

New Scout Camping Gear

Outfitting your Boy Scout for camping can be a neat experience! It can also get expensive rather quickly. Often, we think of camping in terms of throwing the gear into a backpack and heading off into the wilderness. In reality, for most Troop 75 camping, your scout doesn't need a lot of gear, so save your money for later when your scout decides to get into backpacking or other high adventure activities.

The troop will provide the cooking gear that your scout needs. Your scout will be a member of a well-equipped patrol that has a good camp kitchen. Since most of Troop 75's camping will take place at established campgrounds, a backpack isn't needed until your scout is older and ready for a High Adventure base. A duffel bag and daypack are typically the only gear storage items your scout needs for the first year or two.

Every scout looks forward to carrying his pocket knife around everywhere he goes. However, until your scout has earned his Totin' Chit, he is **not** allowed to carry a pocket knife. Most new scouts earn their Totin' Chit on the first couple of campouts, which tends to also be about the time they achieve Scout rank. You might want to wait until he earns Scout to purchase that pocket knife and make it a special gift to acknowledge his first step on the Scouting trail! Do **not** buy your scout a fixed blade knife or a pocket knife with a blade longer than 3-1/2. "Mechanically-assisted knives are forbidden by the BSA (switchblades or spring-assist blades).

Troop 75 strongly recommends that you do not spend a lot of money on camping gear until your scout has been in the troop for a year. To begin, a lot of equipment is sized and he will outgrow it quickly. Secondly, your scout's needs and preferences are going to change based upon his evolving interests (camping vs High Adventure). If you are overly enthusiastic early on, you will end up wasting a lot of money on the wrong gear! Lastly, the piece of equipment that seems really cool at the start of his scouting journey may be absolutely wrong for him a year later.

So what does your scout need to get camping with Troop 75? He will need the following equipment to get him through the typical campout:

- Sleeping Bag
- Sleeping Pad
- Pillow
- Flashlight
- Rain Suit
- Water Bottles (2)
- Drink Cup
- Durable Bowl
- Durable Plate
- Knife, Fork, and Spoon
- Toothbrush and Toothpaste

- ___ Dental Floss
- ___ Washcloth
- ___ Hand Soap in a Ziploc bag
- ___ Pocket Notepad and Pen
- ___ Scout Handbook
- ___ Daypack
- ___ Change of Clothes
- ___ Seasonal Clothing (Jacket, Coat, Hat, etc.)

Believe it or not, most scouts don't change clothes much on campouts! One spare set of clothing is all that is needed (they'll probably come home unused). As far as cool/cold weather new scout camping gear clothing goes, what you already have should work, so there isn't much reason to go break the bank at the outdoor store. If you do need a special camping garment, consider looking at the Salvation Army or Goodwill Thrift Store - why buy new when it's probably going to get torn up?

Your scout's first sleeping bag should come from Wal-Mart or Academy and shouldn't cost more than \$35. Get a bag rated to between 20°F - 30°F. If you are absolutely determined to buy a better bag, it is strongly recommended to purchase the Eureka Silver City sold at the Scout Store. It is a good bag, lightweight and compact for backpacking, and might just meet your scout's needs for many years. It will cost around \$80.

A sleeping pad is essential! Avoid the thin Ozark Trail blue foam pad from Wal-Mart! Likewise, don't go buy your new scout a self-inflating pad or an expensive pad. A good pad that should last your scout many years, to include backpacking, is the Thermarest Solite or Z-lite. If you have an old foam mattress topper, you can trim that down to 24"x72" and let your scout use that. If you have an old blanket or comforter, that makes a great pad, too.

Your pillow from home works great on campouts. Just buy a cheap pillowcase for it.

A decent flashlight or headlamp is essential. The cheap clip-on LED headlamps from Academy are actually very good and quite inexpensive. Pack a set of spare batteries in a Ziploc bag!

Ponchos just aren't that good in Oklahoma rain, so go with the Frogg Toggs or DriDucks ultralight rain suit. It is inexpensive and lightweight. These suits survive Philmont every year, so they should survive your scout...

The cheapest option for a water bottle is to buy a 1-liter Gatorade for your scout. He can rinse the bottle when he's done and reuse it for years. It is lightweight and durable and the wide-mouth makes it easy to refill or to mix Kool-Aid or other flavorings. If your scout is going to hike, he'll need two of these.

You probably have a 16 oz. to 24 oz. plastic drink cup from local restaurant in the cupboard. This is all your new scout really needs. Don't waste money on an expensive Sierra cup! You probably also have a plastic bowl and plate at home. These, too, work great for your new scout. For silverware, you can send a cheap set from home, or you

can spend \$1.50 at Academy or Wal-Mart to purchase the polycarbonate set that will hold up for years.

A daypack is important on campouts. Troop 75 stresses having the 10 Essentials whenever a scout leaves the campsite. The daypack allows him to carry this equipment on hikes.

You'll probably notice that we haven't mentioned a first aid kit yet. Troop 75 has a good troop kit and well-trained first aid providers. As part of your scout's rank advancement, he will be required to assemble a first aid kit. Until he builds his own kit, don't worry about this - we have him covered!

All that remains is a duffel bag to put this gear into. Use whatever you have or go buy a cheap duffel.

Now for a few don'ts:

- Unless you are an experienced backpacker, don't go buy a backpack for your scout until you talk to any one of the troop leaders! We can save you from a costly mistake!
- Don't rush out to buy a cot - we normally only allow them at summer camp.
- Don't go buy a backpacking stove for your new scout - he can't use it until he's at least Second Class and has earned his Firem'n Chit.
- Don't worry about a compass until your scout knows how to use it along with a map.
- Don't send your scout on a campout with a propane heater - they aren't allowed.
- Weapons, to include slingshots and blowguns, are not allowed.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact any one of the adult troop leaders who are all experienced in the outdoors.