

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. Waterproof, 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.

That's The Mountaineers' list. Backpacking, One Step at a Time, Chapter 15, "Essentials" discusses the purpose and use of each and offers recommendations of what to buy.

The LAAC-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. 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 it on every outing. On a backpack trip, lash it to the top of the pack frame. Remove and carry it on every side excursion and summit climb.

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