

ABOUT BACKPACKING GEAR, ESPECIALLY BOOTS...

Backpacking gear can be expensive. You don't have to spend a fortune or look fashionable to be equipped for our September backpack. You can borrow from family or friends, or buy at Goodwill and other thrift stores. The only item not to borrow is boots (see below). If information on this sheet causes problems, feel free to email us at inquiries@oregonextension.org. Don't worry if you haven't backpacked before—you're not alone. You'll choose from a range of trips (easy/short to difficult/long) and your experienced faculty guide will help make it a smooth and enjoyable experience.

Here are the specialty items you'll need for the backpack:

- 1 warm sleeping bag – down or synthetic (polarguard, etc.) – it should be rated to about 10 degrees, although our nights rarely dip below 15 (call us if this item is a problem)
- 2 or 3 pairs heavy wool socks
- 1 pair rugged shorts
- 1 pair loose-fitting wool or fleece or pile pants (pile is a thick, woolly synthetic you'll find in outdoor stores)
- 1 set wool or polypropylene long underwear
- 1 light wool or fleece or pile sweater/shirt
- 1 heavy wool or fleece or pile sweater/jacket
- 1 warm, light, insulated outer jacket with nylon or Gore-Tex outer shell – like a warm ski jacket, down or polarguard jacket, etc. – note: a heavy, bulky wool or fleece or pile jacket or sweater along with a good wind-breaker for the outer layer will substitute
- 1 pair warm wool or fleece or pile gloves or mittens (insulated ski gloves are ok)
- 1 wool or fleece or pile knit hat that can pull down over your ears
- 1 waterproof rain jacket as light-weight as possible but not easily ripped if you wear it while walking
- 1 one quart wide-mouth water bottle
- 1 headlamp or flashlight (headlamp preferable)

The reason for the wool/fleece/pile items is that these insulate the body even when wet. Wetness is common during backpacks at high altitude, due to bad weather (rain and snow) or perspiration. Cotton clothing is dangerous when wet. It wicks heat away from your body. Wool has been the best insulator for many years. When wet, it keeps you warm. Wool versions of most of the items can be purchased cheaply at thrift stores. Synthetics (polarguard, fleece, pile, polypropylene) are just as good, and have been replacing wool. Polypropylene underwear is particularly excellent—it's the one non-wool item you might want to invest in. Silk long underwear is warm and comfortable but expensive. A good outdoor store will have samples of these items and someone to talk with you about their varying uses.

Good boots are probably the most important backpacking item. If you spend a little extra money on them, they'll last you a long time. We suggest you get them at a mountain/outdoor store where salespeople know proper fit and can advise you on breaking in and waterproofing. We suggest a medium-weight hiking boot with ankle support. (Heavy, stiff mountaineering boots are not necessary.) All-leather or combination leather/fabric will serve fine; all-fabric uppers are not advisable. We suggest semi-flexible soles with lugs (not smooth-soled). We'll be in rough country, on sharp rocks and boulders as well as trails, and maybe in rain and snow. When you try on the boots, wear the sock combination you'll wear in the mountains. Many backpackers wear two pairs of socks: a light inner pair and a heavy outer pair.

Blisters from new (not broken in) or ill-fitting or junky boots are the number one injury on our backpacks. They make walking painful, and can force the group to shorten its trip. We do an optional climb of a 9,000' peak, Mt. McLoughlin, a week or two before the backpack, and sometimes students decide to break in their boots on that climb. Often this leaves them with painful oozing blisters on their feet, so then they begin the backpack semi-crippled. Make sure your feet are familiar with your boots before you get here—or begin breaking them in the day you arrive.

If you have a backpack, sleeping pad, tent, stove, cookware, or other camping gear, feel free to bring it. It may come in handy. But it's not necessary. We'll provide these items.

A good online source for everything on this list is www.sierratradingpost.com.