

Flashlights

Don't be caught in the dark

It seems that one of the most forgotten items on the 10 Essentials list is the trusty, old flashlight. An essential all year long, it's especially necessary when the days begin to shorten and dusk arrives sooner than one is accustomed.

In the not too distant past, flashlights used large C or D batteries that are not only heavy but inefficient. Additionally, many of these flashlights weren't exceptionally bright and the batteries died quickly.

Nowadays it is hard to find a flashlight that doesn't use LEDs (light emitting diodes) for illumination. Traditional bulbs burn out much more rapidly and consume far more power from batteries. Though it used to be that LEDs had a weak beam compared to a halogen or regular bulb, those days are gone. New flashlights using LEDs last for hundreds of hours and only dim when low on battery power. Two AAA batteries are generally all they need, but be sure to bring a spare set just in case.

By far the most popular type of flashlight is a headlamp. These are especially handy when you're performing a task that requires both hands but still want to keep light on the task you are performing. Most also allow you to adjust the level of brightness to help extend battery life.

Ideally the flashlight should provide both a flood beam and a spot beam. (Or you can carry two flashlights, each of which does one or the other.) The flood beam provides illumination over a broad area and is good for camp tasks and slow hiking. A spot beam illuminates into the distance and is good for fast hiking and to see what jut made that noise over by the bear bag!

