

Packing a rucksack

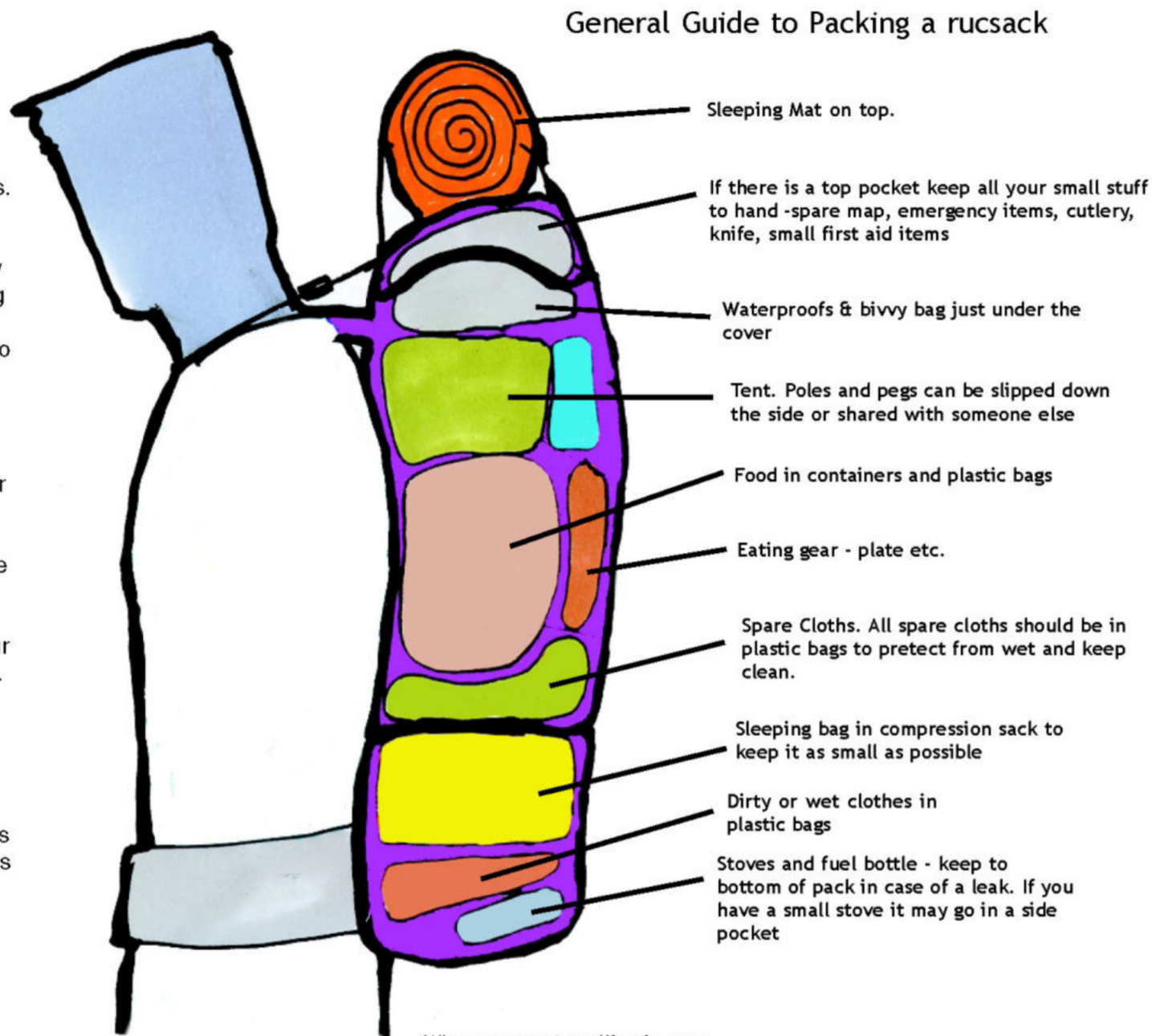
When you embark on an adventure into wild countryside everything you need has to be carried on your back. Rucksacks come in all makes and sizes and it is important that you have a rucksack that will be able to fulfill your needs. For short day hikes you will only require a small day sack, it may be possible to use the same day sack for carrying your books to school so saving on expense. For backpacking and camping however you will need a bigger size.

Rucksacks are sold in various sizes and are measured in liters - 55lts, 65 lts, 85lts. A suitable size for Scouts is a sack of from 55 - 65 lts. The 85lts sack is designed for expeditions and is generally too large in length of frame to suit a young persons body frame. Designs vary as do prices and it is wise to consult catalogues and the Scout Shop before you buy for expert advice. In general it is best to stick to well known brand names as the quality of the workmanship tends to be better. Cheaper rucksacks are normally made in eastern countries with an eye on making a quick buck rather than fulfilling the needs of the adventurer or explorer.

