

Troop 4 Camping Gear for Scouts

The following pages will provide some useful information as you begin to purchase clothing, footwear, and gear for use in Boy Scout camping activities. As you read these pages, please keep in mind:

You don't need to get everything right away. Gear needs will make more sense as your Scout gets some camping experience and sees what other boys use for their gear. We ease new Scouts into the camping experience and we do not expect them to be fully equipped at the start.

Scout Uniform: We do ask that you get a Scout uniform as soon as possible. If your Scout was a Webelos, you probably have the uniform. If your son is new to Scouting, visit the Scout Shop in Liberty Park.

Some general rules: As you begin to acquire gear, there are a few general rules:

- *Go synthetic.* As you will read in the attached articles, synthetic clothing is best. It is lightweight, dries easily, and has wicking properties. Also, at this stage, a synthetic sleeping bag is your best bet.
- *The lighter the better.* While you do not need to spend the extra money for super lightweight gear, you want to look for gear that is reasonably lightweight. For example, you should be able to find a reasonably priced 2 man tent under six pounds. A good 20 degree synthetic sleeping bag should be four pounds or less.
- *When you purchase a backpack, make sure it fits properly.* You may want to start out by renting a backpack from one of the camping stores. The rental fee is modest and you will get some sense of what you may want to purchase. Keep in mind that the weight of the pack is carried on the hips and the pack needs to have a waist belt that fits your son. This is especially an issue for young Scouts who are still quite thin. We strongly recommend that when you look for a backpack that you visit a camping store such as Alabama Outdoors or Mountain High Outfitters where you can talk to a backpacking expert and get a proper fit.
- *We generally only cover five to ten miles on a weekend backpacking trip.* While this distance can be challenging for a new Scout, it doesn't demand high end equipment; but, it does demand equipment of reasonable quality. You should be able to find all you need in the local area or through online sources such as Campmor.com or Alpsmountaineering.com.



Top Ten Items for the New Scout

1. **Headlamp.** LED lights are small, light, and have extended battery life. There are no bulbs to burn out and the headlamp allows the use of both hands.
2. **Water Bottle.** Lexan bottles are dishwasher safe, almost indestructible, and have a retainer on the lid so it won't get lost. They are easy to fill and don't hold odor or taste. Available in lots of cool colors..
3. **Kitchen Equipment: Lexan bowl and plate, Lexan utensil set, Aluminum cup / Mug. The "Fairshare Mug" is popular.**
4. **Sleeping Bag.** A synthetic bag that is sized for a scout and packs down small. 15 to 30 degree range should be adequate.
5. **Sleeping Pad.** Closed-cell foam pads such as the RidgeRest are light and inexpensive for the boys. Dads may opt for the air-inflated ThermaRest for more comfort.
6. **Camp Pillow.** An optional luxury item that's like having a piece of home out on the trail.
7. **Long Underwear.** Merino wool or Synthetic.. won't lose its insulating ability when wet, and doesn't shrink.
8. **Rain Gear.** Separate jacket and pants is best, but ponchos work too.
9. **Socks.** A wool sock with a blend of synthetic materials will not lose its shape, moves sweat away from the skin, and dries faster than cotton.
10. **Accessory straps.** Keep things like sleeping pads, camp shoes, wet tents, and excess gear attached to your pack.

Equipment Guide Dec 2004

Sourced from Dave McPherson, Robert Bewley, Andy McMeans, and others.

BSA Troop 4, sponsored by Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church, is an active Troop with a monthly outdoor event. Generally we use the warmer months for Scout Camp, rafting, deep-sea fishing and other "truck-in" events. A truck-in generally does not involve backpacking. Many scouts pack and carry their gear in the backpacks, but we are typically camped near our vans and we take our ice chests and our Patrol-boxes with cooking gear. The winter months are used for backpacking - it is easier to hike in the cool and there are fewer varmints on the trails.

Before each outing Scouts are briefed on the trip profile and given a "trip sheet" outlining their equipment needs.

Camping and Backpacking equipment is highly personalized. But the process of learning about equipment, thinking about what is needed, and developing flexibility and creativity will develop a Scout's resourcefulness and independence. When considering gear think safety, versatility, and value.

