

4-H Youth Rite of Passage Equipment List

Read the following well. Your knowledge of this material is essential to the health of yourself and the community which you will serve. Make sure that you ask questions of your guides relevant to the terrain, weather, flora and fauna, and equipment needs of the area in which you will be fasting.

EQUIPMENT

The faster goes as “nakedly” as possible into the heart of the wilderness. Nevertheless, you are a civilized being and cannot instantly divest yourself of all technological support and survive under any natural emergency. From the beginning of human history, humans have been “tool makers.” Though our modern tools can be far less versatile and even more cumbersome than those of ancient peoples, they do help to ward off the cold and the rain. You will be asked to simplify the amount of equipment necessary for your survival -- until it can be easily carried on your back.

The following equipment list is distilled from years of experience with thousands of vision fasters as they sought to live with the minimal amount of material culture necessary for their safety and well-being. As you collect your equipment, you will face many choices regarding what to bring and what to leave behind. What you need and don't have will be provided for you. What you finally decide, of course, is entirely up to you and your physical ability to carry it.

Perhaps you will see that this process of collecting and packing your gear is symbolic of your ability to let go and face the unknown, if even for the relatively brief threshold time. Your fully loaded pack is symbolic of your attachment to the life you are leaving behind. All of

us require some material goods in order to stay alive. The question (and a very big question for modern humans) is how much? The weight of your pack is the weight of your "karma" (what you must pay as a consequence of living the way you do). Do you really want to carry that much? If you want to be challenged by a harder time, carry more weight. But remember you were the one who added the weight.

Packing your things is a "self-generated" severance ceremony. Carefully, and with a certain amount of affection, you are selecting from your past those things which will make it possible to walk into your future. Try not to involve your parents in this process. Packing your own things is a sign of self-reliance, a characteristic of true maturity. You are discovering the delicate balance between security and freedom.

EQUIPMENT LIST

- TENT (For basecamp preparation time)
- BACKPACK (self-inspected and in good condition)
- SLEEPING BAG (one that keeps you warm in freezing temperatures)
- STOUT NYLON GROUND CLOTH and/or STRONG NYLON RAIN TARP (9x11)
- FOAM OR RUBBER PAD (for sleeping on the hard ground)
- ROPE (100 feet)
- SMALL CLASP KNIFE
- MATCHES (made watertight)
- LARGE BANDANNA
- ONE-GALLON PLASTIC WATER CONTAINERS (one gallon per day)
- WARM WEATHER CLOTHING:
 - warm wool sweater or fleece
 - rain gear
 - warm jacket
 - wool cap and a sun hat
 - change of clothes
 - bathing suit (for sauna or swimming hole)
- COLD WEATHER CLOTHING:
 - wool cap, mittens
 - warm* jacket

- wool winter socks (with extra pair)
- long underwear
- change of clothes (left at basecamp)
- BOOTS (or stout shoes)
- LARGE METAL CUP AND UTENSILS (for pre/post fast)
- TOILET PAPER (non colored)
- CHAPSTICK, SUN HAT, SUNSCREEN
- FLASHLIGHT (for emergency use)
- TWO LARGE, ONE SMALL GARBAGE SACKS
- JOURNAL, PENCIL
- SMALL DAY PACK

EMERGENCY KIT

Make sure the following items are also packed. Some are already mentioned above. The items comprise an "emergency kit." They should be carried on your person *at all times* during the threshold period.

- EMERGENCY FIRST AID PROCEDURE CHECKLIST
- BANDANA
- AT LEAST TWO QUARTS OF WATER
- A FEW BANDAIDS, A TUBE OF ANTISEPTIC
- A FEW HARD CANDIES, TUBE OF HONEY, POWER BAR (for emergency energy)
- *WOOL CAP, JACKET
- ANAKIT IF REQUIRED

*NOTE: Most deaths caused by hypothermia happen when individuals wearing only light clothing are caught by rain, wind, and freezing temperatures. A life-saving decision may be to take your jacket and wool cap along, even if the weather seems fine at the moment

ADDITIONS TO CONSIDER

- INSECT REPELLANT
- SUNGLASSES
- ELECTROLYTE POWDER
- POISON OAK RELIEF - WASH AND DRIES
- ANAKIT
- NEEDLE AND THREAD
- TOWEL (for after fast)
- A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT
- ART SUPPLIES

CONSTIPATION: Fasting may cause some people to experience constipation. If you are prone to such problems, consider taking precautions before you go and bring with you what you usually take for constipation.

ELECTROLYTE REPLACEMENT: A large percentage of people who experience nausea, headache, and/or stomach troubles during fast can find relief with electrolyte replacements. Electrolyte comes usually in powder form and can be found in camping stores. Use a small amount in your daily water if needed. Those with hypoglycemia should be sure to purchase an electrolyte mix with no sugar.

