

Overview of Training

Welcome to Part 1 of the training you need to get on the trail with the Backpacking Interest Group (BIG). What you'll learn tonight, followed by three pack inspections and in-field training (Part 2), will get you confident in taking care of yourself during this athletic activity.

Part 1 is a 1.5 hour classroom training that teaches you what you need to know to pack and prepare for a trip. We'll follow the Packing List (supplied separately) during the training, and you'll use that list again and again with each trip.

Here's what happens after Part 1.

- 1) You'll sign up for our Google Group, **NCGirlScoutsBIG**, if you're not already getting our emails
- 2) You'll RSVP for a Beginner trip. Trip announcements are only sent to the Google Group There will be links in the trip announcement to sign up. The trip will take place Rain or shine!
- 3) You use your **PACKING LIST** to find what equipment you need to rent, borrow or buy.
- 4) You'll come to the Planning Meeting before the trip with your pack fully packed including clothing you intend to wear on the trip. At that time, you'll work with an experienced backpacker to check everything in your pack, making notes of what you need to add or replace.
- 5) You'll get your pack inspected at a Planning Meeting for 3 trips. After you've had 3 pack inspections (and have been on 3 trips), you won't need to bring your loaded backpack to a Planning Meeting unless a trip leader tells you to.
- 6) Your Part 2 training will be done during a backpacking trip in the field. You'll learn and practice various skills such as setting up shelters and lighting stoves.

Planning Meetings and Trips

The Planning Meetings for a trip are generally held the Wednesday before the weekend trip. The main purpose of the meeting is to bring together the group that will be hiking, eating, and sleeping together. At the meeting, the group will:

- 1) turn in payment and permission slips for the trip, plus any needed health forms
- 2) learn about the locale for the trip, including any special considerations (such as weather)
- 3) divide into sleeping and cooking groups
- 4) in each cooking group, plan menus and assign who will bring what
 - a. Each person brings their own lunches and snacks
 - b. Dinners and breakfasts are done as group meals
- 5) **As a whole group:**
 - a. review each group's menus for the weekend and get input from others
 - b. divide up the equipment that BIG provides: shelters, cooking kits, fuel, etc.
- 6) Carpools are also planned during this meeting

Day of Trip

On the morning of the trip, you'll arrive at the meeting place all packed and ready to go, with water bottles filled with water. Typically, there are no bathrooms available at the meeting site. Because our time to hike out of a campsite can vary, on the way home from the trip, we'll call families to tell them what time to arrive at the meeting site

(typically early to mid-afternoon) for pickup.

Equipment Summary

These notes provide guidance to parents and girls unfamiliar with backpacking equipment. Our backpacking group provides shelters and all cooking equipment, which are returned at the end of each trip. **See Equipment Details for more on each item.**

Backpack

Backpacks come in two varieties. External frame backpacks have a visible metal frame on the outside, while internal frame backpacks have an internal frame that frames a large pouch. Internal frame backpacks are more common.

Our backpacking group has internal frame backpacks we can loan. We cannot guarantee we have enough for everyone, but please let us know in the trip invite if you want to borrow. We strongly recommend trying a pack before buying it.

Whether buying, borrowing or renting, make sure the pack fits you. Try it out with some weight before you use it on a trip. Trip leaders can help you adjust the hip belt and shoulder straps at the Planning Meetings or if necessary, on the trail.

Sleeping Bag

A mummy style, lightweight bag is required. The mummy shape, vs. rectangular, has the best warmth to weight ratio. We backpack in rain also, so down fill is not recommended because when it gets wet, it loses its ability to keep you warm.

Sleeping Pad

A closed-cell foam sleeping pad is recommended. The closed-cell construction will not absorb water. These pads either roll or fold for carrying. Pads used for workouts are not suitable. A three-quarter-length pad is fine and weighs less.

Boots

Hiking boots are not required unless you are attending a long summer trip. Until then, sturdy sneakers or other athletic shoes with good support and a non-slip grip will be adequate for our Bay Area trips. However, hiking boots will keep your feet drier in the rain.

Warm Shirt/Jacket

Our group commonly uses wool or fleece as an outer layer for keeping warm. We recommend combining this with a waterproof nylon shell. Layers in general help you keep warmer.

Socks

When you wear boots on an outing, pair them with hiking socks. Wool socks are recommended and can be combined with thin liners to prevent blisters. However, acrylic hiking socks are also acceptable. If you are not wearing hiking boots for local trips, be sure you are wearing socks that are less than 50% cotton. Link for choosing socks:

<http://www.rei.com/expertadvice/articles/backpacking+socks.html>

Water Bottles and Personal Dishes

Bring your own utensils, cup, and bowl. Lightweight plastic or metal is recommended. Bring two unbreakable 32 ounce/1-quart (1 liter) plastic water bottles or water bladders. Link to bottle example:

<https://www.rei.com/product/402049/nalgene-ultralite-wide-mouth-water-bottle-32-fl-oz>

Link to a bladder example:

<https://www.rei.com/product/820769/platypus-platy-water-bottle-70-fl-oz>

Shelters and Ground Covers

You don't need to purchase a shelter or a tent. Our group has tarps with ropes, stakes, and poles that serve as shelters on most outings, and we have tents for use in really rainy weather. For ground covers we provide Tyvek. This is very light weight, durable and waterproof.



Stoves, Fuel and Cooking Gear

Our group provides stoves and cooking pots and pans. We use fuel canisters containing compressed fuel, which is a mixture of butane and propane. We'll provide each cooking group with a can of fuel and a "Billie Kit" which consists of two pots, a shallow pan, the stove, a lighter, soap, and a sponge. We also have cooking spoons, spatulas, and non-stick frying pans if your planned menu requires them.