We have included links to some excellent web sites where most of the needed information is already discussed, so rather than completely write it anew, I am going to reiterate some of what they contain, give my own opinions and slant the information toward our troop. Keep in mind that it is not necessary to get all of this at once--it is possible to rent items like tents and sleeping bags from Alabama Outdoors and *Mountain High*. Also, considering their age and size, the emphasis should be on the least expense necessary to provide your Scout with the most adequate equipment and clothing for the purpose, since they are very prone to quickly break, tear, loose and outgrow their gear.

Clothing

Cotton does not work well in the outdoors: it absorbs perspiration and rain, dries slowly, and is a very poor insulator when wet. Wool also gets wet easily, but at least remains warm when wet. Synthetics are the best choice. The key to clothing is to use clothes that can be layered (added/removed as exertion levels change) and flexible. For insulation, two-piece (top and bottom) polypropylene long underwear is best. It comes in different names (e.g. capilne, etc) and manufacturers: just get the cheapest "wicking" polypro available. For pants and shirts, most prefer inexpensive nylon...it dries fast and can be both cool and warm - I notice many adults and kids wear the Magellen brand from Academy Sports. You do NOT need the high end-stuff from the big brands. Zip-off leg pants offer flexibility in varying temperatures. Here I contradict myself, you'll see many older Scout around a campfire in a cotton t-shirt - this is acceptable when the Scout can protect themselves from the elements and their level of perspiration is known - and they'll usually sleep in this cotton shirt. Hats are important. SOCKS!! Synthetic mid-weight hiking socks are a good choice - the issue of camp cotton socks again applies: damp cotton socks are not warm and will cause blisters. Damp wool socks will be warm and cause blisters. Synthetic socks (including

"Smart Wool" brand) will "wick" perspiration away from the foot, dry quickly, and minimize blisters. SHOES: A tough issue as footwear can be so expensive and their feet are growing so fast. Because Troop 4 is a very active outdoors Troop, your Scout will not do well backpacking in standard tennis shoes, running shoes, or skateboarding shoes. Try to find a light-or-mid-weight boot that is reasonably water-resistant. A 6" high boot is good. You don't need an expensive boot - just one that fits well and will hold up to the elements for 4 to 6 months. Some Scouts do well in hiking shoes - that are lighter than boots but more 'trail resistant' than tennis shoes.

Tents

Our troop tends to stress each boy having personal, rather than troop-provided, equipment; tents are no exception. While it is possible to get by sharing and/or renting the first few years, at some point your boy will need to have his own tent. Young Scouts like to double-up at this age, and for backpacking this is a good way for them to share the weight. Because of the amount of backpacking that our troop does, a lightweight one-man or two-man backpacking tent is the only kind that should be considered.

Tents come in two basic varieties with respect to set-up: free-standing (fs) or non-free-standing (nfs). A fs tent is one that is self-supporting and will remain standing without having to be staked to the ground. A nfs tent does require staking to remain standing. The advantage of a fs tent is that it can be set-up even on hard ground, and is not going to collapse when a fellow-scouter trips over a guy-line; this is the most commonly used tent. The advantage of a nfs tent is that, because they don't require as much pole for support ribbing, they can be several pounds lighter than a fs tent. And, even on hard ground, it is possible to support a nfs tent by tying out to non-movable objects and/or heavy objects (rocks, logs, etc.).

A backpacking tent will typically have a rain fly (cover) that will extend beyond the tent on one or more sides forming a "vestibule" that serves as protection for gear, muddy boots, etc. One of the more popular styles of tent that allows sharing between two scouts has a vestibule and door on both sides of the tent (examples: Kelty Vortex, REI Half-Dome Plus 2, Eureka Apex 2XTA). If you have a smaller frame scout, going with one of the smaller lighter-weight nfs tents might be a better option.

Backpack

Regarding backpacks for new scouts, I agree with the advice given on the linked web sites. An external-frame backpack is the best choice at their age and size. Internal frame packs have traditionally had few options for attaching gear to the outside of the pack, meaning that everything has to go inside. Getting a pack large enough to hold inside it a tent, sleeping bag and sleeping pad, etc., means getting a backpack that is too large for a young scout.

