

## Backpacking Gear - Suggestions for T166/066 Scouts

This guide is intended to help Scouts who are new to backpacking with the Troop. The gear listed is tailored for multi-day long-term hikes (LTHs); but works for shorter Scout outings too. Backpacking gear is always evolving and getting lighter; but older gear still works great, and one can find good used-items on Craigslist. If you are relatively new to backpacking:

1. Try to use gear you already have.
2. Borrow / rent / or share with a buddy the items you don't have.
3. Consider buying / upgrading new items over time.

The Troop has a great community of outdoor-families who often loan items to trusted Scouts. Note this is not a definitive gear list, and there are many good brands/items not covered here.

**Packs:** 60-80L pack is recommended (3600-4800 cubic inch) on 5+ night trips. 35-55L packs work for 1-3 nights. [Measure your torso](#) to get the right fit & size. It's a personal preference between internal & external frame packs. Internal frame packs can be a tad lighter and are slimmer. External frame packs offer better ventilation and easier packing/mounting options. All packs offer main compartments that are either top-loading, front-loading, or both (most flexible). Top brands include Gregory, Kelty, Osprey, Deuter, REI. The Troop has (2) Kelty external frame packs for borrowing / trying out.



Gregory Wander 70  
(a past favorite of Scouts)



Kelty Trekker 65



Deuter 65 + 10  
(w/ detachable daypack lid)

**Tents:** 3-season, 2-3 person tent that weighs 3-6 lbs. Minimizing weight is key, so consider splitting up the tent, poles, and rain-fly between tent buddies to distribute the load. Free-standing tents are preferable when staking is difficult. A tent with a vestibule is great for storing gear from rain. Some tents come with a ground cloth; but you can easily make a very lightweight one with a piece of visqueen plastic cut to size.



REI Trailhut 2



Mountainsmith 3



REI 1/4 Dome SL 2 (ultralight, \$\$)

**Tent Alternatives:** Lighter options scouts might opt in summer w/ good weather:

Bivouac (bivy sack) is a waterproof shell for your sleeping bag & pad. Minimal weight; sometimes carried as an emergency shelter.



Tarp: Minimalist / lightweight option, a simple 8x10 tarp offers lots of rig options: dining fly, A-frame, C-fly, or simply laid out as a ground cloth. Material can be a ubiquitous blue tarp, up to lightweight nylon camping tarps. Several Troop boys have opted to simply carry a tarp on LTH's, and sleep under the stars.



Hammock: solo hammocks have gained popularity, with the additions of custom rain flies and mosquito netting options. Require solid trees or man-made structures to hang from, which isn't always available. Scouts need to be careful not to damage trees / trample on plants when using hammocks.



**Sleeping bag:** Mummy bags that can compress small are key for backpacking. Match the bag's temperature rating for where you will be, with weight considerations. In summer, a 20-30° bag might be good for higher elevations; a lighter 35-45° bag may be good on a warm lowlands hike. Down-fill bags are very light, but expensive. Synthetic-fill offers a good weight/warmth/cost ratio & is better if it gets wet. Consider borrowing or renting a lighter weight bag for a LTH backpack trip; saving 1-2 pounds here can make a difference.



**Sleeping pad:** foam pads and inflatable pads are 2 main choices. Foam pads roll or fold up; they can be less expensive, light, but a little bulkier (strap to pack). Inflatables can be light, more compact and often more comfortable; but they are subject to damage; carrying a patch kit can be smart. Thicker pads offer more insulation/comfort, but at a cost of weight.



Closed-cell foam pad, folded up



ThermaRest Scout inflatable

**Backpacking stove:** compact + lightweight, these are essential - many locations do not allow fires for cooking. Our Troop leaders prefer stoves whose burners sit on the ground, separate from the fuel canister. They are far more stable & safer for scouts to cook with. That said, when purely needing to boil water for freeze-dried meals, Jetboil style stoves can be great. Isobutane/propane canisters are most common and often preferred for group logistics (universal fuel can for all). White gas and alcohol stoves are also an option. Avoid propane.



[Bulin 5800 Stove](#)  
(Troop favorite for Scouts)



classic MSR Whisper



Jetboil Sumo (1.8L)

**Boots:** The most essential piece of gear to get right, and sizing can be challenging for growing Scouts. Poorly fitting boots can quickly derail a backpack trip with blisters and other problems. Try boots on at a store with knowledgeable staff (ie. REI); walk around, ensure your foot doesn't slide forward + heel doesn't lift up. High-tops offer better water protection and ankle support. **Break-in new boots** before a trip! Walk around your neighborhood with them, wear them to the store, etc.



Synthetics are lighter and may dry faster



Waterproof leather can last longer.

**Socks:** Multiple pairs of good hiking socks are a must. Rotate them during the day to help prevent blisters. Clip damp socks to your pack to dry out while you are hiking. A lightweight liner sock worn under a mid-weight hiking sock can be a good option for some. Merino wool or synthetics are great, cotton is not. Moisture = blisters. Keep your feet dry!

**Rain gear:** Part of your 10 essentials. A lightweight rain-shell jacket & pants should be stored in an exterior pocket for easy access. Minimally, one should have at least a rain poncho.



## Misc items:

**Cat hole shovel** - a lightweight 6-8" hand trowel for when nature calls.



**Water purification:** For Long-Term Hikes, the Troop prefers to solicit a couple of gravity water filters (6-10L), that we use to refill drinking bottles with. Water pumps tend to be problematic. For personal back-up, you might opt to carry iodine tablets, chlorine dioxide drops, or a Lifestraw.



**Hiking poles / stick:** Provides balance on slippery trails or difficult terrain with a loaded pack. Even a simple 5' wood walking stick can help. Collapsible hiking poles are easy to strap to one's pack when not in use. Cost range widely based on materials used (\$25-\$200); REI offers collapsible poles for rental. Hiking poles are highly recommended for adults who want to save their knees on descents; it does make a difference.

**Mess kit:** Keep it simple & light when backpacking. A spork, bowl, & cup can suffice.

**First Aid Kit:** A 10 essential - keep a [Personal First Aid Kit](#) in your pack at all times. Store it in a nylon pouch or quart-sized ziplock bag. [Moleskin](#) is an essential item to have in it.

**Compass:** A 10 essential item, a simple compass can be a lifesaver.

Suunto makes some of the best;

But an inexpensive option is the [Turn On Sport](#).



**Knife:** A 10-essential - Keep it small & light for backpacking. A Swiss Army is great.



**Food storage:** Essential for keeping you and your food safe from critters (big and small). NEVER store food or smellables in your tent! Pack items in ziplock bags or containers that are easy to take out of your pack when you are in camp. Hang items in a nylon bear bag from a tree (bring a carabiner and 50' feet of paracord or 1/4" rope for this purpose). Many National Parks now require exclusively the use of rigid plastic bear canisters in high-use areas.



**Cookware:** Bring items you'll need to cook the menu your group has planned. A simple 2-4L aluminum pot might be all that is needed to boil water, heat a stew, etc. Choose cookware pots/pans designed for backpacking; they are lightweight + compact w/ folding handles. Modern pots with heat exchangers on the bottom offer faster water boil times, saving fuel but taking up a little more space. Use a food strainer with clean-up; pack out all food bits in a ziplock bag + distribute gray water 200' from camp + rivers. Leave no trace!

