

Tips from the Old Scout

Tip # 2: Cleaning and Maintaining Troop Gear

Tips from the Old Scout is a series of informational articles that will appear on the Troop 201 website each month. They are intended to be an information source for both parents and scouts on a variety of important topics relating to camping, backpacking and hiking.

The subject is cleaning and maintaining troop gear. Each scout has the responsibility to care for the troop gear that is used at meeting and on outings. Let's discuss troop tents first. Each tent houses roughly three scouts on a weekend trip, and must be cared for and stored properly to be ready for the next weekend outing.

One scout will be assigned to clean and dry the tent after each weekend outing. The tent should be opened and aired out *the same day the scout returns from the trip*. Even if there was no rain on the outing, the tent will be moist from dew and condensation. It should be opened completely, and hung to dry outdoors, or in a garage or basement. If the tent is dirty, or caked with mud, it should be hosed off and cleaned before hanging to dry (never attempt to wash a tent in a washing machine – it will be ruined). Do not use any soap or aerosol sprays, as these will damage the water repellent fabric.

Both the tent and tent fly (tent cover) should both be cleaned and hung to dry. Each tent also includes a tent bag, pole set, tent pegs and plastic ground cloth. Some tents include bags for the poles and pegs. These also should all be cleaned of mud and debris and thoroughly dry.

Before re-packing the tent, the door to the tent should be unzipped, and the tent should be carefully turned inside out to remove any debris, leaves or wrappers. To re-pack, the tent should be turned right side out, zipped, folded and *rolled separately* from the fly and ground cloth (this makes it easier to set up the tent the next time, and to split up the tent parts to be carried by scouts on a backpacking trip). Everything must fit back into the tent bag.

Return the cleaned and dried tent at the next troop meeting. It will be checked and stored in the container for the next trip. Please let the Troop Quartermaster know if there is any problem with the tent. This might include: tears in the fabric, problems with the zipper, broken poles or missing pieces. Every tent should include at least 8 tent pegs. It's important that we know if there are any problems to fix, so the tent is 100% ready to go on the next outing.

Pots, pans and utensils will also be sent home to be cleaned. It is often difficult to properly clean these at camp, so they need to be scrubbed and sanitized at home to be ready for the next outing. If the canvas bags that the pots are stored in are dirty, we ask that these be washed and cleaned as well.

If you are asked to clean the plastic 5 gallon water bags we use at camp, these can be washed inside and out with soap and water. Then, a capful of bleach should be mixed in water to sanitize the bags. Please rinse thoroughly, and *leave open to dry* before returning them. Report any leaks so the bags can be sealed and repaired prior to the next outing.

The old scout regularly uses tents and gear that is over 40 years old – if a scout takes care of his gear and equipment, it will last a long time, providing years of good use.

Remember:

- Clean and dry all tents *immediately* upon returning from the outing
- Clean all pots, pans and utensils so they are ready for the next outing
- Return all troop gear promptly at the next troop meeting
- Report any problems with the gear to the Troop Quartermaster, so they can be fixed