

Introduction to Backpacking 2025

Lecture 1



Wonderland Trail



Why Go Backpacking?



Indian Henry's Hunting Ground

Course Outline Reminder

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Classroom Session 1

- ▶ Packs; Sleep Systems;
- ▶ 10 Essentials; Footwear

Classroom Session 2

- ▶ Food, Cooking & Storage
- ▶ Water Filtration
- ▶ Clothing
- ▶ Leave No Trace Ethics
- ▶ Trip Planning Resources

Practice Camp

- ▶ Bring your gear to ask questions
- ▶ Test out your gear on a short practice hike and make your camp!

Field Trips or Other Backpacking Trips

- Opportunities to practice backcountry skills and test gear
- Recommend Easy-Moderate trips

Stewardship

- You pick where, when, what
- Mtrs / WTA / Other organizations

Low Impact Recreation Badge

- Free online

Selecting a Backpack

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- ▶ Fit is key!
- ▶ Torso Size vs. Volume of pack
- ▶ 45-70L is usually a good volume, depending on gear (not trip length)
 - ▶ Tip: The bigger the pack, the more you will fill it! A smaller pack will force you to bring only what you need.
- ▶ Features
- ▶ Borrow or rent a pack to start out if you can.



What's In Your Pack?

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Base Weight v. Total Pack Weight

- ▶ Base Weight, approximately 20 pounds
- ▶ Total Pack Weight, not more than 30% of your body weight

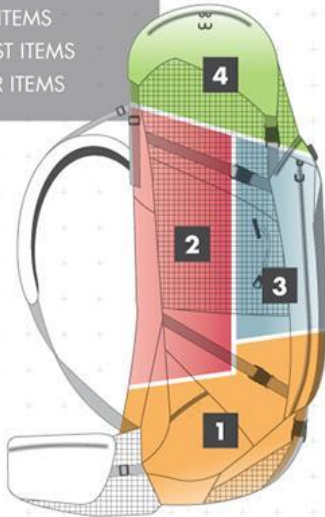
Ways to Reduce Pack Weight

- ▶ Share group gear
- ▶ Weigh your items
- ▶ Bring multi-purpose items

How to Pack Your Backpack

PACK WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION & PACKING ZONES

- 1 MIDWEIGHT ITEMS
- 2 HEAVY ITEMS
- 3 LIGHTEST ITEMS
- 4 LIGHTER ITEMS



MIDDLE BACK
(AGAINST THE BACK PANEL)
Heaviest items, including cookware, hydration reservoir, tent body, food, stove

SIDE POCKETS
Water bottles, fuel containers, tent poles, fishing rod

HIP POCKETS
Phone, camera, snacks, chapstick, pocket knife



LID
Small items you need access to, like snacks, compass, lighter, first aid, rain cover

MIDDLE FRONT
Lightest items, including pillow, towel, light-weight clothes, etc.

BOTTOM
Medium weight gear, including sleeping bag, air mattress, camp clothes, pillow, etc.



Questions?

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Sleep Systems

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(shelter, sleeping bag & sleeping pad)

- ▶ Tarp
- ▶ Bivy Sack
- ▶ Hammock
- ▶ Tent



Tent Features

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- ▶ **Free Standing or Requiring Support to stand?**
- ▶ **Two-door or one door? Side or end?**
- ▶ **How large do you need?**
 - ▶ Room for your pad, sleeping bag & gear you want inside
 - ▶ Height – room to sit up & get dressed
 - ▶ Even if you don't plan on sharing a tent, a 2 person backpacking tent can be handy



Sleeping Bags

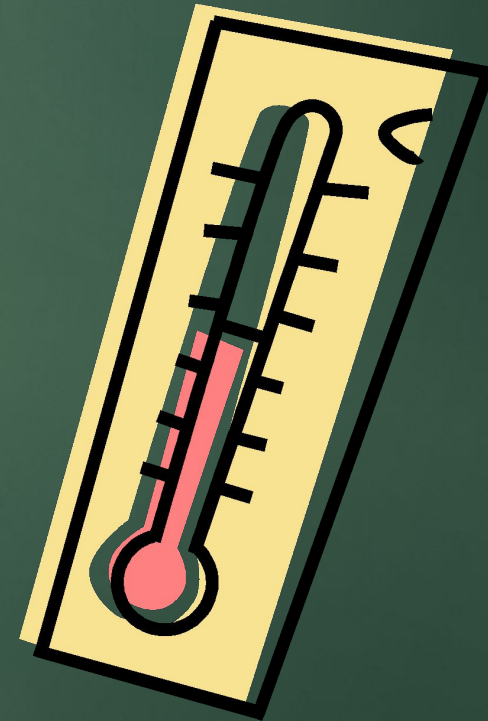
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Temperature ratings

- ▶ Comfort Rating vs. Lower Limit
- ▶ 20 degree bag is great for 3 season backpacking
 - ▶ Summer: 30° mummy bag or quilt
 - ▶ Spring/fall or high elevations: 10-20° bag
 - ▶ Winter camping or mountaineering: 0 degrees or lower
- ▶ Warmer bags tend to be bulkier & heavier

Types of Fill

- ▶ Down: compressible / pricier
- ▶ Synthetic: bulkier / cheaper
- ▶ Hybrid



Sleeping Bags

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Things to consider when selecting a bag:

- ▶ Metabolism
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Sleeping pad
- ▶ Bag Liner
- ▶ Tent
- ▶ Clothing
- ▶ Hood



Go as light and compressible as you can, considering your overall sleep system and the nighttime temps you expect.

