

Setting Up Your Campsite During Rain

For the trip to camp **raingear should be in your daypack or a bag you keep with you**. That way you can put it on immediately if you have to get out of the bus/car into rainy weather. (You might otherwise be soaked by the time you can get access to your main luggage.)

Take care of people first. Don't let hair and clothes get wet. Remind girls (and leaders too) to wear their raingear during rain, both tops and bottoms, and to have their head covered too. When you are wet, you can become chilled enough to cause hypothermia, even on a warm summer day. Your raincoat is doing a poor job if the hood is hanging down your back collecting water and the zipper is wide open. Tuck in, zip up, keep your inside layer of clothing dry! Wear appropriate footwear to keep your socks dry and your feet warm. Change wet clothing as soon as possible. Put on warmer things before you feel chilled. You should have suitable clothing with you; take the time to change into it. After all, that's why you have them! It is far easier to stay warm and dry in the first place, than to try to get dried off and warmed up after you get cold and wet. Things just do not dry while it is still raining! It may be a long time before the sun is back out and you can get dried up and you won't be able to "go in" to dry off.

Protect/shelter your personal and group equipment from the rain. Pack your bedroll and bags so that they are as waterproof as possible. Know where your groundsheets and tarps are packed, (easily accessible), so that you can cover your belongings quickly if they have to sit out in rain before or while you set up. When you cover gear it works well to cover each large piece or a few items individually. Wrap the groundsheets around and tuck them under, sort of like you are wrapping a parcel or putting the item into a bag. If you can get large enough plastic bags (the plastic ones for yard waste should do), just slip each pack, duffel or bedroll into one, twist it shut and tuck the end underneath, (works really well, doesn't gather rain inside and stays put in wind). These bags aren't good for carrying the gear or during transportation as they rip easily, but are great once you have the gear in one place. Spreading a large tarp on the ground and another over, and placing everything for a whole group on it is not so good. It can gather a lot of rain before you can get the top on, the bottom tarp extends out and gathers rain around the edges and then the water runs under everything and the gear sits in puddles. The wind lifts the top tarps very easily. Also, when a lot of people have their gear all together it needs to be opened frequently to add or get things, which allows a lot of rain to get inside.

Set up one piece of equipment at a time as quickly as possible. When you open an equipment box/bag, etc. to get the supplies you need, close it up again quickly to prevent rain from getting into it. Try to get a couple of people to hold up a tarp over your equipment box while it is open. It will be much easier if more than one person, preferably everyone, knows where all your group supplies are packed. Put away tools, empty bags, spare parts and supplies you are done with as you work.

If it is raining, it is a good idea to set up the dining shelter first. This will give some immediate shelter for yourselves, the personal gear and the rest of the group equipment while you set up the remainder of the site. Take the time to do a thorough job, ensuring that sufficient guylines are in place and the structure is secure before you continue with the next jobs. A gust of strong wind or an accumulation of water on the roof can suddenly bring down a tent or shelter, which has not been completely secured. If your shelter falls, at minimum you will have the extra work of setting it up again, but worse, someone could be injured or the shelter could be damaged.

To put up a tent in the rain, get everything ready and organise your group before you start. Open up the tent inside a shelter if possible. Have the mallet and pegs handy, untangle the guylines, assemble the poles and decide what part of the job each person will be doing. Get part of the group to spread out and hold up a large tarp or the tent fly over the place where you will pitch the tent. When the fly is opened up be sure to spread it out with the outside facing upwards so that the inside stays as dry as possible. The rest of the group then unfolds and puts up the tent under this canopy. This will help keep the inside of the tent dry. If it is windy, peg down one or more corners of the tent to keep it in place while you insert the poles and raise it. If you are putting a groundsheet/tarp under your tent, try sliding it under after you have the tent standing and covered by the fly. This way you won't have a puddle already gathered on it before you put the tent down on it. Make sure the tarp does not extend beyond the edges of the tent, (not even for a few minutes if it is raining). Rain can gather on it very quickly and make puddles, which leak up through the floor of the tent. After you have the tent up and before you put personal gear inside use a towel to wipe up any water on the tent floor. (You might want to add a cleaning towel or clothe to your group gear. An absorbent sponge, shammy or a couple of J-clothes will do, just wring it out as often as needed.) Use dry groundsheets/tarps to spread on the tent floor, not the ones that were covering your gear in the rain. If the tarps and gear bags are wet, wipe them also with towels. (Do not try to wipe rainwater or condensation from the walls and ceilings of the tent or fly, just do the floor). Take care not to bring a lot of rain into the tent when going in and out and carrying in the gear. Keep the doors zipped while it is raining. Leave some openings, (in places where rain won't drip in), for ventilation. If your tent is designed for it, open up some ventilation at both the top and bottom, which provides the best air circulation for comfort in wet conditions (and other conditions too too).

If you have to pack up during rain try to do things in the opposite order of set up. Keep raingear unpacked and wear it while working in the rain! Start by having each person waterproof and pack her own belongings. Do this inside the tents. Remove personal luggage and bedrolls from the tents; store in dining shelter temporarily or outside wrapped in tarps or bags.

Sweep out the tents and then take them down one at a time. Have some people hold the fly up over the tent while the tent is folded up to prevent it from getting any wetter. Shake off as much water as possible from the fly and then roll or stuff the tent into the bags. Pack pegs and poles into their separate bags before putting them in with the tent to prevent mud or rust from getting onto the tent and fly fabric. Shake off, roll or fold and pack up any tarps that were used with the tents.

Take down and pack up any gadgets, clotheslines, etc. and pack all other supplies and group equipment into the boxes or bags in which they were brought to camp. Empty dining shelter, fold down and remove chairs and tables. Cover all equipment, tent bags, and other equipment with tarps or place in plastic bags. Take down shelter last, shake off as much water as possible and pack it into its bag or container. Check to ensure that everything has been picked up and is packed inside the bags, boxes and luggage for transport.

Unpack and dry out everything at the earliest opportunity! Tents and other equipment will be ruined if left packed wet. **Ensure all gear is totally dry before storing it.**

Agnes
Camping Trainer,
Ottawa Area Girl Guides