

TRAINING MANUAL FOR MICHIGAN 4-H

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE CHALLENGE



Section:

BACKPACKING



BACKPACKING SECTION CONTENTS

- Getting Started
- Choosing a Pack
- Loading Your Pack

GETTING STARTED

- Borrow major equipment such as packs, tents and stoves. Try a few different types before you choose to purchase something.
- Get in shape. In addition to walking and lifting weights, make sure to take some hikes on trails similar to the terrain you will be traveling with a loaded pack.
- Try out gear such as clothing, socks, shoes, and packs ahead of time. You don't want to get a couple miles off the trail and figure out that something doesn't work.

CHOOSING YOUR PACK

- **External-frame packs:** load heavier items high inside your pack and close to your body.
- **Internal-frame packs:** load heaviest items close to your back, if walking off trail keep the heavy items more centered in the main compartment.
- Stay organized. Use stuff sacks to your advantage.
- You can also find stuff sacks that are waterproof. If you do not have those, pack inside zip-lock bags and then put inside a stuff sack to avoid tearing of the bags when loading and unloading packs. Items such as clothing and sleeping bag must stay dry.
- Keep similar items together and grouped in order of use. For example, bury your toothbrush and other personal hygiene items further in your pack, but keep your toilet kit and hand sanitizer close at hand.
- Remember to fill empty spaces, such as pots and bowls.
- Minimize gear lashed to your pack.
 - Bulky items such as a tent or sleeping pad outside the pack are fine so long as they are secure.
 - Extra gear swinging around can cause you to lose balance and you waste energy by compensating for the movement constantly.
 - Gear constantly clanging on your pack is annoying to others and disturbs the natural setting and wildlife.

LOADING YOUR PACK

- **Your loaded pack should not exceed 30% of your ideal body weight.**
 - The lighter the pack is empty, the better. It allows you to bring more items.
- Find the right size pack for the trips you will most likely take. The longer the trip the more room you will need in your pack.
- Ultra-light options are out there (and they are good), but realize that unless the rest of your gear is ultra-light it may not fit in the smaller, lighter pack.
- Try on the pack, load it up and walk around the store for a bit before you make a decision about purchase. Be sure the hydration system, ventilation and padding works for you.