



Scout Skills

Types of Tents

INFORMATION SHEET

Tents are the most expensive part of camping equipment. A good tent is an investment which, with care, lasts many years. There are many different types of tents on the market, each made for a specific purpose. It helps to know what these different types of tents are, so that you can choose the best tent for the situation.

There are usually two main purposes for tents within Scouting; firstly, there is the traditional standing Troop camp which normally uses the large, heavyweight patrol tents which sleep up to six people and, secondly, lightweight one, two or three person tents ideal for smaller camps and expeditions where the tents need to be carried in or on rucksacs.

There are seven main types and shapes of tent:

Patrol tent - This is the tent most commonly used for Scout camps. Made of a heavy canvas material, it is particularly robust and hardwearing. It is a very basic tent with none of the added extras that come with more modern and lightweight tents, and has been made in this style for many years. It does not have a sewn-in groundsheet so a separate one must be used. Patrol tents can sleep up to six people with kit and because of its size, normally requires at least three people to erect it. Technically it could be considered as a ridge tent as it has a horizontal pole going across the top of the tent.



Ridge tent - This tent, as mentioned above, is any tent which has a horizontal pole going across the top. The upright poles that support it may be a single upright pole, or two sloping poles (also known as an 'A' frame). More commonly, the upright at the back is lower than at the entrance making access easier, and yet allowing for movement. Most ridge tents that are sold (with the exception of the patrol tent outlined above) are made of a lightweight nylon material and it is because of their lighter weight that they can be used for backpacking as they take up a very small amount of space when folded. They are often found as one, two or three person tents usually consisting of an outer tent and an inner one, with a sewn-in groundsheet.



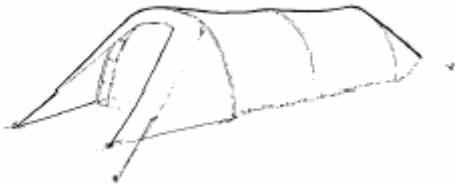
Bell Tent - This has a single upright pole in the centre of the tent, and is then guyed out from it. There are very few lightweight bell tents available, most are made from the same heavy canvas as the patrol tent. The groundsheet is not sewn into this tent. (Many of the ridge tents, have a 'bell end', which means a curved back to the tent, to



allow for the storage of equipment.) Bell tents are used less these days and tend to have been replaced by the dome tent.



Tunnel tent - It is made up of two or more hoops along its length, giving the appearance of a fabric tunnel. These hoops are of equal size, and usually this tent does not have a set front end. This is a lightweight tent with a large working area inside. There are various tunnel tents that will sleep from one to six people, and the outer layer can be of many weights of canvas.



Hoop tent - This is a cross between the tunnel and the ridge tent with a single hoop at the entrance and an upright pole at the far end. Having no ridge pole means that the tent takes up less space, but it is less rigid. The advantage is that these tents can offer less resistance to the wind, and have a better access area to get in and out of. The hoop tent is usually a small tent and is used for lightweight camping and expedition work, and would normally sleep from one to three people.



Dome tent - This tent looks a little like a bubble and its design has only been possible with the introduction of strong flexible materials. It consists of several hoops going across the tent in different directions; this shape means that with no corners, sharp edges or flat surfaces, these dome-shaped designs are better at shedding water and standing up in high winds. These tents are usually used for lightweight camping and walking and are made of lightweight materials rather than a heavy grade canvas.



Frame tent - This tent is considered to be a larger, 'family tent' and, not surprisingly, is used by families for camping holidays. As the name suggests, it is comprised of a basic frame which is built first and then covered with the canvas. They are fairly bulky when packed away, but when erected take on the appearance of a small chalet, with an inner sleeping area that is at the back, a large area in the front for cooking and relaxing, unlike all other tents where this is very minimal. Due to this size and shape, it can often provide a small Patrol with a self-contained unit at camp.





Tricks of the trade

When buying a tent - remember to minus one person from the manufacturer's recommendations. So, a two person tent would be comfortable for one with kit, a three person tent, would be comfortable for two with kit and so on.

Further information

Outdoor equipment suppliers such as Camping and Outdoor Centres will usually help you with any queries that you may have about types of tents, and many of their catalogues have information sections that help to describe the various features and uses for each type of tent.

If you are considering using or buying a tent, speak with Leaders in the Group or District about different types available. They may be able to give you some hints and tips on what they have purchased and what to look for.

