



BACKPACKING AND WILDERNESS SKILLS

Bellingham, WA

EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

The primary goal of any backpacker should always be to carry as little as possible. What is left out of a backpack is often just as important as what is placed inside. Conditions in the mountains vary dramatically from season-to-season, and sometimes even throughout the same day. This can make the process of preparing equipment for a trip difficult. On the one hand, a hiker wants to be light. But on the other, a hiker wants to have everything he or she needs if there is a storm.

This list was designed for the “worst case scenario,” a trip with significant inclement weather. In serious conditions it's not uncommon for a backpacker to need every piece of clothing and equipment on this list. However, if a program does not encounter significant weather, there may be items here that are not used. As you prepare for your trip, it's important to plan for the worst and hope for the best.

On the first day of your program, an AAI guide will work with you to refine your kit to ensure that you bring exactly what's needed given the forecast. It is acceptable to bring too much clothing or equipment to your initial meeting. And it is acceptable to bring things that you have questions about. Extra equipment can always be left behind at the AAI shop.

The Cascade climbing and prime backpacking season is defined as May 1st through October 1st. This list references Early, Mid, and Late-season conditions. These periods of the season are roughly defined by the different types of weather and snow conditions you are likely to encounter:

- **Early-Season Conditions** (May 1st-July 1st): There is usually significant snow both on the ground as well as on the glaciers. Backpackers should expect to encounter snow during the day and firm conditions at night depending on what elevation you are hiking at. Overnight temperatures range from 15-degrees to 40-degrees Fahrenheit (-9-4C). Daytime highs range from 35-degrees to 70-degrees Fahrenheit (1-21C). Precipitation as snow or rain is likely in the early season.
- **Mid-Season Conditions** (July 1st-September 1st): Temperatures range from 40 to 50-degrees Fahrenheit (4-10C) at night, with occasional dips down below freezing. Daytime temperatures often reach 70-degrees Fahrenheit (21C). Climbers should expect the possibility of freezing temperatures above 9000-feet on summit days throughout the summer season. And though mid-season tends to be dryer in the Cascades, the possibility of rain is still always there.
- **Late-Season Conditions** (September 1st-October 1st): September is a varied month. Temperatures begin to drop both during the day and at night. Late in the month, it is possible that you will encounter an increase in snow or rain.

Please be sure to check the forecast several days prior to your course to ensure that you are properly prepared.

PROVIDED EQUIPMENT: Climbing rope, anchors, solid waste bags

RENTALS: Equipment that is available for rent through the AAI Equipment Shop is designated with a “ Rent” check box. These items may be rented on the first morning of your course during your rendezvous. It is possible to reserve rentals ahead of time, but due to an extensive inventory, not necessary. Please call the shop if you have unusual sizing issues (either large or small), as those items are limited.

Underlined items in this form are hyperlinked to examples available in our Equipment Shop. Don't forget that AAI climbers receive a 15% discount off full-price items purchased through our gear shop!

Call or E-mail the Equipment Shop for Advice on Gear

Please feel free to contact us to help you get ready for your climbing trip. Your comfort and safety depend on being well equipped. Whether you get your gear from us or just get advice, we're here to help you prepare.

Call: (360) 671-1570 Email: shop@AlpineInstitute.com
 Equipment Shop Website: www.Shop.AlpineInstitute.com

Clothing	Packing Checklist
<p>Beanie/Toque Only recommended if the weather is cold. Wool or synthetic.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Sun Hat A baseball cap or visor serves well.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Sunglasses Choose a model with UVA/UVB protection. Keeper strings like “Croakies” are useful to prevent dropping your glasses while hiking. If you plan on spending time on snow, wrap-around design or side-shields are required. Sunglasses designed for mountaineering let in less visible light than ordinary sunglasses, reducing eye strain, but are not necessary for backpacking. Bring an extra pair if you have one, or prescription pair if you wear contacts/glasses.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Liner Glove Thin, lightweight, wool or synthetic gloves. Size to fit snug but not too tight. Generally worn alone in temperatures above 25°F(-4°C) when precipitation is not present. UPF rated liner gloves are ideal for sun protection. Bring 1 pair.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Hard Shell Glove Waterproof and insulated gloves. If the glove lacks insulation then size it to fit a liner glove inside. Mainly worn in wet conditions, cold, or when not mobile.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Sports Bra Wool or synthetic, comfortable, active wear.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy

