

Backpacking with Troop 6

Backpacking in the Scouting America teaches Scouts how to respect the outdoors, develop leadership skills, and practice teamwork. Scouts will learn what equipment to carry on their backs and what knowledge to have in their heads. In addition, Scouts will discover how to protect the environment by traveling and camping without leaving a trace. By mastering the basics of backpacking, Scouts will develop an even deeper respect for the outdoors. Backpacking trips are a key part of Scouting, and Scouts may participate in many of them during their Scouting career. And most important of all, backpacking is FUN!

For backpacking the main concern is pack weight. We want to try and keep the scouts to no more than 25% of their body weight, which is a bit of a challenge with younger scouts. So, leave the 6-D Cell Mag-lite flashlight at home! Lightweight backpacking rests on several principles:

- 1) Know the weight of your items that you are planning to take. Have your scout wear the pack loaded and calculate your loaded weight. If over 25%-30% it's too heavy.
- 2) Focus on reducing weight of heavier items first. This is typically the "Big 3" - pack, shelter and sleeping bag - though your clothing as a whole may exceed any of those. Heavier items are where you'll reap the most potential savings. Buy and pack the lightest you can afford.
- 3) Question everything. This type of activity is best done at the troop backpacking 101 meeting so the Scouts learn from one another. We also invite the new scouts on a day trip where the older scouts will backpack overnight to learn and ask questions. Finally, you should ask questions after your first trip. What did you take but not use? What do you really need? The best way to save weight is leave it at home! Can you find a smaller or simpler version? Can you use another item to perform the same function? That leads us to...
- 4) Select multiple-use gear. The lowly bandana is likely the best example of this - there are many different uses for one so that's potentially a lot of other items you don't need to bring. The corollary to this is don't bring that heavy multi-tool when you will never use all of its functions.
- 5) KISS or "Keep It Simple, Scouts!" A Scout is thrifty and simplicity could be thought of as fundamental to that. Taking less and simpler gear while making better use of your knowledge and skills (which weigh nothing) allow you to see more of the backcountry, but it's more than that. Lightweight backpacking is part of a lifestyle that can benefit you the rest of your life.

Below are the main essentials. Troop 6 has some loaner equipment like backpacks if you don't have one or want to try something out before you make a purchase. Just ask! REI, the Hiking Shack, and Bass Pro Shops are good local options for gear. There are many good online resellers like backcountry.com, Campor, and of course Amazon. Finally, you can find great deals on used equipment on places like Offer Up or Facebook Marketplace and REI has returned equipment for sale in their garage sale area.

Backpack

A good youth sized backpack around 50L-70L capacity - REI or Hiking Shack good places to buy and the Troop has several loaner packs. For larger scouts they can go into the adult small to medium sized backs. Getting pack that has the right sized waistband and torso length are very important.

REI – Wander Gregory 50 Pack - Designed for growing hikers, the kids' Gregory Wander 50 pack has ample pockets for all their backpacking essentials, plus plenty of adjustability to make it easy for them to find the proper fit. <https://www.rei.com/product/231827/gregory-wander-50-pack-kids>

REI – Wander Gregory 70 Pack – Designed for growing hikers, the kids' Gregory Wander 70 pack has plenty of space for extended, gear-heavy trips, plus plenty of adjustability to make it easy for them to find the proper fit. <https://www.rei.com/product/231828/gregory-wander-70-pack-kids>

REI – Osprey Ace 50 Pack - Built with the next generation of outdoor adventurers and environmental stewards in mind, the kids' Osprey Ace 50 pack is designed with plenty of adjustability, for years of use as they grow. <https://www.rei.com/product/238136/osprey-ace-50-pack-kids>

REI - Kestrel 58 Pack - Explore sandstone canyons, bushwack through pokey brush and trees, or clear wilderness trails with the men's Kestrel 58 pack. It's built with durable fabrics and dependable suspension. <https://www.rei.com/product/218553/osprey-kestrel-58-pack-mens>

