**Many Great Tips for Backpacking**

* Create an insulating rubber base for the fuel canisters by cutting out a circular plug--a little larger than the base of your fuel canister--from an old (computer) mouse pad. This base will keep your fuel canister off of the cold ground and increase efficiency.
* Use an old (or new) MSR aluminum windscreen (you know, the ones we used when Whisperlites used to be popular) to wrap around the fuel canister to trap stove heat and increase performance. This works best if you are using the small canisters (like the Coleman 3.5 oz, 70%Butane/30%Propane Mix).

John's configuration is mouse pad base, small fuel canister under a Peak 1 Micro stove (6 oz.) and the MSR windscreen "......which increases performance like it were the middle of Summer...."

#### Make Your Own Emergency Fire Starters:

As you well know, emergency fire starters are one of the "Fourteen Essentials" and are useful for quickly starting a fire, especially in emergency situations. They are also useful for igniting wet wood.

There are numerous ways to economically make your own "lightweight" fire starters. Here are a few suggestions:

* plumber's candles (wax) will help start wet wood;
* compressed balls of dryer lint mixed with or covered with melted parafin (creates a real fireball);
* vaseline-impregnated cotton balls stored in small vials like your spent film canisters;
* small strips of waxed cardboard (cut from old produce boxes -- your grocer might even give it to you free :-)
* small flammable containers--individual egg-carton cups filled with mixtures of wood shavings, wax, & lint; etc.

#### Lithium AA Batteries Make Sense:

They work really well. I have an energy-hungry digital camera that came with regular alkaline batteries--they lasted a very short time. I, next, tried out the Lithium batteries. After well over 100 pictures taken and uploaded to the PC, the batteries are still going strong. I don't have stats other than that, but the lithiums are clearly lasting much longer.

#### Collection of Weight-Reducing Ideas:

Name: **Mike Little, 10/02/97**  
Email: **mentalfloss@geocities.com**

Take fewer clothes. No heavy woolen clothes unless it's dead on winter and that's all you have. No cotton. Pile jackets make great pillows. If you get all your clothes on and you're still cold get into your sleeping bag or exercise for 1/2 hour.

Get a simple rain suit, not one with a jillion zippers, bells and whistles. I know what I'm talking about here because my present Gore-Tex parka has too many bells and whistles and is heavy as heck! And it's bulky. A dumb selection on my part.

A headlamp that uses 2 AA batteries will easily last a week. You don't need a 4 AA (or worse, a C or D battery) light. A single 2 AA headlamp will do. Take a spare bulb.

Use a simple, lightweight plastic groundcloth rather than something heavier. Some folks believe in no groundcloth. I don't have the bucks to buy a new tent so I use a groundcloth.

Carefully select snack foods. It is way way too easy to carry too many of these. Be tough on yourself on these and carry barely what you'll need. Carry very light backup foods -- that meal you have for emergency situations. Dried fruit is another heavy item. Carry only what you'll eat. Count them. 2-3 pieces of fruit per day is likely to be enough. Dried bananas are an exception for me. They are truly dry and light. A big bag of nuts is also (too) heavy.

Drink lots of and lots of water when stopped and carry less. It's easier to carry in your belly than on your back.

How about a nice helium-filled frame on those external frame packs? OK, so I'm joking.

There is NO need for an extra pair of pants. Even in the worst weather on the longest trips one pair of pants, one long john bottom and one pair of rainpants will cover all situations. This is not a fashion show. I went with a guy once who carried 2 extra pair of pants for a week and wondered why his pack was so oppressive. But he sure looked great!

Get insect repellant in it's lightest form. A plastic spray bottle, a plastic bottle with no spray, or a stick. No aerosol cans.

Just a spoon. No other tableware is needed. And the smallest knife you can get by with. (If in a group) a huge multi-tool might come in handy, but everyone in the group doesn't need to carry one. Designate the big guy for this task.

Let your Therm-a-Rest inflate itself. If you blow in it, it will gradually pick up internal moisture and grow heavier (and mildew ?) Also, the moisture will make it conduct cold better. What's the hurry? Just lay it out and go do something else.

I just gave up camp shoes. Comfortable boots lightly laced make perfectly good camp shoes in the evening.

Dry out things like tea bags before placing them into your trash sack.

Resist Gadgets. REI and every other camp store has dozens of clever little gadgets to add weight. Don't buy them!

#### Fashion Your Own Emergency Whistle:

In the words of **Charles Harper** (4/18/97), " ..... instead of buying a whistle that will someday break, try an old 22 shell. Blow on it like an empty bottle, and a high pitched sound will shoot out."

#### A (small, thin, flexible) Plastic Placemat Has Much Utility:

The one I have is about 11"x14" cut from a plastic floor mat. It weighs practically nothing, yet has many potential uses. You can use it as a sit pad, a place for dirty boots in the tent, and to stand-on while washing yourself. Other potential, albeit questionable, uses include as a sunshade, stove windscreen (if you're really, really careful), fly swatter, and umbrella. (source: backpacker's basecamp weekly wisdom 8/25/97).

#### Packing Duct Tape #1:

Name: **Carl Mueller, 03/17/97**  
Email: **bugsbunny@vnet.ibm.com**

Instead of packing a large, round roll of duct tape, wrap about 10 feet around a rectangular piece of corrugated cardboard. This dramatically reduces the size and overall weight. Flat gear packs better than large round stuff.

#### Packing Duct Tape #2:

Name: **Ken Bennett, 10/15/97**  
Email: **bennettk@wfu.edu**

Duct Tape ... another way to pack it ... wrap some tape around everything that will hold it. I have a few feet of tape around the handle of my trowel, my tiny bottle of foot powder, the small hard case that carries my first aid kit (an old army decontamination kit case), and one of my water bottles.

I know some folks who wrap tape and parachute cord around their hiking staffs, above and below the handle.

#### Tent Ground Cloth/Vapor Barrier:

Name: **Thomas Shields, 03/16/97**  
Email: **shieldst@mindspring.com**

A ground cloth is needed if you use a tent or bivy. Not (only) to (help) protect the floor, but to prevent condensation by providing a vapor barrier.

.....Most folks use a ground cloth that weighs up to a pound. The most effective way is to buy a very lite-weight painters cloth (lowest mil, cheapest available at local hardware store). Then cut to size, get 4-6 pieces of self adhesive velcro (available at most hardware stores, REI, Campmor,etc.) and attach inside of tent in corners.

It gives you the vapor barrier, if you track in a lot of dirt, etc., it's easy to fold up and remove,shake out, and replace. It will only weigh 2-3 oz.,costs less than a buck to replace(I buy a 9X12 for 1.39 and get two replacements).

**EDITOR'S NOTE:**  
To a lesser degree than the hiking boots vs. running shoes debate, the ground cloth/vapor barrier on the inside of the tent vs. on the outside of the tent is a controversy as well. In this case, Thomas choses to put the barrier on the inside.

#### Winter Water Protection:

Name: **Charles Lindsey, 03/16/97**

It's a major hassle when your water bottle bottle freezes up -- don't let it happen to you !

If you go out in freezing weather, here's several commonly-known practices that help keep your water in liquid form:

* Get an insulated jacket for your bottle. You can get them specially made for Nalgene as well as Platypus-type bottles. They are inexpensive, easy to obtain, weight is negligible, and they work !
* Bring your container inside your sleeping bag with you - place it at your feet, so you don't roll over on top of it. It'll stay about as warm as your toes.
* Wrap it up with a sweater and put inside your pack.
* If you're in a bivy and there's no room for water bottles (cause it's loaded with all your other gear) bury the bottle under a foot or so of snow, upside down. Snow insulates & any minor freezing will occur at the bottom of the container (if its buried upside down).

#### One Single Container vs. Ditty Bags :

Name: **Carl Mueller, 03/17/97**  
Email: **bugsbunny@vnet.ibm.com**

Instead of using ditty bags, I use one large square tupperware container to hold almost all my loose gear. I throw away all external wrappings and lay everything inside the one container.

I pack this container near the top of my pack so it is easy to access. I was able to reduce the overall weight of my pack by a few ounces, but I greatly reduced the amount of room that the indivual ditty bags were using.

#### "Bubble" Packing Material as Sleeping Pad:

Name: **Mike, 09/28/97**  
Email: **slickcode@scws.com**

I use bubble paper as my insulating mat. It weighs just 3 oz, and packs smaller than the Ultralight Thermarest 3/4.

Doesn't insulate quite as well though - but definitely not as slippery!

#### Custom-Trimmed RidgeRest Mattress:

Name: **Mike, 10/19/97**  
Email: **slickcode@scws.com**

I recently cut my ridgerest 3/4 mat down to 40" x 17.5" (narrowing to 14").

The resultant weight is just 6 ozs, and it is just as comfortable, as before!!

I also put a thin layer of seam seal over the edges I had cut, but I don't think this is really necessary.

**PS.** When I use my bubble-paper idea, but with these dimensions, the resultant weight is just 1oz (but for 3-season use only!)

#### Lamp Oil Instead of Candles:

Name: **Dale Caine, 10/03/97**  
Email: **dcaine@intldiv.com**

Candoil makes a plastic cylinder / top / wick unit which replaces the candle and candle holder assembly found in standard candle lanterns.

It sells for about $10 and, besides being a lot cleaner (no wax drips), it is lighter and burns longer.

Candles usually last 6-7 hours while I have used my lamp with oil for ten hours without refilling.

**10/07/97**

A few things I should have mentioned in my original e-mail. First, the units burn standard lantern oil (available in a choice of different scents if you are so inclined to change from the normal dirty socks mode). I bought a 22 oz bottle (bayberry) for less than $3.00, and with probably 100+ hours of use to date, the bottle is still half full. Second, a word on use. It is best to set the adjustable wick height to be just long enough to light (a very small flame at first). Once the unit heats up, the wick draws more fuel and the flame burns at the same height as a normal candle.

#### Super Glue on Boot/Shoe Seams:

Name: **Mike "Mucho Gusto" Buoy, 3/09/97**  
Email: **mbuoy@mindspring.com**

This summer while thru hiking the AT, I choose to hike in trail running shoes. One Sport TRS comps. I have found that with these shoes as well as other light weight boots you can increase the amount of mileage you can get out of them by coating all the threads found on the seams of the shoe with super glue. It protects the threads and stops any fraying from spreading if it does start.

On my thru hike this past summer I never once blew out a seam much less had any of the threads even fray.

#### Lightweight "Solution" for Treating Blisters:

Name: **Larry Loos, 10/31/97**  
Email: **forlucky@ix.netcom.com**

I hike with people who have blister problems. The best light weight treatment I have found for a broken blister is:

1) Clean the area and rinse with clear water as best you can.  
2) Crush one iodine tablet in the bottem of a table spoon.  
3) Add a few drops of the water to make a paste.  
4) Apply the paste to the wound (insure that it gets under skin flaps)  
5) Protect the wound with mole skin.( but do not apply the mole skin directly to wound - cut a hole in mole skin the size of wound)

#### Practical Solution for Packing Light - SHARE THE LOAD:

Name: **Larry Loos, 10/31/97**  
Email: **forlucky@ix.netcom.com**

Sharing equipment is the greatest way to go lite. Share: 1) Camera, 2) Binoculars, 3) Tools, 4) Stoves, 5) Tents, 6) Ground cloth, 7) Cooking pots, 8) Tevas, 9) Fishing gear, 10) you can come up with more.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:**  
HOWEVER, never, let one person carry ALL of an **essential** item. In other words, don't let one person carry ALL the food or emergency supplies, or ALL the water, etc. It should be common practice that everyone be able to survive with the supplies in their own pack. If the person with ALL the food falls off the mountain, you will get hungry.

#### A Lightweight Emergency/Repair Kit:

Name: **Larry Loos, 12/05/97**  
Email: **forlucky@ix.netcom.com**

1) Store several emergency replacement pins and retainers in the extra holes in your pack frame that are normally used for size adjustment.

2) Wrap emergency duct tape around areas of the frame that are out of the way of normal use and do not effect the fit of the frame.

3) Place 2-foot pieces of safety wire inside the long vertical tubes in your pack frame. They can be used for pack, pack frame, and other repairs.

4) Store several large safety pins in your first aid kit. They can be used for pack repair, clothing repair and to secure bandages.

5) Carry your whistle & compass on a new boot lace around your neck. The whistle and compass are handy, and the lace can be used as an emergency boot lace, to hold your hat on in the wind, or to attach pack straps (that have torn or broken eyes) to your pack frame.

6) A ridgerest pad can be used to immobilize a broken arm or leg. Attache it with the same straps that hold it on your pack, or use duct tape.

7) A bright orange garbage bag (like the ones used by CalTrans to clean up along highways) can be used as a pack rain cover, emergency raincoat, or flag for emergency signals.

8) A sheet of reflective mylar can be used as a very light weight mirror for grooming or for emergency signals.

9) A heavy duty zip lock luggage tag makes an excellent emergency water proof wallet. Carry only one credit card, a medical insurance card, a drivers license, $20.00 in paper money, a emergency telephone number list, emergency telephone change, other emergency medical information and a wilderness permit. Attach a car key to the hole with dental floss to save weight. Leave the rest of the contents of your regular wallet at home and leave your other keys at home or in your car. In an emergency, the luggage tag can be used as a cup.

#### Tic Tac Breath Mint Container for Fishing Tackle:

Name: **Jack Harrington Cohen, 03/23/97**  
Email: **jcohen@fix.net**

A tip for the (fishing) handline. I use a little Tic Tac Breath Mint container to carry the tackle when I want to go minimalist. Inside I have a piece of rigid foam that I stick my lure hooks into. I usually carry a few flies, and a 3/16 oz Kastmaster (with one of the hooks of the treble hook snipped off), and a few split shot weights (that you squeeze onto the line).

I try to cast with as little weight as neccessary to give the flies the best action. I push the Tic Tac container so that it is held between the strings on each side of the handline. Hopefully this makes sense. Let me know if it isn't, or if you have any other questions. Thanks again on the mail!

jack  jcohen@streamlines

NOTE: Jack is Mr. Streamlines Handline (3 oz fishing gear). You can learn more about the Streamlines Handline in the Ultralight Reviews Section.

#### Light Tips from Starbuck:

Name: **Conrad Starbuck, 12/11/97**  
Email: **bckpkr@rocketmail.com**

I designed and had made a rain coat of rip-stop nylon to come down to just above my knees and snap-up to the waist for a wind jacket.

I eat cold but will carry instant oatmeal, tea, etc. and heat it over a squaw fire in my sierra cup.

I stuff my 800 fill 5 degree bag into a 500 ci stuff sack.

