

TWELVE OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT ESSENTIALS

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| 1. Backpack | 5. First-aid kit | 9. Water bottle |
| 2. Sleeping bag | 6. Compass | 10. Proper Clothing |
| 3. Ground pad | 7. Fire starter | 11. Sun protection |
| 4. Pocketknife | 8. Flashlight | 12. Rain gear |

1. **BACKPACK-** There are a great variety of different packs and they can range in cost from 150 to well over 500 CHF. They can be divided into to main categories-external frame and internal frame. There are pros and cons to each but the most important thing is to be professionally fitted. Make sure the hip belt is well padded and comfortable and you are capable of adjusting the pack as your son grows. Make sure to purchase a rain cover for the pack, also. Remember-packed for the trail, your son's pack should never exceed 1/3 of his total body weight and if he is inexperienced 1/4 of total body weight.

2. **SLEEPING BAG-** Many varieties to choose from in this category with prices ranging from 200 to 700 CHF. Goose down, synthetic blend fills, waterproof, temperature ratings, regular or mummy style can all make this a difficult decision to make. With the temperature and weather swings we can experience in the outdoors a properly rated bag can make the difference between a great experience and a miserable one. It is important to have your son get into the bag at the store, especially a mummy bag, to make sure he is comfortable in it/with it. Temperature rating is very important-it is recommended that the bag be rated to at least 20 degrees F or -7 degrees C. Remember that this rating tells you to what temperature the bag will protect you-not keep you comfortable. So, look for a liner that will extend the temperature rating usually sold as an accessory to the sleeping bag. Some prefer synthetic fills because they will insulate even if wet. A totally waterproof bag is not necessary as it will keep water in as well as out and after a nighttime in a bag like this you will end up in a pool of sweat.

3. **GROUND PAD-** Next to the sleeping bag, one of the most important things a Scout needs. Sleeping on the bare ground, even in a rated sleeping bag, is a one-way ticket to hypothermia. Look for compact, closed-cell foam pad (smooth or egg-carton, rolling or folding) long enough so your son doesn't hang over the edge. Avoid inflatable pads, they don't insulate as well and if it gets punctured it loses all comfort and insulation value. Price range 30-100 CHF.

4. **POCKETKNIFE-** First, to carry a knife at any Scouting event, your son must earn his Totin' Chip badge. Look for a knife with no longer than a 3-4 inch blade, locking in place when extended. A few basic tools on the knife are helpful-saw blade, scissors, can opener, screwdriver (both flat and Phillips), leather awl. Remember, no sheath knives are allowed at Scouting events!

5. **FIRST-AID KIT-** Scouts that have earned their First Aid merit badge should have made a first aid kit. If your son hasn't earned this badge yet, encourage him to do so. He should always carry his kit to all outdoor Scouting events-"Be Prepared" is not just a motto, it should be a habit. Prepackaged kits can be purchased just about anywhere but

are only outfitted to handle minor First-aid issues.

6. **COMPASS-** Many varieties to choose from here, also. Look for an unbreakable model with a plastic base plate that give scale and direction of travel with a lanyard that can hang around a neck or off a backpack. Electronic GPS devices are great, until they run out of batteries.

7. **FIRE STARTER AND TINDER-** Having a means to start a fire is a basic Scout requirement. It can be as simple as a box of waterproof matches and some dryer lint, sealed in a waterproof container. It can be a flint and steel and dry wood shaving in a watertight container. It can be a hunk of steel wool and a 9-volt battery. Whatever it is it should always be in your son's backpack. A fire can warm you, cook your food, sterilize your water and attract attention if a Scout should get lost.

8. **FLASHLIGHT-** Handheld, headlamp, rechargeable, hand-crank— the choices are endless. Small, lightweight and with backup batteries are all important features. A headlamp is especially good for hand-free use.

9. **WATER BOTTLE-** Look for a stainless steel or aluminum model with a good seal on the lid holding at least 500ml. Plastic is okay but even “unbreakable” bottles can and have broken—metal is more durable. If your son is going on an extended hike or into an area with unproven water supplies, look into the Camelback series of water bags designed for backpacks.

10. **PROPER CLOTHING-** This category is a topic all by itself. The primary rule is stay away from 100% cotton clothing. Once cotton gets wet, either from rain or sweat, it stays wet. Underwear should be a synthetic blend, preferably boxers to avoid chafing the legs. Tee shirts should be the same, to wick moisture away from the body and dry quickly. Socks should be wool with a silk liner sock or wool/synthetic blend. Dress in layers so you can adjust to changing environmental conditions. Outer layers should be water resistant/proof with hoods on jackets for additional protection. Always carry extra socks and underwear packed in waterproof containers. Socks can double as mittens and the plastic bags they were packed in can make them water resistant and dry underwear can be a life saver.

11. **SUN PROTECTION-** Hat, sunglasses and sunblock should always be carried. The hat serves multiple purposes- warmth, protection from the sun, elements and insects. Sunglasses should be UVA and UVB rated with side flaps if possible. Sunscreen is not just for the beach. During the winter months use a specific face sunblock to protect yourself in the brilliant sun above the cloud line. Remember to check the expiration date on the crimp of the sunblock tube-past a year and it loses its effectiveness.

12. **RAIN GEAR-** A good quality poncho is the best all round rain protection available. It worn over a backpack, used as a tent/shelter, a collection basin for rainwater. Buy one of good quality and it will be your son's best friend for years to come. A rain suit is okay but more expensive and your son will soon outgrow it.

Assistant Scoutmaster Scott Wilner, January 2012