

Camping Equipment – Level 2

Camp Stove

Choosing a Camping Stove



Selecting a camping stove is easy once you know the choices and have decided what type of camping trips your family will be taking. Stoves can have one, two or three burners. They will use propane, butane, white gas ("Coleman fuel"), unleaded gasoline, or kerosene. Here is the info you need in order to pick a stove for your trips.

Size

It will be easier for your first few trips if the stove has at least two burners. This will allow you to use nearly all the same food as at home. With two burners, you can have a typical two-pot meal, like pasta on one burner and sauce on the other. You can even add a third pot by heating up one dish and setting it aside while you heat the others.

Brands like Coleman typically offer a couple versions of each two-burner stove, with the difference being the space for the pots. The "standard" sizes are adequate for most small families, and with a little creativity and planning, can function well for larger groups. This size can be a good choice for larger families if there will be a campfire which could be used to heat some dishes. Otherwise, you might want to try the extra large size stove, as it will accommodate larger pots and may even put out more heat as measured in BTU's or British Thermal Units.

White Gas ("Coleman") Fuel

You will encounter all the fuels named above such as propane, butane, white gas ("Coleman fuel"), unleaded gasoline, or kerosene. However, I recommend only two real choices - propane or white gas ("Coleman Fuel").

The white gas stoves will produce the most heat of any camping stoves. It burns cleanly without any odor or effect on food taste. If you spill the fuel it will evaporate very quickly and will not leave an odor. This is very important - sooner or later some fuel will spill on your hand or clothes, maybe even on your table. No problem though.

Many of the white gas stoves now come in a "dual fuel" version. This will allow you to use unleaded auto gas. Many campers use the auto gas and are satisfied with it. However, if you spill it or get it on your hands, you will have a hard time getting rid of the odor (check your hands the next time you fill up at the self service gas station).

I recommend using only the white gas in the dual fuel stoves, unless you run out and can't buy any - then use a little unleaded gas. This is the advantage to the dual fuel stoves.

The main advantage of the unleaded fuel over white gas is cost. Auto gas is usually 3 times cheaper than white gas. I feel the extra cost for the few gallons of white gas used each year is worth paying so you get the cleanliness of this fuel.

Propane Fuel

The second fuel option is propane. Propane does not give out as much heat as the white gas stoves, but it has some very significant advantages for family camping.

First, propane stoves are much easier to use. The propane comes in bottles that are screwed into the stove, not poured into a small tank's filler spout. It will not spill. All you need to do to start the stove is turn on the gas, and light the burner - just like home. There are even propane stoves with built in electronic starters - just like home. This feature makes the transition from cooking at home to cooking at camp easier for most people.

Second, propane stoves are available for use with small fuel bottles, or even large RV type bottles. If you start camping a lot, you will find that the small bottles may be very, very, convenient, but very, very expensive. However, if you buy a stove that has a hose to screw into a larger fuel tank, you can get a better price at the RV refill center. You will also save a lot of bottle changes that can happen right in the middle of cooking your meals.

The propane tanks come in 5, 10 and 20 pound sizes. A typical patio gas barbeque grill has a 20 pound tank. The BBQ tank could be hooked up to a stove for the camping trip. Another option with the propane tank approach is to get the optional attachment that will supply propane to a lantern from the same tank. Now you will have a light in your "kitchen."

This may be more than you really want for starting out. But if you start with the disposable-bottle type propane stove, you can grow to the tank version later.

Backpacker Stoves

A note about the single burner backpacking stoves: These aren't made for preparing an entire family meal. Nevertheless, they can come in handy as an extra burner, or to carry with you for a picnic lunch away from your base camp. Most of these stoves will be the white gas type. This is because weight is very important when backpacking, and white gas provides the most heat for a given weight of fuel.

Stove Extras

Some extra things you will find helpful when using your stove are a windscreen, a starter, a stand, and a fuel funnel (if using white gas).

The heat your stove puts out can be blown away making it take a long time to heat up your meal. Most larger stoves come with built-in back and side windscreens. You will be glad you have them on cool, rainy and windy days.

The stove starter is a long handled sparker that you use to light the burners. You can use a match, but the sparker is much easier and, I believe, much safer. If you get a propane stove, get one with the ignition system built in.

Even though many campgrounds provide picnic tables, you might want to consider a folding stand for your stove. This leaves you with more room on the table for preparing the food, eating, and having the kids play games while waiting for dinner.

Lantern

How to choose a Lantern for Camping

In purchasing equipment for the outdoors, I always use the same thought process. How often am I going to upgrade my equipment based on the new radical improvements that the manufacturer will come out with? How long before my existing equipment will become obsolete and I will have to replace it? How long will it be before I have a disadvantage with my existing equipment? When the time came to choose a camping lantern, I decided that I would choose the best camping lantern that I could afford based on the use of the camping lantern. Currently, there are candle, battery and gas lanterns available.