The first aid kit is basic but I carry a pointed tweezers and a nail clipper. Dang those hang nails.

My 5-day pack is 1800 ci.

The philosophy of KISS suffices. KEEP IT SMALL and SIMPLE.

#### Misc. Tips:

Name: **Maohai Huang, 09/24/96**  
Email: **mhuang@buast7.bu.edu**

- always ( even in a hut or perfect calm weather ) use a wind screen when you cook -- makes a big differnce for MSR stoves.

- priming flame and dying flame after the fuel valve is turned off shouldn't be wasted.

- wood burning stoves are light and good for long trips in woods.

- reduce body weight.

- conserve energy. wear a hat to sleep.

- hang the camera and water bottle on the shoulder harness in front of you to balance the weight.

- have a good rhythm when walking.

#### Sleeping With a Hat (on Your Head):

Name: **Larry Loos, 12/15/97**  
Email: **forlucky@ix.netcom.com**

Sleeping with something on your head is a great idea. It conserves body heat. This allows you to carry a lighter sleeping bag. If you keep your face out of your sleeping bag, the moisture from your breath does not get into your bag. The moisture content of your bag stays lower and you sleep warmer in cold weather.

I find that a silk balaclava in the summer and a polypro balaclava in the winter do the trick. They do not come off in your sleep and can be warn under your hat for extra warmth during the day.

#### Frisbee = Fun, Plate & Bowl:

Name: **Tom Neer, 09/27/97**  
Email: **tom@htan.org**

One of my favorite extras in camp is a frisbee. It's not only a great way to relax, but works as a plate and bowl.

#### Big Slam, Calling Card & Sweet Stuff:

Name: **Luke MIller, 01/02/98**  
Email: **milernov@minotafb.ndak.net**

 I'd like to relate that as strength goes, "Big Slam" soda pop bottles can literally be driven over by a vehicle without breaking, only the cap is a bit vulnerable, a sharp blow to it will ruin your day. Some engineer out there really needs to design a shatterproof cap and we would be all set.

 Always carry a calling card (telephone) for those emergencies.

 Remember to bring powdered drinks (Crystal light) or a good sports powder flavored with Nutrasweet--a little sweetness and flavor goes a long way toward making your trip more tolerable.

#### Kitchen Matches in Pill Bottle:

Name: **Wilson Hardison, 01/02/98**  
Email: **wilsonh@gisbld.ci.winston-salem.nc.us**

Matches: use 'kitchen matches' the large wooden matches with a white spot on the tip. These matches will strike on most rough surfaces, rocks, metal, etc. I carry the matches in recycled prescription medicine (pill) bottles for damp-proof storage.

#### Yah, You !  Lose Some Weight  !

Name: **Charles Lindsey, 01/09/98**  
Email: **email@noemail.org**

I recently lost 5 pounds, most of which was located in the mid-section. Not only does the pack belt feel more comfy but I feel stronger and, obviously, there's 5 less pounds that my structure has to support. My feet are a little happier as a result.

#### Keep Fresh Supplies in Your Vehicle:

Name: **Switchback, 01/15/98**  
Email: **Hiker97@aol.com**

One thing to add to your checklist. Be sure that your vehicle has some food, drinks, and clean clothes for your return.

It is really nice to look forward to these things when coming out after a big hike. Sometimes I have pushed it to get out, and really enjoyed the big water bottle and snacks waiting in the truck.

Just remember the bears are around and to pack everything well and then cover with a big towel.

#### Inexpensive Compression Solution:

Name: **Rob Marco, 01/15/98**  
Email: **mmarco@erols.com**

I just came up with a (method) for saving space in (my) pack. My 1800 cu in Lowe Klettersack is a tight fit for an overnight trip, so I was looking for ways to cut down on bulk, since weight wasn't a problem. Compression sacks always seemed like a good idea, but usually weighed up to half a pound.

I simply took two lash straps, connected both ends, and slipped both over my stuffed sleeping bag vertically, so they were perpendicular, like wrapping a present. I pulled on the two ends, and it cinched up nicely, cutting about 25% of the bulk of the bag, and only weighing a couple of ounces. This helps if you need precious space in your pack.

#### Don't Lose Those Tent Stakes !:

Name: **Switchback, 01/17/98**  
Email: **Hiker97@aol.com**

Before you go out on your big hike, take a moment to brightly spray paint your tent stakes so you can see them laying on the ground. Most stakes are of a color that blends into the surroundings. A quick spray on the tops of your stakes will prevent you from overlooking them. Another good thing to do is make sure you know the number of stakes you are taking with you. Make a check count each morning before putting them into your pack.

#### A First Aid Tip:

Name: **Matthew Paramore, 05/27/97**  
Email: **mhp@coastalnet.com**

Instead of using Neosporin or another triple antibiotic ointment, have a doctor write you a prescription for bactoban. It's the most powerful antiboitic ointment, can penetrate the skin (all others must enter through an open wound), and only costs about $12. It's good stuff to have just around the house.

#### Hot Shower & Baby Wipes !:

Name: **Kelly & Craig Turner, 01/23/98**  
Email: **kcturner@bright.net**

If you use a "Big Slam" bottle for a water bottle, carry a spare cap with holes drilled in it.  Fill the bottle with warm water for a great hot trail shower!

On short trips, I carry travel packets of baby wipes. They smell like babies but that's better than the alternative, and it only takes two or three to do a whole bath.

#### Ultralight Winter Tent Pegs !:

Name: **Charles Lindsey, 02/01/98**  
Email: **email@noemail.org**

As you know, regular three-season tent pegs don’t work in the snow (& ice). There are numerous techniques for securing tents in the snow - we’ll only talk lightweight, here.

One technique, which will actually reduce your overall tent weight such that it weighs less in the Winter than it does during the other three seasons, is to leave the tent pegs at home and use your ice axe, snow shovel, snow poles, and/or skis for pegs. Also, if you can find long wooden branches, they’ll work fine - you must be able to sink them deep enough to create a very solid anchor for your tent, such that high winds cannot blow you and your tent away, and the tent “peg-loops” must not be able to slip off.

If the reason you’re out there in the first place is to use the skis, poles, or ice axe and shovel, you can take the tent down during the day when you need the "tools" and put it up again when you're done playing. If that doesn't work for you, then here’s another option. This is the “ultralight” technique that I use for Winter tent pegs.

I use small-sized nylon stuff sacks - in terms of volume, about 1 liquid quart. Very lightweight to carry and I can pack a lot of snow into them. That's exactly what I do. One small stuff sack = one tent peg.

I pack each stuff sack full of snow and bury it an appropriate distance from its "target tent loop", about one to three feet deep (depending on snow constitution and weather conditions). I stamp the ground with my feet to firm - believe me you may need an ice axe the next day to retrieve your anchors.

Attached to each stuff sack is a section of ultralight, ultrastrong, Kelty Triptease Lightline which, after the sack is buried, is protruding out of the ground. Attached to the other end of the section of Lightline, is a “Taut-Tie” slider lock which I thread thru the tent-peg loop, bring back around and attach to the Lightline, then pull very taut.

I may use only three “sack-pegs” -- because all my tents require only three pegs -- or I may use five (I carry five sacks, they don't weigh much - and its good to have them along in case the wind gets nasty so the tent sides can be anchored also).

#### The Critical Few !:

Name: **Jim Morrison, 02/05/98**  
Email: **raptor99@prodigy.com**

If you look in your closet you will find that you wear only 20 percent of your clothing 80 percent of the time. Things just work out like that. You spend most of your social time with only a small percentage of the people you know and like. It is called (by me) the "critical few". Only 20% of the stocks on the market make 80% of the gains in a given year. Twenty percent of the web page visitors make 80 percent of the contributions.

Why is this important? Because the 20% are the critical few that you should be paying attention to. The rest are less important...not a priority. If 20% of my customers contribute to 80% of my gross income then I had better pay attention to them first.

In my lightweight pack list I have 43 items. Ten of those items do make up 80% of the 25 pound total - Pack, S.Bag, Food, Shelter, Cooker, Rain Coat, Wool Sweater, Sleep Pad, Toilet Kit, and Pot&Lid.

So, if I have taken any care at all with the small items, if I need to, want to, or have to, reduce weight, I should look at the Critical Few and consider them carefully. I could (if money grew on trees) lose a full 2 pounds on my sleeping bag alone. But when I replaced my Leatherman Tool with a pocket knife recently, I only saved four ounces. The best example of all is my packs. I have two, 7 and 5 pounds.

#### Pre-Soak Meals & Use Pressure-Cookers:

Name: **Dan, 02/06/98**  
Email: **DAN.INNAMORATO@hq.doe.gov**

ref: ..... section on cooking and carry less fuel.

If you cook oatmeal, rice, dried beans/grains, or powdered soups, most of the cooking time is rehydration. Put these meals in a Tupperware or Nalgene container & cover w/water early in the day (or prev. night for brkfst). By mealtime, the legumes, grains, and/or soups are rehydrated and, thus, the cooking time - and fuel consumption - is greatly reduced. This fuel savings equates to a smaller fuel bottle needed or longer trip on same fuel allotment.

AlpineAire also has precooked grains, beans and pasta which requires much less cooking time.

The fuel saved by greatly decreased cooking times achieved by using a small pressure cooker, can often offset the high weight of these pots.

Foods cooked at 250-F can mean beans & rice in 4min! Also at altitudes above 6000ft, many foods don't cook properly due to lower boiling point of water, and the cooking just goes on and on. A pressure cooker eliminates this problem. I'm still trying to find a small (2-3L) cooker. REI used to sell one, and it's even pictured in the book they publish by Harvey Manning,"Backpacking: One Step at a Time". But now REI sells useless backpacker ESPRESSO makers, but no suitable pressure cooker.

The Yups have conquered common sense. I've searched [www.kuhnrikon.com] and [www.unitedsoftware.com/napl] for the Magefesa brand. Kuhn-Rikon has a Risotta cooker which might do, but still on the large size for bkpkg.

#### Do You Carry a Comb ?:

Name: **Eric Blievernicht, 02/06/98**  
Email: **ebliever@mail2.theonramp.net**

I was combing my hair yesterday when I noticed that with ordinary straight pocket combs you never actually use more than half the comb at one time. So why not cut it in half?

That's exactly what I did, keeping the end with the finer comb tines for my packlist. Every little bit helps!

#### Reuse Those Film Canisters:

Name: **J. D. Albert, 02/15/98**  
Email: **albertjd@vaix2.net**

I saw in your weight-reducing tips that you do not use film cans (for food) because the film leaves a residue.

It is true that there is a nitrate residue in the film cans, but you can be able to reuse them if you follow these steps to remove the residue:

First, air them out. Next, fill them with salty water and leave the water in them for a week or so. Then rinse the cans out and you have reusable film canisters.

I asked a film developer about this issue and he said it was true. He said these steps would work. The salt in the water attracts the nitrates so when you dump out the water you dump out the nitrates.

This process takes a while, but I think it's worth the money.

#### A  2 1/2  Ounce Bivy Sack !!!

Name: **Ryan Croos, 02/17/98**  
Email: **thepackmule@hotmail.com**

I sleep in a sleeping bag and use the space bag as an over bag/bivy instead of a heavy tent. The bag ..... adds about 10 degrees to the sleeping bag rating, and will keep you dry in the rain. Be careful at first, this is a warm surprise.

Flexibility is pretty good. The worst part of it is the krinkling noise when you're readjusting your sleeping position. I've only used this for weekends, 3 to be exact, but I haven't replaced it yet. It's only 2.5oz so I recommend taking it AND a tent and trying it out.

#### Milk Carton Bottom for Stove / Food Holder

Name: **Coosa Carol Donaldson, 02/21/98**  
Email: **coosa@juno.com**

**Editor's Note:** This is especially interesting for those of us who mainly boil water and add to instant type foods inside heavy duty freezer bags, rather than cook from scratch (and get our pots dirty **:-)**.

I'm using the bottom of a 1/2 gallon milk carton as a baggie holder so I can pour hot water into the baggie and not have to dump my meal into my pot. (My Boy Scout diox stove fits in the carton bottom along with my aluminum foil for my wind shield.)

Dinner is potato flakes, powdered milk (creamora added for flavor), butter buds in one baggie and Just Veggies (or dehydrated if I did that) and roasted soybeans in the other. Set the first in the baggie holder, pour in the hot water, stir, add a mayonnaise packet (if not going ultra-light) stir/fluff and then add contents of second baggie and chow down.

#### 5 Gram Insulated Cup & Holey Moleskin:

Name: **Jimboy2, 03/05/98**  
Email: **Jimboy2@aol.com**

My latest super extra ultra supreme light ideas are from last weekend's hike. I used a 5 gram (16 oz. capacity) insulated cup (>0.5 oz.) and I found a way to make mole skin lighter.

The insulated cup was simple, a styrofoam cup. They seem to be making them more durable nowadays. I've been using the same one for my tea around the house for a week! I know they are "cheap" but don't be snobish - just because they are inexpensive doesn't mean it is a bad idea.

The other idea is to cut the holes out of the mole skin before you leave home and throw them (the holes) away. Saving; one gram. If you carried one gram to the summit of mount Rainier it would require 8.4 calories!

#### Ultralight/Homemade Solar Shower:

Name: **Roger Alsborg, 04/11/98**  
Email: **rcalsborg@earthlink.net**

Leave those comercial Solar Showers at home!

Last summer, while on the JMT I found that the large trash bag I used for covering my Pack made a Great Solar Shower.

Using my cooking pot, I poured 4 or 5 quarts of cold river water into a standard 28 gauge Trash Bag, rolled the end over and layed it flat while held shut with a couple of rocks.

Let sit in the sun for 30 minutes. Then using some bio-degradable soap and the same pot poured the HOT water over myself for an unbeatable treat.

Afterwards, turn the bag inside out and it will dry in the sun.

#### Super Ultralight Lantern:

Name: **j.r., 04/11/98**  
Email: **Tyler502@mail.ultraweb.net**

How about a miniature backpacker's lantern that won't burn your fingers or tent, won't blow out in a storm, weighs a fraction of candle or oil lamps,and will "burn for 30 hours or more on a fuel "cartridge" that is the size of a sugar cube and floats also ?

I took a lighted fishing float bought at K-Mart and replaced the LED lamp with a high brightness lamp bought from Radio Shack, then replaced the watch batteries with a single lithium cell ( eveready 2L76 ) . This lamp has a spring hook that makes it easy to adjust height without removing from limb or tent hook.

The red colour won't attract insects at night and won't blind your night vision.The floats are also available in green and yellow colours.

