

The Big Four of Backpacking

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The Big Four of Backpacking

- ▶ *Overview*
- ▶ Backpacks
- ▶ Sleeping Bags (Ground Pads)
- ▶ Boots (Socks, Trekking Poles)
- ▶ Raingear & Backcountry Clothing



Overview

- Knowledge & Training are the best “equipment”
- Quality/Reliable brand
- Keep it simple
- Go to a Quality Supplier:
 - Major Stores: REI, Cabela’s, L.L.Bean
 - Local outfitters! Trail House (Frederick)
 - Casual Adventure (Arlington)
 - Online: Campmor, Hiker Direct
 - Philmont Tooth of Time Traders



Backpacks

External Frame

- ▶ Cheaper
- ▶ Spaced from back
 - Cooler
 - Tolerates lumps
 - More flexibility in packing
- ▶ “Some” gear outside
- ▶ More pockets

◀ Trade-offs ▶

Internal Frame

- ▶ Close to back
 - Hotter
 - Careful packing required
- ▶ Off-trail/ascent
 - ▶ Lower CG
- ▶ Most gear inside
- ▶ Compartments with divider/shelf



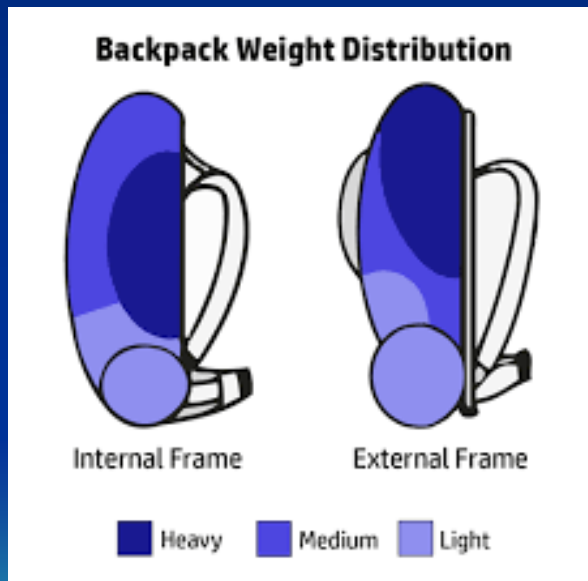
Backpack Sizing

- ▶ Must fit YOUR body
- ▶ Large enough for personal AND crew gear
(Crew “owns” about 1/3 of your pack volume)
- ▶ Recommend ~4500 cu in/70 liter capacity
- ▶ Try on several sizes and makes
- ▶ Fixed size or Adjustable Torso Length
- ▶ Weight of the pack itself - !



Backpack Loading

- ▶ Panel (front) or top loading
- ▶ One large or several divided compartments



Backpack Adjustments

1 - Hip belt

Rides on hips, full contact

2 - Shoulder straps

Width to fit shoulders

3 - Stabilizer straps

Chest

Side (hip) Load Adjusters

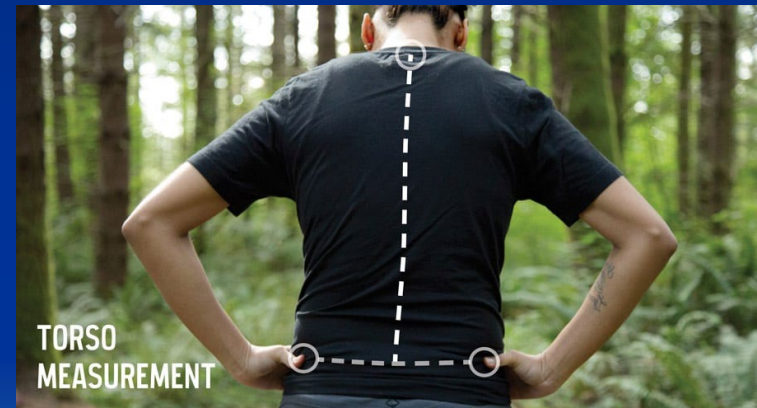
Load Lifters (top)

Torso Length

Too short: Shoulders only

Too long: Hips only

C7 vertebrae to iliac crest



Sleeping Bags

Mummy

- Less room, less to heat
- Hooded
- Lighter

Rectangular

- Roomier, more to heat
- No hood
- Heavier

- ▶ Temperature ratings: EN 13537 (European)
 - Not consistent throughout industry...
- ▶ 20° F bag = good year round
- ▶ “Loft” – Baffles – Tubes
- ▶ Liner can add up to 10° F add'l warmth
- ▶ Or sleep in long johns
- ▶ Double bag in waterproof sacks



Sleeping Bags - Insulation

Down

- ▶ Warmest
- ▶ Lightest
- ▶ More expensive
- ▶ Most compressible
- ▶ New “dry-down” doesn’t lose insulative ability when wet

Synthetic

- ▶ Warm enough
- ▶ Moderate weight
- ▶ Cheaper
- ▶ Less compressible
- ▶ Retains insulative property when wet



Ground Pads

$\frac{3}{4}$ length or full length

Closed-cell foam

- ▶ Cheap
- ▶ Lightest
- ▶ Indestructible
- ▶ Packs quickly

Self-inflating

- ▶ More expensive
- ▶ Heavier
- ▶ Less bulky
- ▶ More comfortable

Inflatable

- ▶ Most expensive
- ▶ Lighter
- ▶ Minimal bulk
- ▶ Noisy
- ▶ Puncture?
- ▶ Most comfortable



Boots

Lightest boot capable of handling trails and loads you'll have

Leather

- ▶ More expensive
- ▶ Careful break in
- ▶ Heavier

Fabric & Leather

- ▶ Less expensive
- ▶ Minimal break-in
- ▶ Lighter

- ▶ One pound of boot equals 5 pounds in your pack
- ▶ High or Mid or Low Cut
- ▶ It's the fit not the size...



Fitting Boots

- ▶ Snug at instep, ball of foot, heel
- ▶ Room for toes; no contact with front on incline
- ▶ Walk around store:
 - Do they feel right?
 - Do they slip?
- ▶ Proper lacing

Socks

- ▶ Wear 2 pair: thin synthetic liner, midweight wool
- ▶ “Hiking socks” - reinforced at stress areas



Trekking Poles

- ▶ Essential for most adults
- ▶ Requires some practice to get used to
- ▶ Assists with uphill and downhill
- ▶ Use as tarp poles (multiuse concept)



Rain Gear

Objective: stay dry and warm (comfortable)

Two piece rain suit (no ponchos)

BREATHABLE

Not worth it to go cheap

Nylon w/Gortex – Nylon – Vinyl

Packs small

Pants with side zips and/or boot zips



Backcountry Clothing

- ▶ NO COTTON!
- ▶ Wicking material (nylon/polyester/wool)
- ▶ Use Layers
 - heat & moisture control (avoid sweating!)
 - easily adjustable
 - Example: t-shirt, fleece, rain jacket
- ▶ Hat (sun, rain, cold)



Trail Wisdom

- ▶ High tech gives convenient options, but...
What you have in your head
is more important than
What you have in your pack
- ▶ Fit, fit and... fit
- ▶ No such thing as bad weather, only inadequate gear...

