

Choosing A Tent

Troop 518 Training

The basic device for sleeping and overnight weather protection for all Troop 518 outings is the tent. The tent is one of the most important pieces of camping equipment the Scout uses. It represents a major expenditure and great care should be used in its purchase. Like shoes, the tent needs to fit the needs of the user.

The following guidelines should help in your selection of a tent. Keep in mind that selecting a tent will involve some compromise. Cost will always be a major factor, but a carefully selected tent is an investment in future adventures and enjoyment. A good tent will last for years with just a little care.

In our opinion the following features are generally accepted as mandatory:

- We suggest a 2-man rectangular tent with "bathtub" design floor
- Externally braced
- Double-sewn, waterproof "taped" seams
- Full coverage rain fly that extends beyond the tent boundaries
- Total weight should be less than 7 pounds, less is better
- Multiple adjustable ventilation openings
- No dependence on the strength and integrity of a single part
- Heavy-duty zipper(s) with an easy to find pull-tab
- Comes with all tent stakes and cords
- Comes with a weatherproof carrying bag or "stuff sack"

The best tents have the following features:

- Aluminum tent poles with internal shock cords
- No more than 2 different length poles
- Dry exterior area or vestibule for shoe and raincoat storage
- Storage lofts
- Replaceable parts that can be easily obtained
- Expansion pieces and accessories that can be easily obtained
- Loop(s) to allow easy storage hanging
- Provided with extra seam sealing compound

There are several types of tents on the market. Here is a brief summary of the types:

Dome or Hexagon

The basic tent being sold in outlet stores is usually a multi-sided "dome" or hexagon shape. These run from fair to very bad. The dome design allows a high central area for dressing. However, the design usually calls for 6 flexible poles to meet at the central apex where they are usually joined together by a breakable plastic coupling. The dome design does not make efficient use of the floor space either. Draw 2 six-foot sleeping bags within a circle and you will quickly see that the dome becomes tremendous before the floor will actually sleep 2 scouts. All this extra material adds to the backpacking weight. Most domes have very poor ventilation systems too. Vents usually remain open in thunderstorms and there is usually not enough ventilation for summer nights. The cheaper domes come with the poorest quality rain fly.

Bivy

The one-man bivy is the lightest possible tent you can have for backpacking. However, the very small size can make for ventilation and entrance/exit problems. The small size can be an advantage in extremely cold weather, but we rarely camp in those conditions. There is also usually a price penalty for this design. These may be a good choice for an adult leader who needs to cut down on their backpacking weight. However, the Troop would prefer that boys share tents and "buddy-up".

Expedition

Expedition or alpine style tents come in many different shapes and forms. Their two main features are a low, sleek look and a very high price tag. These type tents are used for mountain climbing and other semi-professional outings. The sleek look is required to withstand higher wind speeds. The high price is the result of the extra strength required for high snowfall, not extra features. Basically, they are harder to put together and do not have the proper ventilation required for summer camping.

Rectangular Tents

The rectangular design is derived from the exact floor space required for a sleeping bag. This minimal floor space results in minimal weight. The large triangular ends lend themselves to good end-to-end ventilation. The large sides make it easy to storm proof. These type tents are the easiest to setup and maintain due to their reduced part count.

Recommendations

Eureka! makes very nice tents in this weight and price range. These are available at Sports Authority and other local stores. They are durable, easy to assemble, easy to care for tents. Any part can be ordered if replacements are needed. The Eureka! Timberline (\$100 / 7 lbs.) is the top selling 2-man tent for Scouts in the nation. This is an absolutely waterproof, end-entry tent. Lofts and vestibules can be added. The Eureka! Apex (\$90 / 6 lbs.) is a side-entry rectangular tent with 1 or 2 door option. It comes with built-in vestibules. Lofts can be added.

Sources

Sports Authority and **REI** are two good local sources for new tents. There is a **Coleman** store at the Commerce Outlet Mall (I-85 @ exit 50). You can order anything on-line from **Campmor** (www.campmor.com).

Storage Hints

At home, all tents worth buying should be dried immediately after each camping trip. Hanging the tent open and upside-down from the ceiling in a dry basement will remove any moisture. Tents stored wet will develop mold spores and mildew and make the users miserable on the next campout.

Advanced Tips

- Remember: It has to go on a backpack! Think small. Think lightweight.
- The tent should never be folded neatly, but crammed into the stuff sack in a random fashion to protect the fabric.
- A sheet of plastic, a tarp or some other form of water barrier should always be placed between the tent and the ground to protect the inhabitant and the tent.

More than anything else, remember this: the Troop staff is always happy to talk to you about equipment purchases. Please do not hesitate to call any or all of us if you have any questions.