They make great camp markers if you deside to veture out of camp at night as I do, and light up small tents and bivy sacks , I carry three and make trail markers leading back to camp while observing game and owls at night.

**How much does it weigh? How bright?**

L.E.D.'s (light emitting diodes ) are rated in mcd's or micro candle power, i.e. 1/1000th of a candle output. The lamp I used was rated at 2000 mcd or 2 candle power.

The red colour has a darker effect than the same output in white light. There are led's that put out up to 6000 mcd or 6 candle power but they won't fit in the lighted fishing float I'm using. Make sure you disassemble the float and remove the old lamp to compare to the replacement lamp your looking for. Use fine piont needle nose pliers. Observe polarity of the LED when installing or it will burn out.

The weight ? Well it's just a guess maybe 1/2 or 1 oz ? I don't know for sure but it's less than my cheap candle lantern 3.5 oz. So light I carry at least two on most trips instead of my old lantern.

#### Rain Parka - Roll n'Stuff in Hood:

Name: **John Drollette, 04/17/98**  
Email: **tamarag@tiac.net**

Stuffing your shell jacket in a stuffsack saves volume, but even those tiny sheer Marmot Thunderlight stuffsacks weight 1.3 oz.

So, with any shell, roll the jacket up from bottom to top, and tuck it into its own hood.

Tighten the hood drawstrings, and voila -- a stuffed jacket without a stuffsack (and its corresponding 1.3 oz).

#### Mattress - Fold NOT Roll n' Stuff:

Name: **John Drollette, 04/17/98**  
Email: **tamarag@tiac.net**

For those colder trips where you carry a Thermarest (or other mattress), skip rolling and (reduce weight by eliminating) the stuffsack. Deflate and flatten as usual. Instead of rolling, fold it in half lengthwise, then fold in half again, so that you have a flat "panel" of thermarest about 21" x 12". Pack this flat against the "framesheet" in your pack (or where the framesheet was before you took it out :-).

I've found this much more space efficient than a big roll, (even the 3/4 Ultralight II rolls to the size of a 1 liter nalgene) and keeps the pad warm against your back so that it inflates more quickly in cold weather.

#### Multiple Purpose Plastic Bag:

Name: **Pete Farino, 04/17/98**  
Email: **PRMN1989@worldnet.att.net**

I've always considered a large plastic bag as one of my essentials because it is so light and has so many uses.

It can be used for

1. a pack cover
2. a poncho in the rain (with slight modification)
3. carrying water,
4. as a solar still
5. wrapping a sucking chest wound
6. hanging water in the sun for a hot shower or bath
7. wrapping food before hanging it in bear country.

#### Scot's "Can't Do Without" Items:

Name: **Scot Meyers, 04/28/98**  
Email: **smeyers@uswest.net**

One inovation that I have discovered is to save those **toothpaste samples** that come in the morning paper. They are flat, lightweight, and the foil container is easily carried out of the backcountry after I've used up the toothpaste.

Another item I like to take with me when I go is some strong pain medication. Since my last operation a few years ago, I saved some **Oxycodone medication** for painful emergencies. I was stung by a fire ant on one of my toes while camping the night before going into Buckskin Gulch on the Utah/Arizona border. The pain kept me awake until I remembered I had brought the pain killer along.

#### Avon "Bug Repellent":

Name: **Rob Fogg, 05/07/98**  
Email: **robfogg@uswest.net**

....... thought you might like to know of an alternative bug repellant.

When i was in the navy with a land based hydrographic survey unit we had to travel to fun spots like malaysia and other bug rich areas in the pacific. Everyone in my unit swore by **"Skin So Soft" by Avon**. It's not the cheapest way to keep the skeeters at bay but I've found it to be the most effective. It comes in about three sizes ranging from 2oz. to family size.

The plus side of it (beyond its bug-repelling capability) is that you walk around smelling better than the rest of your team. =)

#### Jerry's Ultralite Innovations:

Name: **Jerry Emerick, 05/22/98**  
Email: **jemerick@freenet.columbus.oh.us**

 COTTON THREAD makes fine lashing for dead sticks, to make a tarp frame. just wrap the joints like a spider web, no knots. Withstood big winds. Easy take down, just cut apart.

 TIN FOIL oven dishes (at any supermarket) make fine ultralight cookware, single trip use.

 PILL PACKS: lay out a strip of scotch tape, stand pills on edge, cover with tin foil so the foil sticks to tape on both sides, label. No bottles.

 TOOTHPASTE STRAWS: Fast food plastic straws hold a week's worth of toothpaste in 4" - fold and tape one end, make a slip ring for the other. You can point the straw to make a floss/pick.

 HANDIWIPES or JCLOTHS these pink disposable dishcloths make a beachtowel or neckerchief. get the open weave kind, they wring dry.

 GLOW IN THE DARK flashlight covers. Obvious.

#### Jakstrap Flashlight Holder/Maglite:

Name: **?, 05/20/98**  
Email: **walkej\_at\_nycntpo1@smtpgwy.cibc.com**

I use a Jakstrap flashlight holder to make my Mini-Mag more useful, and to avoid having to carry a separate headlamp. It weighs approximately .5 oz., and transforms my flashlight into a headlamp, as well as keeping it handy around twilight. It is simply an adjustable headband, with elastic loops sized to hold a Mini-Maglite (or similar diameter) flashlight at one of three angles.

As night falls, I just loop it around my neck, where it keeps me from losing my light, and as it becomes darker I put it on, turn it on, and continue reading, cooking, etc.

The efficiency and lightweight of the Maglite are doubly useful with this handy little addition, and the ability to use the Maglite as a candle makes it a three-in-one tool.

That last feature was very useful last weekend in the Catskills, where fascinated kamikaze moths kept extinguishing my partner's candle!

#### Zip Stove Quick Start:

Name: **Mark Allen, 06/24/98**  
Email: **mark-allen@usa.net**

When i carry my Zip stove (only to places that allow fires unfortunately) i also pack a film canister half full of Sterno. I can then dip a few twigs in the canister and toss them into the stove for blazing fast (no pun intended ;) stove lights.

It's a light package and also serves as my emergency fire starter.

#### Eric the Weatherling:

Name: **jem1, 07/16/98**  
Email: **jem1@CTC.Net**

\*Consider wearing a thin, old-timer style fishing hat with an extended brim in 40+ degree weather. (Tilley makes a very versatile one with side snaps and all).

-Crushable  
-Adjustable  
-Sleepable  
-Full circle sun protection

\*Attach safety pins to the outside of the hat.  
\*Dental floss and personal emergency kit (information, $5 bill)can be kept in the inside of the hat in a micro-size ziplock.  
\*Needles fit nicely in the hatband. (No, I've never been stuck, duh!)

\*Carry smaller items in pockets of your jacket. Getting super small items out of your pack doesn't save space and weight by the bunches, but it's sure easier to find stuff in the dark.

\*You be the judge:  
-More stuff sacks/ziplocks, more organization, more weight.  
-Fewer stuff sacks/ziplocks, less organization, less weight. (Works for me.)

\*Finally, for the fashion-conscious, bite the bullet and wear sturdy, impact-resistant glasses instead of flimsy designer series ones that'll crunch instantly if dropped. And forget contact lenses. (I know, Acue-Vue, SmackU-Vue. Get hit in the eye one good time by a decent-size flying varmint, and you'll be wandering off everywhere, foggy eye and all.)

#### Foam Knee/Seat Pad:

Name: **Colleen Burns, Toronto, Canada, 07/16/98**  
Email: **buddie@idirect.com**

For a seat, try a foam knee pad, the kind made for gardeners. They are made of extremely lightweight foam, they are wide enough and thick enough to cushion your butt nicely and they can be used to make a variety of chores more comfortable.

#### Lightweight Ideas:

Name: **?, 08/16/98**  
Email: **RAkel21351@aol.com**

Here are some things that will help all...

For light weight tent stakes go to the nearest building supply store and buy a pack of ties for a chain link fence, They come 50 for about 2 bucks, they can be reused or thrown away after each trip and are very light weight..

Instead of a stuff sack for my sleeping back i use a commercial grade trash bag..It is lighter, waterproof ,airtight..so when you compress it your bag stays small.. and has a bout 10 other uses on the trail( hanging the food).

I also have painted all my waterbottles black.. before cooking i set them in the sun for a hour or so - this saves time and fuel

#### Water Bottle Multi-Use Tip:

Name: Ben, 08/16/98  
Email: **cheers1@erols.com**

When I go winter camping, I fill the water bottles with hot water just before I go to bed. Then I stuff it down my sleeping bag to keep my feet warm and toasty. As long as it's not too hot to make me sweat, it's a great pick-me-up.:)

I usually try to choose the wide mouth bottles. About an hour or so before I eat, I try to reconstitute my food in the bottle. Rice works well, pasta's out. I try not to take pasta anymore because of the long cooking time.

#### Suggestion for Tree-Campers:

Name: Bill Clo, 09/05/98  
Email: **billclo@hotmail.com**

I have a suggestion for those who backpack in tree-filled areas.

Use a hammock and poncho, and ditch that tent, or bivy and save plenty of weight.

I use a hammock that weighs 8.5oz, bug netting and a poncho that weighs 12oz (Campmor). Total weight= 24.5 oz. Attach to two suitable trees (the hardest part is finding 2 that are the correct distance apart, yet big enough to take the weight. Attach the poncho and bug netting assembly above the hammock, and you're set.

You do need to modify the poncho with some velcro patches to accomodate the bug netting though.

With this setup, you have a more comfortable sleep, and all the gear is multi use. (poncho can be used for many things, including rain protection, collecting water in a pinch, emergency raft). Hammock is versatile; sleep in it, emergency fish net, etc.

I tend to look for gear that is useful in normal backpacking, and less than normal "survival uses" also; you never know when it'd be useful.

I also rarely use a sleeping bag, instead relying on my clothes and a heavy duty military space blanket to keep me warm. I've used this method down to 40 degrees so far, and it works ok.

#### Insulated Mug Modification:

Name: Mike Wilson, 09/27/98  
Email: **mwatl@mindspring.com**

Cut the bottom of the handle on a plastic insulated mug. Now you can slip it over any strap and let it hang outside your pack. No more tying it on with straps or string.

#### Chopsticks:

Name: Pablo Mendoza, 12/07/98  
Email: **MendozaP@missouri.edu**

When I lived out my backpack for five weeks in Oregon, I used my chopsticks instead of utensils for eating and cooking. Very light and useful.

It replaced my heavy spoon, fork and spatula for cooking.

#### CD as Signal mirror & Frisbee:

Name: Allen Nichols (HaMmErHeAd) 11/27/98  
Email: **nichols@gwis.com**

Use a CD for a mirror, it's light, free, (AOL mailings) and you can use it for an emergency or hygiene mirror. When in camp you can use it as a frisbee.

#### Goodwill Industries:

Name: Allen Nichols (HaMmErHeAd) 11/27/98  
Email: **nichols@gwis.com**

When you're trying to find the "perfect" solution to you weight-reducing quest you have to stop by the local Goodwill/thrift shop. I've found dozens of cool/cheap deals there: stuff sacks, water bottles, salt and pepper shakers, coffe mugs, etc. Once I found a Columbia jacket there for $5.00! (you bet I bought it!) You can also find "fleece" polyester pants and tops, wool clothes, cheap shoes for using after setting up camp, snow pants etc. I've gone there to find lids for homemade cook sets. Oh, it's a great place to get kids stuff too. Lets' face it; they grow up soooo fast most folks really can't afford to buy them the "hi-tech" gear anyway.

#### Exacto Knife:

Name: Allen Nichols (HaMmErHeAd) 11/27/98  
Email: **nichols@gwis.com**

I switched from using my old Buck knife and sharpener to using an Exacto type utility knife. It's the ones with the 4" blade that can be snapped off and the next tip used. These are razor sharp. You can take and extra blade or two and you'll have enough blade for just about any job. The blade will lock at any position and you can lock it in the closed position when it's stowed in your pack. Cheap and light and razor sharp. Let's face it, 99% or cutting in the backcountry is to cut cord, open packages and maybe widdle off some kindling.

#### Games & Other Fun Stuff:

Name: Tornado, 12/28/98  
Email: **redvine@ix.netcom.com**

I find when looking at gear lists of others and suggested gear lists I find that people almost never include games and fun stuff, except for novels, which aren't really fun and interactive.

First of all, I carrya clear, flat plastic stuff sack which is designated to go in the tent. It contains my journal/pen, handwarmer, small towel, and toiletries. As far as fun stuff, I carry three "fun" things in this sack:

1) I carry a deck of cards, which on average weigh 3 ounces but can be lightened by cutting in half. These are worth the weight, because of the endless games that are possible, and there is only a small amount of light needed.

2) I carry a homemade game that I created from a review of The Himilayan Game by Backpacker Magazine. I made it out of cardboard so it is almost weightless. I have a small piece of cardboard for the board, a shape of a mountain. I then mark lines (about 20) for the spaces and have 4 camps along the way to the summit. I have a plastic bag full of weightless chips dicatating to move 1-9 spaces but I also have reasons for the person to go back spaces or lose a turn by pieces that say lose ice ax or catch tibetan virus. Whoever gets to the summit first, wins. I call it the Everest game. My tentmates seem to like it.

3) I just got this last fun thing for Christmas. It is a small chess board. It weighs about 3 ounces and has magnetic pieces. It's alot of fun.

<="" a="">

#### Lightweight Ideas:

Name: **?, 08/16/98**  
Email: **RAkel21351@aol.com**

Here are some things that will help all...

For light weight tent stakes go to the nearest building supply store and buy a pack of ties for a chain link fence, They come 50 for about 2 bucks, they can be reused or thrown away after each trip and are very light weight..

Instead of a stuff sack for my sleeping back i use a commercial grade trash bag..It is lighter, waterproof ,airtight..so when you compress it your bag stays small.. and has a bout 10 other uses on the trail( hanging the food).

I also have painted all my waterbottles black.. before cooking i set them in the sun for a hour or so - this saves time and fuel

#### Use Only Your Tent Fly:

Name: Packlite, 08/16/98  
Email: **packlite@gte.net**

Consider leaving your tent home and carry only the tent fly. For many tents (including free standing ones), the fly can be setup without the tent body. For those flys that don't have the necessary grommets to house the tent pole ends, grommets could possibly be sewn onto theiry webbing stake loops. The fly, along with the tent's groundsheet, will suffice in many, if not most, situations and is a heck of lot lighter.

#### Multi-Use Bandanna:

Name: Roger, 09/04/98  
Email:

Carry a bandanna and you'll quickly discover that it has a lot of different uses. It can be used to dry pots and pans; as a neck, head, or hand kerchief; arm sling; emergency bandage; head band; wash rag; pot holder; dust mask; and, no doubt, a lot of other things. Heck, you can even blow your nose into it.