Sleeping Pads/Mats

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Inflatable

PROS: More comfortable, less bulky

CONS: More expensive, can puncture, take time to inflate



Foam or Closed-Cell

- ▣ Advantages: less expensive, virtually indestructible, don't need to blow up
- ▣ Disadvantages: not as insulating, not as comfortable, bulkier

Questions?

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DEMO TIME!

30 minutes

~ Packs & Sleep Systems Talk ~

~ Other Questions ~

The 10 Essentials

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- ❖ Navigation (map & compass)
- ❖ Nutrition (extra food)
- ❖ Hydration (extra water)
- ❖ Emergency shelter (tent/garbage bag/emergency bivy)
- ❖ First-aid supplies
- ❖ Insulation (extra clothing)
- ❖ Sun protection (sunglasses & sunscreen)
- ❖ Illumination (headlamp/flashlight)
- ❖ Fire (waterproof matches/lighter/candle; fire starter)
- ❖ Repair kit and tools



Navigation

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Always have a good topographic map with you.

- ▶ Green Trails Maps
- ▶ www.caltopo.com
- ▶ Useful apps: Gaia GPS, Alltrails
- ▶ Learn basic navigation and compass skills – how to find yourself & stay found.



First Aid Supplies



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- ▶ Basic first aid kit
 - ▶ Minimum for our trips: blister treatment and bandaids
- ▶ Make sure you understand how to use contents – it doesn't do you any good if you don't know how to use it!
- ▶ Check for Wilderness First Aid Classes

Staying Hydrated

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- ▶ Have a plan for where you will get water throughout trip
- ▶ Each morning, study water source options for the day's route
- ▶ Drink up at camp and at each water stop
- ▶ Generally carry 1-2 liters depending on water sources, weather and level of exertion. Each liter = 2.2 lbs.
- ▶ Bottles – less accessible while hiking
- ▶ Hydration reservoir / bladder – harder to refill/clean
- ▶ Carry at least one water bottle as a back up



Sun Protection

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UV rays at higher elevations, on snow or on sand can cause painful and dangerous burns.

- ▶ Brimmed hat
- ▶ Sunglasses
- ▶ Sunscreen & lip balm
- ▶ Light breathable long-sleeved shirt and pants

Illumination

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- A 90 lumen headlamp will serve most backpacking purposes.
- Red light option is handy to preserve night vision
- Carry extra batteries or spare headlamp



Fire Starter



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- Matches
- Lightweight lighter (handy to have)
- “Kindling” - as simple as vaseline-soaked cotton balls – something to help build an emergency fire when everything around you is wet.

Building a fire in wet weather is harder than you might think!



Repair Kit

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Improvise – Think light & multi-purpose!

- ▶ Torn tent, clothing or pack? Duct tape works wonders!
- ▶ Multi-tools are heavy, bulky and usually not necessary
- ▶ Examples for your repair kit: Zip ties, a lightweight knife, at least 2' of duct tape (tip: wrap duct tape around an old rewards card or pill bottle stuffed with repair kit)



Questions?

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Footwear – Shoes or Boots

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Hiking Boots



- ▶ Handle rough terrain and heavy packs
- ▶ Often more stable
- ▶ Can walk thru low water and mud

Shoes/Trail Runners



- ▶ Lighter weight
- ▶ Less blister prone in dry weather (less humid inside)
- ▶ Dual use as camp shoes
- ▶ No break-in period required
- ▶ Feet and ankles can become very fatigued

Selecting Footwear

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- ▶ Try on with the same socks you plan to backpack in
- ▶ Important to have adequate room in toe box – “size up” – focus on fit, not on the number.
- ▶ Feet are complicated – you may need some inserts



Socks

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- Liner socks (optional)
- Wool or synthetic (or blend) sock; thicker is not necessarily “better”
- **NO COTTON SOCKS** (that’s asking for blisters)
- **ALWAYS** carry extra socks that are dry



Camp/Water Shoes

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- Helpful for stream crossings (something secure – not a flip flop)
- You may not need different shoes for camp, especially on shorter trips, however:
 - Helpful for comfort in camp
 - Reduces impact in camp (lightweight sole = less impact)
- If you want a camp shoe, get a light one that doubles as a water shoe. Toe protection is a plus.



Gaiters

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- Low gaiters
 - Slip on over your sock
 - Reduces twigs, leaves, and dirt
 - Usually made of light stretchy material
 - Subject to abrasion easily
- High gaiters:
 - Strap under your boot or shoe
 - Can help keep your legs warm
 - Keeps your pants cleaner
 - Tend to be heavier but sturdier



Foot Care

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The best foot care is prevention!

