

# Troop 210's "The Big 10"

## Greetings New Scout Parents,

Troop 210 has long been a believer in using the 'outing' part of Scouting as an integral part of our Scout program. One of the most important things you can do for your Scout is to provide him with the basic gear he needs for camping. This can be a daunting experience, as we all know. As a Scout leader, some of the most frequent questions I get from new Scout parents are: what does my son need, what's good, where can we buy it, etc. First, let me say that buying equipment can get expensive and should be carefully thought out. Resist the temptation to save money by getting bargain basement equipment. You'll end up throwing it away after a couple of trips and buy the better stuff anyway. Conversely, it's not necessary to get top of the line equipment either.

I am available to go with you as your personal shopper. Quite frankly, I enjoy doing this and the only thing I ask, is if you can try to find a few Scouts and their parent(s) that can go shopping together. That way, we can all experience this an once!

The first four items can be costly, and before making a big investment, you may want to consider borrowing or renting until your son is sure he likes Scouting and he decides on what type or brand he likes. It also helps to spread your purchases out over a few months, which is why starting now may be a good idea.

Please keep in mind that what ever you buy - he has to carry it on his back, sometimes for miles - weight and size matter.

## 1) Sleeping Bag

Arguably, the single most important piece of gear you take is a warm sleeping bag. Use a synthetic fiber bag (Hollofil, Polar guard, Quallofil, etc.) not a down bag. A down bag is expensive, and if it gets wet, you'll have big trouble getting it dry again - this year! Consider a mummy bag (modified mummy bags and rectangular bags tend to be heavier and are not as warm).

- Nylon outer shell and inner liner NOT cotton or flannel.
- Should come with a stuff sack or compression bag.
- Maximum weight should be 3 to 4 lb. (Don't confuse this with fill weight, which is just the insulation).
- Temperature rated to 10 - 20 degrees F.

- Length is a consideration depending upon your projected child's growth potential. Children's bags (up to 66 inches long) are lighter and cheaper however, in order to curl up in a sleeping bag, consider up to 72 or 80 inches.
- Reasonable cost \$65 - \$90+.
- Common brands: Kelty, Slumberjack, Marmot, Sierra Designs, North Face

## 2) Backpack

Selection criteria should be volume, fit, weight and features. The other big choice is external frame or internal frame. This is also a personal choice. External is usually less expensive, you can tie lots of stuff on it, and it has a more adjustable fit. External can be less stable and get caught on branches. Internal should fit your body better, "hang up" less, but costs more, and has less flexibility for storing "overflow" gear. The Scoutmaster prefers external.

- Young scouts should select a pack that has between 3200 - 4000 cubic inches.
- Hip belt must fit snugly on the hip, that's where the weight is carried - not the shoulders. Hip belt and shoulder straps should be well padded. Have it fitted at a store where the people know what they're doing. Recommend having the Scout wear the pack around the store with about 20lbs of weight to check the fit.
- Packs come with multiple compartments, but are generally one of two types: top loaders and panel loaders. Both are good.
- Weight: Around 5 lbs or lighter. Some packs are built like a tank and weigh 7-8 lbs, that's too much for a young Scout.
- Some suitable packs are: Jansport Scout or Rainier; Kelty Tioga, Treker, Yukon or Coyote; Camptrails McKinley, Wilderness, Adjustable, Rainier or Triad. (These are recommendations only)
- Cost \$60 - \$100
- While you are at it buy a pack rain cover - inexpensive, invaluable. Large trash/leaf bags will do as a temporary solution.

## 3) Boots

The key here is for sturdy footwear that provides traction and ankle support. There are some inexpensive hiking boots by Hi- Tec, Timberland and others. Don't buy the really good/expensive boots unless you have cash to burn, or have lots of boys to hand them down - they out grow them much too fast.

- Suggest boots have a leather/synthetic combination upper. All leather uppers are more expensive and harder to break in.