Also critical is making sure that the waist belt is small enough to tighten very tight around their waist, especially for some of our skin-and-bones guys. The waist belt is supposed to support the majority of the weight. I have seen several instances of scouts having

a nice big pack, only to watch them hike stooped-over trying to rest the weight on their backs because their shoulders hurt so; their waist belts, tightened as far as they would go, were not tight enough.

The youth pack that I have had the most experience with is the Jansport Scout, but there are several other real good ones by Kelty, and Camp Trails, etc. I like the Scout because it has the zip-open front panels for access. Most backpacks are top-loading (at least for the upper larger compartment. There is always going to be some item (flashlight, pocket knife, etc.) that a boy is going to need as soon as camp is set up, and that item is always going to be at the bottom of the pack. With a top-loading pack, he is going to go "I know that thing is in here someplace" as he is taking things out and throwing them around the tent--where it all will stay until time to pack-up and leave. The zip panels won't prevent the same ultimate result, but it will typically delay the contents being scattered. The flip-side is that zippers get broken, so the top-loaders tend to be more durable.

After a year or two, depending upon their size, the scout is ready to move up to a larger pack. The boys in our troop have typically, but not always, then gone to an internal-frame pack.

Sleeping Bag

This is another place where you can spend a lot of money if you are not careful. Again, as stated on the other sites, goose down is not right for this age, primarily due to cost, the extra care it requires and the fact that it loses all insulating properties when wet. The better synthetic-fill bags can also cost quite a bit. For winter camping, it should be rated at 20 degrees (F) and weigh no more than ~4 pounds. The Slumberjack Superpacker is one that is fairly popular for scouting. It is reasonably priced (I have one myself) and can be obtained at Academy Sports. For really cold campouts, you may also consider getting a fleece blanket or bag insert (can replace sleeping bag for warm weather). Try to find a youth size bag - a bag that is too big will lose a lot of body heat.

Sleeping Pad

A closed-cell foam pad works best at this age. Most of the boys could get by with a 3/4 length "Ridgerest" for the next few years (a 3/4 length adult pad is about a full-length for a new Scout). Another good option that costs a little more is the "Z-Rest". Both are made by Thermarest and are preferable to the self-inflatable sleep pads for several reasons: 1) when the boy pitches his tent on the sticker vine, or drops his pocketknife, his pad won't be deflated; 2) most importantly, the self-inflating sleep pads are VERY hard for these boys to get deflated/rolled-up and packed; 3) cost. At their size and weight (boys), closed-cell pads offer plenty of comfort.

Hiking Boots and Socks

Unless your son has special needs in a boot (high arches, etc.), I would not spend a lot of money on boots that he will outgrow almost as soon as he gets them broken in. They do, however, need to be waterproofed in some manner: either waterproof lining or coating, or both. As stated on one of the linked sites, better to get good hiking socks, and possibly liners. Lighter-weight socks and liners will offer

more versatility. After the boys get bigger and heavier (and not growing so fast), higher quality boots will be more desirable.

Miscellaneous

Scouts typically purchase and organize food by Patrol. Your Scout may want to carry some personal snacks - go for high-calorie high-carbohydrate stuff like trail mix and dried fruit. Try to avoid Gatorade, etc.

Always strive for less weight. Flashlights should be small-- no bigger than 2x AA or AAA. Headlamps with LED bulbs have gotten very popular and are quite useful when setting up a tent in the dark. It is possible to find some nice ones in the \$15-20 range now; I wouldn't spend much more than that for one at their age.

For all of our campouts, each boy should have an eating kit consisting of a plate, bowl, cup and utensils (knife, fork, spoon). The utensils made of Lexan plastic are best. Bowl can be inexpensive plastic from WalMart, etc; flexible plastic is best but not a necessity. I would avoid the traditional aluminum "Mess Kit" because they are typically heavier and harder to clean. For backpacking, about the only thing that he will ever need is the bowl (6"), cup, spoon and fork.

A Scout will normally carry 3 to 4 liters of water on out outing. Round plastic 1-litre Nalgene bottles have been the norm for a while - try to use the "wide mouth" version as they are more flexible and easier to clean. In recent years many outdoorsmen carry one Nalgene for trail drinking and a plastic "platypus" water bag for carrying additional water (the bag being much lighter). Some scouts carry 16 oz. disposable water bottles but they are more easily broken in the backpack.