- ▶ Break-in boots at home
- ▶ Experiment with different lacing to prevent excessive movement
- ▶ Take off shoes & socks at breaks, let 'em breathe
- ▶ ALWAYS treat 'hot spots' before they blister
- ▶ Have good blister treatment in your first aid kit!
 - ▶ Moleskin or 2nd Skin, tape in advance (Leukotape, duct tape if necessary)



Trekking Poles

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Benefits:

- ▶ Help with stability
- ▶ Reduce impact on knees
- ▶ Help with stream crossings

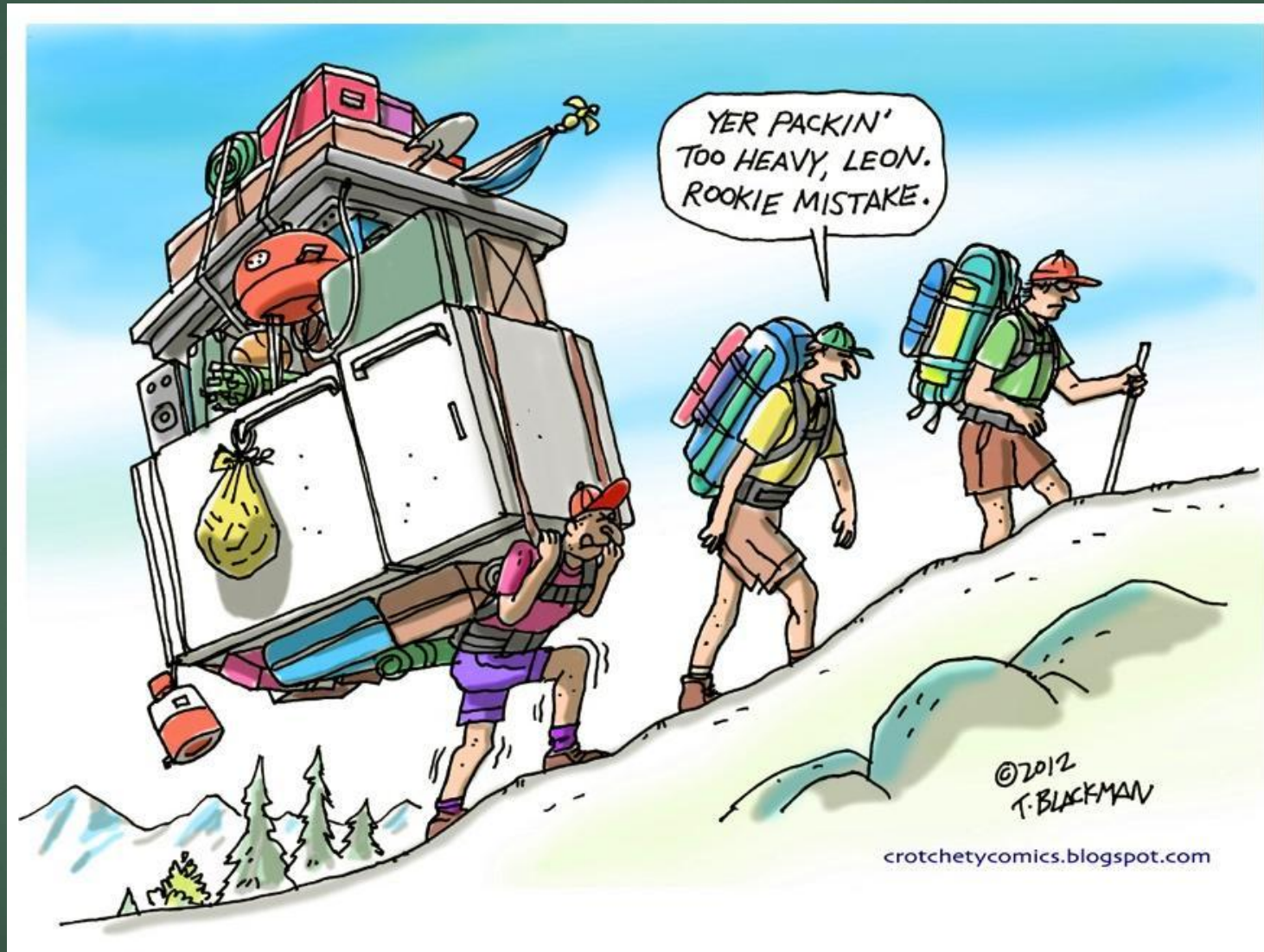
Types

- ▶ Extendable
 - Power lock (recommended)
 - Screw lock (tends to fail)
- ▶ Fixed Length
- ▶ Carbon vs. Aluminum
- ▶ Cork, rubber and foam handles



Comfort Items

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Questions?

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DEMO TIME!

30 minutes

~ 10 Essentials & Footwear Talk

~

~ Other Questions ~

Next Session

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- ▶ Food, Cooking, & Storage
- ▶ Water Purification & Hygiene
- ▶ Clothing
- ▶ Animal Encounters
- ▶ Leave No Trace Ethics
- ▶ Trip Planning Resources
- ▶ Reminder about Field Trips

Questions?

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