The rucksack is designed to carry all your essential items along the trail or to camp. This means you have to carry them on your back. Keeping the load as light as possible is therefore a major consideration. For that reason an equipment list is a useful aid when packing to ensure that the essential items are packed and those non essential items like the 'kitchen sink' and heavy extras that you may pack - just in case, are left at home.

A heavy load is best carried vertically above the centre of gravity of the body. Modern rucksacks are designed with this principle in mind. An internal or external frame helps to align the rucksack to your line of gravity and with careful packing to ensure even weight distribution the pack can be comfortable and easy to carry. With time and experience you will learn those things that need to be packed and those things that are best left behind. For example, a half tub of toothpaste instead of a full one. A selection of light interchangeable clothing is better than a number of heavy sweaters. One deep plate, in place of a plate and a bowl. Sharing of equipment between other members of your Patrol rather than each carrying the same equipment.

Put everything in plastic bags, there is no such thing as a waterproof rucksack.



How you pack your rucksack will be determined by the type and design of the bag that you have. If you have a split compartment design then it is possible to place items in the bottom of the bag and still easily get at them when needed. You should work on the principle of - LAST IN FIRST OUT - as much as is practical. Another consideration when carrying your pack is to distribute the weight in the bag so that the heavier items tend to be near your back in the middle to bottom of the pack. This will help to stabilise you pack particularly when travelling over rough terrain.



Be Prepared

It is a constant compromise when travelling with a rucksack on your back between comfort and weight. Don't discard vital clothing and survival equipment to save weight or space. Experience is a great teacher and after a number of activities in the open you will know what to bring and why.

When you are travelling in open countryside you will constantly be changing your clothing layers as the weather changes and as you ascent or descent mountains. Choose the clothing you pack with care. You will want the best protection from the elements and often it is best to have a number of different layers of clothing rather than one heavy jacket. A good fleece jacket is ideal for warmth but useless in the rain. So perhaps a lighter rain jacket can also be used in such circumstances or perhaps an ex army poncho, which can also double as a ground sheet or shelter. Most of your body heat is lost through the head so don't forget the woolly head. On day hikes don't discard spare clothing just because the rucksack is smaller.



Equipment list

This list will differ depending on the time of the year you are venturing out. The list includes all items and you can delete as necessary. If you are travelling in a group or with a partner then some of the equipment can be shared such as tent items, cooking gear and foodstuffs. If you are going away for a long period of time such as an annual camp then you will have to include extra clothing and include such things as washing powder so that cloths can be cleaned during camp. A good rule of thumb - is to WEAR ONE, HAVE A CLEAN ONE, and ONE IN THE WASH

Main items

- Rucksack
- Sleeping bag
- Sleeping mat
- Bivvy sheet / Bivvy bag
- Tent/poles and pegs
- Stove and fuel
- Rain gear - jacket and over trousers
- Boots and gaiters
- Torch & batteries and spare bulb
- First aid kit - personal
- Eating utensils
- Cooking utensils
- Matches/disposable lighter
- Knife
- Whistle
- Map & compass
- Light walking rope

Clothing

Bottom layer

- Underwear
- T-shirts (day and sleeping use)
- Long johns - winter use
- Socks -2 light pairs and two heavy pairs

Middle layer

- Long sleeve and short sleeve shirt or light fleece.
- Light weight fleece or pullover
- Trousers - tracksuit bottoms - not jeans

Outer layer

- Lightweight wind proof jacket
- Rain gear - Jacket, over trousers, poncho
- Hat
- Gloves
- Sandals - optional summer wear in camp - crossing streams
- Swimming gear

Eating

- Plate, bowl, cup
- Knife, fork, spoon
- Cooking pots if required
- Water bottle
- Tea towel
- Salt and pepper in film container
- Tea bags/cup a soup
- Can opener