Room available

How much room is available to carry the lantern. Are you backpacking, kayaking or car camping? Do you have extra room or can you afford the extra weight of batteries? Gas lanterns are not practical if you will be hiking.

How much light do you really need?

Are you also going to be using a headlamp?

Choose the same lantern as your stove

If you decide on using a gas lantern, select a gas lantern that uses the same kind of gas as your stove. There are a number of different types of fuel available, including propane, butane, dual fuel, and kerosene.

Noise level

Candle and battery lanterns are quieter than gas lanterns. Gas lanterns are noisy.

Brightness and type of light

Gas lanterns are the brightest of all the types of lanterns. The amount of light from a gas lantern can be adjusted by the flame. The gas lanterns will also last longer than the candle lanterns. Battery lanterns have focused, adjustable lights, too.

Type of climate

Battery lanterns don't respond well in cold and freezing conditions.

Safety considerations

Battery lanterns are the only safe choice to use inside your tent. Both the candle and the gas lanterns are hot and have a risk of fire.

Battery Camping Lanterns

Battery lanterns display a lot of light, are convenient, safe and you can use rechargeable batteries (obviously not while on the trail). The amount of light can be adjusted and there are also flashlights that also become a lantern. These flashlights will hang right in the middle of your tent and produce enough light for your needs. You should also bring along an extra flashlight or lantern bulb. There are also LED lanterns available. LED lanterns last for a long time with 4 D batteries (almost 12 days). Battery lanterns have maximum durability compared to candle and gas lanterns.

Don't forget to learn how to maintain your camping lantern correctly because incorrect methods might damage your camping lantern and choose your camping lantern wisely.

Types of Lanterns

Electric Lanterns

Battery-powered lanterns offer you a choice of three types of lamps.

- **LED:** Best for long battery life; good light output; can handle rugged use.
- **Fluorescent:** Larger fluorescent models produce high light output; fluorescent tubes require special disposal procedures.
- **Incandescent:** Good light output; modest battery life; most use bulbs containing a bright-burning pressurized gas such as Krypton; more fragile than an LED lamp.

PROS:

- Quiet
- No exhaust
- Safe around kids (LED and fluorescent lamps generate no heat)

CONS:

- Battery usage and disposal

Fuel-Burning Lanterns

Gas-powered lanterns can run on several fuel sources:

- **Liquid-fuel:** Refillable white-gas/auto-gas tanks; fuel-efficient; generates powerful light.
- **Propane:** Refillable tanks; fuel-efficient; generates powerful light.
- **Butane:** Disposable canisters; compact; easy to use; high light output.

PROS:

- Stronger light intensity than most electric models

CONS:

- Ample ventilation is needed (they're not intended for small, enclosed places)
- They generate heat (considerable caution is required when you operate them around children or near flammable materials)
- Noisy

Candle Lanterns

These use one or more candles to provide soft, natural light. Optionally, reflectors can be used to maximize the glow.

PROS:

- Soft light and no noise = pleasant ambience
- Adequate for close-up tasks

CONS:

- Minimal light output
- You must be vigilant to keep candle lanterns a safe distance from flammable materials (such as tent fabric)
- They generate heat and can be hot to touch

Coolers

Pick the best camp cooler for your camping needs.

A camping cooler is an essential piece of camping equipment that has a very important job, – not just keeping things cold, but keeping them safe for you to eat or drink!

Before you can pick the right camp cooler for you; you need to understand cooler differences, and your cooler needs.

What are your cooler needs?

Buying a camp cooler is an investment in your camping future, so first you have to decide; what are your camping needs, – now, and in the future.

Ask yourself these questions;

1. Do you need to keep things cold for multi-day camping trips, or just day trips?
2. What size do you need?
 - How many campers, – 2, 4, 6, or more?
 - Will it be used for food and drink, or just one or the other?
 - Do you have transport or space restrictions?
3. Do you want one big cooler to handle everything, or a couple smaller ones to divide the load?
4. Will you have to carry it by yourself, will there always be someone available to help you, do you want one with wheels?
5. How will you transport your camping cooler, – RV, trailer, mini-van, car?
6. What climate do you camp in, – always hot, always cold, or both?

7. Do you want a cooler that will outlast you, or one just for a few uses?
8. What is your budget?

Once you can answer those questions you will be better prepared to judge your available choices.

Moving on to the selection process:

If you are only looking for a day-trip cooler, then almost any cooler you buy will work, even the least expensive. A 28-qt to 54-qt cooler is likely to be the optimum size for you also.

