A Rubicon Guide to Storage of the Small Stuff

Where Is Your Gear?

By: OhCanada

Ok, so you have your BOB finally all together, you're all set now…or are you?

There is more to gear storage than simply putting it all into a large backpack. Where you put your gear is just as important as what you carry. So here are some tips on where to store your gear so that their full benefit can be used.

Packing a Pack

The larger your pack is, the more important it is to pack it right. A larger pack presupposes a large weight, pack it incorrectly and it becomes a magnet pulling you towards earth, pack it correctly and it becomes a part of you (well a you with a few more pounds on your waist).

The first thing you'll want to do is to make sure your pack fits the gear you intend to carry. While a pack that is a bit empty during the summer allows you to fill it in the winter, too large a pack will let everything you put into it shift around and settle into the bottom even if you packed it right. So fit your pack to your gear and not the other way around.

Some packing principles are to put those items you only use at camp in the bottom of your pack, next put those things you may have use for during the day in the top of the pack, and put those small frequently used items in the side pockets so they do not get lost in the main compartment.

When I pack I like to have both my repair kit and first aid kit in my packs left pocket. The first aid kit going on top of the repair kit as it is more critical; however, both items being infrequently used items, they go in the same pocket. My trowel and toilet paper go into the packs right pocket. My stove fuel goes here too as side pockets are narrow and keep the fuel container upright (not so critical with gas canisters). My packs lid also doubles as a fanny pack so I keep rain gear and survival kit items in here; when I go away from camp on a day hike I also put the first aid kit, trowel and toilet paper in the lid as well and take that with me.

For the main compartment the sleeping bag goes in first, as this will be the last item to come out at night. The tent goes on top of this while my stuff sack of clothes goes in front of the tent and thereby keeps the tent close to my back as it is generally best to keep the heavy items closer to your back for balance. Next goes my cooking kit and food. The last thing to go in is a fleece jacket or sweater incase it gets cold on the hike.

So that's it for the pack but there is more:

Repair Kit

So you have one, good. Now how can we make it better? Well if you carry a stove that requires o-rings, cleaning tools, etc. why not carry these in the stove bag so they never get lost or left behind? Do you use a self-inflating air mattress? I have the manufactures glue and patch kit complete with instructions in a small plastic bag taped to the mattress itself. Wherever the mattress goes there the repair items for it will be too.

First Aid Kit

A good first aid kit is a necessity but you may find yourself using some things quite often and some things not at all. Why not put some Band-Aids in the pocket of your jacket so you don't have to take your whole pack off and go through the kit on the trail and risk loosing some of the many small items that make up a first aid kit. Do you suffer from chronic headaches or old injury pain? Carry your required medication in your jacket or pants pocket. If you take prescription medication for serious illness, make sure all your team members know where these are on you or your pack and make sure they are there EACH AND EVERY TIME. I also like to carry tweezers in my pocket rather than in a first aid kit; it is much nicer to remove a splinter or tick quickly than to have to dig through your pack first. I carry a type with a plastic slip on cover so it doesn't poke through my pocket.

Jackets

Both in city and country I like to carry a hat and gloves in each of my jackets. This way I never have to remove them from one jacket to another or, more dangerously, forget them at home and suffer a frostbite injury. For this reason, I prefer jackets with large pockets rather than "fashion" jackets. I also like jackets with upper pockets too, into these goes fruit bars, energy bars, nuts, etc. Your jacket merely helps you to retain heat, heat that comes from your body burning food, so why not carry some fuel too?

My jacket pockets are also the perfect place for a short roll of say 20' of Para-cord.

The inside of your jacket is also a great place for a few strips of duct tape for first aid or repair.

Pants

Do you wear cargo-style pants? Why not put those pockets to use by taking a small Zip-lock bag and putting in a Mylar blanket, some string wrapped around a piece of card, a box of matches, and a tea candle. You now have a slim lightweight emergency shelter/hypothermia kit.

Keys

Ok, you can easily go overboard here but I do carry a P-38 military can opener, handcuff key, and flashlight on my key ring. I also carry a Mini-Bic lighter in a protective case in my pocket but these are not on my keys.

Other Pockets

Do you see where I am going here? We are not talking about overstuffing your pockets with survival gear, but there are little things that weigh next to nothing but might prove to be very handy if you forget your BOB or for that short trip to the movies that turns into an unexpected city-wide power outage.

Jewellery

Yes, survival jewellery! I have two nice bracelets made from woven cord-cord and plastic buckles. There is about 8 feet of 7-strand cord-cord wrapped up in these bracelets. I have a black one for everyday wear and an OD one for hiking. A work of art that has a survival purpose. If you carry a pocket knife you can also make a woven lanyard with 5 or so feet of cord-cord, these serve as decoration, are useful for drawing your knife from your pocket, and of course you got 5 feet of cord-cord in a tidy package.

Conclusion

This is by no means complete list. The purpose is to make you think of how you are carrying your gear both in the field and in the city, and to make your creative juices flow as to how you can carry your gear in a way that will give you the most benefit from them.