

How to Do It »

Fix It First

A little elbow grease—and duct tape—will go a long way, and you can always call the professionals when the damage is serious

As an avid hiker and climber, I tear through gear and garments at steady clip. I've found that the most cost effective way to keep me in useful clothing and reliable gear is to mend my damaged items rather than replacing them.

My go-to quick-fix solution is ... **duct tape!** No big surprise there, and yet I keep finding new ways to use duct tape on my gear. Gaiters

sliced with a crampon? A rip in the bottom of Gore-Tex pants after a glistade? A tent pole stay meltdown? All this and more can easily and quickly be mended with this silver wonder tape—which even comes in a variety of colors these days. You do have to be careful, however. I advise against duct taping any material that resembles ripstop

fabric. Once adhered to this type of fabric, duct tape compromises the integrity of the material and makes it more difficult to actually repair. Sew ripstop fabric tears or get them professionally mended.

For a more solid fix on your malleable gear, try **Seam Grip**. This product can fix everything from your boot rind to a cracked Nalgene. I've seen it in action, and it is truly legit. Another gear repair must-have is **McNett Gore-Tex Fabric Repair Kit**. It's easy to use, comes with rectangular and circular patches, and can be used to mend any Gore-Tex fabric.

Of course, duct tape can't fix everything and if sewing was the worst grade you received in high school (totally me!), you may want to check out a local repair shop. **Rainy Pass Repair**, found in Seattle's Wallingford neighborhood, can be a bit expensive, but their work is incredible. I brought them a torn-to-shreds single-wall Black Diamond tent, and they made it work like new for a reasonable amount. They

can also fix any Gore-Tex garments, backpacks, and any type of sleeping bag or insulated jacket. If you're terrified of throwing out your twenty-year-old boots or embarrassed to be seen breaking in new ones, one longtime local favorite boot repair place is **Dave Page Cobbler** in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood. In Portland, try **Mountain Soles** for boot repair. And if you are looking to get your rock climbing shoes resoled, I recommend **Cascade Cobblers** in Winthrop. You can mail them your thrashed shoes and they will send back grippy, beautifully resoled shoes for a good price.

And if the problem isn't damaged gear, but no gear at all—try making it yourself!

If your skills go beyond duct tape and Seam Grip, stop by Seattle Fabrics. Their product selection is ample, and their staff is quite helpful. Just be sure to do your research ahead of time so you understand the differences between Cordura, waterproof, and waterproof breathable fabric and know what type of fabric you need for your creation. Arriving at the fabric store with this knowledge will reduce the amount of time you spend in the store scratching your head. Try something simple for your first project, such as overmitts. Master that and you can move on to gaiters or a stuff sack. It is easiest to start with pre-made patterns, either by scaling patterns you find online or by purchasing them. But if you are the ambitious type, you can also design your own patterns. Creating your own gear will cost you more time initially, but it may prove to be a fun endeavor and can be economical once you've mastered your do-it-yourself projects.

Pacific Northwest weather and conditions can be rough on your clothing and gear. Completely replacing your gear can really add up if you head straight to the gear shops. Try making simple pieces on your own, and, for damaged gear, duct it, mend it, or get it professionally fixed. If all else fails, then replace it. I look upon my gear's battle scars, war wounds and glue resin with pride and honor. That gear has seen it all, and it deserves another couple of seasons, another handful of summits and a few more miles on the trail. ♦



Duct tape is a great first line of defense for busted gear. Photo by Jim Brewer.

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Cheri reviews gear for *Washington Trails*.