<p>Base Layer Wool or synthetic shirt, long sleeves preferred, ideally a “sun hoody” with UPF 30+ sun protection.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Active Insulation Layer Lightweight “gridded fleece” or lightweight synthetic insulated jacket. Hood preferred. ☆ Active insulation jacket weight at 40g/m2 and heavier Insulation jacket at 60g/m2 or 80g/m2 ☆ Example: Patagonia R1, Montbell UL Thermawrap Jacket, or similar.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Soft Shell Jacket or Windshirt (Optional) A soft shell is a weather resistant, breathable, and stretchy freedom of movement piece. This piece is versatile in the sense of movement. It is often called an “action layer.” It is weather resistant, meaning it can put up with light showers and wind. Also if it gets wet it dries fairly quickly. This enables you to not have to stop and put on another piece when the wind picks up or a light shower happens. Because it is water resistant, and not waterproof, it also breathes fairly well. This enables you to move without overheating, so you don’t have to constantly stop to change out layers to regulate body temperature. They are also made of a stretchy material so there are no restrictions to your movement during activity. Put all those together and you have a pretty versatile layer, the Soft Shell. Hood preferred. ☆ Materials: Exolite, Matrix, Schoeller ☆ Example: Patagonia Houdini, Arc’teryx Squamish Hoody, Mountain Equipment Squall.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Insulation Jacket AKA the “puffy.” Down or Synthetic. This piece is worn in cold conditions or when not moving. Hood preferred. If choosing Down, water-resistant Down treatment is preferred to help prevent matting and loss of insulating ability if the jacket gets wet. ☆ Weight: 350g-450g ideal weight. ☆ Example: Arc’teryx Atom LT, Rab Xenon, or similar.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Rain Jacket In the event of rain, a lightweight waterproof jacket will help protect you from the elements. ☆ Materials: Gore-Tex, eVent, Drilite, H2NO, Pertex Shield</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Undergarments Wool or synthetic.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Base Layer Pant (aka “Long Johns”) Wool or synthetic. Bring one for early or late-season conditions, optional for mid-season conditions (depending on the weather).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Soft Shell Pant (Optional) Thin, weather-resistant, breathable, and stretchy. ☆ Materials: Exolite, Matrix, Schoeller</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Hiking Pants Look for nylon, polyester, or stretch-woven material. This will be your outermost layer most of the time for your legs. “Convertible” zip-off legs allow conversion to shorts. ☆ Examples: Patagonia GI III Zip-off Pant, Patagonia Sidesend Pants</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Hard Shell Pant (Optional depending on weather) Non-insulated, waterproof and breathable membrane. Full side zips are recommended. When sizing make sure it is able to fit over a base layer and soft shell pants. ☆ Materials: Gore-Tex, eVent, Drilite, H2NO, Pertex Shield</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy

<p>Socks Wool or synthetic socks that are over the ankle height. Focus on getting insulation from the boot and using a lighter weight sock, instead of using a heavy weight sock for warmth. Wearing a “silk-weight” liner sock beneath your hiking sock can reduce friction on the skin directly and mitigate blister development. Bringing 1-2 pairs is recommended.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Approach Shoes Optional. Recommended to have for the 1 day of rock climbing. Also nice to have mid to late season if you would rather hike into camp in approach shoes rather than mountaineering boots. Early season there tends to still be a lot of snow on the ground and it is recommended to hike to camp in your boots.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Hiking Boots During mid season when conditions are more favorable, approach shoes or light hikers can be worn instead. Be sure to break in your boots several weeks to months in advance to ensure they fit properly and are comfortable on the trail. Choosing the right boots for your mountain ambitions is a process that should not be rushed. Visit our shop or another reputable retailer for advice, and try on as many kinds and models as you can. People who plan to progress into mountaineering trips with AAI should choose a boot with a stiff shank that is designed for crampons. For the backpacking course, any good hiking boot will suffice. For all boots, fit is the most important selection factor.</p> <p>If you plan to rent from AAI, please call the shop to reserve.</p> <p>☆ NOTE: There are many makes and models out there and not all are created equal. Please consult with our Equipment Shop if you are uncertain about the acceptability of your chosen model. ☆ Mountaineering: Salewa Vertical Pro, Sportiva Nepal Cube ☆ Backpacking: Vasque Summit GTX, Asolo Fugitive GTX</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy <input type="checkbox"/> Rent*
<p>Gaiters (Optional) Knee or calf height. Best used in early-season conditions. Optional for mid or late-season.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy <input type="checkbox"/> Rent*
<h2>Camping</h2>	
<p>Tent 3 season tents are recommended for this course. Be sure to find one where the rain flies go all the way to the ground on all sides. A “bathtub” floor for the inner tent is also recommended. This means that the inner tent isn’t all mesh but has water resistant floor material that scoops up from the floor for 4-12” before changing to mesh, like a bathtub. If there are any questions please consult our Equipment Shop to see if your tent is okay to use.</p> <p><u>-Early-season:</u> Double wall 4 season tent recommended depending on conditions. <u>-Mid-season:</u> 3 season tent. <u>-Late-season:</u> 3 season tent recommended, 4 season depending on conditions.</p> <p>☆ NOTE: 4 season tents are available to rent at AAI the morning of the course if they are needed. There is also the possibility to pair up with other students on your course and share a tent.</p>	<div style="text-align: right;">Packing Checklist</div> <input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy <input type="checkbox"/> Rent*