Sources of Equipment

- 1) REI is a membership store, which is open to the public but pays back year-end dividends to members. Lifetime membership costs \$20 and the annual dividend averages 10%. This store has quality equipment, often at prices that are competitive even before the discount. They will take anything back if something is wrong with it, even after substantial use up to 1 year. They

have monthly (members-only) “Garage” sales of returned equipment at which great bargains can often be found. They also rent equipment. <https://www.rei.com>

- 2) Sports Basement is a warehouse-style store that has exceptionally good prices. They rent gear and have a similar return policy as REI. <https://shop.sportsbasement.com>
- 3) Any Mountain is another good place to look for a somewhat different brand selection from REI. <https://www.anymountain.net>
- 4) Big 5 Sporting Goods is another source for clothing and camping gear. www.big5sportinggoods.com/
- 5) Costco Seasonally have camping items. <https://www.costco.com>

Equipment Details

Backpack

Desired Features:

- Nylon pack
- Well-padded shoulder straps
- Well-padded hip belt
- Enough space to include a sleeping bag
- Two or more outside pockets
- Lightweight and adjustable

Other useful features include: chest strap, water bladder pouch, and head bag (top pouch)

Example of backpack: <https://www.rei.com/product/126717/osprey-aura-ag-65-pack-womens>

Packing a Backpack

A properly packed backpack can feel lighter than it actually is. For trail hiking with a heavy pack, put the heavy items near your core, i.e. the middle of your back and layer the medium and lighter gear around it. Put any items you need on the trail within reach, i.e. pockets and top pouch. For more details, try this link. <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/loading-backpack.html>

General Pointers: Always start by packing your sleeping bag into the bottom of your pack (do not hang it on the outside). This serves as a good base for the rest of your load, and all of your other gear will help compress the bag. Packing heavy gear is easier if you lay the pack horizontally and fill around it with lighter gear. Keep a pile of clothing and other soft gear to fill any vacant spaces created by hardware. Bulky items like ropes, tent poles, and foam pads can be attached to the exterior lash points of the pack but remember to keep your center of gravity and balance in mind. For exterior gear, the best place is under the side compression straps. The top of the pack is good for light items, such as foam pads.

Sleeping Bag

Next to footwear, no other piece of equipment is so important to comfort and health on a backpacking trip as your sleeping bag. For warmth vs. weight, down bags are the best, but they lose their loft and insulating ability when they are wet. A bag with 3 pounds or more of synthetic fill is the best bet for backpacking in the Bay Area. If soaked, it can be wrung out and used that night. It is durable and non-allergenic. Both inside and outside surfaces should be nylon for light weight and durability. A mummy bag construction is important, with a cord tie at the top of the bag to close it up around your face on cold nights.

Most bags have a temperature rating on the packaging that represents the minimum temperature at which one can be comfortable in the bag. For our trips we recommend at least 20 Degree ratings. Even a bag rated for zero degrees Fahrenheit is quite comfortable on warm spring evenings. Make sure that the bag weighs less than 4 pounds. Additionally, if you tend to be cold at

night, add a sleeping bag liner.

Check construction very carefully. Construction can have as much effect upon the warmth of the bag as the insulation used. Avoid bags where the inside and outside covers are sewn together through the insulation. This type of construction, called "sewn through," produces a bag with cold lines where the insulation is thin.

Store the sleeping bag outside of its stuff sack: storing it compressed will cause it to lose loft.

More details at this link: <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/sleeping-bag-backpacking.html>

In summary, look for:

- 1) Mummy style bag
- 2) Total weight less than 4 pounds
- 3) 3 pounds or more of synthetic insulation (check temperature rating on the packaging)
- 4) Nylon covers inside and out
- 5) Non-sewn through construction

Sleeping Pad

Sleeping pads provide 2 vital benefits: cushioning and insulation. Cushioning might seem like a pad's most useful function, but often more important is its ability to insulate your body from cold surfaces. For the lightest possible pad, pick a basic foam pad (Z-fold) or a "short" "3/4 length". Low weight and a small packed size override all other concerns. For adults who prefer a bit more comfort, compare pads with greater thicknesses and durability. The tradeoff, of course, is a moderate increase in weight.

The "Z-fold" basic backpacking pad features dense foam filled with tiny closed air cells. Pros: Lightweight, inexpensive and durable; excellent insulators; won't absorb water. Cons: Less comfortable. Relatively stiff and firm, so they tend to be bulky.

Example of Z-fold: <https://www.rei.com/product/829826/therm-a-rest-z-lite-sol-sleeping-pad>

Footgear

Nothing can spoil a weekend campout for you (or leaders and fellow scouts) so much as sore, blistered feet. Sturdy, well-made athletic shoes are acceptable for Bay Area outings, but not for longer hikes in the Sierras.

We recommend sturdy, but soft and flexible, boots which fit your feet well, especially in the heel. Most good boots feature some degree of ankle support. Boots are available with a nylon or Gore-Tex fabric top (rather than leather), or a composite of nylon and leather, and lug soles.

Although a nylon composite is not waterproof, it has the advantages of lower cost, much quicker break-in, and excellent flexibility. Waterproof boots are not a requirement. Try on boots with hiking socks (and liners if you prefer them) and walk around in the store a lot before you buy. Take them home and walk around at home before taking them outdoors.

Break in your boots before you hit the trail.

More details at this link: <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/breaking-in-hiking-boots.html>

General advice on backpacking: <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice>