

Gear Storage

Properly maintained gear lasts longer and saves you money.

Gear can get expensive, but with these simple storage steps, you can increase the life of your investment.

Boots. Use a coarse brush on dry boots to remove caked-on mud and dirt. Once you've removed as much gunk as possible, use a mild, no-residue detergent and warm water to work out dirt from mesh and leather. For leather boots with a waterproof breathable membrane and all fabric boots, wait until next spring to apply a waterproofing compound, as some of the active components of waterproofing agents degrade over time. Make sure to use a waterproofing agent that is compatible. If you have leather boots without a waterproof breathable membrane, apply a thicker than average coating of non-petroleum conditioning agent, remove your insoles, and stuff boots with newspaper to store. For all boots, spray the insides and insoles with an anti-fungal spray, and store with a few wads of newspaper inside to retain shape.



Tent. Your tent must be dry and clean. If it's particularly dirty, set it up and wash it down with a diluted solution of no-residue detergent and warm water. While your tent is pitched, use a fan to dry it as quickly as possible. If you dry it in the sun, don't leave it out too long since UV rays can damage the fabric. Store your tent rolled or stuffed randomly in a cotton storage sack, not the compression sack it came with. Folding a tent can crease and damage the waterproof coating.

Sleeping Bag. If your sleeping bag is filthy to the point that a simple airing out can't rectify it, you'll want to wash it before placing it in storage. Wash a synthetic bag with no-residue detergent in a commercial washer and dry it in a commercial drier. To launder a down bag, consult the manufacturer, as improper laundering can ruin a down bag. Store sleeping bags stuffed randomly in the largest cotton stuff sack possible or, better yet, hung by the foot in a cool, dry area. This preserves the loft of the bag's insulation and ensures that it will work well for years to come.

Water filter. Before storing away your water filter, disinfect the filter media, following the directions in its owner's manual. Then disassemble your water filter and disinfect all hoses and caps with a solution of one tablespoon of regular, unscented bleach in one gallon of tap water and allow it to air dry.

Cookware. Wash your pots and utensils thoroughly – bacteria from your last washing in untreated water can cause illness. Ensure all water bottles and



bladders are also cleaned and dried, then store them open to allow air to circulate.

Flashlight/headlamp/electronics. Remove the batteries from your headlamp, GPS, radio and other electronics. Leaking batteries can permanently damage your gear. Recycle old batteries properly and store your hiking electronics with the battery cases open to allow air circulation to prevent corrosion. If you haven't yet switched to rechargeable batteries, now is the perfect opportunity to make the money saving-switch. Be sure to recycle your old batteries.

Stove. If you use a liquid-fuel stove, burn off as much of the fuel as possible and transfer the remaining fuel to a separate storage bottle designed to hold fuel for long periods of time. Store the empty bottle open and uncapped to prevent corrosion. Clean all visible parts of soot and food particles and follow the manufacturer's instructions on cleaning the internal mechanism. For bottled gas stoves, disconnect the gas canister and replace its protective cap. Wipe soot and food particles off of the exposed surfaces and consult the manufacturer's literature to determine if the pin-valve needs to be cleaned.



Clothing. Launder your hiking clothes in a non-residue detergent. Keep in mind not to use liquid fabric softener on most wicking fabrics. If you are about to begin a new hiking season, you can apply an insect repellent to your clothing helping you to stay tick-free.

First aid. Examine the contents of your first aid kit. Are your band-aids soggy or dirty? Are your medications expired, or have you used all of your ibuprofen? Now is the time to replace your dirty bandages and refresh your medicine stockpile. Keep a list of what you normally carry so you can easily spot if something's been used up.

Keep it organized. Consider setting up a simple storage system to simplify packing for hiking trips. Use plastic utility bins labeled shelter (sleeping bags/tents), ground (groundcloths, sleeping pads, stakes, guylines), packing (stuff sacks, bear bags, backpacks), cooking (cooking, stoves, utensils, water bottles), and first aid (first aid, water purifiers, sunscreen, insect repellent). This system keeps your gear clean, organized and ready to pack for your next adventure.

