

Campcraft Basics for Hikers

Ridgeline Athletics · Digital Guide

Discover fundamental skills for setting up camp efficiently. Whether you're a seasoned hiker or just starting out, having solid campcraft skills can make your outdoor adventures more enjoyable. This guide will walk you through some essential techniques to help you create a comfortable and efficient campsite.

Choosing the Right Campsite

When selecting a campsite, look for flat, level ground to ensure a comfortable sleep. Avoid areas prone to flooding or with loose rocks and debris that could disturb your rest.

Consider the proximity to water sources, but avoid setting up too close to help maintain cleanliness and to reduce the chance of flooding if it rains.

Be mindful of environmental impact. Choose established campsites when possible and adhere to Leave No Trace principles to preserve the natural beauty of the area.

Setting Up Your Tent

Start by clearing the area of sharp objects and debris that could damage your tent. A ground tarp can offer additional protection.

Ensure your tent is oriented correctly to provide adequate ventilation and to minimize exposure to wind. This will help maintain a comfortable temperature inside.

Secure your tent with stakes and guylines to keep it stable, especially in windy conditions. Proper tensioning will improve durability and comfort.

Organizing Your Camp Kitchen

Designate a safe area for cooking, away from your sleeping area and any flammable materials. This reduces the risk of accidents and keeps food smells away from your sleeping space.

Store food in bear-proof containers or hang it from a tree if necessary. This is crucial in areas with wildlife to help avoid unwanted encounters.

Keep your cooking gear organized to save time and effort. A simple system can make meal prep more efficient and enjoyable.

Building a Campfire Safely

Check local regulations before starting a campfire, as restrictions may apply. Always prioritize safety and environmental considerations.

Use existing fire rings whenever possible. Gather wood from the ground instead of cutting living trees, and keep the fire small and manageable.

Have a means of extinguishing the fire readily available, such as water or a shovel, and ensure the fire is completely out before leaving the area.

Maintaining Camp Hygiene

Set up a designated area for washing and personal hygiene, away from water sources to help maintain cleanliness.

Use biodegradable soap and a small basin for washing dishes and personal items. Dispose of wastewater responsibly by dispersing it over a wide area.

Keep hand sanitizer readily available, especially before meals and after using the bathroom, to maintain cleanliness and health.

Storing Gear Efficiently

Organize your gear into categories such as sleeping, cooking, and clothing to make finding items easier and to keep your camp tidy.

Store gear in waterproof bags or containers to protect it from unexpected weather changes.

Be mindful of weight distribution when packing up to ensure a balanced load for your hike back.

Respecting Wildlife and Nature

Observe wildlife from a distance and avoid feeding them. Human food can harm animals and disrupt their natural behaviors.

Stick to marked trails to minimize your impact on the environment and to protect fragile ecosystems.

Leave your campsite cleaner than you found it by packing out all trash, including food scraps and biodegradable waste.

Effective Use of Lighting

Ensure you have adequate lighting for your campsite. Headlamps are a versatile choice, freeing up your hands for other tasks.

Use lanterns to illuminate common areas like your kitchen or gathering spots. This helps reduce the risk of accidents and makes camp life more comfortable.

Conserve battery power by using lighting only when necessary and carrying spare batteries to avoid being caught in the dark.

Weather Preparedness

Check the weather forecast before your trip and pack accordingly. Carry rain gear and warm clothing layers to adapt to changes in weather.

Set up tarps or windbreaks to protect your campsite from harsh weather conditions. This can make a significant difference in comfort and safety.

Monitor weather conditions during your stay and have a plan for sheltering in place or safely packing up if adverse weather arises.

Mastering these campcraft basics can enhance your hiking experience by making your time in the great outdoors more enjoyable and sustainable. With practice, these skills will become second nature, allowing you to focus more on the beauty and adventure of your surroundings. Remember, preparation and respect for nature are key to a successful camping trip.

Before you start

This guide is general training and performance guidance for healthy adults. It is not medical advice and does not diagnose, treat or rehabilitate any injury, pain or condition. Do not use it if you are training through pain, are post-surgical, are pregnant or postpartum, or are managing a cardiac or blood-pressure condition — see a qualified coach, physiotherapist or physician first. Effort should be hard, not painful; stop if a movement hurts.

This guide is for general educational purposes only and is not medical, health, or professional advice. Consult a qualified professional for guidance specific to you.