#### Water Bottle Multi-Use Tip:

Name: Ben, 08/16/98  
Email: **cheers1@erols.com**

When I go winter camping, I fill the water bottles with hot water just before I go to bed. Then I stuff it down my sleeping bag to keep my feet warm and toasty. As long as it's not too hot to make me sweat, it's a great pick-me-up.:)

I usually try to choose the wide mouth bottles. About an hour or so before I eat, I try to reconstitute my food in the bottle. Rice works well, pasta's out. I try not to take pasta anymore because of the long cooking time.

#### Suggestion for Tree-Campers:

Name: Bill Clo, 09/05/98  
Email: **billclo@hotmail.com**

I have a suggestion for those who backpack in tree-filled areas.

Use a hammock and poncho, and ditch that tent, or bivy and save plenty of weight.

I use a hammock that weighs 8.5oz, bug netting and a poncho that weighs 12oz (Campmor). Total weight= 24.5 oz. Attach to two suitable trees (the hardest part is finding 2 that are the correct distance apart, yet big enough to take the weight. Attach the poncho and bug netting assembly above the hammock, and you're set.

You do need to modify the poncho with some velcro patches to accomodate the bug netting though.

With this setup, you have a more comfortable sleep, and all the gear is multi use. (poncho can be used for many things, including rain protection, collecting water in a pinch, emergency raft). Hammock is versatile; sleep in it, emergency fish net, etc.

I tend to look for gear that is useful in normal backpacking, and less than normal "survival uses" also; you never know when it'd be useful.

I also rarely use a sleeping bag, instead relying on my clothes and a heavy duty military space blanket to keep me warm. I've used this method down to 40 degrees so far, and it works ok.

#### Insulated Mug Modification:

Name: Mike Wilson, 09/27/98  
Email: **mwatl@mindspring.com**

Cut the bottom of the handle on a plastic insulated mug. Now you can slip it over any strap and let it hang outside your pack. No more tying it on with straps or string.

#### No Soap for Dishes:

Name: Scruggs, 09/27/98  
Email: **scg@gte.net**

Instead of using soap for dishwashing, try water, sand, pinecones, dirt, leaves instead. Your dishes will get as clean as they need to be and you and the fish won't be ingesting "biodegradable" soap residue.

#### Chopsticks:

Name: Pablo Mendoza, 12/07/98  
Email: **MendozaP@missouri.edu**

When I lived out my backpack for five weeks in Oregon, I used my chopsticks instead of utensils for eating and cooking. Very light and useful.

It replaced my heavy spoon, fork and spatula for cooking.

#### CD as Signal mirror & Frisbee:

Name: Allen Nichols (HaMmErHeAd) 11/27/98  
Email: **nichols@gwis.com**

Use a CD for a mirror, it's light, free, (AOL mailings) and you can use it for an emergency or hygiene mirror. When in camp you can use it as a frisbee.

#### Goodwill Industries:

Name: Allen Nichols (HaMmErHeAd) 11/27/98  
Email: **nichols@gwis.com**

When you're trying to find the "perfect" solution to you weight-reducing quest you have to stop by the local Goodwill/thrift shop. I've found dozens of cool/cheap deals there: stuff sacks, water bottles, salt and pepper shakers, coffe mugs, etc. Once I found a Columbia jacket there for $5.00! (you bet I bought it!) You can also find "fleece" polyester pants and tops, wool clothes, cheap shoes for using after setting up camp, snow pants etc. I've gone there to find lids for homemade cook sets. Oh, it's a great place to get kids stuff too. Lets' face it; they grow up soooo fast most folks really can't afford to buy them the "hi-tech" gear anyway.

#### Exacto Knife:

Name: Allen Nichols (HaMmErHeAd) 11/27/98  
Email: **nichols@gwis.com**

I switched from using my old Buck knife and sharpener to using an Exacto type utility knife. It's the ones with the 4" blade that can be snapped off and the next tip used. These are razor sharp. You can take and extra blade or two and you'll have enough blade for just about any job. The blade will lock at any position and you can lock it in the closed position when it's stowed in your pack. Cheap and light and razor sharp. Let's face it, 99% or cutting in the backcountry is to cut cord, open packages and maybe widdle off some kindling.

#### Games & Other Fun Stuff:

Name: Tornado, 12/28/98  
Email: **redvine@ix.netcom.com**

I find when looking at gear lists of others and suggested gear lists I find that people almost never include games and fun stuff, except for novels, which aren't really fun and interactive.

First of all, I carrya clear, flat plastic stuff sack which is designated to go in the tent. It contains my journal/pen, handwarmer, small towel, and toiletries. As far as fun stuff, I carry three "fun" things in this sack:

1) I carry a deck of cards, which on average weigh 3 ounces but can be lightened by cutting in half. These are worth the weight, because of the endless games that are possible, and there is only a small amount of light needed.

2) I carry a homemade game that I created from a review of The Himilayan Game by Backpacker Magazine. I made it out of cardboard so it is almost weightless. I have a small piece of cardboard for the board, a shape of a mountain. I then mark lines (about 20) for the spaces and have 4 camps along the way to the summit. I have a plastic bag full of weightless chips dicatating to move 1-9 spaces but I also have reasons for the person to go back spaces or lose a turn by pieces that say lose ice ax or catch tibetan virus. Whoever gets to the summit first, wins. I call it the Everest game. My tentmates seem to like it.

3) I just got this last fun thing for Christmas. It is a small chess board. It weighs about 3 ounces and has magnetic pieces. It's alot of fun.

#### Bungie for Extension of Tent Stake Loop:

Name: Peter V. 01/22/98  
Email: **fluff@inreach.com**

For those tents which need a taut pitch and for those tent sites that always seem to put a rock right in the exact spot where you need to put a stake, in order to achieve that taut pitch, Peter V. suggests tying small loops of tiny bungie cord on the tent stake-out loops. The bungie will allow for adequate tension as well as provide sufficient latitude in stake placement.

#### Group Toothbrush !:

Name: Jennifer 02/17/99

I have seen toothbrushes that now have replaceable heads (4 heads/1 handle) the heads snap on/off. Good for group backpackers. The only place I know of that sells them is Vitamin Cottage in Arvada, Colorado.

#### Comfy Pack Pillow:

Name: Michael Garrison 02/10/99

In the winter months when heavier clothing is needed, I pack 1-down jacket and 1-cotton pillowcase. There may be a lighter cloth that dries faster that you may choose to substitute for cotton, but I figure if the interior of my pack gets that wet then my jacket is also going to be wet. In short, at bedtime, stuff the down jacket into the pillow case and at the onset of slumber you can rest your trail-wearied neck on a comfortable down pillow. (ADDITIONAL HINT If you can attach a velcro closure to the mouth of the pillowcase in will be very much worth the effort as the jackets like to crawl out.) Hope this is helpful.

Happy Trails....

#### Multiple Tips from Mark:

Name: Mark Desprez, 02/08/99

Just found your site.......just my cup of tea.........heres some of my thoughts:

Utensils - I do not usually shop in camping stores, for my utensils I first bought what I call a "plate/bowl", a plate with a deep dish bottom (serves as both), next I combed the second hand stores for a pot on which the bowl shaped bottom of the plate/bowl could serve as a pot lid (no pot lid needed), another spin-off advantage is that I can cook one course transfer it to the plate bowl, cook a second dish with the plate/bowl acting as the lid, keeping the first dish hot.

For trips up to a week my brother takes a radicle approach and assumes that backpacking is no time to start thinking about cuisine, everything should be eaten raw or boiled and edible with a spoon (light plastic) and he eats out of his insulated cup (no plates/bowls).

Knife - what is the personal hangup with carrying your own knife, a Swiss Army knife is probably the heaviest small item we pack, I ask before I leave, if you have one mine stays in the car, I'm not so proud.

Coffee - using only a light plastic insulated mug, one cup filter holder (makes two cups/very light), paper filters with grounds are bio-degradable or burnable, and best of all none of those camp coffee grounds, also the paper filters are a great last ditch effort to remove sand/dirt/twigs/etc.

#### Treking Pole Camera Monopod:

Name: Greg, 02/19/99

Make one of your treking poles into a monopod using a bolt,hacksaw,drill, and glue. Drill a hole straight into the top of one of the handgrips slightly smaller than the bolt thread size for your camera, (make sure it is in a spot where you can go down about 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch). Screw the bolt down into the hole after covering the threads with glue. Cleanly cut off the head of the bolt with a hacksaw to the desired height and cap it off with a rounded locking nut. It has worked for me on three different sets of poles.

One more thing. By screwing your camera onto the pole and reaching out with the pole fully extended you can get some interesting overhead angles on people and wildlife. Note: This requires and camera with a timer or a remote because you sure as heck can't reach the button.

#### Multiple-Use Anti-Bacterial Gels:

Name: Nigal, 02/16/99

One of the most useful items I have found in a long time is the anti-bacterial hand sanitizer gels. You can buy them in small trial bottles at the grocery store. It has many uses.

I use it all over instead of having to do the whole bath thing -- leaves me feeling cleaner than soap and water.

I use it to prime my stove also. it doesn't burn quite as hot but it will burn longer and cleaner (no black stuff!). It also makes a fairly good fire starter in non windy conditions. Being mostly alcohol, it evaporates fast.

I also use it to sanitize my pot after dinner and then rinse with treated water after that.

#### Lightweight Sleeping Bag Pad:

Name: Bill Clo, 11/25/98

I've discovered a very lightweight sleeping bag pad that I just had to tell you folks about.

Go to Lowe's or a similar store (Large Home Improvements store), and get some mylar insulation in a roll. The kind I found is double-sided, and has bubbles in between; just like bubble wrap.

A 6' pad weighs 11oz, and a 4.5ft pad weighs 7.25 oz, and it's pretty warm. Not as comfy as other pads, but lighter and warmer.

#### Lightweight Salt Shaker:

Name: Tom K, 11/02/98

Why use a shaker? I just use the little paper packets of salt and pepper you see at fast food places. I keep them in a zip lock bag.

#### Uniformity:

Name: Mark Burton, 3/06/99

I hike with two of my friends. We try to maintain uniformity with our gear. For example, we use a propane stove and a propane mini-lantern. We only take one extra propane cannister. Also, all power items are "AA" batteries. The GPS, flashlights, weather scanner , and anything else are all "AA" battery-powered. We only bring 4 extra "AA" batteries. We all have an Eveready area/spot flashlight. It works well along the trail or "pulled down" in the tent. We only bring one extra bulb for the group. All of our ponchos are military. We have snapped all three together many times to create a shelter.

Uniformity in gear helps !

#### Cotton balls and Vaseline--Great Fire Starter:

Name: Ty MacWalters, 3/14/99

1.) get a bag of cotton balls  
2.) get vaseline  
3.) get an empty film can  
4.) grab a few cotton balls and cover them in vaseline  
5.) stuff the cotton balls in the film can (the more the merrier)

The result is a great fire starter that burns for a long time.

#### Vinyl Tape and Mini-Mag Lite:

Name: Christopher Michael Baugher, 3/16/99

Instead of buying a bite-cap for your AA model Mini-Mag or if you, like me, can't find one for your AAA Mini-Mag, use some vinyl electrician's tape. I rolled a good measure onto the end of the Mini-Mag, to a thickness of two or more millimeters. Now I can hold the light in my teeth without crunching metal. It also serves as a source of repair tape.

#### Seam Grip on Sleep Pad:

Name: Greg Lang, 3/18/99

I have a thermarest ultralight 3/4 that is a few years old (pre anti-slip fabric). In order to keep myself on the pad at night I utilized one of my favorite products (SEAMGRIP) Just run a few lines of seamgrip horizontally across your pad (especially at waist level) and let dry completely. Seamgrip remains grippy even when dry and this has kept me on my pad ever since.

#### Little Things:

Name: Mary Simpson, 3/28/99

For warm weather, a down vest in a tiny (about 6x12) pillowcase I made is perfect. I made the case by putting the opening in the center of the back so nothing falls out. The pillowcase also serves as the stuffsack for socks etc. When I am out for a short trip, up to three days, I use 1 mil plastic sheet for a groundcloth and blow off the tent if there is to be no rain. Nylon pants with zip off legs are worthwhile. I take Always brand panty liners with no side tabs in lieu of extra undies. I've never had to do it but they should make a fine no stick bandage for a large wound. One would need to use that duct tape. I have used those 99 cent thin plastic ponchos and they are just fine.

#### Newspaper Rubber Bands:

Name: Switchback, 4/05/99

The rubber bands that come with your newspaper are excellent for outdoor use. They seem to be the type of rubber that does not dry out when exposed to the outdoors. Save them each day and you will always have a great supply.

#### Wet Boots and Pack Covers:

Name: Rick Walker, 4/07/99

**Wet Boots:**  
Ever crawled into your tent and realized that you have a choice of either bringing your wet or dirty boots into the tent with you and spreading dirt or mud over everything else in the tent, or leaving them out in the rain and having wet boots in the morning ? Although I'm new to backpacking, I've already encountered this scenario. I have a solution.

I carry the cheap plastic shopping bags that you get at every store nowadays, and I use them as stuff sacks and garbage bags, etc. You either stand in one of them while you remove your feet from your boots, or sit in your tent with your feet sticking out, take off your boots and put the dirty boots in the bag. You can leave the top of the bag open inside your tent to let the boots air out without getting the tent dirty or tie the bag shut and leave them out in the rain without them getting soaked. This works for clothing also. If your camp shoes have gotten dirty, you can put them in a bag, tie it shut and put them in your pack without getting everything else dirty. But wet shoes inside a plastic bag won't dry out, so you probably don't want to pack wet camp shoes away like that, for very long.

**Pack cover:**  
If you're not in a shelter and don't have a vestibule on your tent to cover your pack over-night, you can pull a large garbage bag over your pack to keep it dry in a rain shower. One of the large leaf and garden bags works well. Just clip the pack's waist belt together, pull the bag over the pack and tuck it underneath. You can even twist-tie it shut if you need to. The bag weighs very little and will keep your shoulder harness and hip belt from soaking up water overnight, which can make putting the pack on the next morning rather uncomfortable. It'll also help keep small rodents and insects from rummaging through your gear. You can also lay it under the pack as a ground cloth when you open it up to access your gear; as an emergency rain coat or shelter; or cut the sides open and spread it out for a ground cloth under your tent.

But make sure that you don't leave the garbage-bag-covered pack near a trash can over-night or you may end up buying all new gear.

