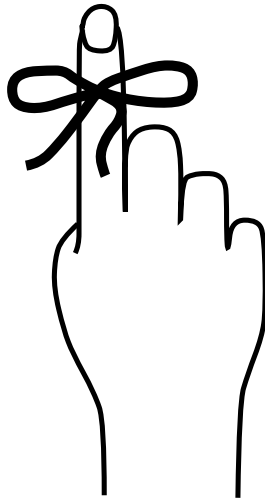


Trail Tips



Boy Scout Troop 849
Manhattan Beach, California

Introduction

If you have been on a few hikes with our Troop, then this brochure is for you. It contains some tips and useful ideas to make your hiking experience more pleasurable. Topics include:

General
Pack Related
Tent Related
Longterm
Back at Home

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General

Drink lots and lots of water.

Lace your boots tight around the top during downhill hiking. This will help keep your toes from hitting the boot.

Learn the traction limits of your boots and how they hold on gravel, dirt, rocks, granite, and wet surfaces.

When pausing on the trail, stop with your backpack to the sun so you get some shade.

Check your camera batteries before you leave.

Review your remaining advancement requirements before every trip to see if there are some you can get completed.

Keep your pocket knife away from you compass when using it as the knife is magnetic and will throw the compass reading off.

Hike in groups of 4 or more. Mountain lions might attack a single person or two but are more intimidated by large groups.

Never run from a mountain lion. Running is an invitation for it to pounce on you. Make yourself appear as large as possible. Face them down and back away slowly. Do not turn your back on them.

Setup your water so you can drink while hiking.

Get your flashlight out and put it in your pocket before it gets dark.

Don't shine flashlights at people or at tents as that ruins night vision. Would you like someone to shine a bright light in your face?

Set up your bear/critter bag line before it gets dark.

Turn your bear canister upside down at night to keep the rain out.

Bring light gloves (100% polyester) for cold mornings.

On weekend hikes - Pack your clean underwear in a 1 gallon zip lock bag. Pack the next days clothes in another zip lock bag. After you set up your tent through both of these bags in. Before crawling into your sleeping bag, open one zip lock bag and change underwear by exchanging clean for dirty. The next morning your clean clothes are handy.

One gallon zip lock bags can be used to keep clothes clean and dry. Before sealing the bag, put on the floor with a book on top of it. Compress it with a knee and then seal it. You'll get a nice compact clothes pouch.

Try to time pit stops for rest breaks.

When making an off-trail pit stop, carefully inspect the area for poison oak and avoid it. Few things are worse than poison oak on certain parts of the body that shall remain unmentionable.

Drink lots and lots of water.

Pack Related

Pack the heaviest items near your body and at the center of the pack. This will help keep the pack from falling “backward”.

Be consistent in where you put things in your pack so you’ll be able to find them.

Use an extra water bottle to store snacks. Once empty it can be used for water.

Keep small gear you use frequently in outside pockets.

Keep your iodine bottle in a zip lock bag as even a small leak will make a big mess and stain your pack.

Store your iodine bottle so the top stays dry. Otherwise the seal will get soggy and eventually leak iodine water all over.

It is better not to swap or switch gear, so you do not get confused about who is carrying what. This applies to all food and gear in your possession.

Check for pitch before leaning your pack against a tree.

Check for pitch before sitting on a log or root.

On rainy hikes store your sleeping bag in a small plastic trash bag to help insure it stays dry.

When getting packed up for the trip home, the driver will try to get your backpack into his vehicle. If this isn’t possible, make sure you know who has your backpack and arrange for its return.

Tent Related

If you are using a troop tent and time permits before the hike, inspect the tent to make sure it is all there and the zippers work.

When arriving in camp, set up your tent quickly before it can rain.

Pick your tent spot carefully. Avoid ditches and bowls. Try to figure where the rain water will go and then set it up elsewhere.

Don't let the ground cloth stick out from under the tent or it may act as a rain scoop and flood your tent. Fold it over and back under to form a rain barrier. (Don't dig a ditch around your tent as it is very hard on the environment.)

Don't pitch your tent under a tree with dead limbs, lest one fall on you.

