

# Gear maintenance & Care

*Keep Your Camping Gear Working (and Lasting) for Years*

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You just spent money on camping gear. Now let's make sure it lasts.

Most gear problems occur due to poor maintenance, not poor quality. A little care after each trip can add years to the life of your equipment and save you from expensive replacements.

Below, we will cover the basics: how to clean, store, and maintain your core camping gear so it's always ready whenever you are.

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# TENT CARE

Your tent is one of your biggest investments. Take care of it, and it'll take care of you.

## *After Every Trip*

### **1. Shake Out Debris**

- Turn your tent inside out and shake out dirt, leaves, and pine needles
- Brush off the tent stakes and poles

### **2. Spot Clean Stains**

- Use a damp sponge or cloth with lukewarm water
- For stubborn spots, use mild soap (not detergent)
- Avoid harsh chemicals that can damage waterproof coatings

### **3. Dry Completely Before Storing**

- Set up your tent at home if you packed it wet
- Let it air out for at least a few hours, preferably overnight
- Moisture = mildew = ruined tent

### **Deep Cleaning (Once or Twice a Season)**

- Fill a tub with cool water and mild soap
- Gently hand-wash the tent body and rainfly
- Rinse thoroughly to remove all soap
- Hang to dry completely in shade (not direct sunlight)

**Never put your tent in a washing machine or dryer.** The agitator and heat can damage fabric and coatings.

## **Storage**

**The #1 Tent Storage Mistake:** Keeping it compressed in its stuff sack.

### **The Right Way:**

- Store your tent loosely in a large breathable bag (a mesh laundry bag works great)
- Or hang it in a closet
- Keep it in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight

**Why?** Long-term compression breaks down fabric and coatings. Loose storage extends tent life.

## **Maintaining Waterproofing**

Over time, the waterproof coating on your tent wears down. Here's how to restore it:

- Check for water beading: spray your tent with water. If it soaks in instead of beading up, it's time to re-waterproof.
- Use a tent-specific waterproofing spray (like Nikwax or Gear Aid)
- Apply to the rainfly and the tent floor, following product instructions
- Let dry completely before storing

## **Repairing Small Tears**

- Use tent repair tape for small holes or tears
- Apply to both sides of the fabric for a strong hold
- Keep a patch kit in your gear bin for quick fixes on trips

# SLEEPING BAG CARE

Your sleeping bag keeps you warm. Don't ruin it with bad storage.

## *After Every Trip*

### 1. Air It Out

- Unzip your sleeping bag completely
- Hang it or lay it flat for 24 hours
- This releases moisture and odors

### 2. Spot Clean if Needed

- Use a damp cloth with mild soap on dirty spots
- Focus on the hood and collar, where oils from skin and hair accumulate

## *Washing Your Sleeping Bag*

**How Often:** Only when actually dirty (not after every trip). Washing too often wears down insulation.

### **How to Wash:**

- Use a front-loading washing machine (top loaders can damage baffles)
- Use a gentle cycle with cool or warm water
- Use a sleeping bag-specific detergent (regular detergent damages insulation)
- Run an extra rinse cycle to remove all soap

### **Drying:**

- Use the lowest heat setting in a large dryer
- Add 2 to 3 clean tennis balls to break up clumps and restore loft
- Check every 30 minutes and fluff by hand

- Continue until completely dry (can take 2 to 3 hours)
- Let it air out overnight before storing

**Never dry-clean a sleeping bag unless the manufacturer specifically says to.**

## ***Storage***

**The #1 Sleeping Bag Storage Mistake:** Keeping it compressed in its stuff sack.

### **The Right Way:**

- Hang it in a closet
- Or store it loosely in a large breathable bag
- Never store compressed

**Why?** Compression kills loft (the fluffy insulation that keeps you warm). Loose storage maintains warmth for years.

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# SLEEPING PAD CARE

## After Every Trip

- Wipe down with a damp cloth to remove dirt
- Let it air out before rolling or folding

## Storage

- Foam pads: roll or lay flat, doesn't matter
- Inflatable pads: store partially inflated (not fully inflated, not completely deflated)
- Check for leaks periodically and patch immediately

## Repairing Leaks

- Most pads come with a patch kit
  - Clean and dry the area around the leak
  - Apply the patch according to the kit instructions
  - Let it cure for 24 hours before using
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# CAMP STOVE MAINTENANCE

A well-maintained stove is a reliable stove.

