



Skills Session: Packing and Hiking Techniques

Time Frame

1 hour 15 minutes

Materials

- Selected footwear
- Appropriate clothing (polypropylene, wool and synthetics—not cotton such as blue jeans, which have no insulation value when wet and take too long to dry once wet)
- Rain gear
- Backpack and/or day pack (If the group is using internal and external backpacks, it is best to demonstrate how to pack both types.)
- Items listed on the following checklists (for the packing demonstration), found in the *Boy Scout Handbook*:
 - Warm-weather and cold-weather clothing checklists for hiking, camping, and backpacking
 - Scout Outdoor Essentials checklist
 - Personal overnight camping gear checklist
 - Patrol or group overnight camping gear checklist

Resources

- *Boy Scout Handbook*—chapter 3, “Tenderfoot Scout”; chapter 8, “Hiking”; chapter 9, “Camping”
 - Warm-weather and cold-weather clothing checklists for hiking, camping, and backpacking
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Goals

By the end of this session, participants will be able to

- Explain the techniques of safe hiking and its benefits for enjoying nature, physical fitness, and nurturing self-reliance (personal growth).
- Explain the who, what, where, when, why, and how of planning a safe hike.
- Tell how to select the right footwear, clothing, and other gear.
- Explain the importance of setting a pace and resting when hiking.
- Pack a neat, well-balanced, and systematically organized backpack or daypack that is comfortable to wear and efficient to use while hiking.
- Demonstrate the ability to pack items for accessibility on the trail.

Assignments

- Present yourself to your leader, properly dressed, before going on an overnight camping trip. Show the camping gear you will use. Show the right way to pack and carry it.  **T1**
- Explain the rules of safe hiking, both on the highway and cross-country, during the day and at night. Explain what to do if you are lost.  **T5**
- Explain why we use the buddy system in Scouting.  **T9**

Before You Begin

Conduct this session after the Campsite Selection skills session, when participants have set up a campsite, but prior to hiking—during the planning phase of the trek—to help ensure the safety and comfort of participants. Present it in conjunction with the Finding Your Way skills session. This session may be taught as a lecture/demonstration in which instructors display and pack their own gear. Have one or two group members lay out their gear and explain their ideas about packing. Participants may discuss the pros and cons of various approaches and be able to devise a more direct approach.

Segment the sessions in one time block such as a morning between breakfast and lunch or an afternoon between lunch and dinner. Group more experienced adult leaders together with the appropriate number of staff members and teach them "on the trail."

Tell participants how younger Scouts can be taught by initiating a discussion using a very poorly packed pack as the focus for a contest (e.g., "Find 10 things wrong with this pack"). Use the ensuing discussion to highlight the main points of packing theory. Scouts can also learn by packing "rooms" of the "house" (e.g., the "kitchen"—pots, pans, food, stove, utensils, etc.). Incorporating "teachable moments" allows leaders to point out positive and negative qualities of various packing strategies. With younger Scouts, a "Pack-of-the-Day" prize may be awarded to help encourage the proper technique.

Lesson Plan: Packing and Hiking Techniques

Hiking is a great way to see the world around you. Hiking begins with safety, and this skills session focuses not only on how to hike, but how to hike comfortably and safely. That means devising a trip plan using the "Five W's":

- **WHERE** are you going?
- **WHEN** will you return?
- **WHO** is going with you?
- **WHY** are you going?
- **WHAT** are you taking?

Don't forget **how** you will respect the land by practicing the principles of Leave No Trace.

Choose the Right Gear

FOOTGEAR FOR HIKING

If your feet feel good, chances are you'll have a great time hiking. Lightweight boots work well for short hikes on easy terrain and for most hiking in good weather. Leather boots might be heavier, but they will provide the protection and support your feet and ankles need for longer hikes and inclement weather. Whatever the type of footwear you choose, make sure your boots fit well. Follow tips found in the *Boy Scout Handbook* on adjusting to new boots, caring for your boots, and the proper socks to wear.

CLOTHING FOR HIKING

Dressing properly for the outdoors calls for layering so that you can adjust your clothing to match changing weather conditions. Learn about the different fabrics for hiking wear, including rain gear. The *Boy Scout Handbook* has checklists for outdoor essentials and warm-weather and cold-weather hiking, camping, and backpacking.

Backpack

Whether you choose a backpack with an external frame (great for general backpacking, especially hiking on open trails) or an internal frame (for added stability), it should be comfortable for short hikes or for a long day on the trail. When shopping for a pack, try several models—each with plenty of weight packed inside. An internal-frame pack keeps the pack snug against your back, which makes it ideal for skiing and mountaineering (and backpacking, too). Adjustable straps and hip belt help make a better fit possible.

Use the outside pockets of your pack for water bottles, maps, and other gear that you might need in a hurry.

