

## Expedition Equipment

A good choice of equipment is vital for the comfort, safety and enjoyment of an expedition at any level. It is important to take everything you will need, and even more important to leave behind what you won't need. A good kit list will make this possible and your instructor will be able to provide you with one, which can be personalised if necessary.

The equipment you will need can be split into the following categories:

- Clothing
- Emergency equipment
- Personal camping equipment
- Group camping equipment

### **CLOTHING**

Arguably, your clothes are the most important part of all your kit. Your choice will have to protect you from the worst possible conditions, be those hot, cold or wet.

It is customary to have three layers of clothing;

Inner- absorbs perspiration

Middle- insulation & warmth provider

Outer/Shell- keep wind and rain out

#### *Inner Layer*

When you sweat, the wetness created removes the insulating properties from materials. This is why it is important to wear an inner layer such as a T-Shirt to help you stay dry.

#### *Middle Layer*

Insulation comes from air trapped between layers of clothing. Bearing this in mind, it is a good idea to have your middle layer made up of two or three thin jumpers, rather than one thick layer. This way you can also add and remove clothing to regulate your body temperature.

#### *Outer Layer*

Wind will blow through most clothing, removing any warm air that you have created next to your body. To prevent this you should wear something windproof in windy weather. As with sweating, wet weather removes the insulating properties of materials, so you should try and stay dry by wearing a waterproof.

#### *Socks*

The socks you choose to wear should cushion and insulate your feet as well as absorb perspiration. They should also be free from holes and seams otherwise you may get rubbing on your feet leading to blisters. Many walkers choose to wear two pairs of socks, 1 thick and 1 thin pair. This helps prevent blisters.

*Head Wear*

A hat can protect your head from the heat of the sun, or it can help to keep your body temperature up in the cold, as a high percentage of body heat is lost through your head.

*Gloves*

These are obviously designed to keep your hands warm, but waterproof gloves can also be brought, keeping your hands dry as well as warm. Whatever sort you buy, they should be long enough to protect your wrists and tuck into your jacket sleeves.

**BOOTS**

Of all your clothing and equipment, your boots will have the biggest impact of the enjoyment of your journey. Above all they should fit you. Good boots will be lightweight, comfortable and waterproof, with a good tread pattern to prevent slipping and falling.

The best boots are made of one-piece leather with 'D'-rings rather than bootlace holes, thus making them as water proof as possible. Tough suede, fabric and Gor-Tex® boots are also widely available on the market, and provide a cheaper alternative to the leather variety.

*Purchasing Boots*

When you buy boots you have to make the right choice, as they are expensive and you only get one real chance at getting it right. Take your time and choose carefully, listening to any advice the shop assistant gives you. Try the boots on with the socks you will be wearing during the expedition.

*Breaking Boots in*

You should always break your boots in, or mould them to the shape of your foot before you go on any walk. There are many methods to doing this, but one of the best is to wear your boots in place of your shoes, to the shops, school, even around the house. Boot oil or liquid wax will soften the boot and help this process. Don't go on the venture without doing this!

*Maintaining the Boots*

If you look after your boots properly, they will last you a long time. Always clean them after you have used them, and allow them to dry naturally. Putting them by a heater or fire will just crack the leather. Waterproof them with polish or wax. Always follow the manufacturers instructions.

**PERSONAL EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT**

Every member of the group should carry the following kit;

*Spare Clothing*

These clothes should be waterproofed in a plastic bag and saved for emergency use. If you are in an emergency, you will be grateful that you have taken the time to do this.

*Bivvy / Survival Bag*

This is undoubtedly a piece of lifesaving kit. Basically a plastic bag big enough to fit a person inside. It is used mainly for shelter when a group member is suffering from exposure or hypothermia. If one person is suffering, the rest of the group are not

far away, especially if they have stopped and how silly are you going to feel if you have to queue up for the use of a Bivvy bag?

#### *First Aid Kit*

The contents of your first aid kit should reflect your understanding of first aid. It should also be small, lightweight and waterproof, and stored in an accessible place in your bag. As a minimum it should contain 2 sterile dressings, a selection of plasters, a triangular bandage and a couple of large non-adherent (melolin™) square dressings.

#### *Emergency Rations*

These should be a high-energy provider e.g. chocolate bars, nuts, jelly. Try to take something you don't particularly like and then you won't be tempted to tuck in during a bout of hunger. The rations should be shown to the assessor/safety supervisor before and after the expedition.

#### *Whistle*

The whistle can be used to attract attention to yourself. A plastic type will prevent it from sticking to your lips in cold weather. You should carry it in a pocket, that way if you lose your bag for any reason you will still have a whistle.