ANAKIT (*epinephrine*): Anyone who is aware that they have a severe allergic reaction to insect stings (most commonly bees) is required to carry an adequate remedy from their personal doctor at all times. It is now possible to purchase, by prescription, Epi Pen, an epinephrine auto-inject system that is absorbed through the skin without needles. Now that the legendary "Killer Bees" have found their way to the U.S.A., an antidote is a must for those who experience severe reactions to just one sting.

NOTES ON EQUIPMENT

BACKPACK. If you have never worn a backpack before, make sure the one you obtain fits you. They come in all sizes and there are subtle differences between them. Make certain the straps, webbing, frame, fittings, zippers, and pockets are in good repair, and that the pack is large enough to hold your gear. When packing, try to distribute weight evenly throughout the various sections. Get someone to help you adjust the shoulder and waist straps so they are comfortable. It is

a good idea to walk around with your backpack on after you have packed it. Get used to it. Imagine its weight after a mile or two of hiking. Ideal weight is 35 pounds or less.

TARPAULIN/GROUND CLOTH. You will use your tarp as a ground cloth, a sun shield, a primitive tent in the event of rain. Six by nine feet is barely adequate. Nine by ten is adequate. You will want the lightest weight consistent with fabric strength. The wind eats up inadequate tarps. First the grommets tear away; then the fabric itself tears. Make sure the fabric is tough. Canvas is too heavy. Your guides will be pleased to show you a variety of ways in which tarps can be erected in the field, according to the terrain you will live in.

GARBAGE SACKS. The two large plastic sacks can be used during a storm. They provide an emergency poncho when arm and head holes are cut. They can be draped over your pack or stuffed with overflow equipment. A small sack is needed to store all garbage (used T.P., feminine items, etc.) so that it can more easily be brought out to basecamp when you return.

SLEEPING BAG. The relative weight and warmth of your sleeping bag depends on the time of year and the altitude where you will be fasting. In winter, an inadequate sleeping bag can be a serious matter. Flannel bags are worthless in any season but summer -- and they are heavier than down or synthetic fibers. Down bags lose their efficiency when they become wet. Fiberfill or "Holo-fill," though slightly heavier than down, make the best all-around bags.

ROPE. One hundred feet is an overestimation, but it's good to err on the adequate side. Tough, light-weight nylon rope is the best. The rope is used for a variety of purposes, but mainly to fasten your tarp down in high winds or rain.

WATER CONTAINERS. One-gallon plastic milk or juice containers will do, but the bottoms must be fortified with duct tape, for they are easily pierced. Better are the sturdier cooking oil or bleach bottles (well cleaned). You will carry one gallon of water for each day you will be in the threshold. If you are in the desert or in arid mountains (spring, summer or fall) you will need to drink at least three quarts per day. Your guides will make certain you are supplied with any additional water you might need.

BANDANA. This is an essential, multi-purpose item. It can be a pot holder, a sun shield, a sponge, a rag, a Lone Ranger mask against the blowing dust, a constricting band, a compress, a bandage, a handkerchief, a distress flag, a stonepile or solo-place marker, etc.

JOURNAL You keep a journal so that you can recognize your own continued growth, long after your return. The insights that come during your participation are invaluable. A keystone of the human learning process is the ability of the student to *reflect*, to obtain meaningful feedback from past experience.

BOOTS. If they are new, take precautions to break them in. Most kinds of tennis shoes, such as running shoes, are eaten alive in days by limestone and cactus. Boots that cover the ankles offer added protection against rattlesnake bite.

WOOL SWEATER, CAPS, SOCKS, MITTENS, ETC. Wool keeps you warm, even when it is wet, and dries out quickly. Except for certain expensive synthetic fabrics, wool is the best cold weather protection you can wear. Wool socks absorb moisture and offer good protection against foot blisters. In winter cold, snow, sleet, wind, or rain, a wool cap is a must. In summer, a wool cap stuck down into a fold of your daypack will give you emergency protection if you are caught in a storm and the temperature drops.

DRUGS. Drugs are not listed among equipment needs. That is because the vision fast is a warrior's dance of balance and harmony. Drug use causes an imbalance which is not righted through "coping." Come without drugs. The elders of your vision fast community will be depending on you.

If you are currently taking a prescribed drug, check with your doctor concerning its use during a fast and a time of aloneness. You must also keep your guides closely informed regarding this matter. Food can be taken with your pills if needed.

The items mentioned above are merely suggestions. It is quite possible that there should be more items listed. These suggestions offer you a level of survival which is higher than the traditional buffalo robe of the Sioux quester. In the end, it is you who makes the decisions -- and lives with them.

FOOD

For a week in the field, three days of which will be a fast, there are not many meals to think about. Arrangements will be made among the members of your group and with your guides regarding what food items you might need to take.