PACKING UP

STUFF SACKS help you organize your gear—clothing in one stuff sack, cooking utensils in another, and so on. Resealable plastic bags and bread wrappers make good stuff sacks.

LOADING A PACK will likely involve not only your personal gear, but also your share of the patrol or group equipment. Just remember these tips:

- Arrange soft items so that they will cushion your back.
- Keep rain gear, flashlight, first-aid kit, and water bottle near the top or in outside pockets for easy access.
- If your sleeping bag won't fit in your pack, wrap it with a ground cloth or stuff it in a plastic trash bag, and tuck it under the pack's top flap or strap it to the frame.
- Stow items in the same place each time you pack—you'll find what you need when you need it.

Use a rain cover (a large plastic trash bag works well) to keep your pack dry. For hiking in the rain, cut a slit in the bag so that you can cover the pack and still leave the straps free. Tuck the loose ends of the bag behind the straps or under the frame. The *Boy Scout Handbook* has lots of other packing tips and photos to show you how.

Additional Packing Tips

The *Boy Scout Handbook* recommends a **day pack** for holding things you might need for a day of hiking. You might already use this kind of pack for school.

Use a **fanny pack** for carrying handy items on longer adventures and for cross-country skiing or mountain biking. The pack sits comfortably against your lower back and won't throw you off balance along the trail.

The handbook also provides a number of checklists for a variety of situations such as personal gear for overnight camping and warm-weather camping.

How to Hike

USE A HIKING STICK

A hiking stick comes in handy not only for stability, but also for pushing back branches and poking behind rocks. Personalize your hiking stick by whittling a small notch on it for every five miles you walk. Elsewhere on the staff, cut a notch for each night you camp out under the stars.

OTHER HIKING TECHNIQUES

Walking quickly is often not very important, so hike at a pace that is comfortable for the slowest member of your patrol. Take time to enjoy what's around you, and remember that group safety and fellowship help make a hike more meaningful.

Don't forget the importance of **resting** while hiking. Hikers need time to adjust their clothing, check their feet for signs of hot spots or blisters, take a drink, and have a snack.

Conditioning helps prepare you for longer journeys. Start with short hikes to harden your muscles, strengthen your heart and lungs, and prepare you mentally for more challenging distances. Regular exercise, jogging, and eating a healthy diet help, too.

Remember your **trail manners** while hiking. Travel single file on most trails (leave some space between you and the Scout ahead of you), and be courteous to other hikers by stepping to the side of the trail so that they can pass. The *Boy Scout Handbook* has other tips for a variety of hiking situations, such as meeting people on horseback.

Hike With a Buddy

Whether hiking along quiet back roads or in the city along busy streets, always hike with a buddy. Why use the buddy system? It's a way for Scouts to look after each other. Buddies keep track of each other at all times, sharing the good times and preventing the bad. Periodically conduct a *buddy check* by having Scouts immediately hold up the hand of their buddy. That way if anyone is missing, everyone will know it right away.

Hiking on Highways and Roads

Whenever hiking along a highway or road without a sidewalk, stay in single file on the left side, facing traffic. Wear light-colored clothing so that drivers can see you more easily. If you must hike at night, tie strips of white cloth or reflective ribbon around your right arm and leg. A fluorescent vest and flashlight also enhance visibility. **Never hitchhike.** It can be dangerous, might be illegal, and it spoils the spirit of a hike.

Hiking on Trails and Cross-Country

Following a trail makes reaching your destination less complicated and helps you avoid trampling vegetation or contributing to erosion. Wherever you hike:

- Watch your step to avoid slipping or twisting an ankle.
- Use bridges to cross streams.

- Wade through water only as a last resort, and only if the water is shallow and the current is not too swift (the *Boy Scout Handbook* tells you how).
- Detour around areas that appear to be dangerous, or go back the way you came.

As the *Boy Scout Handbook* states, **your safety is always much more important than reaching the destination of a hike.**

Staying Found

Know at all times where you are. Plan your route and destination on a map, then study the map to become familiar with your course. Note landmarks along the way. As you hike, pay attention. Notice your direction, and watch for hills, streams, valleys, buildings, and other details. If you have a map and compass, use them to pinpoint your location. Look back over your shoulder often to see how your return route will look.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE LOST. The *Boy Scout Handbook* tells how to follow the **STOP** steps when you are lost. The handbook also tells you to stay put if you have no idea where you are or which way to go, and tells how to help searchers find you.

Activity

1. During the course, go on a hike that participants have helped plan. Reinforce and practice safe hiking techniques along the way.
2. Immediately after the session, staff members should observe all participants packing their own gear, to be sure the skill is understood. Observe Leave No Trace principles, and emphasize the need to "pack it in, pack it out." Whatever you take to camp must be carried back home.