<p>Sleeping Bag Synthetic or Down. If you bring a synthetic bag bring one on the lower end of the temperature range since synthetic bags tend not to be as warm as down. If you sleep cold it is recommended that you bring a warmer bag than required for the seasonal conditions. If choosing Down, water-resistant Down treatment is preferred to help prevent matting and loss of insulating ability if the sleeping bag gets wet. <u>-Early-season:</u> 0°F to 20°F (-18°C to -6°C) <u>-Mid-season:</u> 20°F to 30°F (-6°C to -1°C) <u>-Late-season:</u> 15°F to 20°F (-10°C to -6°C)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy <input type="checkbox"/> Rent*
<p>Compression Stuff Sack For your sleeping bag. If it is a down bag, a waterproof compression sack is recommended.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Sleeping Pad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Early-season:</u> Bring two; one inflatable and one closed cell foam. The foam pad helps insulate from the snow and serves as a backup to the inflatable pad. <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Mid or late-season:</u> One inflatable or closed cell foam pad. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy <input type="checkbox"/> Rent*
<p>Stove and Fuel Liquid fuel or canister stove. Fuel is available at AAI the morning of the course. ☆ NOTE: Many people choose to share stoves, fuel and tents to decrease weight. However, some people prefer to camp in their own tents and use their own stoves. This can be determined on the morning of the first day of your program.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy <input type="checkbox"/> Rent*
<p>Pots Bring one pot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Early-season:</u> Bring a bigger pot for melting snow; 1.5L to 2L <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Mid or late-season:</u> 0.5L to 1L <p>☆ NOTE: If you have a complete stove system like the Jetboil or MSR Reactor, and plan on eating out of your integrated pot, then you do not need to bring a pot.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Utensils Don't forget the official "most forgotten item ever;" the spoon, or spork.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Bowl</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Early-season:</u> Bring a plastic bowl or mug, preferably with insulation. <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Mid or late-season:</u> Bring a plastic bowl, insulation is not necessary. <p>☆ NOTE: If you have a Jetboil or MSR Reactor type stove and plan on eating out of your integrated pot, then you don't need to bring a bowl. The same applies if you plan on only using commercially packaged dehydrated or freeze dried meals.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Lighters Bring one. You will have the opportunity to buy them the morning of the course.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Hydration 3L capacity is recommended, though some people need more and some people need less.</p> <p>Some people bring a bladder and a hard sided bottle. The bottle is an important backup to the bladder if it gets punctured. A hard-sided bottle may also double as a mug for hot water, though not every bottle is designed to hold boiling water.</p> <p>For Camelbak style hydration bladders, bring a drinking tube insulator, as the tube can freeze up. Drinking tubes must also have a lock on the bite valve. If you choose to use this</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy

system, be aware that they require constant vigilance in order to avoid freezing. Some people are not very good at this. Blow the water out of the tube after every use and place the bite valve in the neck of your shirt to keep from freezing.

-Early-season: Bring more water carrying capacity (3L to 4L) to reduce the number of times you need to melt snow.

Water Purification

Water purification tablets are recommended, they are available at the shop the morning of the course. Pills that take an hour or less to purify are recommended. Steripens are an acceptable alternative to purification tablets.

☆ NOTE: Pumps can be damaged by silt in the glacial water.

- Own
- Buy

Food

You are responsible to bring your own food for the duration of the course. Please consult our [meal planning page](#).

You will need two days and one night worth of food. Assume your first breakfast and last dinner will be in Bellingham.

- Own
- Buy

Other Essentials

Packing Checklist

Trekking Poles

One is required, but two are highly recommended. These increase balance while wearing a heavy pack and making stream crossings, while also decreasing pressure on the knees during steep descents. For the early-season, your poles should have a snow basket.

- Own
- Buy
- Rent*

Internal Frame Pack

50L or more. Mountaineering specific packs, instead of backpacking packs, are a good way to shave weight. Should also have the ability to carry weight well (45 lbs+).

- Own
- Buy
- Rent*

Headlamp

Bring extra batteries, or if it has a rechargeable battery, make sure and bring a charger. 200-350 Lumens is an ideal range.

- Own
- Buy

Toothbrush and Toothpaste

Travel size recommended.

- Own
- Buy

Hand Sanitizer and/or Wet Wipes

Required. Used after going to the bathroom and before eating. Wet wipes can be used for the “mountain shower.”

