

General Gear Maintenance (Camping)

By Mathew Keating



Millions of people love to be outdoors and explore what the natural world has to offer. There are many ways to get to experience this, but one of the most popular ways is camping. I have gone camping my whole life, it was a core part of my childhood and remains to be an event that brings me, family, and friends closer together. To be able to join in on this activity requires a person or group to have a good amount of gear like tents, sleeping bags, lights, correct clothing etc. The thing is with all this equipment is sometimes stuff happens. People might not bring the right stuff, gear can break, get wet, be packed wrong, all sorts of things. This is why it is important to know what to have in the first place, and how to maintain or repair gear when needed. So let's get into what to do and how to do it.

Things to Bring for Maintenance

- Sewing Kit (With extra cloth or fabric)
- Duct tape
- Tenacious repair tape
- Paracord
- Multi-tool pocket knife
- Non-toxic Waterproof Coating

1. How to Patch Holes

It is important to keep clothes free of holes. A hole in clothes allows the elements to get under or in the fabrics, which can have an effect on the person wearing them. An example of what I mean is if somebody has a hole in their coat when camping in cold weather, this hole makes it so heat escapes, making the person wearing it colder. This has to be fixed! To do this, you are going to want to have the sewing kit. A simple but effective way to

close a hole in the fabric is a “star”. All this means is drawing the thread through the fabric slightly outside the radius of the hole, maybe one to two centimeters away from the hole itself. Do a plus sign (start at the top, go down and then go from the left and go right) then do an x symbol over the top of it. This should combine to make a star like symbol and effectively close the hole in the clothes you have.



(An example of the star technique)

To patch a tent, you are going to want that Tenacious Repair Tape and extra fabric. Many tents come with extra fabric, and if they don't it can be purchased online or at local outdoor equipment stores. First clean the area surrounding the hole in the tent. Then you are going to want to cut the fabric to the appropriate size of the hole and then put the tape on the edge of the fabric. The tape should have an inch or two of extra length to give it a chance to really stick to the wall of the tent itself. Stick the taped fabric to the hole and allow the adhesive of the tape to dry and just like that you should have a fixed, waterproof tent wall.



(An example of Tenacious Repair Tape) →

2. Cleaning Gear

To ensure long-lasting, high functioning gear, it is important to keep it clean. Below are six key tips for cleaning your gear.

- Do not wash gear before removing as much visible dirt and grime as possible.
- Refer to the tag on your gear for specific washing and drying instructions.
- Make sure all pockets and zippers are closed before washing.
- Laundry soap can damage gear, make sure it is cleaned out of the soap dispenser before washing.
- Make sure you have the right cleaning soap for your gear. Different types of gear require different cleaning products.
- Do not wash all of your gear at once.

3. Waterproofing Gear

Staying dry and out of the elements is a very important theme of camping. A lot of camping gear like tents, sleeping bags, coats, and boots have a coat of DWR (Durable Water Repellent). This takes a while to wear off but can fade over time, this is when you will want the non-toxic waterproof coating like *Otterwax* or *Nikwax*. Products like this can be reapplied to the listed fabrics and equipment mentioned earlier which adds the lost layer of waterproof material. Just make sure to clean the things before you put on the non-toxic waterproof coating, this will make the adhesive work much better vs. if you do not clean the affected area.



(An example of wax to use for waterproofing)

4. Storing Gear

When you're not using your gear it is important to store it properly. There are four general steps to gear storage and maintenance.

- Dry out your gear
- Clean off any dirt and grime
- Scan carefully for any holes and tears
- Store gear in a cool, dry area.

Things to note:

- If you live in a humid environment you may want to get a dehumidifier for the location where you store your gear.
- If any of your gear has batteries, remove batteries and store them in a cool, dry place.
- Notice keeping things dry is important to keeping the gear in good condition.

Moisture can do a lot to affect gear negatively so generally speaking it should be kept in a nice dry place.

Storing things improperly is a major cause of damage when it comes to camping gear, this is why it is very important to focus on this aspect of maintenance.

Closing Thoughts

These four steps are great for keeping gear in good condition. They are a good guideline, but are also only a base that one can build off of. There are way more skills, gear, and techniques that can be found and researched that can help with fixing and maintaining gear. This is key in making camping gear last and saving money on buying new things to replace it or repairing it!



Citations

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