- I recommend thick wool or wool blend socks with a polypropylene liner. Make sure boots are fitted at a store where they know what they're doing (same recommendation as with packs). Have your Scout wear the liners and thick wool or wool blend socks when you have the boots fitted. The best time to have boots fitted is in the afternoon, since feet tend to swell as the day goes along.
- Note for hiking trips, we require thick wool or wool blend socks with a polypropylene liner sock (Polypropylene wicks away the moisture).
- Cost for boots is \$40-\$125.

#### **4) Rain Gear**

This is an absolute must for every trip. Avoid the temptation to get a cheap plastic poncho or rain suit; they are a waste of money. Frankly, in high winds, the poncho is mostly useless. They're also clumsy to work with. Consider a low-cost rain suit that has a jacket and pants. This may seem to be a pricey investment but they are good for any outdoor activity, all year long.

- Look for waterproof, NOT water repellent.
- Don't buy rubber or PVC, its too heavy and hot.
- Polyurethane coated nylon is a good, inexpensive material.
- Rain gear with vents improves breath ability and comfort.
- Pants should have zippers or Velcro at the ankle to allow putting on over hiking boots.
- Rain gear will cost \$40-70.

#### **5) Sleeping Pad**

Another essential item is a sleeping pad. A sleeping pad provides insulation from the cold ground and also acts as a barrier to ground moisture.

- Self-inflating mattresses, like Therm-A-Rest, are good, but NOT for young scouts. They are too heavy and expensive.
- An air mattress is also too heavy.
- A good sleeping pad for a young scout is a "closed cell" foam pad (like Z-Rest). These are very light, inexpensive and provide excellent insulation.
- A typical closed cell pad will run about \$15.

#### **6) Mess Kit**

I know your first impulse will be to buy an aluminum kit that has utensils and a cup. However, I have a simpler and cheaper solution - LEXAN. Lexan is a rigid plastic that won't melt or get distorted in boiling water, and won't break in the cold. It's also much lighter than the metal variety and food stays warm longer

with Lexan than aluminum. Additionally, Lexan won't scratch our Teflon cook sets. All you need is a Lexan bowl or plate and a spork (spoon with teeth). Add a plastic coffee mug (travel mug) with lid and you are set.

- Cost is less than \$6.00

## **7) Flashlight**

- Small, lightweight and inexpensive. I don't recommend a mag-light or mini- mag at this age; they lose them too frequently. Two "AA" battery size is all you need. An extra set of batteries are fine too.
- Bright colors are easier to find in the leaves and/or mud.

## **8) Pocket Knife**

- Boy Scout or Victorinox are fine, with a blade less than 4 inches. Don't get too fancy or expensive.
- Consider a bright key chain to attach to it to make it easier to find in the dark and the leaves.
- Requires a Scout Toten Chip to carry a knife, but that's usually earned first.

## **9) First Aid Kit (just the components)**

- One of the first requirements in Scouting is to make a personal first aid kit.
- Simple small kit with Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, tweezers.
- All items in the first aid kit can go in a small zip lock bag.
- Most often used shortly after earning the Toten Chip for pocketknives ;-)

## **10) Water Bottles**

- Two quarts total, recommend two one-quart bottles.
- Should fit in Backpack pockets or bottle holders.
- "Spring Water" in plastic bottle doesn't work and should be avoided.
- Wide-mouth Nalgene bottles are perfect, come in a variety of colors and are practically indestructible.

Where to Buy I suggest you get yourself a Campmor catalog. Call their toll-free number (1 800 226 7667) or visit their web site at: <http://www.campmor.com/>. They have most everything a Scout needs at reasonable prices. I use the catalog as a handy price reference when shopping locally.

**Web sites that offer camping gear:**

- <http://www.campmor.com/>
- <http://www.rei.com/>
- <http://www.reioutlets.com/>
- <http://www.landsend.com/>

Good local stores, in no particular order are:

- Sports Authority
- Target
- Wal-Mart
- Local Thrift stores
- And of course - The Scout Shop
- Happy Shopping!!

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