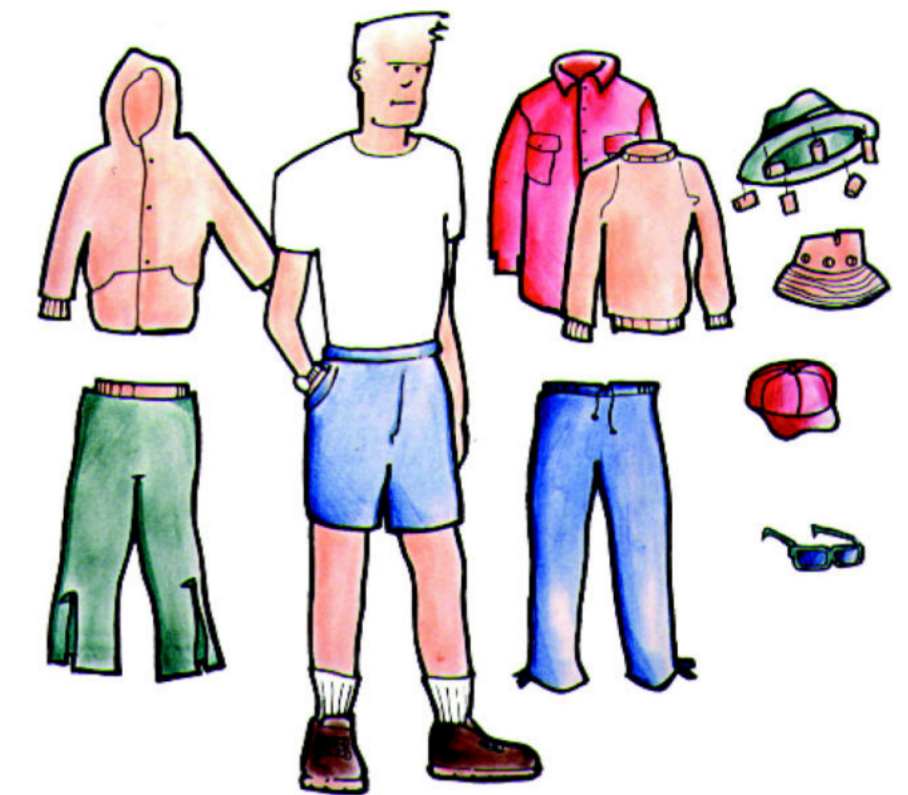
Food - as required by menu Emergency rations and trail food

Hygiene

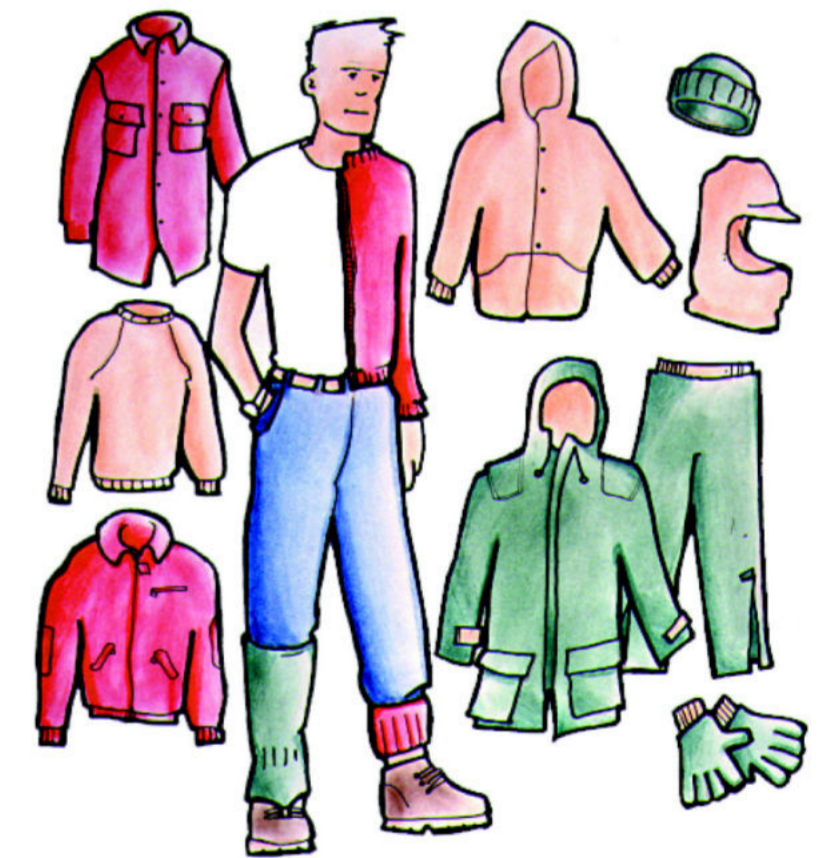
- Wash gear - toothbrush, soap, etc.
- Small mirror
- Towel
- Tissues & Toilet paper - half a roll in plastic bag
- Small plastic trowel - toilet use
- Water purification tablets
- Soap powder - if required
- Brillo pad or pot scrub
- Washing up liquid in small film container
- Plastic bags - rubbish, dirty clothes etc.

Essential bits and pieces

- Personal survival kit
- Duct tape - repairs etc.
- Piece of sisal
- Pencil and paper
- Needle, thread and pins
- A folding saw - cutting small timber / walking stick
- Waterproof matches or spare matches in film container with striker paper
- Something to read
- Dubbin for boots
- Spare laces for boots
- Insect repellent
- Sun cream/screen
- Small (tiny) personal radio - weather forecasts
- Mobile phone - emergency use
- Cloths pegs
- Stove repair kit
- Candle



Summer gear



Winter gear

Start packing by placing all the items to be packed on your bed and check off the list. When all items are present then pack. Work on the principle of LAST IN FIRST OUT and IF IT DOESN'T FIT IN THE SACK ITS NOT GOING don't carry anything that you don't need and don't have items dangling from the pack. Make sure however that you have all the essential items. Use your own judgement as to whether you really need that campfire blanket on an overnight bivvy.



What to bring