

Tips from the Old Scout

Tip # 7: Rain 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 rain gear. The scouting motto is *Be Prepared*, and being prepared for inclement weather is a top priority when hiking, backpacking or camping. Having proper rain gear is essential whenever heading into the great outdoors.

The minimum in terms of “survival” rain gear is a large (lawn and leaf size) heavy duty plastic bag. You can easily poke out openings for head and arms. Many scouts carry a traditional poncho, which has an integral hood and may be cut large enough to fit over one’s backpack as well. The down side of a poncho is that the bottom is wide open, allowing rain and splashing water to soak a hiker’s pants, socks, and often boots. During windy conditions, it may be difficult to manage a poncho because the wind can blow it around. Additionally, like all types of rain gear, moisture can build up on the inside of a plastic poncho which will dampen clothes and skin.

The requirement for Philmont and extended wilderness backpacking is a separate rain jacket and rain pants. A dedicated rain jacket will have an integral hood and will often be vented to allow perspiration to escape (particularly important in warm weather). Modern rain jacket fabrics will allow water to bead on the outside and will remain somewhat dry on the inside. Rain pants will keep the pants and legs warm and dry, and will keep rain from dripping into the socks and boots.

Rain gear should be stored in an outer compartment on the backpack, or near the top of the pack for quick access. When taking a side hike, make sure to transfer your rain gear over to your daypack.

It’s a good idea to carry a rain cover for your backpack as well. This can be a form-fitted cover, or simply a large plastic garbage bag that fits over the backpack completely. You want to keep rain off the backpack while hiking, as well as when your backpack sits under a tarp or outside your tent on an overnight outing.

Extra tip: Wear a brimmed cap under your rain hood – it will keep rain off your face – especially helpful if you wear glasses!

Bonus tip: Remember to pack all your clothing inside the backpack in gallon size Ziploc bags for extra rain protection.

Remember:

- Keep rain gear easily accessible in your backpack

- Transfer rain gear to your daypack when taking side hikes