

Hill walking Stages 3 & 4



Knowledge:

- 1) I know how to pack a rucksack for weekend hikes
- 5) I know what patrol (group) equipment to bring and why

This presumes we know what type of hiking we are packing for and what we are packing.

In explorers we hike

LOW LEVEL that means less than 500 meters above sea level

'SUMMER' weather which basically means we don't venture out in snow or ice and in fact we avoid howling gales and any expected really bad rainfall (see section 6)

Personal Equipment

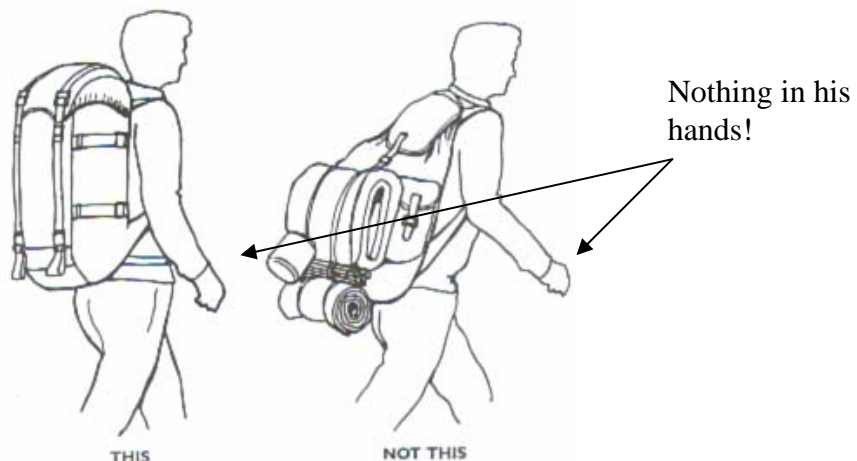
Day Rations (see section 3)
Whistle
Boots
Socks
Trousers
Shirt
Sweater
Raincoat
First Aid Kit
Overtrousers
Rucksack

Group Equipment

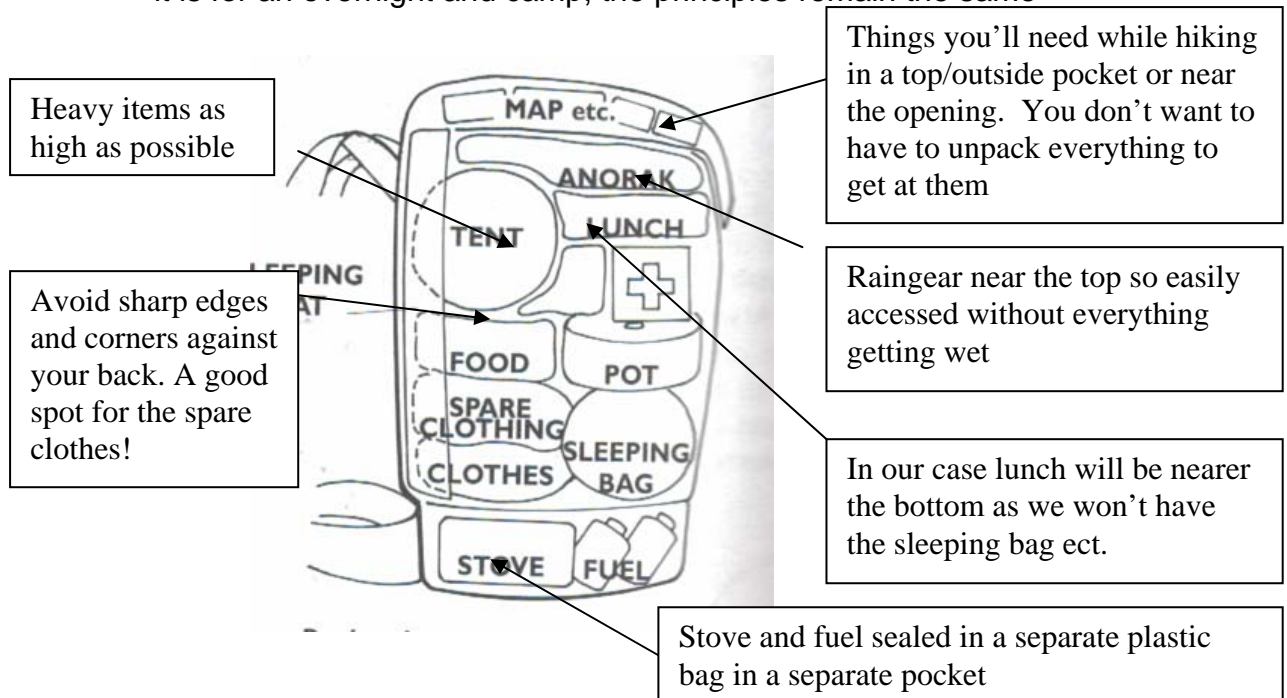
Map (1 for 2 people)
Compass (1 for 2 people)
Watch (1 for 2 people)

How to pack it?