#### "Cheap" Mosquito Netting:

Name: Shane Graber, 4/15/99

Instead of buying mosquito netting from someone like REI or Campmor, simply go to your local fabric store and purchase "bridal veil" fabric. From everything I've seen, the two products are \*identical\*. I purchased a 54 inch x 12 foot section for $2.50 (it was on sale at the time). If I had bought it retail, I would have paid $4.75. Still, that's dirt cheap compared to any of the catalog prices I've seen... To soften it up, wash it on warm in your washing machine. Do not wash it with anything else because the veil material will pick up lint from the other clothing in the wash. The material will come out of the washing machine very supple and ready to use.

#### Misc. Nigal Nuggets:

Name: Nigal, 4/17/99

Try using a shaker bottle used for making salad dressing, for a **water bottle**. Most are 16 oz. (don't need to have a whole quart do you?), have measurements on the side, are water tight, have a huge-mouth opening for easy cleaning, cost less than half as much as a Nalgene bottle. It's a great choice for people who drink a lot of mixes -- like Carnation Instant breakfasts -- because they have a mixing insert that mixes the dressing or whatever is in it. They aren't Lexan so they would absorb flavors if not rinsed out after use. They are lighter too.

After giving up on my candle lantern, I started taking a small **can candle**. They weigh about 3 oz. and come in great flavors like mulberry and vanilla. You can find them at your local supermarket for around a buck or two. They will last up to a week of use in the evenings. I'm trying to find small citrinella candles for Summer.

I found great use of trash bags this winter. I used a lawn and leaf bag cut along the length of the side seams and unfolded for a **ground cloth**. I also used produce bags from the grocery for **feet vapor barriers**. They work unbelievably good while not on the move. I have also used tall kitchen bags for a **vapor barrier vest** worn against the skin. A trash bag **over the foot of your bag** will keep it from getting wet when rubbing against the tent walls or against your tarp.

#### Sense of Humor:

Name: Robert Adams, 5/14/99

Bring your sense of humor. Because sure as you don't, you're going to need it -- besides it tends to lighten even the heaviest load.

#### Reading Material/Fire Starter:

Name: Jolan ?, 5/1/99

For reading material, shop the used book stores for paperbacks. Burn them as you go. This also obviates the need to take any fire-starter material.

#### Zero-ounce Camp Shoes:

Name: David Gregory, 4/27/99

I usually carry two pair of socks and sock liners, so I can wash one pair and let them dry on the back of my pack while I hike. (Clean socks also double as mittens and pot mitts.) When I hit camp, I take off my boots and hang up the inserts to let them dry. Then I change into my clean socks and put my boots back on. Loosely laced and without the inserts, they make very comfortable -- if somewhat heavy -- camp shoes. They also protect your feet much better than Tevas from camp debris and hazards. And the heat of your now-dry feet will help dry your boots quicker than just hanging them up. This trick works really great unless the boots have become really soggy. Caveat Emptor.

#### Emergency Firestarter:

Name: **Benjamin Crowley, 05/19/99**  
Email: **bencrowley@email.msn.com**

A bicycle inner tube cut into 2-inch squares works great for a firestarter. It can't soak up water no matter what, and burns great for a few minuites, enough to catch wet twigs. Only problem is that it stinks, so stay upwind. Another trick for fires is to carry a small length of tubing, very light anduse it to blow into just the right spots to keep a fire going good. It ismore efficient and works better than fanning the coals. Plus it weighs next to nothing.

#### Lightweight Cutting Board:

Name: **Mike Pettinger, 05/28/99**  
Email: **idalaska@pinn.net**

On occasion I have needed a small cutting board while backpacking, generally for cutting food. Though several small (and expensive) backpacker's cutting boards are available, I found a lightweight solution for free.

I'm an architect, and a product rep brought in some samples of solid surfacing veneer (SSV), which is manufactured by Corian, Wilsonart and several other companies. I immediately found a cabinet shop in the area which assembles kitchen and bath counters using this stuff, which is highly resistant to scratches and cuts, but is easily formed with woodworking tools. I stopped in and asked them if I could have a piece of scrap SSV, about 6" square. They gladly cut a chunk off a larger piece of scrap.

It wasn't the color I would have picked, but it was free, and I took it home. Fifteen minutes in the shop allowed me to drill, saw and sand this into a great little cutting board which sits flat on the bottom of my pack cook pot.

#### Give Up Garbage Bags:

Name: **Kam Mudd, 05/28/99**  
Email: **beaterbomb@uswest.net**

I hiked the AT in '96 with a down sleeping bag. It rained or snowed about 50 of the first 60 days. I did not use any garbage bags to line my pack because I personally think they are worthless. It may sound strange, and it is a bit heavier, but I used cadaver bags.

I work for a veterinarian and cadaver bags for pets come in 24"x30" and 30"x48" sizes. Perfect for fitting inside a pack. And they are just about indestructable and do NOT leak.

#### Wind Screen for Homemade Stove:

Name: **sleepy, 05/29/99**  
Email: **sleepy@sockets.net**

The homemade stove works great! I've used mine several times and made a couple for friends.

I have a windscreen that I made for it. Take another can that is slightly larger in diameter than the stove. Cut the top out of it and cut it so that you have a section of can that is about two inches long. Punch a few holes in it so you can put two grates made of wire in the can that are about 3/8" or so apart. Make these near the center of the can section. Cut about 4 triangular notches in the top and set this on top of the stove. The notches allow you to use a pot that is bigger in diameter than the stove. I also use empty tin cans for cookware. Using different sizes allows the cans to nest in each other. For example a soup can sits inside a green bean can which sits inside a beef stew can, etc. In this way you can come up with a whole system of nested cookware and stove. Just snap a rubber band on and it holds it all together. Just make sure the cans are not galvenized. For a handle, I always carry a multitool (leatherman) and use that to move them around. Also wear gloves to hold them while eating. The cans are free and if they get funky, discard and get fresh ones.

#### Jewelry Pouch-First Aid Kit:

Name: **Steven C Jones, 06/12/99**

I purchased a clear, vinyl jewelry organizer pouch at a dollar store. It has 18 pockets of various sizes and that are transparent (front and back). Now, as soon as I open my kit, everything is organized and visible! Just don't forget to remove the hanger hook. The pouch EASILY fits into a ziplock along with my wilderness emergency paperback book (a must!) and some other emergency necessities.

#### Chopsticks!!:

Name: **Reese "mr. homebody", 07/17/99**

I've started carrying chopsticks left over from our last take-out Chinese meal to use instead of forks. They're versatile and made from wood, which is much lighter than a metal fork. Furthermore, if you are only staying out for one night, they can be disposed of in your campfire to lighten the return load.

#### Cut Cooking Weight:

Name: **Eric Romberg, 8/20/99**

Recently I've started making longer and longer backcountry and wilderness trips, as this has gone on, more and more things are being left home. Most recently my entire cookset! On trips where I do lots of miles in a day I've given up cooking in camp to mearly boiling water and adding it to either comercily bought freeze dried meals or to self prepared meals (usualy I use a base of instant rice, instant potatoes, or couscous). I was down to just bringing a pot and a cup and a spoon for my cook set and utensels. I found using ziplocks to cook in worked beter and left less to clean up, and I stoped bringing a propane/butaine stove and now use sterno. So I thought about why I was bringing that "heavy" pot. On my high milage trips I now just bring a 20 oz colman stanless steal cup ( the 20 oz is capasity not the wheight of the cup) and a spoon, I rarly need more than two cups of water to reconstitute my meals, and while my meal is reconstituting I'm warming water for hot chocolate.

#### Take Fly - Leave Tent:

Name: **Bert Nemcik, 8/30/99**

Dear Light Friends,

After trying all kinds of tents, I finally settled on an 8' x 10' coated fly for my shelter. It weighs a mere 1 pound 12 ounces weighed accurately on a baby scale. I use my Komperdell poles for pitching. With 8 stakes and stiff, no tangle cord, the total fly, plastic ground cloth and pegs weighs in at a wonderfully light 2 pounds 4 ounces. It gives me a lot of space to spread out and a dozen ways to pitch it. I set the poles up in the middle and stretch the fly out at the corners and have plenty of air and still nearly 80 square feet of floor space. This is plenty for my wife, me and our two dogs. I slept in the fly pitched this way in a thunder storm with the wind whipping and didn't get the least bit wet. I found too that I could look out and watch the light show which made it all the better.

Tents are nice for winter, but the fly will work well then too. Just pitch it so that the ends are down to the ground, and place packs and a poncho at the end where the cold wind is coming from and there is plenty of shelter for sleeping snug. Of course, you'll need a winter weight bag but that is a must anyway. I've slept in the fly down to 20 degrees and it was fine. It does condense though so there is a need to dry it out every day. But what the heck, even when soaked, it weighs about 2 pounds less than my 5 pound 5 ounce two person tent. I bought my fly from Campmor for $38. Give it a try.

#### AT Water Tips:

Name: **John Young, 9/3/99**

When i backpacked the Appalachian Trail in 1995, I used a number of techniques to reduce pack weight. Since water is quite heavy, I carried less than most, usually no more than a quart, and stopped more often to drink when passing a stream or spring. I carried a Katadyn mini-filter most of the time to treat the water. However, for some stretches, I mailed the filter ahead to myself to save even more weight and used iodine or chlorine bleach to purify Nalgene bottles-full of stream water. I used chemicals for only occasional stretches, preferring the filter's weight to ingesting abnormal levels of chemicals for too long.

Since nearly all AT shelters are close to springs or streams, it was simple to boil a great deal of water in the morning and evening, and to drink my fill then. I would boil nearly two quarts of water, fill my two plastic coffee mugs and let them cool, then add my oatmeal or evening pasta meal to the remainder. Of course, I would turn off the stove promptly and let the contents cook under the pot lid to save fuel. Then, replete to bursting with water, I could hike for several hours before requiring any more. Carrying it in your stomach is better, I think, than on your back.

That was the last drought year, and I'll admit I was caught short on several occasions in the mid-Atlantic states. I had to drink from swamps several times in New Jersey and Massachusetts, and could have been in trouble in New York when most of the streams or springs marked on the maps turned out to be dry. So the technique of tanking up and carrying less is great -- as long as you're pretty certain there actually is water up ahead! That's probably less of a problem in Washington than, well, anywhere else :-)

#### Russ' General Tips:

Name: **Russ Ray, 9/7/99**

1: If you wear contacts, the small (2") squeeze bottles of daily cleaner make great dispensers for bio-soap and bug dope. Most have a wrap around label that peels off leaving a white bottle you can write on. I filled one with water and had to stomp it 3 times to cause it to burst!

2: Try leaving your heavy candle lantern and taking a Photon (white) light. Hang it using the small plastic " J " hooks that come various department store items such as socks. You can quickly save 10+ ounces!

3: Even small sharpening stones weight 2+ ounces. Try the Eze-Lap diamond rod. (Found mine in Wal-Mart) It's shaped like a very short fountain pen. The cap exposes a nice diamond "rod", flat on one side and groved on the other. About 0.7 ounces.

4: Check out the Ziplock disposable bowls. Round. When you trim the "lift tab" of the lid, you have a tough 0.5 ounce bowl with lid. Great for that last helping that needs to last a few hours till you are hungry again. (Fits great inside the Evernew Titanium pot)

5: This Nugget is not for everyone. It works for me. Consider the Platypus Big Zip 2 (3.9 ounces), (or similar) bladder and an in-line filter (2.4 ounces). For 6.3 ounces you have a great filter and water source compared to 10+ounces for a filter and 5+ for a single 32 ounce bottle. (Until you are sure you can carry an empty 16 ounce bottle for backup.) Hint! Only keep it 1/2 full until camp. 70 ounces of water is heavy!

6: If you use sugar, carry cubes. They are much easier to portion control so you carry only what you need.

7: If your load is small enought, remove the metal stays. Mine weigh 8.9 ounces. My load is down to 22.5 pounds with water, but not food. My daily food is about 1.6 pounds. (Long live "Joe's Ultralight Moose Goo!)

(I know many of you are lower, but this ain't no race! Two years ago I was hauling 52 pounds!)

#### Tarp Shelter & Bugs:

Name: **rhysdavies, 9/15/99**

many people are using tarps to save weight and a simple way to keep out the bugs is;

along the middle (width ways)either glue or stitch,(remember if you stitch you need to seal the area with seam sealer).a half inch wide peice of velcro which should not go to the ends of your tarp but,about 1"from the end. next buy a length of noseeum mosquito netting long enough to tuck under your sleeping mat, allowing enough slack that you can move around in your sleeping bag. again along the middle width ways attatch the velcro.you can then either marry the netting to the tarp prior to errecting your sheltr or after simply by pushing the velcro tape together.

#### Make a Instant Fire!

Name: **Bridger Newman, 9/17/99**

It's pouring and you did not make it to your intended destination on time. Wet and cold?

You would like to warm up and dry out all of that hi-tech gear you just bought. But with all this rain, how do go about accomplishing getting warm and dry FAST? Try this: remove all the leftover lent from your dryer and place it into a ziploc bag. Once you have accumulated enough for a weekend trip (half a freezer bag) add 1/8 cup of citronella fuel. The lent will soak it up like a sponge and you will most certainly have a fire when you most need it. You can also try variation with parafin wax as well! Good luck, hope this helps.

#### Conserving Water:

Name: **Becky, 9/20/99**

I don't like to carry too much extra water (weight) when backpacking. I always carry 1-3 extra cups "just in case", and gorge myself at the water sources, but the while actually hiking I use a different method: I find that if I use a Platapus and just sip water slowly but constantly while hiking, instead of waiting until I'm thirsty, I get two good results. The first is that I almost never have to stop and pee. The second is that I probably use 8-15% less water (so I don't have to carry as much). I think the trick is to get into a "sipping rythm" where you sip exactly as much water as is needed to stay hydrated, and no more.

Also, i start my day with a glass of super powerful Gatorade (dry mix and water), to help me stay hydrated. It tastes nasty but works well.

#### Bombproof Shoe/Boot Repair:

Name: **Bridger Newman, 9/27/99**

Occasionally, even the highest quality shoe or boot succumbs to trail abuse. Sometimes the heel, toe or stitching comes undone. Instead of super glue or shoe goo, I substituted with construction strength liquid nails. You would find it at Lowes or another hardware store. If it's good enough for 3/4 inch plywood or 2x12x16 board, chances are it will stand up to a shoe or boot, too. Happy trails!

#### Vac Liner Stuff Sack:

Name: **Dozerluvr@aol.com, 9/27/99**

Trash bags are a cheap and lightweight alternative to heavy-vinyl-watertight stuff sacks but here's a better one! Go to home Depot or Sears ( anyplace that sells wet/ dry vacs ) get a liner for a 16 gal. vac. they're much more resistant to tear than regular trash bags !

