

How to Store Your Gear

A few hours of maintenance can extend the life of your hiking stuff

BY ALLISON WOODS

You pay good money for your gear, and you expect it to last for a long time. Like anything of value, the life of your backpacking gear will be greatly extended if you take care of it properly. This involves a little more effort after you've arrived home from your trip—but these few minutes of gear care will extend the life of your gear for years. Here are a few tips for storage and care of the gear we love so much.

Tents

In the field, make sure your tent is dry before storing it. It's best not to fold a tent for storage, either at home or in the backcountry, since folding can weaken the coating on the fabric. Instead, always stuff your tent and fly into your pack or stuff sack. At home, dry the tent once again to ensure that there is not one molecule of water on the tent. Store tent and fly stuffed loosely in a large bag, or hang it up if you have the space. If you ever get mildew on your tent, try the fix described on the next page. Rinse pole tips in plain water from time to time, since dirt is abrasive and can cause the ferrules on the poles to wear and eventually crack.

Cobblers

Ramuta's Shoe Repair

609 Stewart St.
Seattle, WA
(206) 622-5800

Dave Page Cobbler

3509 Evanston Ave N.
Seattle, WA
(206) 632-8686

Sleeping Bags

Store sleeping bags in large cotton or mesh bags, or hang if possible. Sleeping bags must be completely dry before storage. When using your bag in the backcountry, drape it over a tree or your tent (only if it's dry, of course), airing out both sides every morning. At home, dry again and store. Wash after every 20 bag-nights or so. If your bag gets smelly between washings, try setting it out in the sun, unzipped, with the inside facing out.

Boots

When leather boots are new, it's advisable to coat the seams with a very thin bead of a seam sealant such as McNett Seam Grip. This protects the stitching from abrasion. Do the same thing where the sole or rand meets the leather or cloth body of the boot. At home, keep boots clean and maintained with a leather or

How to Wash a Sleeping Bag

Take your sleeping bag to the laundromat and put it in the largest washing machine possible. Always wash your sleeping bag in a front-loading washing machine. Never put your bag in a top-loading washing machine with a center spindle. Wash the bag, using a product made specifically for your bag. You might try Nikwax Tech wash or McNett Down Cleaner Concentrate. Avoid common laundry detergents, which are hard on both down and synthetic fill, and can also break down water-resistant coatings. Dry the bag on low heat until completely dry, stopping periodically to eliminate clumps.



Ted Roth

Make your gear last longer by properly storing it. Completely dry all gear before packing it away. Store tents and sleeping loose in large bags (not stuff sacks). Here, WTA member Ted Roth's gear collection is clean and well-organized.



Rehab your gear in the off-season. Apply leather treatment to boots and use products like ReviveX to make jackets and sleeping bags more water repellent.

fabric treatment. Remove footbeds and allow boots to dry completely before storing. It's okay to dry them near a heater, but don't get them too hot. Or try a heat-free drying product, such as Dryzone (www.dryzoneuse.com). Resole boots before they are completely shot at a reputable cobbler like Ramuta's or Dave Page Cobbler.

Sleeping Pads

Inflatable pads should be stored with the valve open. They are a little bulky when fully inflated, but if you don't have any cats, you can store them under the bed.

Check for leaks before going on a trip by completely deflating the pad and closing the valve. Let it sit overnight. If the pad inflates with the valve closed, there is a hole in the pad or a leak in the valve.

If you discover a leak, find the exact location of the hole (there may be more than one, and it also could be the valve that's at fault) by putting the pad in a bathtub full of water. Make a mark where the hole is and let the pad dry. Once it's dry, glue a patch in place with seam sealant, cover with cellophane wrap, and put a

large book on top of the pad. Once the glue is dry, remove the cellophane wrap and do the "hole test" again to make sure you've repaired every hole. If this seems like too much trouble, check to see if the manufacturer of your pad offers warranty service.

Gear Repair

Rainy Pass Repair

4415 Stone Way North
Seattle, WA
(206) 523-8135
www.rainypass.com

Water Filters and Hydration Systems

Remove filter from its housing and dry everything completely before storage. Dry hydration bags completely before

storage. Remove batteries from MIOX water purifiers.

Shell Jackets and Pants, Softshells

Any shell or softshell with a durable water resistant (DWR) treatment requires a little extra care in washing. Detergents will strip the DWR from the fabric. Use a technical soap like Nikwax Tech Wash or McNett ReviveX Synthetic Fabric Cleaner, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Then dry the garment on air-only until it's dry. After it's dry, throw it back in the dryer on high heat for about 10-20 minutes. If the DWR treatment still seems lackluster, repeat this process, but add a spray-on product (like McNett ReviveX) for hard shell jackets or a wash-in (like Nikwax Softshell Proof) for softshells. The spray-on products work better for hardshells due to the laminated construction of the fabric. Both products can be used on items that you'd like to make more waterproof, even if they were not originally DWR treated. I used a full bottle of ReviveX on a sleeping bag that was having moisture problems last year, and it worked great. ♦

Rainy Pass Mildew Treatment

This is a three-step process for tents with mildew odors.

Step 1 - Mix 1/2 cup Lysol in 1 gallon hot water (not so hot you can't put your hand in it). Wash the tent fabric with a sponge and dry completely, without rinsing.

Step 2 - Mix 1 cup salt and 1 cup lemon juice in 1 gallon of hot water. Wash the fabric with this solution and allow to dry, without rinsing.

Step 3 - After the tent is dry, rinse it with fresh water and allow to dry thoroughly before storing.

Recipe courtesy of Rainy Pass Repair (www.rainypass.com).