He will want to have his pocketknife. Eventually, each scout should have a compass. There are other items that we will cover at a later date, but this--plus the provided links--should provide a good start to getting your scout equipped for the backpacking to come.

Put their name/mark on EVERYTHING! Use a permanent marker, paint pen, engraver, or scratch with a nail.

<http://www.troop797.org/newscouts.htm>

<http://www.troop111.org/buyer1.html>

http://www.troop876.org/resources/troop_876_camping_equipment.htm

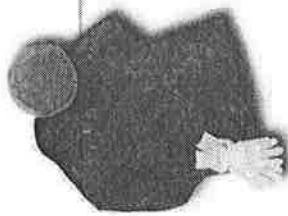
<http://www.troop849.org/backGuideIntro.html>



Clothing Checklist

For Warm-Weather Camping:

- T-shirt or short-sleeved shirt (lightweight)
- Hiking shorts
- Underwear
- Socks
- Long-sleeved shirt (lightweight)
- Long pants (lightweight)
- Sweater or warm jacket
- Brimmed hat
- Bandannas
- Rain gear



For Cold-Weather Camping:

- Long-sleeved shirt
- Long pants (fleece or wool)
- Sweater (fleece or wool)
- Long underwear (polypropylene)
- Socks (wool or synthetic blend)
- Warm hooded parka or jacket
- Stocking hat (fleece or wool)
- Mittens or gloves (fleece or wool) with water-resistant shells
- Wool scarf
- Rain gear

Layering

For the most comfort in the outdoors with the least weight in your pack, use the layering system. Choose layers of clothing that, when combined, will meet the most extreme weather you expect to encounter. On a chilly autumn day, for example, you might set out from the trailhead wearing long pants, a wool shirt, a fleece sweater, mittens, and a stocking hat. As you hike, the effort will cause your body to generate heat. Peel off the sweater and stuff it in your pack. Still too warm? Loosen a few buttons on your shirt or slip off your mittens and hat.

You also can use layering to keep cool in hot climates by stripping down to hiking shorts, a T-shirt, and a brimmed hat. Lightweight long pants and a long-sleeved shirt will shield you from insects, brush, and the sun.

Footwear for Camping

Almost any durable shoes will do for a frontcountry camping trip. When your plans include walking to a backcountry campsite with all your food and gear in your pack, hiking boots can give your feet and ankles protection and support.

In addition to boots for hiking, you might want to carry a pair of running shoes or other comfortable, lightweight shoes to wear around camp. Any shoes or boots you use for camping must fit well. Your heels should not slip much when you walk, and your toes should have a little wiggle room.

Clean your boots or shoes after every outing. Use a stiff brush to remove mud, or wash them off with water and mild soap, then allow footwear to dry at room temperature. (Placing shoes too close to a campfire can dry out leather and damage nylon.) The manufacturers of leather boots might recommend treatment with a boot dressing or waterproofing agent; follow their instructions.

Be sure to break in new boots

before using them in the field. Wear them several times, gradually extending the length of time you wear them, until they feel like a natural part of your feet.



Wool

For generations of outdoor travelers, wool was the fabric of choice. Of course, that's about all there was for making warm clothing. Wool still is terrific for many cold-weather adventures because it is durable and water resistant, and will help you stay warm even when the fabric is wet. A wool shirt or sweater will ward off the chill of summer evenings, too. Wool also is an excellent choice in hiking socks, hats, and mittens. If wool irritates your skin, you might be able to wear wool blends or wear woolen layers over clothing made of other fabrics.

Cotton

Cotton clothing is cool, comfortable, and a good choice for hot-weather shirts and shorts in dry climates. If cotton becomes wet, though, it loses its ability to insulate, and it can be slow to dry in cold weather. In hot weather, the evaporation from wet cotton gives a cooling effect. Wearing cotton clothing can be a real danger on cool days, especially when mist, rain, and wind bring with them the threat of hypothermia. (For more information on hypothermia, see the chapter titled "Managing Risk.")

