

The following basic equipment information should help your son get started camping with Troop 11. Please contact me or any T-11 Assistant Scoutmaster with any questions.

### **1. Tent.**

NO. Scouts under First Class rank are required to use Troop tents.

### **2. "Real" hiking boots.**

NO. Too expensive for growing feet. Besides, they aren't recommended for individuals who weigh less than about 125 - 150 lbs.

### **3. Camp eating utensils or "mess kits".**

NO, mostly. Each patrol has a patrol box containing plates, silverware, cooking gear. However, each boy does need a light-weight, insulated cup for hot chocolate or oat meal with his name on it. (Later on, in order to go backpacking, each boy will need a plastic bowl and a spoon.)

### **4. Sleeping bag**

YES. A +30-degree rated artificial-filled 6' mummy bag weighing less than 3 lbs is recommended, unless you want higher quality. Light weight is important. Bags of like temperature rating and filler material that weigh less are usually slightly higher in quality and slightly higher in price than heavier bags.

Sleeping bags have two kinds of fillers, artificial and goose down. Most people buy the artificial, because of the \$70-\$100 price, even though it degrades over time; i.e., it loses loft or thickness. Thinner insulation equals less warmth. Thus, a 30-degree artificial-filled bag will degrade to a 40-degree rating after a few years. But this is not a big problem, because simple measures can be used to stay warmer, such as wearing long johns, sleeping socks, a knit hat, etc. Down-filled bags last a lifetime and don't degrade, but they cost about \$170 or more. Other advantages of a down bag are lightest weight and high compressibility. People who buy down bags are usually experienced backpackers who want and need the high quality, lighter weight, and less bulk, and the higher price to them is well worth it. You decide.

If you buy a +10 or +20 degree-rated bag, rather than a +30 degree bag, the disadvantages are: it will cost more, weigh more, and it will take up more space, simply because it contains more insulation. Check out the price and weight charts to confirm this. For South Texas winters and summer high adventure trips to high elevations, 30 degrees is about right. But there are some in the Troop who do have bags rated less than +30 degrees - you decide.

Sleeping bag temperature ratings are based on sleeping on a ground insulator, wearing a long-sleeve long john top and bottom, and inside a tent. But you only need to wear the long johns if you expect low temperatures, or you aren't warm enough. If buying long johns, be sure to buy only artificial fiber, never cotton. Air dry such artificial fiber clothing after washing, never in a clothes dryer. Artificial fiber long johns are easy to buy cheaply online ([www.campmor.com](http://www.campmor.com)), but may be hard to find in local stores.

Artificial fiber long johns are useful as ski clothing and should cost around \$25 for a top and \$25 for a bottom.

Do not buy rectangular bags, slumber party bags, cotton flannel bags, or "55-gallon" bags that take up so much space and weight they aren't readily backpackable.

It's important to keep sleeping bags uncompressed between campouts. Failure to do so may cause them to lose loft or thickness. Less thickness means less warmth.

Some sleeping bag brands held in high esteem by campers are North Face, Mountain Hardwear, Kelty, Marmot, REI, and Sierra Designs, but there are others. Campers are less enthusiastic about Slumberjack, Coleman, Wenzel, or most bags that cost less than the ones listed first. See [www.campmor.com](http://www.campmor.com) or [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com) to peruse prices, weights, etc. These are good mail order houses. If buying locally, consider REI. The bags at Academy are too cheap and not recommendable.

#### **5. Ground insulator or sleeping pad.**

Definitely YES. As mentioned above, thinner insulation equals lesser warmth. On the underside of a camper, any sleeping bag will be compressed to a lesser thickness by body weight. Such lesser thickness equals lesser warmth. Therefore, an additional insulator pad is an absolute must to stay warmer than the cold earth. Folding or rolled-up closed-cell foam about 72" long and costing about \$15-\$25 and weighing about 8 - 16 oz is fine. Small bodies need the insulation but don't need much padding. Bigger bodies (adults) need the insulation but may also need more padding than a \$15 - \$25 pad yields. Do not buy an air mattress with large air chambers or any pad with large air chambers - these provide padding but do not insulate.

Examples of closed cell foam pads:

[http://www.campmor.com/outdoor/gear/Product\\_41312](http://www.campmor.com/outdoor/gear/Product_41312)

[http://www.campmor.com/outdoor/gear/Product\\_47725](http://www.campmor.com/outdoor/gear/Product_47725)

[http://www.campmor.com/outdoor/gear/Product\\_41314](http://www.campmor.com/outdoor/gear/Product_41314)

[http://www.campmor.com/outdoor/gear/Product\\_47726](http://www.campmor.com/outdoor/gear/Product_47726)

#### **6. Backpack.**

NO. Scouts under 1st Class should use the Troop's when we actually go backpacking.

A year or so from now, you may want to buy your own backpack. In the meantime, notice what kind of backpacks others have, whether the owners like them and recommend them and why. Hint: The troop-owned backpacks from REI are good buys.

These are sized for youth, not adults, but smaller adults have owned and liked the same backpacks as the Troop's, and have used them for week-long backpacking trips.

**Summary: Buy a 30 deg sleeping bag and a ground insulator now. Do not buy a mess kit, hiking boots, backpack, or tent now.**

Thanks, regards,  
Kent Johnston

Troop 11