

## The Dad Checklist™: Camping Gear Checklist

From *The Dad Checklist*  
by Jeff Levinson  
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- Map and compass. If you know how to use GPS, go ahead, but you just might want to keep a compass as a backup.
- Permits and licenses, ID, \$.
- First Aid kit.
- Pen, pencils, and paper.
- Book (plus deck of cards, cribbage board).
- Whistle.
- Matches and lighter. Waterproof matches are reliable.
- Knife.
- Bandannas.
- Water bottles. Many people like the Nalgene bottles. Make sure that you have enough water bottles for each person and extra for emergencies.
- Water purification or filter. Necessary for wilderness areas or anywhere you are not sure of the water supply. Before you go, check with the local outfitters or outdoors store for the best way to clean the water for the area you'll be traveling in. Be sure that your children know which water is safe to drink.
- Raingear. I recommend rain pants and rain jacket. Ponchos do not work well and get caught on branches and drag on the ground.
- Flashlight or headlamp with new batteries.
- Lightweight binoculars (optional).
- Camera.
- Glasses and sunglasses. Children, too, should have sunglasses.  
It makes no sense to me when I see parents wearing sunglasses on a bright day, and the children have no eye protection.
- Sunscreen. My wife has educated me on this.
- Chapstick.
- Bug spray.
- Hat or cap.
- TP (toilet paper) is high on the list of key items.
- Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, biodegradable soap, personal meds, personal hygiene products; no razor because not only is shaving not required, but the rugged look is part of the experience).
- Repair kit. Sewing kit with (large) needles, thread, safety pins, small coil of wire, and fishing line for stronger repair. Multi-use duct tape for patching tents, boots, water bottles, canoes (along with liquid aluminum for canoes or some epoxies that harden like steel). Some ripstop nylon patches and tape-on velcro for tents and raingear. Spare backpack buckle. Extra cord. Extra lighter. Phone change or phone card (if you have a cell phone, it won't likely work in most wilderness areas though it might be useful in emergencies if you get close to a road. Remember to keep it off during the trip though). Hose clamp and cotter pins for your pack.

- ❑ Tent (already seam sealed) with poles, stakes, ground cloth, and rain fly. Lightweight tarp, as needed. Freestanding dome tents come in many shapes and provide great protection from wind and rain. Most come with a rainfly that covers the tent and shock-corded aluminum or fiberglass poles. They're easy to set up and come in all sizes.
- ❑ Light cord (for clotheslines, tying gear), about 50 feet of it.
- ❑ Bear bag and rope (if needed).
- ❑ Mylar (space blanket) emergency blanket (smaller than a deck of cards).
- ❑ Food. You can eat well on the trail. Make sure you bring enough food, since you burn more calories on the trail. You have to carry just about everything you plan to eat (not a problem if you are car camping).

Most meals can be stored in separately marked ziploc bags. Freeze dried food offers many choices, unlike the old days, but is more expensive than staples like rice and mac and cheese. You really need only one pot (with lid) for cooking.

- ❑ Spices and oil. Spice Box. Salt and pepper are good, but you can be creative with spices, even with something as simple as mac and cheese. Think about packing cumin, curry, cinnamon, oregano, basil, cayenne pepper, chili powder, garlic powder, dried onion, Bacos, dried milk, bouillon cubes, and your other favorites. Experiment, remembering that most things taste good outdoors, but it is possible to overdo it. Some people caution against using old film containers, but I like them since they are sized just right for spices and can be marked with a piece of masking tape.

- ❑ Waterproof boots and socks (wool outer socks with synthetic fiber liner socks or special hiking socks that do not need liners). If canoeing, you may want river sandals or old tennis shoes (though the shoes stay wet). The type of boot you get depends on the type of backpacking you'll be doing and loads you'll be carrying. Go to a good outdoor store since the boots are one of the most important pieces of equipment you will have.

- ❑ Extra pair of dry and comfortable shoes or sandals for around the campsite.

- ❑ Extra socks. Wool stays warm when wet and wicks moisture away.

Some new wool blends are also pretty comfortable; they're not as itchy as the old ragg wool socks. Man-made materials are also pretty good, but cotton is not because it gets soggy and can chafe.

- ❑ Wool sweater.

- ❑ Clothing as the weather requires. Layering is best in cool weather. Have clothes that keep you warm when wet (synthetic fibers), and have dry clothes for around the campsite, because you will get wet. The layer closest to your skin should wick away moisture. The middle layers insulate, like synthetic fleece or a wool sweater. The outer layer or shell protects from wind and rain. Remember pants, shorts, underwear, swimsuit, small towel or one of those super-absorbent ones, shirts and T-shirts, warm cap, and extra bandannas. In cold weather, add long underwear (synthetic fibers, not cotton, will keep you warmer), gloves, hats, and appropriate outerwear.

- ❑ Backpack. Internal vs. external frame. The type of pack you get depends on the hiking you are doing, climate, and trail conditions. If you are loading up for a long summertime hike on marked trails, an external frame pack can hold a ton of gear. Internal frame packs rest right against your back, fitting your movements better, but they may be a bit harder to load. Many people now prefer internal frame packs for shorter trips, and they can be very comfortable. With any pack, make sure the suspension system works well and comfortably. A padded hip belt is a must, since it will bear most of the load. Look for padded shoulder straps and a mesh back for air circulation.

- Sleeping bag in waterproof stuff sack (use a garbage bag inside the stuff sack for insurance).

The sleeping bag should be rated for the weather you may encounter.

- Air mattress or foam pad.

Straps to attach gear. How to pack. Pack everything you want to keep dry in garbage bags (one inside the sleeping bag stuff sack, another in the bottom pack compartment for clothes). If you pack like this, and your backpack keeps things relatively dry, you may be able to do without a pack cover.

For river trips, you may want to buy “dry bags” to keep your things dry. Backpacks should be loaded with the heaviest things (extra water, heavy food) close to your back and relatively low in the pack. Sleeping bags go on the bottom, either lashed on or in the lower compartment.

Tents may be lashed to the top, though you may want to pack the heavier parts lower. Mid-weight gear goes more toward the upper and outer areas of the main storage areas. Lightweight stuff on top. Outside pockets are handy for water bottle, maps, raingear, sunscreen, snacks, insect repellent, camera, binoculars, knife, and first aid kit.

- Trekking poles. In the old days, people would find a large branch near the trail to use as a walking stick. Nowadays, there are high tech trekking poles. Any walking stick will help you balance on downhills and reduce the strain on your knees.

- Stove (that you know works and that you know how to work), fuel canisters or bottles.

- Large pot with lid plus smaller pot for dessert or tea, stirring spoon, ladle, and spatula.

- Cup and bowl (you don't need plates for most meals anyway so you can just use a sturdy plastic cup or bowl. Insulated cups work well. A canoe paddle can serve as a cutting board in a pinch).

- Spoon (you don't need a fork or a knife other than your pocketknife).

- Potholder (a bandanna, or pliers on a multipurpose tool).

- Biodegradable soap and pot scrubber (Scotchgard, not steel wool, which disintegrates).

- Trash bags.

- Trowel for digging latrine.

- If canoeing, you'll also need the “of course” stuff:

canoe, paddles (plus spare), life jackets, yoke and pads for portaging, repair kit, waterproof bags for your gear. If fishing, bring your gear. For kayaking, there is specialized gear, like a paddling helmet, paddling jacket, spray skirt, and dry bag for gear. Climbing has a whole different set of equipment. And winter camping requires more of everything.

	Other Gear We Need to Remember
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