- We must not have a bag that is heavier than a third of our body weight
- Everything should be inside the bag not hanging off the back or sides of it
- The load should be carried high and close to the back., its simply more comfortable and easier to walk this way
- Straps should be adjusted and tightened to bring the weight as high as possible and use a hip belt if you have one to spread the weight between hips and shoulders
- Weight should be distributed evenly from one side of the bag to the other



The following is a diagram of where things should be packed although it is for an overnight and camp, the principles remain the same



2) Know why you bring certain clothing on hikes

You basically need **three layers** of clothing

Underlayer consisting of a light t-shirt or dryflow top +/- long-johns

Mid-layer consisting of a sweater / fleece and trousers

Outerlayer – raingear tops and bottoms

Don't forget the hat, gloves, scarf, sunhat, sunglasses, suncream

This allows you to adjust what you are wearing as the weather dictates; so for example if it was warm but raining you can wear your baselayer and your raincoat; if it's very cold you wear all three layers.

It is worthwhile having two thinner mid-layer sweaters/fleeces rather than one thick one as this gives you more flexibility.

We don't wear **cotton** – the sweat we produce is held close to our skin and causes us to get cold; this is especially disastrous if our underlayer t-shirt just happens to be cotton – I've learnt this one from bitter experience.

We don't wear **jeans** or indeed any clothing which takes a long time to dry when wet – apart from the discomfort, the weight of the water is difficult to walk with.

Finally a note on socks – not the ones you wear to school; we're talking about the lovely thick cushioned hiking ones which you will grow to love and never want to hike without once you've tried walking with a pair. If you don't have a pair try two pairs of the thickest you have (footballing kit usually does the job). Beware of your socks being too tight, this can cut off your blood supply and causes all sort of discomfort.

3) Know why you bring certain food and drinks on hikes

Hydration

To remain healthy the average person needs 30mls of water per kilogram of body weight per day – about 2 litres. But on a hot day while you are hiking you could need upto three times this amount to prevent yourself becoming dehydrated (you'll feel very very sick) Remember coke and other minerals will all make your kidneys work faster and also take water from the body to dilute the highly concentrated sugars in them resulting in dehydration which is why we don't allow you fizzy drinks on hikes and Coke is the worst for this.

Plain water is absorbed faster than orange squash, but some people don't like plain water so squash is a lesser evil; isotonic drinks have salts and sugars in them to aid their absorption by the body but are expensive. Camelbags and platapus bags are a great way of keeping drinks while on the move.

Warm drinks such as tea, coffee, hot chocolate, soup, squash are comforting great on a hot day – personally a flask with hotwater and soup, hot chocolate, coffee sachets +/- tea bags gives me the choice throughout the day.

Food

Food is fuel and when you are hiking you use a lot of fuel

The first rule is to ensure you have enough fuel onboard before you start hiking – that means having a good breakfast at least an hour before you leave and we're not talking a small bowl of cocopops here.

Then throughout the day we want to refuel regularly (a dentists nightmare because we're talking about snaking often). We want foods which are high in carbohydrates and light to carry such as sandwiches, cereal bars or flapjacks, fruit cake, fruit or dried fruit especially bananas, and nuts.

You would need about 2 sandwiches, a cereal bar, two pieces of fruit and some raisins or nuts to get you through a full day hike.

Emergency Rations

What happens if the fog comes down and you have to shelter for the night, someone in the group has an injury, you miss the bus, or someone simply needs gets cold and tired and needs an energy boost. This is where our emergency rations come in – a couple of mars bars, a banana and some chocolate, some glucose sweets: whatever you like but it must be put into a separate container or plastic bag not to be touched unless in the emergency situation *(now I know we allow you to eat it when we're safely on the way home but the Discoverys and Rovers would be discouraged from this practise so they always have something tucked into the bottom of their rucksack – although obviously not the banana!)*

4) Know how to care for all my personnel equipment

Basically you need to clean and dry everything when you get home and store it (preferably together) somewhere dry such as the shed, garage, attic or under the stairs – don't leave it in the car as that gets hot and cold and damp. And watch where you store your compass if you have one.

