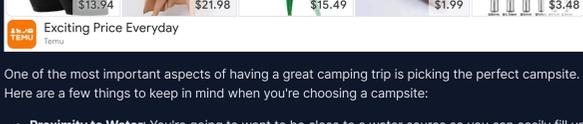
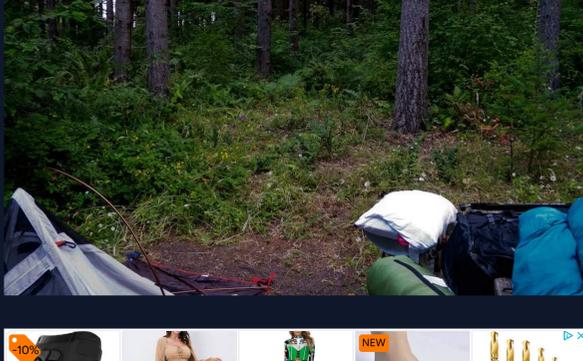


Pro Tips for First-Time Campers

It can be overwhelming for first-time campers to figure out what they need to bring and do to survive in the wilderness for a night or two. Choosing what gear you need, pitching a tent, and even making a fire can be quite daunting!

But don't worry; we've got you covered. Below are some tips for choosing the right campsite, packing a perfect camp kitchen, and more that will hopefully set you up for success on your first camping trip.

1. Pick the perfect campsite



One of the most important aspects of having a great camping trip is picking the perfect campsite. Here are a few things to keep in mind when you're choosing a campsite:

- **Proximity to Water:** You're going to want to be close to a water source so you can easily fill up your water bottles and cook dinner. But you also don't want to be too close to the water as you might have unwanted visitors like mosquitoes and wild animals.
- **Shade:** Make sure to pick a spot that has plenty of trees or other natural shade. The last thing you want is to be stuck in direct sunlight all day long. If there isn't a ton of tree coverage where you're camping, pack some zinc-oxide based sunscreen.
- **Go during the week:** You can save up to 15-20% by reserving a weeknight campsite

Now that you know how to pick the perfect campsite, let's move on to what camping gear you need.

2. Have a good tent



A tent is an essential part of your gear as it provides shelter from the elements. A three-season tent is ideal if you are just starting out camping. They come in many sizes and styles. You can choose a tent that fits your budget, size, and sleeping needs. If you plan to camp with friends or family, consider buying a larger tent to accommodate everyone comfortably.

If you're a beginner, practice putting your tent up and down a few times. Do a practice night in the backyard to see if you've missed anything.

Make sure the tent you buy has a vestibule and is set up correctly so that you don't wake up soaking wet.

Once inside, there are two things you need to consider - light and ventilation. If your tent doesn't have a way to hang a small torch from the roof, then rig one up, or get a lantern or something similar to provide light.

Ventilation is the key to keeping the inside of your tent dry; keep the flaps open as much as possible. Don't bring wet clothes or boots into the main tent if you can avoid it.

3. Get a sleeping bag



A warm sleeping bag is key for a comfortable night's sleep. Be sure to choose a sleeping bag appropriate for the season and temperature range in which you'll be camping.

It's always colder than you think, especially when camping in autumn or spring. Bring a cot, air mattress, or a sleeping pad to elevate you from the floor and isolate your body warmth from the cold ground. Ideally, you will have chosen a flat surface to place your tent on.

If it's especially cold where you're camping and you want your clothes to be warm for the next morning, don't place them inside of your sleeping bag! Instead, place them *between* your mattress and sleeping bag. That way your body doesn't get them wet while you sweat in your sleep during the night.

4. Source LOTS of Firewood

Nothing quite says "camping," like sitting around a campfire at night telling stories and roasting marshmallows. But the biggest mistake most campers (even the experienced ones) make is not gathering enough wood.

The best camping life pro tip is this - once you think you have gathered enough firewood, gather five times more. It's **NEVER** enough wood - especially if you're planning on having a fire all night to keep you warm. By the time the food is cooking, the pile will already be running low, and it will be pitch black out!