#### *Torch*

Besides being able to see what you are doing when you have to pitch your tent in the dark and to stop yourself falling down a ditch on the way to the toilet, a torch can be used to signal in an emergency. For this reason you should make sure your batteries are new and carry a spare set of batteries and bulb. The torch should be lightweight; a head torch provides hands free operation, which can be never endingly useful.

#### **REMEMBER**

You can't read a map if you can't see it!

#### *Maps and Compass*

The obvious comment here is that the map should be of the area you in. I know it sounds silly, but it is a very valid point. You have to protect your map, so either use a map case or a laminated map. The group should carry a minimum of two maps. A compass should be carried providing you know how to use it correctly.

#### *Matches*

You will need matches to light your stove, giving you food to keep you going. For this reason matches should be kept dry. Store them in driest place you have and waterproof them further by carrying them in a film case. If you do this, don't forget a striker. Alternatively you can use candle wax on the tip.

#### *Pencil and Note Book*

You will have to make notes for your report so it is a good idea to have your notebook easily available. A pencil will write better than a pen in wet weather. You can even sharpen both ends on a pencil. You will also need your notebook to record all the details in an emergency.

#### *Water Bottle*

This does not have to be expensive; a small, empty pop bottle will suffice as long as it does not leak. Fill your bottle up when ever possible and don't be afraid to

ask at farms or houses for water. In areas that are common to walkers you will not be the first people to have asked them, and certainly won't be the last. The worst they can say is no, but most won't. Try not drink out of mountain streams, you can't guarantee their purity.

### **PERSONAL CAMPING EQUIPMENT**

This equipment is what you need to camp in comfort.

#### *Rucksack*

Everything you take with you on the venture will have to fit inside the rucksack. For this reason it should be strong and robust. Many now come with an internal frame making them an ideal choice. Look for well padded hip and shoulder straps as they will add to your overall comfort. The size is an important factor. The smaller the bag the better because the more room you have available to fill, the more you will want to carry. As a guide 55 to 65 litres is a good size. No matter how expensive your rucksack is, it will never be 100% waterproof so you should always use a liner.

#### *Sleeping Bag*

The sleeping bag must be able to keep you warm. For the Award's requirements a two to three season bag should be suitable. A synthetic filling is easier to dry if you get the bag wet. It may be worth storing the bag inside a separate waterproof liner. A compression sack will have to be used in most cases to 'crush' a sleeping bag small enough to fit into your rucksack.

#### *Rollmat (or similar)*

Many walkers choose to use a closed cell foam mat to add comfort to a nights sleep. Apart for that, it will insulate you from the cold and is also useful in emergencies.

#### *Change of Clothes*

In addition to the emergency clothes listed earlier, it is a good idea to change into dry clothes at night and back in to the wet ones in the morning.

#### *Eating Utensils*

You will need a knife, fork, spoon & cup. A non-breakable plate is also a good idea. Everything else can be shared e.g. eat straight out of the canteen set.

#### *Washing Gear*

It is a good idea to take a small towel & soap, toothbrush & toothpaste and the ever important toilet paper. You can choose to take other things, but anything else is not really necessary.

### **GROUP CAMPING EQUIPMENT**

The remainder of the kit is what the whole group needs. You should pool all this kit and share it out equally between the group. Doing this will increase your chances of success.

#### *Tent*

Your tent should be lightweight and sleep two or three people. This way the load can be shared out between the occupants. All team members should make sure they know how to pitch the tent, even in the dark.

### *Cooking Stoves*

When choosing a stove you should consider its weight and bulk, as well as the efficiency and fuel availability. A Trangia® (Meths stove) is the most popular choice. Methalayed spirits is widely available and a good advantage is that you don't have to carry a separate canteen cooking set.

### *Fuel Bottles*

As the contents are flammable, it is important that the bottle you choose is specifically designed for carrying fuel with a secure screw top.

### *Canteen Cooking Set*

If you are not using a Trangia® you will need a canteen set to prepare food in. The pans that nest inside each other are the best as they save space.

### *Washing-up Materials*

For hygiene reasons you should keep the cooking equipment clean. A good guide is a plastic container of washing up liquid, a wire wool scourer, a dish cloth and at least one T-towel.

### **AND FINALLY ...**

It is worth remembering that the more you take with you, the more you have to carry. Additional extras may include a needle and thread and a small length of string, but generally speaking, ask yourself the question; "Does it increase my safety?" If the answer is "No", do you really need to take it with you?

You should also become an expert at the art of improvisation by the end of the expedition. Make use of what you have with you; e.g. a t-towel can serve as a hat in hot weather or as a flag in an emergency.