6) I know where to get weather forecasts

T.V. after the 9pm news on RTE; radio; newspapers; recorded weather forecasts you can get over the telephone but by far the handyist nowadays is the internet. Sites such as *met.ie* and *wunderground.com* have revolutionised when and how we get our weather forecast; with these sites you can get a reasonably accurate forecast 5 days in advance which is a blessing when your meeting is on Wednesday and you hike on Sunday.

7) I know the potential dangers of weather on hikes

There are whole books written on weather and hiking. Weather is a constant theme of conversation when hiking and walking – the reason is simple; the weather can seriously affect your enjoyment or otherwise of an activity and being prepared for the wrong sort of weather can prove disastrous.

Cold can make you miserable if improperly prepared and equipped (*although we all like an odd snow hike or two*) can lead to hypothermia with dire consequences.

Wind – walking into the wind will be far harder, slower and tiring than it blowing behind you helping you along; if someone gets exhausted they can end up seriously ill and at the least the group will have to stop and take shelter long enough for them to recover which you may not be prepared for. Perhaps doing a linear route in reverse so the wind is behind you is an option? Too harsh a wind becomes especially dangerous along certain routes and the wrong forecast would cause you to change your route or abandon it altogether. Wind direction can also determine the warmth or dampness of the day. And you always have the “Wind Chill Factor”, where circulating winds wick away the warm air around your body and make you feel colder. If you get cold you’ll feel miserable but you could get hyperthermia.

Rain – As we go up the frequency and intensity of the rainfall goes up with us. This is simple – if you get wet then you get cold, if you get cold you will be miserable but you could also get hyperthermia, then you get sick then you could die.

Heat and Sun – We all like to see the sun but it can be just as dangerous as the wet and cold. **Dehydration** we covered in the food section but **loss of salt** can lead to cramps and feeling ill also. Normally we take in more salt than our bodies need but for every litre of fluid lost from the body through sweating we also lose 2grams of salt so prolonged sweating can result in salt deficiencies. We don’t crave salt when we need it so we have no way of knowing that someone is lacking salt until they start showing the signs of heat exhaustion. **Sunburn** can be avoided by slipping on a t-shirt, slapping on some sunscreen and slapping on a hat as well as avoiding hiking in the middle of the day. The effects of **glare on the eyes** and prolonged squinting to stop the sun shining into our eyes are headaches and eye strain – time for the sunglasses,

At the far end of the scale you could suffer from heat syncope – tiredness, fainting and a feeling of giddiness. Heat exhaustion – lacking of water and/or salt and finally heat stroke (hyperthermia) when the body’s way of coping with the heat fails and can result in death.

Sections 8 – 10 First Aid Covered Separately

11) I know the limitations if my patrol

There is nothing that will get a group into more trouble and danger than not knowing what the weakest of the patrol is capable of and planning to work to that lowest denominator. This is why we have built up our distances over a number of months and now know who to watch out for; we've also got a good idea of our pace allowing us to shorten the window between our hike ending and when the bus is due. People who are less physically fit, tire easily and this can result in exhaustion. Other physical differences including whether you are a girl or a boy play a part in determining what strengths and weaknesses exist in your patrol. Morale – self-belief or the belief of the group can also play a huge role in performance and cannot be underestimated. Our rule of thumb is that the hike leader at the front should always be able to see or be in communication with the last person (which is always a leader) and we put our weaker walkers in the middle where morale is highest and they can be swept along with the gang.

12) I know the international Distress Signal

The recognised mountain distress signals are based on groups of three (six in the UK). A distress signal can be 3 fires or piles of rocks in a triangle, three blasts on a whistle, or three flashes of a light, in succession followed by a one minute pause and repeated until a response is received. Three blasts or flashes is the appropriate response.

To communicate with a helicopter in sight, raise both arms (forming the letter Y) to indicate "Yes" or "I need help" and stretch one arm up and one down (imitating the letter N) for "No" or "I do not need help".

13) Leave no trace principles Covered Separately

Skills

1) I can use a compass

2) I can use a map

3) I can complete a route card we are not using formal route cards as so often people get them wrong or can't read them – instead we photocopy the map and plan according measuring our distances and timing ect. if we do this well it will more than suffice especially in this digital age. This is in accordance with the advice received from the registered Mountain Leader attached to our group.

Responsibility

I can be responsible for myself and my patrol when hiking

To the level which my leaders will allow me to take on that responsibility and whilst in their care