Do you want to draw the short stick to go get more firewood? We've all seen what happens in The Blair Witch Project...

For helping start your fire, pack a pencil sharpener. You can use it to make kindling out of any little sticks! Or, save your dryer lint and bring it along. It's highly flammable, and the results are even better if you mix it with vaseline.

If you forget the pencil sharpener or dryer lint, carry a small handheld fan or a long tube. They let you blow air to start the fire without burning off your eyebrows.

From a fire safety aspect, **DO NOT** camp in dry woods or forests. A single spark can cause a big fire in a few minutes. Always have a large bottle of water on hand in case of an emergency, even if you're camping at a location that provides its own water supply.

5. Have an Emergency Plan

Speaking of emergencies - do not leave home without a first aid kit. And I'm not talking about a basic one.

It's imperative to carry a quality first aid kit. It should have a tourniquet, suture stapler, clotting powder, emergency blanket, splint, and a fair supply of gauze and tape.

Doesn't matter if you're going only for the weekend -- 127 Hours showed us how quickly things can go awry when you're by yourself in the wilderness.

Here are a few things you should do:

1. Carry a medication list, including your blood type and allergies, on a laminated card with you all the time.
2. Know how to use whatever you bring.
3. Know where the nearest hospital is and the directions to get there. One slip with a pocket knife could be disastrous if you are hours from an emergency room. Google maps works offline, so [download the maps](#) you need or carry a hiking guide with you.
4. If you use a tourniquet, use a magic marker to write down the time you applied the tourniquet.
5. Always make sure someone who isn't coming with you knows where you are, when you'll be back, and when to call the police if you haven't returned.

Ultimately, it's always better to be safe than sorry.

6. What to wear camping for beginners

Let's talk clothing. First and foremost, leave your Levi's at home. Denim is the worst camping clothing in the history of camping. If it gets wet, it gets heavier and takes forever to dry.

Instead, choose function over fashion. This is the great outdoors after all; opt for durable clothes that can withstand outdoor elements like dirt, rain, and potentially sharp rocks or branches.

Put on some well-worn boots instead of brand-spanking-new ones. If you don't have hiking boots, wear old sneakers. If possible, pack slip-on shoes or sandals for around your camp. Tying your shoes is a major inconvenience when you need to use the restroom at 2AM.

Nothing ruins a camping trip faster than being cold and wet, so bring extra socks and underwear. They're going to get dirty and soaked in sweat or water, and you don't want the discomfort and risk of blisters that come from wet socks or no socks. You can carry them inside a garbage bag so they remain dry, and you can use the bag to clean up after your stay.

I recommend you leave a complete set of clean clothes in the car. That way, you'll have something clean to wear on the way home.

Final thoughts

You will likely have forgotten something important, so save your camping pack list. When you come home, add what you forgot, remove what you brought but didn't need, and save the list for next time.

Make sure you arrive at your location early in the day so you can drive to a local shopping center to buy anything that you have forgotten.

Lastly, *please* clean up after yourself. The wilderness often gets cluttered with plastic rubbish that just looks bad and is also bad for the environment. It takes thousands of years to disintegrate, and often animals either eat the trash left behind or suffocate inside it.

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Prevent yourself from slipping in the snow by putting your socks over your shoes.

Keep matches dry by dipping the tips in wax and scraping it off as you need them.

When camping, measure and package all ingredients for each meal in advance.

When hiking in an area with a high tick prevalence, wear light colored clothing.

Bring dryer lint to use as a fire-starter.

Use trick candles to help start a campfire.

Bring cornstarch to the beach to get wet sand off your feet.

If you're going hiking, download and print (or buy) a topographical map of the area.

Learn and how to use a firearm.

If you get lost somewhere, always retrace your steps instead of going further into the unknown.

Disoriented in an avalanche? Clear away enough snow so you can see which way your zipper hangs.

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