Backpacking Tent

Something not too heavy and not a big 4 person tent. If tent does not come with a footprint try and buy one that is made for tent as bottom layer below tent. A rainfly is important too so it's not just open mesh at night that would get really cold or wet inside if it rains. Lots of companies are now making an oversized 1 or 2 person so there is room to store backpack inside tent. Ex: a 2 person is tight for too people whereas a 2+ gives decent room. Just watch the weight as you don't want something too heavy. Try to stay under 5-6 lbs pack weight (tent, poles, footprint, rainfly, stakes, carry bag). If you plan to backpack with your scout, you can have them sleep with you on the first couple of trips and then you carry the tent, and your scout avoids any tent weight. We want to get the scouts sleeping without a parent ASAP. Some scouts like to work out sleeping arrangements with a buddy so they may split up some of their gear like the tent, cooking supplies and food so they spread out the weight.

REI - Trailmade 1 Tent with Footprint - Get into backpacking with the REI Co-op Trailmade 1 tent. It offers simple setup and enough space to keep you comfy—plus, it comes with a footprint to help your tent last for many more seasons of fun! <https://www.rei.com/product/243610/rei-co-op-trailmade-1-tent-with-footprint>

REI – Half Dome 2 Tent with Footprint - An REI member-tested icon, the REI Co-op Half Dome 2-person tent keeps backpacking trips comfortable. Its thoughtful design, easy setup and protective rainfly are built on 45+ years of member input. <https://www.rei.com/product/243702/rei-co-op-half-dome-2-tent-with-footprint>

Dragonfly OSMO Tent: 1-Person 3-Season - The one-person, three-season Dragonfly OSMO Tent maintains an efficient trail weight of just over two pounds while still providing some wiggle room so we can sleep comfortably on our multi-day treks. <https://www.backcountry.com/nemo-equipment-inc.-dragonfly-osmo-tent-1-person-3-season>

Mountain Hardware Aspect 2 Tent - Offering livable space for summer road trips and lightweight backpacking missions, the Mountain Hardware Aspect 2 tent shelters you in robust 3-season protection that pitches and packs down fast. <https://www.rei.com/product/164698/mountain-hardware-aspect-2-tent>

Sleeping Bag

Go with a good quality mummy bag. Really watch packed size and weight here. I'd go with a bag rated around 20 degrees. I always add about 10-15 degrees to what is stated for my nighttime temp comfort, so if its going to in the mid 30's at night I would want a bag rated in the low to mid 20's range. You can end up with multiple bags at different temperature ratings. If it is going to be really warm at night you might want a 40-degree bag or just a light sheet. There are also sleeping bag liners so you can go with a higher degree bag and then add the liner if it's going to be colder. I'd try and get a bag that is under 4 lbs and has a compression strap bag. You may also want a small backpacking pillow or I prefer to have my spare clothes in stuff sacks and use my stuff sack as a pillow.

REI - Trailmade 20 Sleeping Bag - The REI Co-op Trailmade 20 sleeping bag checks all the boxes for your weekend backpacking trip (or simply an overnight setup in the car) with its trifecta of warmth, packability and weight. <https://www.rei.com/product/217592/rei-co-op-trailmade-20-sleeping-bag>

Kelty Cosmic 20 Sleeping Bag - Sleep comfortably through the night with the men's Kelty Cosmic 20 sleeping bag. With 550-fill-power down and a thermally efficient trapezoidal baffle construction, it's a 3-season superstar. <https://www.rei.com/product/231267/kelty-cosmic-20-sleeping-bag-mens>

NEMO Tempo 20 Synthetic Sleeping Bag - Blending roomy comfort with the NEMO space-saving Spoon™ shape, the men's NEMO Tempo 20 synthetic sleeping bag has a relaxed, crowd-pleasing fit that packs smaller than a rectangular sleeping bag. <https://www.rei.com/product/215981/nemo-tempo-20-synthetic-sleeping-bag-mens>

Sleeping Pad

You can go with an inflatable or something like the Nemo that is easier to deal with. A lot of kids just go with the simple accordion pad from Walmart. You can get some really good discounts on sleeping pads on Nellis Auction too.