TEACH YOURSELF

Tents come in all shapes and sizes for a variety of different purposes and great care needs to be taken in finding the right tent for the right purpose. You will need to have read the Information Sheet about the specific types, if you have not already done so.

Time and equipment

This will depend upon the method chosen but in the case of tents, it's easier to go to them, rather than bringing them to you!

Learning all about it

There is no substitute for actually looking at, and examining different types of tents to understand their advantages and disadvantages. Indeed, sleeping and living in a tent will provide you with first hand knowledge of the tents.

There are several options for finding out about the different types of tent available:

- Spend some time at a camp and identify and examine the variety of tents that are in use.
- Visit a camping exhibition with displays of different types. Examine them, inside and out, and ask questions.
- Speak to the Quartermaster of a Scout Group who has a variety of tents that they can show you and discuss the merits of.
- Obtain camping catalogues which list and describe different tents. Compare the details of each type.

You may like to have some or all of the following questions in the back of your mind when looking at different types of tent:

- Is it easy to put up
 - in calm weather?
 - in wet and windy weather?
- Is it light to carry for backpacking?
- Is it easy to get in and out of?
- Will it withstand a lot of 'wear and tear'?
- Is it easy to get replacement parts?
- Is it appropriate for the purpose or use you have in mind?
- Is it designed to withstand the most severe of weather conditions (if necessary)?
- Has it sufficient space inside?
- How much does it cost?

Can you do it?

Check how you are doing and see how many of the following you can answer:

- Can I list seven main types of tent?
- Can I describe the sort of occasion that they might be used for?
- Can I state the things to consider when buying or selecting a tent?

So you want more?

Visit camps of other Troops within the District. See what tents they are using. Speak with camping and tent suppliers and/or obtain various catalogues to find out

about the current developments and availability of tents.

HOW TO TRAIN OTHERS

This section is designed to give some practical ideas about how you can help other people to find out about types of tents. This might be Leaders or Scouts - either in an informal way on a Troop night or more formally on a skills workshop, training course or something similar.

Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- i. Identify seven main different types of tent;
- ii. Describe the possible uses for each of the above named tents; .
- iii. State the features to look for when selecting a tent.

Time

This will vary depending on whether constructing tents or just looking at some already up, and on the training method and games chosen. However, 30-60 minutes will probably be sufficient to introduce the different types of tents and discuss their uses.

Equipment

Again this will depend upon the method chosen, but it is possible that you will require an example of each tent and current camping equipment catalogues if you are not visiting a camp or exhibition.

Training methods

The most effective way of familiarising participants with the different types of tents available is for them to see the tents for themselves. In an ideal situation, there should be a display of each type of tent for participants to look at and, better still, an

opportunity for them to sleep and live in and to find out first hand their advantages and disadvantages. A camp situation is, therefore, ideal for this, although this is not, of course, always possible.

Here are some alternatives:

Using diagrams of various tents, ask participants, either individually or in pairs, to name them and describe the uses of each.

If it is possible, arrange a visit to a camping exhibition or local camping supplier. If contacted, a camping equipment supplier may be interested in coming along to you and putting up examples of different tents.

Have a go at one or more of the training games outlined below. As there is little factual information to put across, there is no reason why these should not be introduced early on.

Training games

- Using previously pitched (put up) tents, and with participants in small groups, the session leader specifies a type of tent and one person from each group has to run to the appropriate tent. The first person to correctly identify the tent gets a point.
- Devise a wordsearch or anagram type puzzle which includes different types of tents and /or their uses.
- In small groups, give participants a selection of scenarios for which they have to decide what type of tent would be most appropriate.
- Have a selection of different types of tents available, not pitched. Ask participants, in small groups, to erect each of them, discuss their features, advantages and disadvantages, and to take them down again. After all the groups have done this, each group should then give a short report back on what they have found.

Alternatively, the putting up and taking down could be done in groups, but this time against the clock.



- This game requires a bit more planning - take a selection of photographs of different tents, some of which should make it obvious what the tent is, whilst others should be taken from unusual angles and from inside of them! Get Members to guess what type of tent they are.

Checking their progress

Ask participants if they can answer the following questions:

- Can I list seven main types of tent?
- Can I describe the sort of occasion that they might be used for?
- Can I state the sort of things to consider when buying or selecting a tent?

So they want to know more?

Learn how to pitch a variety of tents and in different weathers. (See Tent Pitching in this series).

Learn how to care for and repair tents.

Your notes on this session