

## Troop 38 Camping Gear Buying Guide

The Troop provides tents, ground cloths, cooking gear, axes, saws, area lighting, rope, etc for camping. Your son will need his own “personal gear”. It’s important to buy good quality gear that fits properly. If you buy that Walmart sleeping bag or backpack now, you’re most likely going to have to buy another one soon. That’s not to say that everything sold at Walmart is bad, you just need to be careful about what you’re buying. It’s a good idea to shop around for mid-range items and keep your eyes open for sales. Spend money now on quality items to avoid having to repeat those purchases later.

You can find gear at a variety of local retailers like Walmart, LL Bean and Dick’s Sporting Goods. The BSA has recently started selling some pretty good gear too. You may find good deals at some of the online retailers like CampMor, Amazon.com, L. L Bean and others. You can also find good used gear and clothing at thrift shops, yard sales or from other Scout families. If you can’t afford to buy the higher-priced items right away, most of our families probably have gear that they will be happy to loan or give to you. Don’t feel that you have to go out and purchase everything on this list right away. You probably already have suitable alternatives right now and these items would make great birthday and Christmas gifts.

There’s a company called ALPS Mountaineering that sells good equipment at a 45% discount to Scouts. I’ve used products from this company and have been very happy with them. You can find out more at: <https://hikerdirect.com>.

**Duffel Bag and Backpack:** Your son will need something to put all his personal gear in. For those first trips where we’re not going backpacking a duffel bag that you may already own will be just fine. However, you will eventually want to get him a “technical backpack” that will hold enough gear to camp for 2-3 days. It EXTREMELY important that the backpack fit your son properly. You can expect to spend about \$100-\$150 for a mid-price internal frame backpack. For the younger boys you will probably end up buying a youth or women’s size pack and then have to upgrade to a bigger pack as they grow. We do a couple of backpacking trips each year. One of those trips is usually to Sandy Neck in Barnstable. This is a great trip for the first-time backpacker. Other trips during the year are usually more adventurous and usually have age and skill requirements.

**Sleeping Bag:** A sleeping bag's temperature rating generally identifies the lowest temperature at which a bag is intended to keep an adult male warm while wearing a clean, dry layer of long underwear and using a sleeping pad. Some people sleep warmer or colder than others. I generally recommend a 15-25 degree lightweight (less than 4 lbs) synthetic mummy bag for most of our spring & fall camping trips (\$50-\$150). For colder trips, double up on the sleeping bags, bring blankets or purchase a zero degree bag (\$100-\$200).

**Sleeping Pad:** Your son will need a sleeping pad to put some insulation between him and the ground. The sleeping bag provides little insulation while he’s sleeping on it since the insulation gets compressed. The thickness of these pads vary considerably (and so do the prices), but most young boys don’t really

need the pads for comfort. I recommend the Thermarest RidgeRest Cell Foam Pad that is 72 inches long. You can expect to pay \$20-\$30.

**Mess Kit:** I try to avoid metal mess kits in the winter since they cool off your food before you get a chance to eat it. A plastic plate, bowl and cup with plastic utensils (spork) will work best.

**Water Bottle:** Do not go cheap on the water bottle or your son (or another Scout) may end up with wet gear. I like the Camelbak line but there are other good ones out there. It should be at least .75 liter (2 bottles for backpacking) and will cost about \$10.

**Flashlight/Headlamp:** A headlamp can be used hands-free and make it easier to set up a tent at night. LED technology has made everything smaller and lighter. Expect to spend around \$15-\$20. Buy and carry extra batteries.

**Compass:** A compass with a see-through rectangular baseplate is best. Cost \$15-\$20.

**Rain gear:** A rain jacket and pants that are both windproof and waterproof are essential. Unfortunately there aren't too many places that sell reasonably-priced lightweight rain gear. You can expect to pay \$40-\$60 each. Yes, we do camp in the rain!

**Clothing:** You should avoid cotton for most camping trips. Cotton gets wet from sweat or rain and doesn't dry very well. It holds moisture next to the body and can cause hypothermia. There are lots of low-cost synthetics out there now. Shop Walmart, TJ Maxx. Scout pants are great for camping