, the so-called 'frost hollows'. If there is little or no wind when the tents are pitched, then it is usual to take shelter from the prevailing wind, which in the British Isles is from a Westerly direction. Place the windbreak between the tent and the wind.

Permissible to camp on the site - all land belongs to someone. Permission to camp should always be sought from the landowner. In Scotland it is a criminal offence to camp without permission and this is true in certain countries on the Continent. There are, however, certain areas, usually in the wilder remote upland areas of England and Wales, where the landowners tolerate the tradition of free camping.

Free from objective dangers - it is vitally important that campsites should be free from dangers that may take a variety of forms ranging from flash floods to cattle. Sharing a campsite with any form of livestock other than sheep is asking for trouble.

Able to provide some degree of privacy - mobile campers only have the seclusion of a small lightweight tent and, of necessity, their ablutions must take place in the open. Some degree of seclusion and privacy is essential both for the campers and for the inhabitants of any nearby dwellings.

Within easy reach of water - the site must be reasonably near water, but lightweight campers are usually prepared to carry their water a little way if it enables them to choose a better site, which fulfils more of the criteria, listed above.

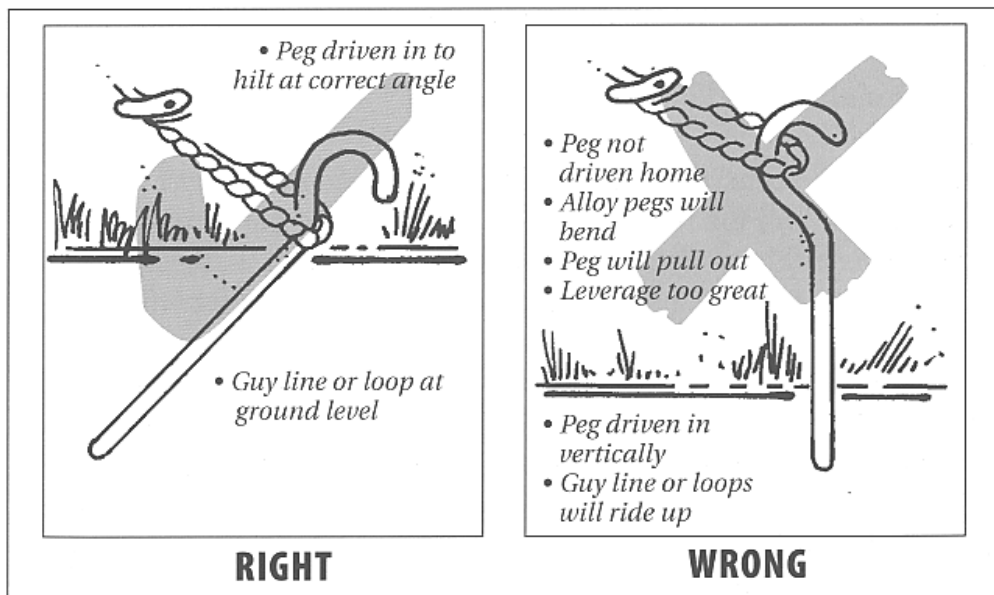
Reasonably level - the ground on which the tent is pitched needs to be as level as possible within the limits of the terrain. Sleeping on a slope can be very uncomfortable as there is a tendency for all the occupants of the tent to finish in a heap at one side, or end, of the tent. If the tent has to be pitched on a slope, then it is better to sleep with the feet facing downhill.

Able to provide a secure anchorage for the tent - the tents that blow away are the ones, which have not been fastened to the ground properly. The ground where a tent is pitched must provide a secure anchorage for the tent pegs. For many lightweight campers the site may be Hobson's choice! Sand, semi-marsh and stony ground provide the greatest problems and ingenuity may be necessary to overcome the problems.

PITCHING THE TENT

With such a variety of tents available, it is impossible to suggest a routine for pitching a tent, but one can say with certainty that a well-pitched tent is a safe and secure one. Objects that may puncture the ground sheet must be removed, and anything which can be done to improve the surface will increase the chances of a good night's sleep; you may well lie awake all night wishing you had devoted more attention to the ground you are sleeping on.

