

Ten Essentials - Plus

This short list of items to be taken on every outing was developed many years ago by The Mountaineers, a hiking club in the Seattle area. Its purpose is to designate a minimum set of things that are essential to survival in the event of a delay or accident in the backcountry. This idea has been adopted by many groups, including the Boy Scouts, although often in an amended form, not by the name, "Ten Essentials", and without acknowledgement to The Mountaineers.

1. Emergency clothing. This is in addition to what a person would expect to wear on the outing. For a day hike, it could be rain gear, a stocking cap, and a wool shirt. On a backpack trip, it could be a pair of long underwear and a down vest or wool sweater.
2. Sunglasses. They must be wrap-around and provide total protection from ultraviolet rays. Reflected light, whether from rock, water, or snow, is a problem when hiking.
3. First aid kit-personal. To include items that each person uses for minor problems, plus any prescription drugs. This kit is to have moleskin or footpads, adhesive bandages such as Band-Aids, insect repellent, sunscreen or sun block, lip balm, and personal medications. Medications may be nothing more than something to take for a headache, or include prescription drugs. A person with a chronic knee/ankle problem is also to carry an elastic bandage or other device for treating it. The Unit is to carry a kit with items for dealing with any major problems.
4. Emergency food. Something to get by on for a day or overnight, should the Unit be delayed. Several high carbohydrate/fat content items, individually wrapped, such as trail bars. Just so that they are extra, not something to eat the first time that you're a little hungry.
5. Flashlight. Small, dependable AA battery (fresh) type.
6. Knife. Small, sharp, good quality. No sheath or survival knives; nothing with a blade longer than two inches. The smallest Swiss Army knife is sufficient.
7. Map(s). To provide current, detailed coverage of the broad locale of the outing. Carry and refer to it as you hike and you should never get lost.
8. Compass. The simplest Silva-type is enough; get the cheapest one at the Scout Shop. All compasses point to magnetic north - everything else is up to the user.
9. Matches. Carry them in a waterproof case. An inexpensive lighter is a good substitute. Water-proof, wind proof matches are a good idea.
10. Fire starter. A small vortex candle or candle stub, several fuel tablets, or made of rolled newspaper dipped in melted wax. Carry in a small plastic bag.

The GLAAC-High Adventure Team recommends that each person also carry these items on each outing.

11. Extra water. A second quart water bottle, full or empty at the start, as conditions require.
12. Ground insulation (in winter). A fanny pad, or 12x18x3/8 inch closed cell insulation pad. This small pad is to keep a person from getting cold when sitting down.
13. Trash bags. Two large, heavy duty ones. Wear as protection against rain or to conserve body heat, just so that the face is not covered.
14. Nylon parachute cord. 50 feet.
15. Police whistle. Plastic; a lightweight signaling device.
16. Emergency blanket. A lightweight sheet of aluminized Mylar (Space Blanket). Use as a blanket; rig as a shelter; use as a signaling device.
17. Small mirror. A lightweight signaling device.

The heaviest item is the bottle of water, at two pounds. The entire set of ten essentials-plus should weigh 5-7 pounds. Put them in a day pack, except for the couple that belong in a pants' pocket. Carry a day pack on every outing. On a backpack trip, put it in your pack. Remove the day pack and carry the ten essential plus in it on every side excursion and summit climb.

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Functional Systems Approach

The above list has evolved over time from a list of individual items to a list of functional systems. For a more detailed description of the systems see *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills*, 8th Edition.

1. Navigation. Always carry a detailed topographic map of the area you are visiting, and place it in a protective case or plastic covering. Always carry a compass. Climbers may also choose to carry other navigational tools such as an altimeter or global positioning system (GPS) receiver; other aids include route markers, route descriptions, and other types of maps or photos.
2. Sun Protection. Carry and use sunglasses, sunscreen for the lips and skin, and clothing for sun protection.
3. Insulation (Extra Clothing). How much extra clothing is necessary for an emergency? The garments used during the active portion of a climb and considered to be the basic climbing outfit include inner and outer socks, boots, underwear, pants, shirt, sweater or fleece jacket, hat, mittens or gloves, and raingear. The term “extra clothing” refers to additional layers that would be needed to survive the long, inactive hours of an unplanned bivouac.
4. Illumination. Even if the climbing party plans to return to their cars before dark, it is essential to carry a headlamp or flashlight, just in case. Batteries and bulbs do not last forever, so carry spares of both.
5. First-Aid Supplies. Carry and know how to use a first-aid kit, but do not let a first-aid kit give you a false sense of security. The best course of action is to always take the steps necessary to avoid injury or sickness in the first place. At a minimum, a first-aid kit should include gauze pads in various sizes, roller gauze, small adhesive bandages, butterfly bandages, triangular bandages, battle dressing (or Carlisle bandage), adhesive tape, scissors, cleansers or soap, latex gloves, and paper and pencil.
6. Fire. Carry the means to start and sustain an emergency fire. Most climbers carry a butane lighter or two, instead of matches in a waterproof container. Either must be absolutely reliable. Fire starters are indispensable for igniting wet wood quickly to make an emergency campfire. Common fire starters include candles, chemical heat tabs, and Canned Heat. On a high-altitude snow or glacier climb where firewood is nonexistent, it is advisable to carry a stove as an additional emergency heat and water source.
7. Repair Kit and Tools. Knives are so useful in first aid, food preparation, repairs, and climbing that every party member needs to carry one. Leashes to prevent loss are common. Other tools (pliers, screwdriver, awl, and scissors) can be part of a knife or a pocket tool, or carried separately—perhaps even as part of a group kit. Other useful repair items are shoelaces, safety pins, needle and thread, wire, duct tape, nylon fabric repair tape, cable ties, plastic buckles, cordage, webbing, and parts for equipment such as tent, stove, crampons, snowshoes, and skis.
8. Nutrition (Extra Food). For shorter trips, a one-day supply of extra food is a reasonable emergency stockpile in case foul weather, faulty navigation, injury, or other reasons delay the planned return. An expedition or long trek may require more. The food should require no cooking, be easily digestible, and store well for long periods. A combination of jerky, nuts, candy, granola, and dried fruit works well. If a stove is carried, cocoa, dried soup, and tea can be added. There are many possibilities.
9. Hydration (Extra Water). Carry extra water and have the skills and tools required for obtaining and purifying additional water. Always carry at least one water bottle or collapsible water sack. Daily water consumption varies greatly. Two quarts (liters) daily is a reasonable minimum; in hot weather or at high altitudes, 6 quarts may not be enough. In dry environments, carry additional water. Plan for enough water to accommodate additional requirements due to heat, cold, altitude, exertion, or emergency.
10. Emergency Shelter. If the climbing party is not carrying a tent, carry some sort of extra shelter from rain and wind, such as a plastic tube tent or a jumbo plastic trash bag. Another possibility is a reflective emergency blanket. It can be used in administering first aid to an injured or hypothermic person, or can double as a means of shelter.

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