Synthetics

Outdoor clothing made of fleece, polypropylene, and other manufactured fabrics can be sturdy and comfortable, and can maintain warmth even when wet. Look for synthetics in underwear, shirts, sweaters, vests, jackets, pants, mittens, and hats. Lightweight nylon shorts and shirts are ideal for hot weather because nylon dries quickly. Waterproof and breathable synthetic fabrics are used in parkas and rain gear, and in the shells of mittens and gloves.

Layering System

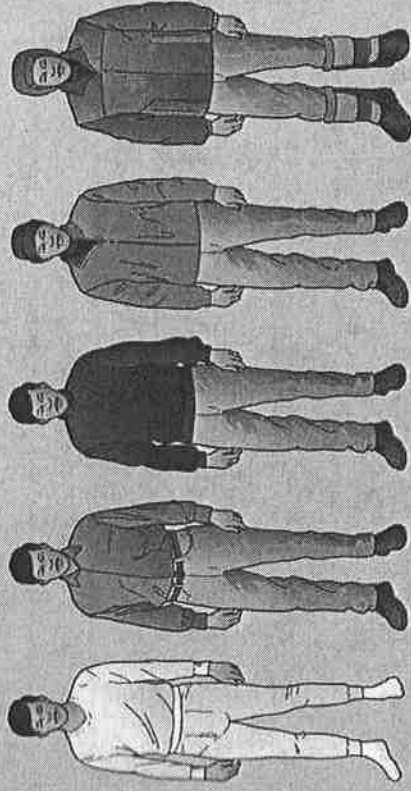
For the most comfort in the outdoors with the least weight in your pack, use the layering system. Choose layers of clothing that, when combined, will meet the most extreme weather you expect to encounter. On a chilly autumn day, for example, you might set out from the trailhead wearing long pants, a wool shirt, a fleece sweater, mittens, and a stocking hat. As you hike, the effort will cause your body to generate heat. Peel off the sweater and stuff it in your pack. Still too warm? Loosen a few buttons on your shirt or slip off your mittens and hat.

When you reach your campsite and are no longer exerting yourself, stay warm by reversing the procedure, pulling on enough layers of clothing to stay comfortable. After the sun goes down, you might want to add an insulated parka and fleece pants or long underwear.

You also can use the layering system to keep cool in hot climates by stripping down to hiking shorts, a T-shirt, and a brimmed hat. Lightweight long pants and a long-sleeved shirt will shield you from insects, brush, and the sun.

For more on managing your clothing to stay comfortable in challenging weather, see the chapters titled "Cold-Weather Travel and Camping" and "Hot-Weather Travel and Camping."

The WWW of Layers



A wicking layer, warmth layers, and a windproof layer make up the WWW of an outdoor clothing system.

Versatility in your clothing is the heart of a successful layering system. Several shirts, a sweater, and a jacket will allow you to adjust your clothing in many more ways than would a single heavy coat. The kinds of layers matter, too:

Wicking layer. The layer closest to your body is made of synthetics that can wick, or draw, moisture away from your skin.

Warmth layers. Intermediate layers have effective insulating properties to trap the warmth your body generates.

Windproof layer. An outer layer prevents wind from blowing away the heat trapped in the other layers of your clothing.



Wool gloves with water-repellent shells are ideal for cold weather.

Footwear for the Field

Many outdoor treks involve miles of trail hiking. Other treks, including kayaking, rafting, mountain travel, and cross-country skiing, require specialized shoes or boots, but even then you might find that you need to walk some distance to reach a river, a mountain, or a snowfield. No matter how you spend your time in the outdoors, you'll probably want to have a pair of good, durable hiking boots. In most cases, that will mean boots made of leather or trail shoes composed primarily of nylon.

Leather Boots

Your feet and ankles can take a pounding when you are traveling over rugged terrain, especially if you are carrying a backpack. Most leather boots have a steel shank between the upper and the sole for stiffness and lateral stability—important factors when you are toting heavy loads or traveling cross-country. Leather boots also can shed water and insulate your feet in cold weather.

A drawback of leather boots can be their weight. For serious mountaineering, you might want stiff, rugged boots. For most trail hiking and camping, though, flexible leather boots at half the weight and cost should be just right.

