

Guidance for Buying your own Expedition Equipment

If you buy some of your own equipment then you can keep it for the future. If you are thinking of doing this, then here is some guidance which is meant to help by explaining what you do need but also pointing out where you can save money and avoid buying expensive things that you don't need. Here are three points to emphasise at the start.

- Firstly, it is essential to be properly equipped because we will be outdoors for two days and one night and even in summer, the British weather can be cold and wet. If we have suitable waterproof and supportive footwear and if we are wearing clothes that keep us warm and dry then we will enjoy our expedition whatever the weather. If we allow ourselves to get cold or wet then it will be miserable.
- Secondly, having made that first point, cheaper equipment or things you have already at home will often be sufficient. You don't need to go and buy more expensive specialist items if this is your first venture into countryside walking and you don't know whether you will want to do a lot more in the future. Outdoor shops are full of fantastic quality expensive gear for those climbing Lake District mountains and who know they will get a lot of use for many years. For most of our students, reasonable quality cheaper items will be fine.
- Lastly, you have good discounts available (at least 10% and often more) with your DofE discount card which should have been posted to you after you registered on eDofE back in October. Details are available online at this link (including what to do if you've lost or not received your card) <https://www.dofe.org/shopping/card/> These discounts are available with a range of DofE's partner outdoor suppliers, including Go Outdoors and Blacks.

Waterproofs

These are absolutely essential to keep us comfortable and safe. Waterproofs also keep the wind chill off, which is just as important. Waterproof jackets must have a hood.

You can pay more for more comfortable waterproofs. However, it makes sense to buy a reasonable, cheap waterproof jacket unless you really know you'll use it quite a bit in the future. Waterproof trousers are worn less often so a cheaper pair makes sense here too. We are buying Regatta waterproofs for our kit store which are cheap and basic, but reasonable.

We would definitely advise buying cheaper waterproofs from an outdoor supplier rather than from a supermarket. A quick look at the GoOutdoors website shows several waterproof jackets at less than £20 (not counting DofE discount).

Walking Boots

You need proper walking boots with a sturdy sole for rough ground and ankle support. Trainers are not sufficient. This is particularly true for our expedition as we will be carrying large rucksacks which makes us more top heavy and boots with ankle support are all the more necessary. Waterproof boots will keep your feet dry if it rains. Fabric boots will be cheaper than leather and are lighter weight. You should be able to find waterproof fabric walking boots in the larger outdoor shops for as little as £35 or £40 (not counting DofE discount). Decathlon have waterproof walking boots from £30, although not with DofE discounts.

We strongly advise going to the shop and trying walking boots on for comfort rather than buying online. Buy boots half a size bigger than your normal size. Try them on with two pairs of socks, a thinner pair and a thicker outer pair. This helps protect against blisters caused by boots rubbing.

Wear them for a few walks to get used to them. Don't wear them for the first time on the expedition.

Sleeping Bag, Liner & Mat

You'll want a 2 season or even a 3 season sleeping bag for camping in northern England, even in summer. 3 season means it should be useable for camping in Spring, Summer and Autumn. You should be able to get a good synthetic 2 or 3 season sleeping bag for £30-40 before DofE discount.

Synthetic sleeping bags are fine for our purposes. Down bags are more expensive and harder to look after and to clean when needed.

We definitely recommend buying a cotton sleeping bag liner for about £10 to use with your sleeping bag. These are easily washed and save the inconvenience of washing heavy sleeping bags so often – like a pillow case on a pillow.

Roll mats are not just for a bit of softness to lie on. Their main purpose is to insulate against the chill coming up from the ground overnight. Sleep without a roll mat and you'll feel much colder. A thin, cheap foam roll mat is fine, costing £5 or thereabouts. You can pay more for self-inflating mats, etc but you don't need to.

Pillows are too bulky for us to carry in rucksacks. We recommend bringing an empty pillow case and stuffing it with your spare jumper. You can buy compact camping pillows but you don't need to.

If its colder than expected and your sleeping bag isn't as warm as you'd like? Wear an extra top and/or leggings and socks in bed. A hat too. You needn't spend extra money or weigh down your pack just to make double sure.