For multi-day camping trips, the cooler’s insulation and lid seal become more important. Most camping coolers have manufacturer’s ice-holding rating promos, for example:

- “will hold ice for 5 to 6 days” is a common promo for the better “Extreme” camping coolers, or “guaranteed to hold ice for 3 days”

Multi-day camping means a bigger cooler also. Obviously it will need to hold more of everything. Most common sizes are around 66-qt to 77-qt, but manageable sizes go all the way to 120-qt monsters.



Coleman 33-qt. Cooler Approx: 22"W x 14"D x 12"T	Coleman 62-qt cooler with wheels – approx: 32"W x 17"T x 16"D	Coleman 150-qt Cooler approx. 46"W x 20"T x 20"D
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Of course these are not the only sizes available. They were just picked to give you an idea of general dimensions. You will find dozens of capacity variations between the 33-qt and 150-qt sizes.

The most common camp cooler sizes range from 54-qt to 80-qt.

What a cooler is made of: Most camping coolers are made of Poly now, (good ones and cheap ones), because it is such a durable material. Molded construction is the standard. But, like all things there is good and there is better, stick with a name-brand cooler so you know you won’t be getting “paper-thin” construction. Or ...

Important Features to look for:

- Bottom drain – this is a must for two reasons; first, so you don't have to bail or pick up and tilt, the cooler to get melted ice water out of it, and second; if your cooler maker did not think a drain was important enough to include, then you want to pick a different brand.
- A ribbed bottom would be nice – it lets water drain under the food, not around and over it
- Handles on each end; molded handles are the most durable, – nothing to break, but flap handles are good too if the cooler is made by a reputable brand, like Coleman or Igloo
- A strong latch, if the cooler top is hinged, (as most coolers over 40-qts. are), to keep the lid sealed tight against the cooler body
- Lid Gasket; This ensures an air-tight seal to keep the cold in, and help ice last longer.
*Most coolers, (except the most expensive ones), under 40-qts do not have gaskets, they rely on a tight lid-to-body seal. Which is okay if you are not looking for a 5-day ice holding cooler.



To wheel, or not to wheel: If you are considering a cooler larger than 33-qts, and you will be moving it each time you go camping, – the easy answer is yes. A loaded cooler is heavy, and most of the name-brand models are designed so the wheels reduce the cooler's capacity as little as possible.

Extra features to consider:

- Molded drink-holders in top – might be convenient on a drink cooler, but probably won't be used much on the larger food coolers. Think about where your cooler usually is while you are camping to decide if this is a feature you might make use of or want.
- Insert trays – trays that ride on top-ridges of the cooler, above the bulk stuff in the bottom. Good for keeping condiments, cheeses, or smaller items separate from other foods. Your call, – would they be useful to you, or would you prefer the extra storage space without them.
- Section dividers – these are usually only found, (or useful in), in larger capacity coolers. It's not a necessary feature, but if you are buying a larger cooler, they are very helpful with food storage management.

Bottom-line recommendations:

You can't go wrong with a Coleman Camping cooler. They are time-tested and backed by an experienced camping equipment company. Choose from the "Extreme" line of coolers for the

best cold-holding ability and tested camping features.

Coleman isn't the only good brand though, Igloo makes good coolers too.

Typical Camping Coolers Set-up:

- Just the 2 of you: A 54-qt. cooler will probably be all you need for a week-end camping trip. Longer than that and you might want to consider an additional small 8-qt – 16qt. cooler.
- 3-4 people: a 62-qt to 77-qt. cooler for food storage, and a 54-qt cooler for drink storage.
- More than 4 people, or more than a weekend trip; You might be in the 100-qt+ category. Check them out first.

That's it! If you answered the questions at the top of this article, and understand the basic features your new cooler should have, then the extra features offered are up to you. Let your wallet be your guide.

Be safe, make sure your coolers maintain temperatures below 40`!

Water container

You will need to choose two types of water containers.

The first type is a large water storage container that is typically 5 to 7 gallons in size. This container will have to have a large opening so you can easily fill it, a handle so you can easily carry it and a pour spout that can be turned on and off.

The second is a reusable water bottle.



The most common plastic reusable bottles are the Nalgene type bottles. Almost indestructible and you can see how much water you have in them at all times. If you choose a plastic bottle make sure it is BPA free.



A much better option would be an aluminum reusable water bottle. These bottles are available in all sorts of sizes, colors, and designs. They even have special-sized models for kids, too.



Stainless steel reusable water bottles are a third option. They are made entirely out of stainless steel, which does not leach, is difficult to break or crack, and does not easily stain or interact with whatever product you are consuming. The water always tastes good out of it and it keeps it reasonably cold for a little while you go hiking or out in the sun. They don't recommend using them for hot beverages, which is understandable – that's what a thermos is for.