#### Toothpaste Replacement:

Name: **MARK HAUGHWOUT, 9/28/99**

I never carry toothpaste or powder. If i plan to brush my teeth at all, i either just use water or better yet use salt. salt is an excellent replacement for toothpaste and you need to carry salt in your pack anyway to flavor food and prevent dehydration. Also the only eating utensil i carry is a spoon, i find next to no use for a fork and i use my swiss army knife(with minimal gadgets) as my eating knife. also i don't carry a tent. i use a goretex bivy sack instead (15oz.) The only time i might carry a tent is for multi day storms. A bivy will easily add five or ten degrees of comfort to my 25 degree sleeping bag.

#### Toilet Paper-NOT!:

Name: **MARK HAUGHWOUT, 9/28/99**

i just don't carry toilet paper. I carry newspaper instead, which can also be used as fire starter. and if i remember to, i grab the crossword puzzle section thereby providing entertainment as well.

#### Toilet Paper-NOT!:

Name: **MARK HAUGHWOUT, 9/28/99**

i just don't carry toilet paper. I carry newspaper instead, which can also be used as fire starter. and if i remember to, i grab the crossword puzzle section thereby providing entertainment as well.

#### A Little Duct Tape:

Name: **Bernie Hohman, 10/04/99**

I have much experience with a heavy pack but I have been slowly reducing my gross pack weight. I consider myself well prepared on each trip-- sometimes over-prepared. But one piece of light equipment that I cannot do without is duct tape. It is very useful for repairs to pack straps, boots, tents, gaiters, etc. But an added bonus that I found is that it works very well at repelling and/or protecting blisters. I leave the medical tape out and bring the duct tape--it is more versatile.

#### Some Clothing Tips:

Name: **Az8hiker@aol.com, 10/16/99**

Here are some ideas for reducing the weight of the clothing you bring:

You need a Waterproof jacket. You DO NOT need waterproof pants. I carry a pair of uncoated nylon windpants, and in combination with gaiters and a jacket that is cut long, they will keep out all but the worst weather. Wearing a pair of polypro long johns underneath will help too.

Also, unless there are ticks or other insects, you don't need hiking pants. Shorts will work in most weather. When you are cold, put on long johns, for weather protection, use wind pants.

Think about when you are hiking. I used to carry about the same stuff year-round, but if you fine-tune you pack to the season in which you are hiking you will be much happier. You don't need that thick pile jacket for a summer hike, do you?

Keep it simple. There are way too many bell and whistles on today's clothing. Sure, pockets are nice, but really think about how many you actually use. No more than one or two, am I right? Look for a jacket that is made for hikers, not climbers or (especially) skiers. Also, don't be afraid to alter the clothing after you've bought it. Slice off unnecessary pockets and straps and flaps, make those drawcords one-hand operable, seam-seal a cheap jacket, and so forth. All I'm trying to say is tailor the clothing to your needs. Don't assume that the manufacturer knows what is best for you.

#### Water Supply:

Name: **Doug Rodrigues, 10/17/99**

I occasionally hike into a deep canyon (3,500 ft. in 4 miles) area where there isn't any water except for the river at the bottom. I "plant" a half gallon water bottle just off the trail at approximately the halfway point. On the way back up, that planted water supply is a welcome sight. Where ever I hike, I also leave one of those 2 1/2 gallon store bought drinking water containers on the hood of my car with a note: "Anyone needing a drink is welcome to help themselves."

#### Sleeping Bag Weight:

Name: **Jim Yurchenco, 10/27/99**

If you travel with a spouse, (or a close friend) you can save significant weight in your sleeping bag. We modified a single bag that unzips all the way by adding a thin cloth zip in bottom. The single bag forms a quilt over the two of us and the thin bottom keeps it from slipping off of us and prevents drafts. Thus two people carry the weight of barely more than a single bag. If you use a lightweight sleeping pad, in most weather you don't need the insulation on the underside of the bag (which gets flattened and rendered almost useless by your body weight anyway). We have used this system successfully on multi-week backpacking trips with nightime temperatures that have dropped below freezing.

#### Spoon Substitute:

Name: **RSTYB2@aol.com, 10/29/99**

Eliminate even your spoon as an eating utensil, during woodland treks. I pick up dry sticks, thicker than a pencil and straight, about 10" long. A few flicks with my knife and the bark is off the bottom 5" and the last 2" are square. Presto: Chop sticks. As I boil supper, I boil the ends of the sticks. Anything that is liquid (soup, etc) I drink the solids and use the chopsticks for the rest. Yes, with a little practice you can eat oatmeal with them! Smaller bites make the meal last longer, and more filling, too. In the morning, after breakfast, I clean them and either carry them on (still lighter than a spoon) or usually throw them out and get another set at dinner. Weight savings: 1 oz. plus.

#### Duct taped zip-lock bag:

Name: **Ken Shinzato, 10/30/99**

Zip lock bags are very handy for a backpacker, but even the heavy duty ones are susceptible to tears or holes which then render them somewhat useless. By applying strips of duct tape to your plastic bags you can get air tight waterproofing with added durability and strength. The best way I've found, is to layer your strips vertically so that the entire bag is covered, and then to fold strips along the edges which are the most vulnerable spots.

#### Tony's Tips:

Name: **Tony Rockwell, 11/1/99**

Although you mention obtaining a lightweight backpack - I found that the size of the backpack made a big difference. By getting a smaller capacity pack, for short trips, I couldn't fit as much and was forced to re-think more gear. I cut about 10 lbs. off of my "normal" 3-day pack just by getting a smaller backpack.

Another thing I did was to stop taking a cookpot altogether. I bought a cheap, lightweight aluminum coffee pot (4-cup percolator) - toss the percolator insides and use it to boil water. I only take food that can be cooked by pouring the boiling water in its packaging...then I eat directly out of the package. Now my "kitchen" consists of lexan spoon & fork, a termal mug with the handle cut off, and the coffee pot. Believe me this pot works well, sometimes I even take my stove and coffee pot on snowshoeing day hikes - just to have hot tea on the trail. [OK I admit I do have a lexan bowl also, but I only take it when I want a particular food that requires a separate bowl, like cereal - although I usually just buy the small individual servings and eat them out of the packaging also.]

#### Insect Repellent:

Name: **Dj van den Oever, 11/5/99**

I read your page about the "Fourteen Essentials". Insects do seem to be getting accustomed to repellents. But I've always found using a repellent with lemonscent quite helpful. In the Netherlands, where I live, such a repellent is available at the chemist or drugstore under various names.

#### Waterproofing Tip:

Name: **Brad, 11/12/99**

I take a large tube of silacon and mix it into about one litre of paint thinner (varsol). It takes some time to desolve but with some patience you end up with a brush on silacon that is cheep and works well on nylon as well as cotton. Hope this helps some one out. Oh, it smells for a couple days but once its finished drying its fine.

#### Vandals!!:

Name: **CMccrossen@aol.com, 9/28/99**

We have problems with vandals at The Red River Gorge area of Kentucky. These good old boys bust out car windows even if you leave the car unlocked(in one case a vandal came across a car with the windows down, he actually rolled the windows up and broke them out!!!). We suggest putting all of your valuables in the engine compartment. (After it cools down) It's amazing what you can fit into that tiny space.

#### Trail Toothbrush:

Name: **Thaddeus Yukna, 3/24/00**

For my trail toothbrush I picked up the children's size. They are already short and light with a small head. The added advantage is they come with an assortment of cartoon characters on the handles for early morning entertainment.

#### Dental Floss and Toothpaste Tips:

Name: **Leon C. Nelson, 3/17/00**

For the LightWeight Backpacker: STORAGE OF DENTAL FLOSS \* Use only WAXED J&J DentoTAPE \* Wrap 18" around your finger \* Store "coil" of floss in sandwich bag with toothbrush

For the LightWeight Backpacker: NO TOOTHPASTE OR POWDER NECESSARY Brushing for plaque removal requires NO TOOTHPASTE!!! Honest! I know this to be a FACT cuz I am a dentist, and have recommended "dry brushing" to my patients for over 30 years! When brushing, just use the brush dampened with saliva or water.

#### The Three Needs (Gear Tips):

Name: **epaz@worldspy.net, 3/4/00**

I have had good luck planning trips using needs assessment or the three needs.

FOOD- dried meats like salmon, beef, deer, emu, duck. the higher the fat content the better. grains like rice, Asian sweet rice is nice flavored. soup mixes in a packet for just add water type things. eggs, milk, bacon, and other perishables are not practical in backpacking scenario.

WATER- although you can opt for the new filter systems and expensive gadgets a standard army 1 qt. or extravagant 2qt. canteen with metal cup and purifier pill attachment will work more than adequately. when in doubt boil.

SHELTER- if it is warm weather, and even transition seasons in mild climates, a Vietnam era rain poncho with liner will be enough shelter and warmth for most. in rainy areas a small tarp of ripstop nylon,(walmart-5.00), or a section of 6mil poly sheet tarp from a hardware store will do great. Don't forget your stakes and cord if you are tarping.

other essentials even for the minimalist  
-a compass and topo map.  
-waterproof matches (dip wood strike alls in wax) and tinder material (firestarter log 2.00 grocery store)  
-utility knife,leatherman,sog, buck,kershaw, all make good versions, dont forget the good old swiss army versions. a large survival knife makes one feel manly but is not good for much other than trenching and spearing.  
-bug juice, deet military stuff, or sensitive kids stuff from wal mart. must have anywhere. first aid kit- the pre packaged ones are always incomplete use good research and forethought.  
-flashlight, small AA model will suffice bring extra batts.  
-dried foods, remember the protein.  
-even the minimalist can find room for a camera, a small cheap one will do. the pics you get should keep you motivated when placed properly on your work site desk.  
-if it seems important take a spare.

all of your equipment should fit in or on a med to small size pack. i use a med frame alice pack with no frame. dont visit the forest live with it while you are there. leave no trace. pack it out.

#### Fishing Rod Case:

Name: **Tickbait, 1/09/00**

I don't know how many fishermen/women there out there but, I replaced my old PVC rod case with a cardboard mailing tube covered with rip-stop nylon. This is my first sewing project!

I think I will spray it with Scotch Guard to semi-waterproof it. If the tube gets trashed, it will be very easy to replace. This system is much lighter and still offers enough protection.

#### Re-Use Hotel Shampoo Bottles:

Name: **Climbthegunks@aol.com, 12/31/99**

These bottles can be cleaned and re-used for a number of items....like butter (my one luxury), spices, Dr. Bonners Peppermint soap, coffee creamer, etc...

They're stronger and a little easier to dispense then good old zip locks for a number of key items.

#### Cache Water Supply:

Name: **Climbthegunks@aol.com, 12/31/99**

A simple trick I learned hiking the Grand Canyon that has proved useful many times since. If you route takes you back to the same trailhead where you started, pack an extra liter or two of water with you on the way in. Then cache (i.e. hide) a bottle at a convenient distance from the trailhead (e.g. two miles in, then another four miles in).

This gives you an emergency stash in the event you cannot find water, and saves your weight on the way out (when you'e most tired). You don't need to carry water out, just retrieve your hidden water.

Leave a snickers bar, too, and you'll really have something to reward yourself with after a couple of hard days hiking!

#### Gourmet 1st-Night Meal:

Name: **Climbthegunks@aol.com, 12/31/99**

I often spoil myself to a great meal the first night (on a 2-3 day camping trip) by freezing a small steak (or schrimp) and maybe some frozen vegetables at home before I start in. Many stores even sell steaks in the frozen section.

Sure it's a lot of weight. But that first night's meal is glorious! I especially use this trick when I am taking along a friend who doesn't backpack much.

And if you're feeling really gourmet, pour a bottle of wine into an old gatorade or 1 liter soda bottle. If your friend happens to be of the opposite sex, you can't create a more romantic dinner for two!

#### Containers:

Name: **Derek Chambers, 1/31/00**

As a fairly newbee backpacker, I found myself looking for a container to store my first-aid kit, sewing kit, and bits and bobs, (of which have more than one function)

Taking two video cassette cases, (the clear type), I butchered one and salvaged a side. Next I hotglued the sides of the complete case, and fitted a divider. On the inside of the lid, I stuck various adhesive tape, (electrical, surgical, & duct). Keeping the plastic label cover on enabled me to make a note of the contents as follows:

Left hand side (First-aid kit) Iodine,tape,lip balm,transiderm,painkillers,gauze,tri-bandage,steri-strips,plasters,surgical wipes,beechams hot,safety pins,surgical glove,scissors,& scalpel.

Right hand side (bits & bobs) buttons,needles,thread,pencil,pen, toothpicks,nail-clips,lighter,condom,clothes pegs,candle,matches,hankies,drawing pins,blue tack superglue,chalk,flints,cord stays,rubber bands,paperclips,chewgum,velcro,stamps, fishing weights and hooks.

Contents list can be varied, but I hope it gives the general idea. the finished item fits nicely into a large zip-type freezer bag.

Derek Chambers  
(Northern Ireland)

#### Filter Water w/Coffee Filters:

Name: **Rich Goenne', 1/16/00**

I dont carry a filter anymore. Instead I treat my water with iodine tabs and also use a thin coffee filter from coffee makes to filter any debree such as tiny leafs, dirt anything that is in the water.

#### Rain Poncho as Shelter:

Name: **All8Cylinders@cs.com, 4/05/00**

I have found that an Army issue rain poncho WITH liner is comfortable and warm as well as waterproof. I can usually go without the tent or tarp in the summer this way. In the spring or fall I add rain pants to p[rotect the lower areas. I will take the tarp however if rain is a factor. A word of advice though. The Vietnam era liners are much warmer than the new ones. I am looking at having a quilted liner stitched for me out of a hollofil and rayon. The rain poncho is basically a large square so making your own could be easy too. Also the 1.5 liter Aquafina bottles work great as a cheap canteen. I just make sure to pack mine in the ruck to protect the corners from impact if I fall down a slope or something..

#### Plastic Garbage Bags:

Name: **Rich Goenne', 1/21/00**

Use plastic bags to keep you 10 to 20 degrees warmer. They are good vapor barrier and a lot cheeper and lighter than GORTEX.

#### Keep Writing From Rubbing Off:

Name: **Switchback, 12/8/99**

One thing I do on bottles, pepper spray cans, etc., is put clear package wrapping tape around the item. This keeps the content writing from rubbing off on a trip. I do NOT try to put it on smoothly, so the item is easier to grip. Happy trails

#### Snap Light & Tree Step:

Name: Rick Joiner, 12/15/99

I carry a snap-lite that you find at Walmart for about $1.50 and hang one each night in my tent gear loft. This provides sufficient light in the tent so a headlamp or other source is not needed. If I have a fire left in the morning, The light is left behind and burns away. These lights last all night. I prefer the green. Also, your tent is a little more visible at night unless you have the rain fly on.