Pine needles and leaves make a very soft bed.

Small pine cones and rocks can ruin a good night's sleep. Spread out just the tent ground cloth and check for bumps before setting up the rest of the tent.

Unstuff your sleeping bag and through it in the tent as soon as possible so it will have time to loft up before you crawl in.

Bring rain gear inside the tent with you at night in case it starts raining.

Bring your boots inside your tent at night to keep them dry and varmint free. If your boots are muddy and you have a vestibule or extended rain fly on your tent where they won't get wet, turn them upside down and leave them outside.

Make sure your tent is adequately vented or your breath will condense and cause "rain" inside your tent.

Change socks, underwear and clothes at night just before crawling into your sleeping bag. Dry clothes will make for warmer sleeping. Dry socks will help keep your feet warm. It may seem cold but temperatures are warmer at night than in the morning. You may feel momentarily cold but you will quickly warm up in the sleeping bag.

Lay the next morning clothes out before retiring. It's much easier that rooting around before breakfast in the cold. You can even use them for a pillow.

Jackets and sweatshirts make good pillows and will be handy for the next morning.

A 20 degree sleeping bag is the best way to keep warm at night, but wear additional layers if your bag isn't quite warm enough for conditions or if you tend to sleep cold at night.

When packing up to go home, tip the tent and shake out debris before zipping it up and taking it down. That way it will be clean for the next time it is used.

Be consistent in where you lay things in your tent so you'll be able to find them, even in the dark.

Some tent buddies like to swap tent halves every time they take down the tent so no one gets stuck with "the heavy half" even though both halves should weight the same.

Longterm

Thoroughly check your tent before leaving. Set it up and check everything out.

Since space is a premium, try packing clothing in your sleeping bag stuff sack, tent bag, and ground pad. These items can be moved back into your pack as space permits.

Head nets are often essential.

Sometimes nothing can protect you from mosquitoes. “Skeeter Stick” will stop the itching even after you get bitten.

Bring a notebook if you don’t already have Hiking merit badge. Keep a log which you will need to satisfy one of the merit badge requirements.

Empty your wallet of useless stuff like library cards.

When climbing a peak, wrap your jacket around your water bottle(s) before putting them into your day pack. That will help keep them cooler. This is especially helpful on all day peak climbs.

When eating pancakes, warm the bottle of syrup in a pot of hot water before using it.

Bring enough socks so you always have a clean pair. Socks can be washed daily if needed.

Given sun and a breeze, underwear takes about 2 hours to dry, thick socks take about 3 hours.

Drink lots and lots of water.

Top 12 uses for a bear canister:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1) Store food | 7) Foot stool |
| 2) Seat | 8) Headrest |
| 3) Haul water for washing clothes | 9) Bongo |
| 4) Cooking surface | 10) Coffee table |
| 5) Wind break for stove | 11) Flotation device |
| 6) Gather fire wood | 12) Take the top off and use it a plate holder |

Back at Home

Once a year try lighting a match to see if they are still good. Preferably just before longterm.

Once a year inspect your pack for worn pins and loose split rings. Replace as required. Again, preferably before longterm.

Store your sleeping bag uncompressed. If a sleeping bag is stored compressed in the stuff sack for long periods of time the fillers will “take a set” and remain compressed when released. This results in less loft and hence reduced insulating ability. One method is to take the bag out of the stuff sack and store it in your backpack’s large compartment. Let it pooch out a bit at the top. This way it is expanded and doesn’t take up extra storage space.

Store your backpack and all its contents in a large nylon stuff bag (about 30" x 42") with a draw string. This will keep your backpack clean and all of your equipment in one place.

Totally empty and hose your pack off at least once a year. (Especially just before Longterm.) Squirt water inside the pockets to get the crumbs out. Hang it upside down to drip dry. This will also wash off your body salt so critters won’t be tempted to nibble on your pack straps.

Troop 849 Publications

Eagle Court of Honor Checklist for the Eagle's Family

Eagle Court of Honor Checklist for the Troop

Equipment Guide for Weekend Hikes

Your First Hike

Trail Tips

Weekend Hikemaster Handbook

Longterm Hikemaster Handbook