Trail Shoes

A wide range of lightweight footwear builds on the technology of athletic shoes beefed up for use on trails. Combining nylon uppers with rugged soles, some trail shoes are cut higher like hiking boots, and some are cut below the ankle like running shoes. They offer varying degrees of stability, durability, and protection from the elements. This type of shoe is best suited for treks when you are carrying a day pack or a lightweight backpack.

Conventional wisdom holds that a pound of weight on your feet is equal to about 5 pounds in your pack. Don't buy more boot than you need.

Selecting Footwear

Trek adventure footwear must fit extremely well. Boots or shoes that are too tight or too loose are an invitation to blisters. Spend as much time as you need to find the footwear that is right for you and for the activities you intend to enjoy.

When you go to a store to try on trekking footwear, put on the socks you will use in the outdoors. Find a clerk who is knowledgeable about the activities you will be doing, and who also knows a lot about how to fit shoes. Lace up a pair of boots or shoes, then walk around the store. Kick your toes forward—they should not jam against the front of the foot. Kick your heel back into the heel pocket—your foot should feel secure. The widest part of your foot should not slip, nor should it feel squeezed. Try several other models, giving each the same careful tests.

Breaking In Boots

Regardless of the design and material of your new boots or shoes, wear them several times before using them in the field. Gradually extend the length of the walks on which you wear them, and soon they'll feel like a natural part of your feet.

Caring for Outdoor Footwear

Clean your boots or shoes after every outing. Use a stiff brush to remove mud, or wash them off with water and mild soap, then allow footwear to dry at room temperature. (Placing shoes too close to a campfire can dry out leather and damage nylon.) The manufacturers of leather boots might recommend treatment with a boot dressing or waterproofing agent; follow their instructions.

Socks

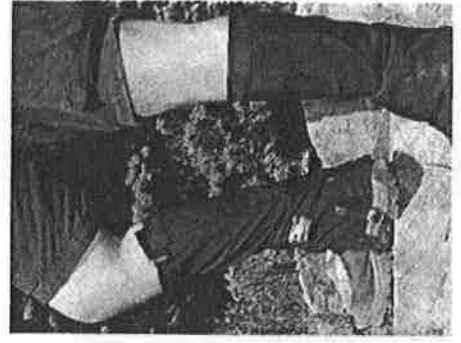
Hiking socks made of wool or a blend of wool and nylon are terrific. Synthetic liner socks worn underneath them increase comfort and reduce the chances for blisters to occur by wicking moisture away from your skin.

Gaiters

Gaiters shield your feet and lower legs from rain, dew, dust, and mud; help keep gravel and snow out of your boots; and help prevent spreading seeds of noxious plants.

SPECIALIZED FOOTWEAR

Outdoor sports and activities can best be enjoyed when your footwear matches your challenges. Ski touring, horseback riding, canoeing, kayaking, rafting, caving, and cold-weather camping all benefit from the right boots or shoes.