## After Every Trip

- Wipe down surfaces to remove grease and food residue
- Check fuel connections for leaks (smell for gas)
- Clean burner holes with a small wire or needle if clogged

## Storage

- Store with fuel disconnected
  - Keep in a dry place
  - Check O-rings and gaskets periodically for wear
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## COOLER CARE

A clean cooler doesn't smell. A dirty cooler... does.

### After Every Trip

- Empty all contents and ice
- Wash with warm water and baking soda (or mild soap)
- Scrub corners and crevices where mold grows
- Rinse thoroughly and dry completely
- Leave the lid cracked open during storage to prevent mildew

**Pro Tip:** Wipe down your cooler with white vinegar to eliminate stubborn odors.

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# COOKWARE & UTENSILS

## After Every Trip

- Wash all cookware with soap and water
- Dry completely before storing
- Store nested to save space

## Cast Iron Care (If You Use It)

- Wash with hot water (no soap)
  - Dry immediately
  - Apply a thin layer of cooking oil before storing
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# RAIN GEAR & CLOTHING

## After Every Trip

- Hang wet rain gear to dry completely
- Spot clean with a damp cloth if dirty

## Washing

- Turn inside out
- Use a gentle cycle with cool water
- Use technical fabric detergent (like Nikwax Tech Wash)
- Tumble dry on low heat to reactivate DWR (water repellent coating)

## Restoring Water Repellency

If water stops beading up on your rain jacket:

- Wash it first (dirt reduces water repellency)
  - Apply DWR spray or wash in treatment (like Nikwax TX Direct)
  - Tumble dry on low to activate
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# HEADLAMPS & LIGHTS

## After Every Trip

- Remove batteries if storing for more than a month (prevents corrosion)
- Wipe down with a dry cloth
- Check for water damage if used in the rain

## Storage

- Keep extra batteries in your gear bin
  - Test lights before each trip
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# BACKPACKS & GEAR BAGS

## After Every Trip

- Shake out crumbs and dirt
- Vacuum pockets and compartments
- Spot clean stains with mild soap and water
- Let dry completely before storing

## Deep Cleaning

- Hand wash in a tub with mild soap
  - Or use a front-loading washing machine on a gentle cycle
  - Air dry (never put in dryer)
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# COMMON GEAR MAINTENANCE MISTAKES

## **Mistake 1: Storing Gear Dirty**

- Dirt and moisture cause mildew, odors, and damage
- Always clean and dry gear before storing

## **Mistake 2: Keeping Tents and Sleeping Bags Compressed**

- Long-term compression ruins fabric, coatings, and insulation
- Store loosely

## **Mistake 3: Using Harsh Chemicals**

- Household cleaners damage technical fabrics and coatings
- Use gear-specific products or mild soap

## **Mistake 4: Storing Gear in Hot or Humid Places**

- Garages and attics have extreme temperatures
- Store in a cool, dry place

## **Mistake 5: Ignoring Small Problems**

- A small tear becomes a big tear
- A dirty stove burner stops working
- Fix issues immediately

# GEAR MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

## After Every Trip:

- Shake out and spot clean the tent
- Air out the sleeping bag
- Wipe down the sleeping pad
- Clean the cooler and dry it completely
- Wash cookware
- Check the stove for clogs or leaks
- Hang rain gear to dry

## Before Storing:

- Dry all gear completely
- Store the tent and sleeping bag loosely
- Remove batteries from lights
- Leave the cooler lid cracked open

## Once a Season:

- Deep clean tent
- Wash sleeping bag (if needed)
- Check the tent waterproofing
- Inspect all gear for damage
- Restock the first aid kit

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Good gear isn't cheap. But with a little care, it'll last for years.

The 20 minutes you spend cleaning and storing your gear after a trip will save you hundreds of dollars in replacements and repairs down the road.

Take care of your gear, and it'll take care of you.

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