A favorite item I use is a tree step (Cabelas or local archery/hunting store). I buy the Ameristep strap-on for about $7. It allows me to hang my pack on any supporting tree at a level I can easily work from and also serves to keep it off the ground away from easy access to animals or away from water on the ground if raining. It straps on and does not damage the tree as a screw in would. It will support the pack weight and my own! These are small and pack easily. Not for a minimalist but sure is nice to have.

#### Campshoes:

Name: Robert Collins, 12/27/99

The best lightweight end-of-the-day campshoes I've found are Wal-mart's Teva-knockoff sandals. They weigh just a few ounces per pair. Their soles are of some rather stiff foam rubber that weighs next to nothing. Their straps are lightweight nylon with Velcro closures. The soles are infinitely better at cushioning your feet from rocky soil than houseslippers. In winter, I've put them on over my wool socks and they provided comfortable insulation for my feet around camp even on snow! At the end of the season, many Wal-marts close these sandals out for five dollars or less; you just have to scrounge a bit.

#### Summer Gloves:

Name: David Olsen, 4/18/00

For inexpensive summer gloves, try the white polyester knit work glove liners available at most hardware stores. They don't chill when wet like cotton, dry very fast, work great at keeping out sun as well as cold and usually cost about $1.50.

#### Gluestick (for emergencies):

Name: Rammer, 4/19/00

When you're thinking of things to add to your backpack that are great in emergency situations.I found throwing a glue stick in your sewing kit or your jacket pocket. This can be used to refasten that shoe sole that came loose or that tear in the tent until you get home.Just warm it up over a candle or over the fire and smear it on (its waterproof too).I haven't tried it yet in the wilderness but on a long weekend with all the Dentists out of town, I made a temporary filling with this stuff after loosing a filling. I heated it up until it was pliable,rolled in my fingers then forced it into the cavity. No pain...it worked. The old Scout....

#### Table Cloth:

Name: Claudia Nowlan, 5/21/00

I've only been backpacking for a few years now, but something I have learned... I used to carry a sit upon I made out of an old foam sleeping pad, but I have given it up for one of those plastic table cloths...not the flannel backed, but the disposable ones for parties...they come in assorted colors...& they are very light ..you can sit on them...use them for a shelter...use them as a blanket...use them to cover your pack in the rain...& they are very durable!!! My neighbor has one they used for his daughter's graduation party two years ago & it is still in good shape after a few trips out into the wilderness!!!

#### Cook with Sterno:

Name: Jansen Voss, 6/11/00

I have found that sterno, even though it is not as "cool" or high tech as a titanium liquid fuel stove, suits my needs. I backpack in the southern U.S. up to Virginia and cold weather as never been a factor in the failure of Sterno for me. I do not use the sterno stove part, I use just the sterno fuel. I have made a stand for my 20 oz. stainless steel cup. I took a Star-Kist tuna can, which is about 1.5 in. tall and cut the center out of the lid of the can. Leave about .5" around the outside of the can. Do the same for the bottom of the can. This process is dangerous and should be done with caution. I used a pair of heavy duty scissors to cut the center parts out. Next one should cut at least four squares out of the sides of the can. This lets air get to the flame. The tuna can fits perfectly on top of the sterno can and my 20 oz cup fits perfectly on top of the can. I have gotten great results out of this. I also use an old Whisperlight windscreen in foul weather. boiling time for 18 oz. of water is about 16 minutes with no lid on the cup.

#### Forget the tent!:

Name: Alan Hopper, 6/15/00

During summer months in areas where cold is not a problem, I bring a light weight camping hammok and a thin tarp. The advantages of the hammok are:

(1) You get to sleep outside

(2) You do not have to look for level ground

(3) There is no need to bring a therma-rest or other padding

(4) If someone in your party gets hurt you can use it as a stretcher

(5) Avoid having to deal with wet ground!

disadvantages:

(1) Less wind and bug protection

(2) You need to find things to hang it from

(3) No convenient way to store items

The tarp that I bring is long enough that I can use parachute cord and four small stakes to make a cover over the hammock. If it gets windy lowering the tarp can cut out a lot of the wind and if you have to, then it is possible to get the hammock very close to the ground and make the tarp cover all the way to the ground.

For me the advantages of the hammock outway any disadvantage, as long as I am hiking in a known place in the summer! I do not recommend this type of travelling if you are going anywhere unfamiliar! (I have found it hard to find trees)

#### Paint Pole Walking Stick:

Name: Randy Cone, 6/19/00

If you'd like to use a light weight, adjustable and in-expensive walking stick just drive over to your local Home Depot or Lowe's paint department. for years now, I have used an aluminum expandable paint pole for a walking stick; it has a lanyard hole, is lightwieght and strong (it can hold my 295 Lbs. frame)and can be expanded out to almost ten feet for use as a bear bag reteiver, ridge pole, or snake stick. It's also just the right size to add a bicycle grip for comfort, I've even screwed on a frog gig for snagging some brook trout. They have fiberglass poles now that are even lighter than my old one. Total cost: around $15.

#### Backpack Stay Splint:

Name: Matt Chambers, 6/26/00

If your hiking partner breaks a bone, chances are he won't be able to carry his pack. If the pack is an internal frame, use the metal stays as a splint. No need for a Sam Splint. Saves weight and money.

#### Ultralight Toothbrush:

Name: Roy Anglin, 8/04/00

Want a truly ultra-light toothbrush? I came upon these disposable fingertipped toothbrushes called DentalDots. On inspection, they were no more than the "hook" side of round velcro patches. They had dehydrated toothpaste pressed into the patch. One applies the adhesive patch to the end of a finger, and the toothpaste is reconstituted with either saliva or a little water. Easy and cheap enough to make your own. If you do not want to stick your finger inside your mouth, cut your velcro patches to match the handle of your spoon. You can use the toothpaste of choice and a weeks worth can weigh as little as .3oz. They are single use, so one need not worry about drying and sterilizing a brush.

#### Photon Microlight Screws:

Name: Roy Anglin, 8/04/00

Lose a screw in your Photon Microlight II, or wondering how to change the battery in the bush? I replace the tiny phillip-head screws with those little flat head silver screws found in eye-glass repair kits. Get a kit with several different sizes- one will fit. The silver color is easier to find if dropped, and the flat slot is workable with most multi-tools. By the way, that funky shaped little blade in the Mini-Buck tool is actually made to fit small phillips-head screws- and fits the original Photon screws nicely.

#### Camp Shoes:

Name: Reed Jones, 9/01/00

Lighter than aqua socks (which you advocate and I USED to use) are cheap chinese-made flip flops which cost less than $10 at a discount store. I found some that have very durable nylon cloth straps, inch thick soles and decent tread and since they are made from air-blown recycled rubber, they weigh MUCH less than a pound. I have found them to be very durable, comfortable and a lot lighter than any water shoes I have found. Just go to a K-Mart or Target and weight test everything you find, until you find this type. They are remarkably light.

#### Multiple Tips:

Name: Charles Minton, 10/01/00

Use more oils and oily foods (low or no cholesterol or saturated fat). Carbohydrates have about 110 cal/oz. Oils have 240 cal/oz. and give more sustained energy.

A cheap mylar space blanket makes a good ground cloth at 2oz. it doesn't puncture easily but you have to watch for the edges tearing.

I've found Patagonia capilene expedition weight fleece quite warm and light at 7oz for the bottom and 10oz. for the top.

A pint plastic yogurt or salza container makes a good cup at 1oz.

I have to question the weight savings of iodine pills since they take a half hour to work. I was finding myself carrying 3+ pounds of water for that time (plus some extra time for ascorbic acid pill to neutralize the iodine) before I could drink it. I'm thinking now that a nine oz water filter may average out to as good or better. Plus there are less stops ie. getting the water, shaking it after a few minutes, adding and shaking with the neutralizer and finally drinking it.

I've saved a couple of oz. by leaving behind my pot's lid and using heavy foil such found in one time use pie tins and baking sheets. The foil can also be fashioned into light weight wind screens.

I carry an emergency plastic poncho at 2oz. I found at a hardware store and an emergency mylar sleeping bag, 2.5oz as a cover for my bag to supplement a tarp and stakes shelter. Rain, hwever, is unusual where I hike and I haven't had to use those.

#### Semi Primitive:

Name: **Ron Schmidt, 5/16/00**

Sewed my own canvas 1lb (3000 cu in) backpack, sewed a sleeping blanket to replace my sleeping bag 1.5 lb., made a 40 deg. bag with an sleeve to stuff in additional insulation ( leaves, grass, what ever I can find ) 1 lb. , no stove other than solid fuel bars or burned wood & cones in a can (modified peach can).

#### Spectra Line:

Name: **Roy Anglin, 8/4/00**

Try using the modern day version of para-cord for critter-bagging. Spectra line is lighter and stronger than nylon para-cord. It is 825test and 1000test. The 825 weighs around 1.2oz for 50ft, the 1000 is a little heavier. Best of all, it is a braided-unshiethed cord that is slippery- it does not snag on bark. It is quite durable and seems to repel dirt and sap. The reduction of friction means that some knots need an extra loop or two to hold though. It also works well for the ridge-line in tarp set-ups. Available from parachute companies over the net.

Shorty.

#### Pocket Stove:

Name: **Andreas Faulstich, 9/22/00**

Berlin-Charlottenburg, Germany For winter camping I like to use a pocket stove. It weighs just 75g (=2oz) and burns 10 hours on 5g (0.2oz) gasoline. Using my pocket stove at night I can take a much lighter sleeping bag. In harsh winter conditions I use my Feathered Friends Wallcreeper sleeping bag (1kg = 35oz). In camp I can wear it as warm and comfortable jacket using its arm and leg holes. In summer I only use a bivy bag (320g) and sleeping bag liner (223g).

#### Knock off weight, plus More!:

Name: **Don Kredl, 10/24/00**

I agree with Charles Lindsey....Loose some weight....Over the past 3 years I've worked on chiseling off over 30 lbs...Now just think, here we are knocking off an ounce here and an ounce there with our gear and we're all carrying at least 10 to 20 pounds around our waist....Just think you guys that are 20 lbs over weight have to go tentless while I can carry a nice 4 season 5 pound tent and still be 15 lbs ahead of you....Seriously, think about it. Your knees, back and feet will love you for the it, and if you pack light weight to boot, man you'll fly over the trails.

**Other tips:**  
-Dehydrate my own veggies, Broccoli, Cauliflower, onions, mushrooms and 2 tablespoons of powdered gravy mix...Great nourishment....  
-Cut back to a 3.5 oz fuel bottle. You never seem to get to the bottem of those biggies...  
-Photo copy only the pages of your guide you will be used rather than carrying a 12 oz. guide book.  
-Dried soy beans have much more protein and 1/4 the weight as other nuts... -Napkins are just great...does the job for clean ups without any us of water...I always pack 6 or so...Next to nothing weight wise...  
-And remember on a 14 day hike or less you will not have a super appetite so cut back to 1 lb or less of food....Hey, you're not going to die out there and gee the worst that can happen is that you may even loose a pound or two...

#### Cooking with Lids:

Name: **Jim Walton, 11/26/00**

Always use a lid when cooking - you reduce the time it takes to boil water and reduces the amount of fuel needed.

Unless you are planning to fry anything, don't pack a "proper" lid. The aluminium pie trays available at most supermarkets make a very lightweight lid. They can be moulded around the pan (before it gets hot!) to form a perfect seal - often beter than a manufactured lid.

NEVER take pasta or rice to eat. These foods, although hign in carbohydrate, require the water to be boiling for over 10mins. This requires a huge amount of fuel. Better to use fuel that only requires the water to be boiled for a short period of time - a perfect example being INSTANT MASH POTATO. Boil the water, stir in the powder, turn off fuel.

If melting snow, always put a small amount of water in with the snow as it speeds the melting process.

#### Tent Guyline Management:

Name: **Bill Holt, 11/29/00**

In your review on the Hilleberg Akto you recommend wrapping the folded guy lines with a rubber band. Here's what I do with guy lines on my tents. On all of my tents I leave the guy lines on permanently. To eliminated lines all over the place I fold them into 6 to 8 inch lengths and then tie the folded lines into a simple over hand knot. The knot is easy to untie, the folded lines are easy to pack and the unused lines are hanging from the side of the tent ready to be deployed if needed.

#### Camping Tips:

Name: **John Godino, 12/12/00**

Oregon John's tips:

There are a lot of good comments here about using garbage bags - even pet cadaver bags, yuck! My preferences: trash compactor bags (for smaller stuuff, like sleeping bags) and contractor's clean up bags, from a hardware store. The contractor's bags are huge capacity, 3 mil thick, super tough, will last for many trips, and will hold up when you really need them. Use for the usual things: emergency bivy gear, solar shower, pack cover, etc.

Bears are great tree climbers but they can't climb rock. In bear country, if you make a point to camp near a rock face (even 20 ft will do) use a piece of webbing wedged in a crack or around a rock horn and a tiny keychain type carabiner to clip your food bag out of bear range. This is a lot less hassle than putting food in a tree, and can provide much camptime amusement as you and your climbing pals try new bouldering problems to put up the food bag.

#### Sarah's Tips:

Name: **Sarah Kover, 12/28/00**

! Food Containers

I find that if youlike to bring soups that come in a plastic bowl, take out the insides and put them in a plastic baggie instead. Then copy down the directions on a tiny piece of paper so you will know what to do with it.

2. Journals

It is always nice to be able to recount the days adventure in a journal, but they are heavy. Try only bringing one small piece of paper per day. And sharpen your pencil down to only a couple inches and cut off the eraser. You don't need it. Or if you want to be REALLY conservative, just write on the back of your map. Then you won't have to bring any paper at all.

#### Repackaging Food:

Name: **Curt White, 1/10/01**

Many tip sheets include the benefits of repackaging food items to save weight. On my last week long trip with my wife we tried a technique that worked well. We both like the packaging of the Backpackers Pantry food. It is in an upright freestanding pouch without an inner package of food. The new ones have a zip lock closure on the top instead of a piece of tape to keep it closed.

On our trip we took two of these meals and saved/cleaned the pouches when we were done. The other meals on the trip we had repackaged into boiling/freezing zip lock bags. We poured the contents into the saved heating pouches for cooking, eliminating the extra packaging that comes with those meals. The spare packaging from those meals filled two paper grocery sacks (two people, two breakfasts and two dinners for 9 days).