- Own
- Buy

Toilet Paper

The provided solid waste bags have a small amount of toilet paper with them, but most people do not find this to be adequate. Estimate how much you’ll need for a program of this length and place that in a plastic zip lock bag. An extra zip lock bag can be helpful for pack-out of used paper.

- Own
- Buy

Sunscreen

SPF 30+, zinc based is preferred. Small travel size tubes are recommended so you can put them in a close by pocket for easy access.

- Own
- Buy

Lip Balm

- Own

<p>Make sure it is SPF rated.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Buy												
<p>Personal First Aid Kit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Band aids <input type="checkbox"/> Blister treatment <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription drugs <input type="checkbox"/> Ibuprofen etc. <input type="checkbox"/> If you wear contacts make sure and have spares if you can't see without them. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy												
<p>Repair Kit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Inflatable sleeping pad patch kit <input type="checkbox"/> Duct tape (Can be wrapped around trekking poles or water bottle. Gorilla Tape tends to be the best brand for the mountains.) <input type="checkbox"/> Zip ties <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 ft of 3mm accessory cord <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Trash bags that are big enough to line the inside of your pack with. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy												
<h2 style="margin: 0;">Other Optional Items</h2> <p>The items below are not required, although many are nice “luxury” items that can make your expedition more enjoyable. Remember that a few ounces here and there add up to extra pounds on your back and knees during your expedition.</p>	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Packing Checklist</h3>												
<p>Ice Axe</p> <p>A straight shaft ice axe like the Petzl Glacier or Black Diamond Raven Pro is recommended. Adze is required. Please contact our Equipment Shop if you have any questions.</p> <p>This may be necessary depending on how early in the season your course takes place and what the snow levels are.</p> <p>Use the following table as a rough guide on length. Ice axe leashes are not required and not recommended.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="background-color: #e1f5fe;">Straight Shaft Axe</th> </tr> <tr> <th style="background-color: #e1f5fe;">Personal Height</th> <th style="background-color: #e1f5fe;">Recommended Length of Axe</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>5’8” or shorter</td> <td>50-55cm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5’9”- 6’</td> <td>55-60cm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6’1”-6’3”</td> <td>60-65 cm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6’4” and up</td> <td>65-68cm</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Straight Shaft Axe		Personal Height	Recommended Length of Axe	5’8” or shorter	50-55cm	5’9”- 6’	55-60cm	6’1”-6’3”	60-65 cm	6’4” and up	65-68cm	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy <input type="checkbox"/> Rent*
Straight Shaft Axe													
Personal Height	Recommended Length of Axe												
5’8” or shorter	50-55cm												
5’9”- 6’	55-60cm												
6’1”-6’3”	60-65 cm												
6’4” and up	65-68cm												
<p>Buff/Neck Gaiter</p> <p>Look for one that is UPF rated. Brighter colors work better for warmer conditions and darker colors for colder conditions.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy												
<p>Gaia Navigation App</p> <p>Optional Smartphone App. Please have the Mt. Baker (all aspects) maps downloaded prior to the start of your course:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy												
<p>Map and Compass</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy												

<p>Map should be of Mt. Baker area (preferably Green Trails Maps #13SX). Compass must have declination adjustment.</p> <p>☆ NOTE: All three items are available together in a bundle, or all sold separately, at AAI the morning of your course.</p>	
<p>Altimeter Watch If you have one then bring it, it is a great tool to have in the backcountry, especially for navigation.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Pee Bottle Used at night or when the weather is poor so you don't have to get out of your tent.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Women's Specific Items</p> <p>Female Urination Device Pee funnel such as the GoGirl or Freshette. Many female guides prefer a rigid pee funnel.</p> <p>Click here for more info</p> <p>Menstruation Collection Cup There are many things to consider concerning backcountry menstruation.</p> <p>Click here for more info</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Entertainment Books, games, cards, music player, kindle, ect. For evenings or rainy days in the tent.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Portable Charging Device Phone charger, battery pack, or solar panel.</p> <p>☆ NOTE: Solar panels should only be used to charge battery packs. Battery packs should be used to charge devices. Inappropriate use of a solar panel could lead to the depletion of a device's power.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Ear Plugs For defense against snoring and high winds.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Insect Repellent Biting insects such as mosquitoes and blackflies can be prevalent during different times of the season depending upon conditions and location. This is a nice item to have just in case.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Camera Phone cameras or small point-and-shoot cameras are preferred. SLR cameras are not recommended due to their size and bulk.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Comfortable Clothing and Footwear Breathable footwear -- like flip-flops -- as well as some comfortable cotton clothing can be nice to change into after you get back to the van.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy
<p>Car Charger Consider bringing an extra battery pack as well, having a lot of people using car charger cables is difficult.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Buy