

Campsite Selection

Introduction

Choices may be limited since Cub Scout camping will be taking place at council-approved sites like council camps, local parks, or campgrounds. But no matter where you go to camp, the pack leaders need to consider some things before selecting that perfect site.

Finding a suitable campsite is important to the success of an overnight outing. The Pack Overnighter Site Approval Form (Appendix A) spells out clearly the camp standards and facility specifications. Check with your local council to obtain a list of properties that have been inspected and approved using this form. If you find a location not on the list, contact your council to see if you can get it approved.



Campsite Selection Considerations

There are several considerations to keep in mind when laying out your campsite for a pack event.

Review each of the following:

Location

A campsite facing the south or southeast will get more sunlight and generally will be drier than one on the north side of a hill or in the shade of mountains or cliffs.

Cold, damp air tends to settle, causing the bottoms of valleys to be cooler and moister than locations a little higher. On the other hand, hilltops and sharp ridges can be very windy and should be avoided in lightning-prone areas.

Size and shape

A good campsite has plenty of space for your tents and enough room to conduct your activities. It should be useable as it is, so you won't need to do any digging or major rock removal to reshape the area. The less rearranging you do, the easier it will be to leave the site exactly as you found it.



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Protection

Consider the direction of the wind and the direction from which a storm will approach. Is your campsite in the open or is it protected by a hill or a stand of trees? Is there a solitary tree nearby that may attract lightning? Don't camp under dead trees or trees with dead branches that may come down in a storm or light wind. The best campsites are found near small, forested ridges and hills.

Insects and animals

All insects and animals have their favorite habitats. The best way to avoid mosquitoes and biting flies is to camp away from marshes, bogs, and pools of stagnant water. Breezes also discourage insects, so you might look for an elevated, open campsite. Don't forget to check around for beehives, hornet nests, and ant mounds. Their inhabitants usually won't bother you as long as you leave them alone, but give them plenty of room. The same goes for most animals.

Ground cover

Any vegetation covering a campsite will receive a lot of wear and tear. Tents will smother it, sleepers will pack it down, and walkers will bruise it with the soles of their shoes. Some ground cover is tough enough to absorb the abuse, but much of it is not. Whenever you can, make your camp on naturally bare earth, gravelly soil, sand, or on ground covered with pine needles or leaves.



Drainage

While you will want a campsite that is relatively flat, it should slope enough to allow rainwater to run off. However, you don't want to be in the path of natural drainage. Check uphill from where you plan to set up your tent to ensure water won't run through your site. **Never camp in a streambed!** Also, you want to avoid depressions in the ground, as even shallow ones can collect water in a storm.

Privacy

One of the pleasures of camping is being away from crowds and the fast pace of city life. Select campsites away from the sight and sound of trails and other campsites. That way you'll have your own privacy while you respect the privacy—and the right to peace and quiet—of other campers.



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Beauty

The beauty of a campsite often is what first attracts visitors to it. Being able to look out from a tent and see towering mountains, glistening lakes, or miles of canyon land or rolling prairie is part of what camping is all about. Find a campsite that gives you spectacular scenery, but use it only if it is appropriate for every other reason, too.

Remember always to leave your campsite better than you found it.



Tread Lightly!

You can do a lot to protect the wilderness. Try to leave no trace of your visit. Leave no marks along the trail, keep your campsite clean and tidy, and leave it cleaner than you found it.



You will preserve a true wilderness character for you and others to enjoy in the future. Be gentle on Mother Nature. Don't harm plants or animals, including insects. **Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, and kill nothing but time.** This philosophy is as appropriate in a county park as anywhere else.

Summary

There are so many things that come together to help to make a pack campout a memorable event for Cub Scouts. This includes selecting a campsite that provides a comfortable location for gathering to eat and enjoy a campfire.