We also tried pouring the hot water directly into the zip lock bags. It worked but they were difficult to keep from being punctured or spilled. It might work if you took some of the new zip lock bags which can stand upright on their own. Another advantage of this technique is that you can bulk up your meals for two without alot of extra packaging weight. We always add more veggies to our meals because thats what we crave in the backcountry.

Give it a try!

#### Foot Care:

Name: **Curt White, 1/10/01**

One of the best discoveries I have come across in my many miles of backpacking is the custom molded footbed insole.

I have very high arches and a wide fore foot making boot fitting difficult. I used to get off the shelf insoles and start trimming away untill I came up with something that kept my foot in place in the boot and supported my arches. Then I found a good boot fitter who said what I really needed was a footbed molded for me. This happened to be at an REI store and he showed me a selection of three footbeds of differing densities. Since I do alot of backpacking he recomended a fairly stiff and durable footbed. They put the footbed in a susie bake oven to get them soft and then you stand on top of them on a rubber pad and let it cool down. When done it retains the shape of your foot.

I hiked for a week on these things and let me tell you, its like power steering for your feet! I also have a pair in my ski boots and the controll is amazing. My foot now stays where it should be in the boot. Uphill or down. They run between $65 to $100. I paid about $80 on sale.

An appointment with person fitting you is recomended as it takes about 45 minutes to do. If you hike in light weight sports shoes you may want one of the more flexible molded insoles. This would also help prevent bruising of the feet from rocks felt through the thinner soles of these shoes.

#### Great to be a Dad:

Name: **Glen Craig, 2/21/01**

One method that has worked great for me was giving my 15 yr old son a Gregory Lassen backpack for his birthday. He went from a 2700 cu inch BSA backpack to 4600 cu inch loaded. This reduced my pack weight by at least 5 lb.s now that he has a bigger/better pack than me. " Its great to be a Dad!"

Groov'in Glen

#### Mark's Sierra Cup:

Name: **Mark Houston, 2/28/01**

I take a small "Dinty Moore" stew can and wrap a heavy coat hanger around it for a handle. Each wire handle comes out different as if each one was a work of art. Been using it for several years and it is my prototype that I show to the Boy Scouts to teach them that they do not have to purchase a sieera cup but can make one. Any stout can works especially the one that have the rounded bottoms. I use it for fresh water, hot drinks, and even cook in it. If you get the can to hot without fluid in it the inside lining can be damaged.

#### Cord Locks and other stuff:

Name: **Andy Winz, 4/11/01**

On most of the smallerstuff sacks/ditty bags that i use. I don't use cordlocks..I just tie a slipknot into the string.

If you're a college student like me and can't afford to buy titanium cookwear, do what I do: Raid the local K-Mart or Walmart or whatever nasty nationwide chain store you have and buy a light weight 32oz aluminum pot. I got one for a buck....unscrewed the handle which had the majority of the weight and made a homemade handle out of a wire coathanger.

#### Reading Materials:

Name: **chugachman, 5/4/01**

I don't care how tired I am from the trail, I can't go to sleep without reading Even small paperbacks were adding unneeded weight. So, the night before, I go online and download some articles (replaces magazines, no weight from ads) and I rip the paperback apart and only take the amount of pages I'll probably read.

#### Weight of Water:

Name: **August Curcio**

After a surprisingly exhausting search I finally found the weight of Water. Appearently I prefer to cruise the net rather than simply filling a gallon jug and putting it on the bath room scale. So... Water weighs 8.33 lbs, per gallon at sea level; or 2.0825 lbs (33.32 oz)per quart, add to that the light weight of an extremely durable 1qt. gatorade bottle at roughly 1.9 oz. And you will find you are carrying 35.22 oz or 2.20125 lbs per 1 quart gatorade bottle of water.

#### Tim's Tips:

Name: **Tim Gaffney, 6/22/01**

--In mild weather, instead of taking a pair of light gloves "just in case," plan to use an extra pair of socks as mittens if you need them. (I learned to do this on early-morning runs when I couldn't find my gloves.) In cold weather, socks can add an emergency layer over gloves.

--Select a pot for functionality as well as weight. My old Sigg pot has a locking handle that allows me to pour with it -- no pot-gripper needed. The lid doubles as a plate.

--Some food packages allow you to mix the food with hot water in the bag, eliminating a pot-cleaning chore. (if I do wash a pot, I use a good nylon scrubber; its meager weight is good insurance against food poisoning.)

--Why cook? On my first trip to the Smokies many years ago, I left behind my Svea 123 stove (I hadn't mastered it yet) and munched homemade beef jerky, dried fruit and other such stuff for five days. (I carried a small pot and a few pouches of instant soup, and I did make soup one night when some other hikers let me use their camp fire.)

-- Carry your flashlight inside your coat on winter trips. Warm batteries last longer, requiring fewer spares.

OK, now a question: Does it save weight to wear pants that can double as shorts with zip-off legs? I have never worn these, but I'm considering it.

#### Tim's Tips (2):

Name: **Tim Gaffney, 6/23/01**

Gotta have a lantern in your tent? Stick your flashlight in a small, white plastic bag and hang it in the top of your tent for a dome light, or prop it against a pot lid for a reflector.

--Toothpaste: At home, buy a travel-size tube of toothpaste and use it until there's just enough left for your next backpacking trip.

--Soap: Buy a biodegradable liquid soap that can double as dish soap. Take just enough in a small eye-dropper bottle. It makes a passable shampoo on long trips.

--Spare bootlaces: Make sure your laces are in good shape before you go, and you shouldn't need a spare. In an emergency, cut a lace from your clothes line/bear line/tent line cord, having made sure it will fit through your eyelets.

--Windscreen: I made a windscreen for my trusty old Svea 123 stove from heavy-gauge aluminum foil. In camp, I unfold it and crimp the ends together to form a ring. Four tabs extending from the bottom fold inward, and the stove sits on them to hold the screen in place. It can all sit on a piece of sleeping-pad foam or an old mouse pad (which can double as an insulated seat cushion when you're not cooking.)

A note about windscreens around canister stoves: I don't have much experience with gas-canister stoves, but I recall reading that enclosing one in a wind screen can create an explosion hazard. The idea of a windscreen isn't necessarily to trap heat, but just to protect the flame. Use common sense and be safe.

--Duct tape: News photographers carry duct tape wrapped around a tripod leg. You can do the same with your hiking staff, but that's extra weight on the end of your arm. You can wrap it around a tube on your pack frame, if you have one, or the handle of your shi--excuse me, trowel.

--Hiking staffs: Can't afford those fancy trekking poles? I've seen squeegees and mops with telescoping handles that are lightweight and only cost $10 to $15. Plus, you can still use them for their original purpose. Check out the broom section in your hardware store.

#### Breakfast Bowl:

Name: **Wayne C., 6/23/01**

For breakfast, I pack some granola, along with 3 tablespoons of powdered milk into a pint-size, heavy-duty-freezer ziploc bag. When it's time to eat, just add water, hot or cold, depending on your situation. When you're done, you have a trash bag.

#### Backcountry Washing Machine:

Name: **ValpoSimcich, 7/14/01**

If you're near a decent Army Surplus store, buy a "Wet Weather Bag." It will save you quite a few pounds.

If you are out for an extended time in the backcountry, you have the choice of a) packing a lot of clothing with you, or b) becoming as funky as an outhouse rat and being a health hazard as well. Washing clothes is a good idea, but washing them in a stream is a lousy idea (who wants to see soap suds floating by as they fill their canteen downstream of you?). Your wet weather bag serves as an excellent backcountry washing machine.

1) Turn bag inside out.  
2) Fill with ONE set of clothes; i.e., shirt, pants, undershirt, drawers & socks   
3) Fill with half a quart of water and a tablespoon of soap powder, or your cake of soap if that's all you have  
4) Throw in a handful of VERY smooth stones if you can find them  
5) Push out most, but not all, of the air in the bag, then tie shut   
6) Pretend you know how to play the accordion for about 5 to 10 minutes   
7) Dump all out, wring clothes out tightly, fill with water (rinse cycle) and repeat steps 4-6 until your clothes are no longer soapy.

I spent three weeks' time backpacking in the Smokies, and had only one change of clothes with me, a savings of several pounds.

#### Packaging & Packing:

Name: **Maxime Lachance, 7/18/01**

I found that one of the biggest source of extra weight is the extra bags we use. Often, we pack our stuff in boxes or other bags believing that it will help us organize our pack better. While sometimes this is true, most of what I've done in the past was over packaging my stuff. Here are some alternative example for better packing:

- Use heavy duty ziploc kind of bags instead of boxes and fabrick bags (eg for soap, personnal effects...) they protect your stuff from rain, they are cheap and disposable...

- Do not bring an ultra robust water bottle (eg Lexan water bottle) if you plan a short trip. Use those plastic water and soft drink bottle... they often come with your favorite non-alcoolic beverage in them and are very cheap. If your bottle have a leek... repair it with electric black tape or duct tape. Moreover, most people do not really leave civilization for too long when the go backpacking... So at the next village, just buy a new bottle!

- For your films.. avoid bringing the containers

- If you really need good and solid containers to protect your stuff... use your cooking pots.

- For extreme light weight backpakers... I guess you even do not need a bag for your sleeping bag or your tent...

- Also... remember that the smallest your pack will be, the less it will weight... pack small things! However, avoid those compression packs.. they are heavy and does not help you packing smaller as they make your stuff almost like a hard rock that cannot fit properly in your pack.

That's it for the moment....

By the way... sorry for my poor english!

#### Multipurpose Toothbrush:

Name: **William Graham, 7/18/01**

Most people forget that a toothbrush doesn't just have to be used on Teeth! Use it to scrub your pots and it will serve double duty. I mean, hey, the food you are cleaning out of your pot was destined for your mouth anyway right? Then swish about some water in your mouth and after you have a clean pot, you'll have a clean toothbrush too!

#### Fire Starter for Wet Wood:

Name: **Corey Aikens, 7/24/01**

Make friends with your local VW shop, when aircooled engine cases are line bored, or bored for larger cylinders the shavings are magnesium, a mix of the shavings and wood shavings or other easily flamable material will light just about anything. Use caution though magnesium burns VERY hot, over 1400 degrees I believe, and the only way to put it out is sand.

#### Fire Starter - Recipe':

Name: **Bill Turner, 7/27/01**

I've seen many ideas for fire starters on the net and in stores, but this is the best I've ever used. You'll need:

-wax paper cups (3/4" dia. the kind restaurants serve condiments in, but get the small ones they're best).  
-paraffin wax(or old candles etc)  
-dryer lint

Method: Lay out cups on cookie sheet. While melting wax safely, pack cups full of lint to within a 1/4" of top then drizzle in wax. Object is to saturate lint NOT fill cups with wax. the end product is a safe, enviro-friendly fire starter that is very "packable", water and fool proof. To use, simply light the rim of the cup and stack kindling around it. On average one will burn for 15 min.

#### Fly Fishing Tips:

Name: **John Mowery, 7/31/01**

If you're like me, you don't go to the backcountry unless there is an ample supply of trout on hand. Here are several time tested methods to make you pack lighter, fishing more enjoyable, and catching much better.

1. Bring lanyard with your essential tools on it. It's a lot less weight than a vest.

2. Get a very small fly box and bring only the most essential flies. Backcountry trout don't see tons of pressure and you therefore can get by with many fewer flies. My humble recommendations: Adams (14, 16, 18), Lime Trude (14, 16), Hoppers, Wolly Bugger (6,8), Bead Head Prince (16), Hare's Ear (18, 20). These are all great back country flies, and I promise that if you fish them well, you'll catch trout anywhere.

3. Put several #4 weights, and indicators in with the flies.

4. Patagonia wading shoes are by far the lightest, most durable wading shoes I've come across. Get a pair of wading socks and you're ready for a full day on the water. Felt souls are essential to a good day on the water.

5. Most companies make 5 piece rods now. My preference is the Winston LT series. They make packing much easier than even a 3 piece rod. Use the rod case supplied by the company. You can save weight by skipping it, but a broken rod means no fishing and where would you be then?

Also, unless you're starving, don't eat the trout you catch. Put em' back, PLEASE!!!!

#### Insulated Coffee Cup:

Name: **SGT Rock, 8/5/01**

I love coffee myself so I .......

Here is what I did. Since I like multifunction and lightweight I don't carry a coffee cup. I carry a Country Time Lemonade plastic container with a polypro cozy.

About 1 1/2 years ago I was backpacking and lost my cofee cup. All I had left was one of those Gatorade plastic jars. So I used it and it was great, but it lost heat, but not as fast as a metal mug. I started looking around for a better solution and even made a foam cozy from some old trimmed down sleeping pad.

I finally found the Country Time lemonade containers. The top is a 1/2 and 1 cup measuring cup which also happens to be the correct size for 2 packages of oatmeal or grits. The bottom needs to be trimmed down to the threads, but makes a great 24oz (I think) bowl/cup/re-hydration chamber. I use it to make my puddding at dinner, rehydrate my pasta before eating (no cook pasta salad), carry extra water in, coffee cup, etc. I was recently cutting up a worn out polypro top to make some mittens and a hat when I realized the sleeve of the shirt fit around the cup perfectly, so I sewed it up and made a polypro cozy.

As for weight - the bowl/jar/cup weighs 1.8oz, and the cozy weighs .4oz. The older foam cozy weighed .5oz but was bulkier. Now I have a total of 2.3 ounces for an insulated multi function cup/jar/bowl/measuring cup. And it is cheap!

#### Solar/LED Lantern:

Name: **Matt Morton, 8/10/01**

My buddy fashioned a lantern from a solar powered walkway light he bought at Costco. He simply removed the fixture and the top handle, leaving just a base with a small solar panel and one tiny nicad battery. This little thing charged all day and came on at sunset, emitting enough radiant light to use for cooking and easily the same as a candle lantern. Awesome!

#### Titanium vs. Aluminum:

Name: **Adam, 8/17/01**

It is common knowledge in the bicycling industry that aluminum is much lighter than titanium. It is the strength to weight ratio that is better in titanium. However, in such things as cookwear this is irrelevant and the cheaper aluminum pots/mug/etc are fine. As far as tent stakes go, a beefer aluminum stake will be lighter and cheaper than titanium. Also you (we, hikers) should consider the neccesity of tent stakes, as there is almost always an ample amount of rocks and trees and branchs to be found out there in the woods. Instead of a tent with 12 stakes it's lighter and cheaper to carry a tarp like shelter (like the Golite cave) and take only half of the stakes with you.