REI - Nemo Switchback Sleeping Pad - <https://www.rei.com/product/141846/nemo-switchback-sleeping-pad>

Big 5 - Klymit Static V Sleeping Pad - <https://www.big5sportinggoods.com/store/details/klymit-static-v-sleeping-pad/0760151340001/ /A-5645585>

Walmart - Ozark Trail Foam Lightweight Sleeping Pad - <https://www.walmart.com/ip/Ozark-Trail-Foam-Lightweight-Sleeping-Pad-72-8-L-X-21-65-W-Silver-Gray/553650004?fulfillmentIntent=In-store&filters=%5B%7B%22intent%22%3A%22fulfillmentIntent%22%2C%22values%22%3A%5B%22In-store%22%5D%7D%5D&classType=VARIANT&from=/search>

Cooking Stove and Fuel

I'm a big fan of jetboil. It's simple, lightweight, and small to carry. If you want to skip on this for now you can always share with other scouts\parents to heat up water.

REI - <https://www.rei.com/product/127968/jetboil-flash-cooking-system>

"Scout Essentials"

- Pocketknife.
- Rain gear. Just a cheap, light and compact rain poncho is good or a waterproof outer shell jacket
- Trail food.
- Flashlight - I'd go with a headlamp
- Extra clothing.
- First-aid kit. (Leader will have a medical kit, but scouts should have small kit with them)
- Sun protection.
- Compass

Water

We always hike to water so there will be opportunities to refill water bottles and obtain water for cooking. Usually this is water from a spring or creek. Water will need to be filtered, and we need to make sure there are at least 2-3 people with water filters. So, it is not necessary to have your own water filter, but it's recommended.

- Filled water bottle or two - Nalgene bottles are great.
- Water Bladder – some people like having a water bladder in their pack if it's compatible for convenient access to water via hose.
- Water Filter – Something like a Sawyer is a good system as you can get it with small squeeze bags. Best option for water at campsite is a gravity bag with filter.

Sawyer Filter with Pouches - Ideal for outdoor recreation, hiking, camping, scouting, domestic or international travel, and emergency preparedness. High-performance 0.1 micron absolute inline filter fits in the palm of your hand and weighs just 2 ounces; 100% of MINI units individually tested three times to performance standards by Sawyer. Attaches to included drinking pouch, standard 28 mm disposable water bottles, hydration packs, or use the straw to drink directly from your water source

<https://www.amazon.com/Sawyer-Products-SP128-Filtration-System/dp/B00FA2RLX2/>

Gravity-Fed Water Bag for Sawyer

<https://www.amazon.com/Gravity-Fed-Survival-Compatible-LifeStraw-Foldable/dp/B0BB2DY2TX>

Other items:

- * biodegradable toilet paper
- * cat hole digger ex: <https://www.rei.com/product/130212/vargo-titanium-dig-dig-tool>
- * flint and steel
- * For clothes go with layers to put on \ shed as temps change. Attached list is good. Some campouts will get chilly at night down into 20's. Or if your kids are like mine, all they want are shorts and a t-shirt. [Layering Basics | REI Co-op](#)
- * good worn in hiking shoes \ boots - don't make this the first trip for new shoes
- * snacks and meals. A lot of scouts like to keep it simple here and go with freeze dried meals or something like ramen noodles in a cup. Walmart has really good prices on mountain house freeze dried meals.
- * Cup for hot beverages and knife/fork/spoon (they sell camping specific sets or just a hard plastic set will do).
- * if not doing freeze dried food then cooking pots\pans
- * \$20 spare cash if needed for food or other items.
- * Small trash bag as everything is pack in – pack out.