Guy lines should be run out in line with the seams and, if the tent has main guy lines, heavier pegs should be used. If the ground is loose or very soft, then stones should be placed on top of the pegs, care being taken to ensure that they will not fray the lines. This is where the extra trouble of adding a selection of different tent pegs of varying shape, length or material to those supplied with the tent gains its reward. It is often possible to fashion additional pegs or stakes out of twigs or wood. The alloy or steel pegs used with lightweight tents must be driven into the ground up to the hilt and at an angle of 45° to the surface of the ground with the head away from the tent. The tent should normally be pitched with the entrance facing away from the wind, but if it is pitched close to a windbreak, then it may need to be the other way round. Tents should not be pitched immediately under trees. Two people should never take more than 15 minutes to pitch or strike a lightweight tent.



LIVING IN A TENT

When two or three people are living within the confines of a few square metres of tent, organisation and tidiness are essential, especially in wet weather. It is important that the occupants establish a routine for 'who does what'. This should be sorted out before reaching the campsite in the evening. No matter how tired and weary the group may be, tents should always be pitched straightaway. Immediately after the kettle has been filled and placed on the stove to boil for the 'brew-up', the tent should be pitched and, with good teamwork, it should take no longer than the kettle takes to boil. A hot drink can do much to restore morale when a group is cold and wet, as well as remedying any dehydration. After a drink, preparations can be made for cooking the evening meal.

After the meal, equipment that is not in use should always be packed away. Stoves and utensils, which will come to no harm if they get wet, are best stored outside near to the tent. Experienced campers prepare for the unexpected. Pans and dishes should be washed after the meal, the site tidied up and all equipment restored to the pack, except for items which will be required overnight. The torches should always be to hand beside the sleeping bag. Boots, or outside footwear, should never be worn inside the tent but should be placed inside the tent on either side of the door. The lightweight groundsheet must always be treated with great care otherwise they will become porous; bare or stockinged feet must be the rule. Every effort must be made to keep the inside of the tent dry in wet weather by leaving wet over-clothing under the fly sheet, if there is one, and there should always be a cloth to hand to wipe up any spillages. One set of dry clothing must always be retained even if this means donning wet clothing in the morning.

When striking camp, the underside of the ground sheet must be wiped clean and dry and the tent pegs cleaned with some rag, which is always stored in the peg bag. If the tent is wet, then it must be shaken to remove as much of the water as possible before packing. A wet tent must always be hung out to dry on return to home or base.

HYGIENE

Hygiene is a most important aspect of camp craft and is of major concern to both Supervisors and Assessors when they visit a campsite. Personal cleanliness should always remain at a high level throughout the venture. Face, hands and feet should always be washed at the end of every day and teeth should be cleaned. Every effort should be made to wash socks as frequently as possible and they can be dried while on the move if the weather is fine by fastening them to the outside of the rucksack.

Water supplies must be kept clean. **No washing should take place in streams and dirty or greasy water must never be thrown back into a stream.** Dirty water should be poured into a hole in soft ground, well away from the stream, made by removing a piece of turf with the trowel.

All litter, tins, bottles, paper and remnants of food must be removed from the campsite. It may be possible to make arrangements with the landowner concerning its disposal. If not, the group must carry it until it can be deposited in a bin. Sometimes Assessors and Supervisors can be persuaded to take it away with them. Spare plastic bags should always be carried for this purpose. It is neither acceptable to burn rubbish, as it always leaves an unsightly patch, nor to bury rubbish as it will always attract animals.

When meeting the campsite owner on arrival at the site, discuss toilet arrangements. If none are available, dig a latrine well away from any stream and any place that might be used by other campers to pitch their tents. Using the trowel, remove the turf in one piece and dig a hole at least 20 cm deep (8 inches). Replace the turf after use so that there is no trace left. Do not remove rocks and then replace them as this leaves the site unusable for other campers.

LEAVING THE CAMP SITE

Before the campsite is vacated, the landowner should be thanked and any payment made. Any stones used under pans to prevent the grass being scorched, or used to secure guy lines, must be replaced. The site should be searched to ensure that it is clean and free from litter; even a matchstick counts as litter.

After a camp site has been vacated there should be no trace of its ever having been used for camping; whether the site was on the immaculate lawn of a country house or on the top of some lonely fell. Good campers leave nothing behind but their thanks.