Trail shoes

Trail running shoes

Basic Cold-Weather Clothing Checklist

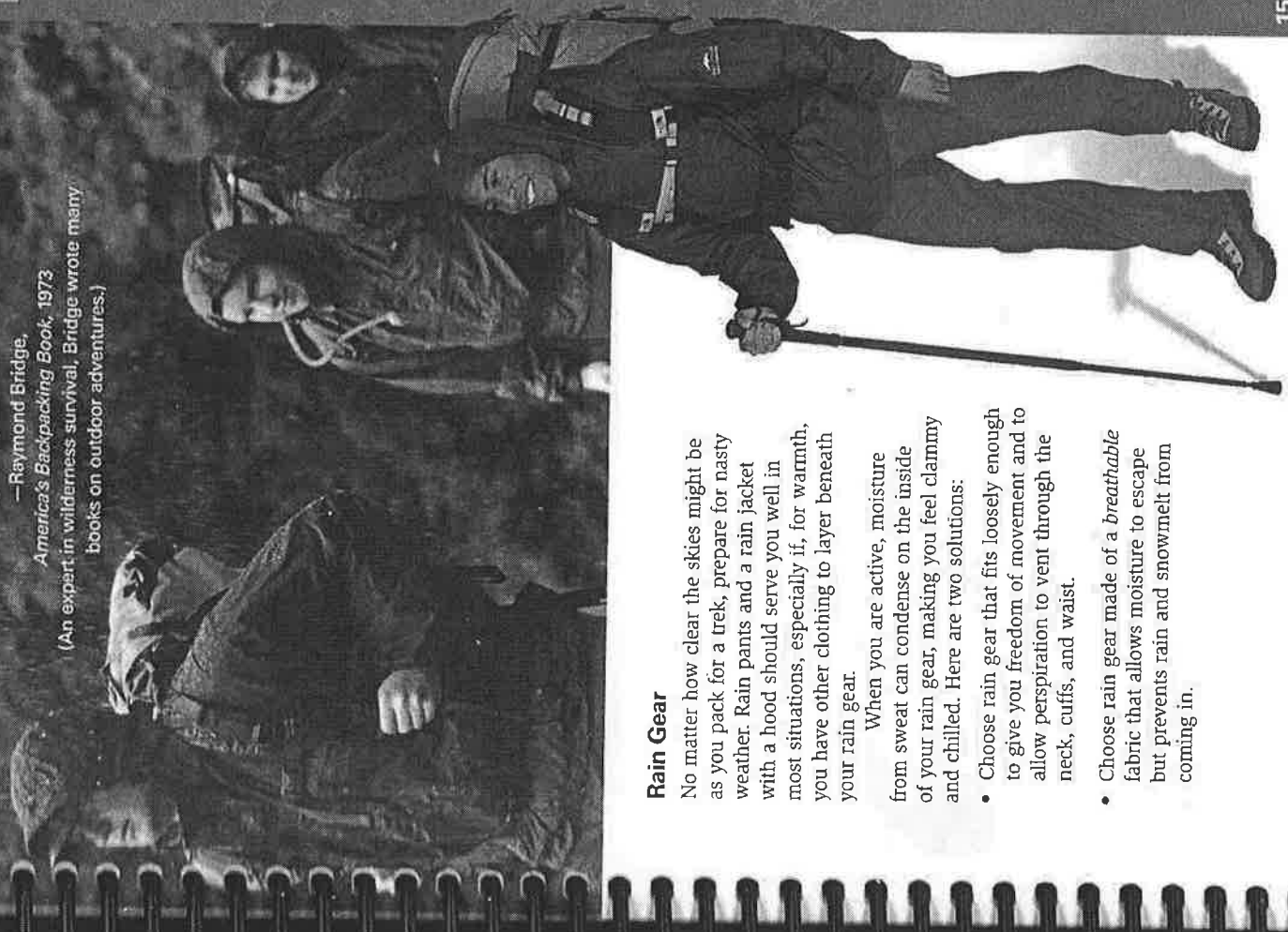
<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-sleeved shirt
<input type="checkbox"/>	Long pants (fleece or wool)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweater (fleece or wool)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Long underwear (polypropylene)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Socks (wool or synthetic blend)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Warm hooded parka or jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stocking hat (fleece or wool)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mittens or gloves (fleece or wool) with water-resistant shells
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wool scarf
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rain gear

Basic Warm-Weather Clothing Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	T-shirt or short-sleeved shirt (lightweight)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hiking shorts
<input type="checkbox"/>	Underwear
<input type="checkbox"/>	Socks
<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-sleeved shirt (lightweight)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Long pants (lightweight)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweater or warm jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	Brimmed hat
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bandannas
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rain gear

The main problem with rain is, of course, that it tends to get you wet."

—Raymond Bridge, *America's Backpacking Book*, 1973
(An expert in wilderness survival, Bridge wrote many books on outdoor adventures.)



Rain Gear

No matter how clear the skies might be as you pack for a trek, prepare for nasty weather. Rain pants and a rain jacket with a hood should serve you well in most situations, especially if, for warmth, you have other clothing to layer beneath your rain gear.

When you are active, moisture from sweat can condense on the inside of your rain gear, making you feel clammy and chilled. Here are two solutions:

- Choose rain gear that fits loosely enough to give you freedom of movement and to allow perspiration to vent through the neck, cuffs, and waist.
- Choose rain gear made of a *breathable* fabric that allows moisture to escape but prevents rain and snowmelt from coming in.