

Adirondack Backpacking - Adult Equipment List

Welcome to NOLS!

Learning to choose the right equipment for your adventure is an essential part of the NOLS curriculum. We know that walking into an outdoor store can be a daunting experience, but preparing for your course need not feel overwhelming. This list is designed to help you make smart, prudent choices about the gear you bring on your trip.

When you arrive, your instructors will first look through all the equipment you've brought and help you decide what to take into the field. You'll then go into our Outfitting Department to rent or purchase any remaining items. The list below is comprehensive; however, the actual equipment needed for your course will vary depending on location, season, and instructor judgment. For this reason, we do not recommend that you go out and purchase a lot of expensive, specialized gear for your course.

Here are some thoughts to guide you as you pack:

- **First, use gear you already own!** You'll be comfortable in tried-and-true clothing. Bring more layers than you think you'll need; your instructors will help you choose your best options. If an item is deemed suitable for your particular course, you can take it into the field; if not, you can leave it in storage at the branch. If in doubt, bring it to the Northeast !
- **Second, rent key items from NOLS.** When it comes to gear, every adventurer has their own preferences. In the field, you'll have the opportunity to hone your preferred system. We recommend that you rent, rather than purchase, several "big ticket" items, such as a sleeping bag. While you are not obligated to rent gear from us, there are several reasons why we suggest it. Our rental gear is high quality, chosen specifically for the heavy use it receives on courses. Rental prices are reasonable, so you can try out gear and make informed decisions on future adventures.
- **Third, purchase specific items from our Outfitting Department.** To make shopping simple, we offer basic kitchen utensils (mug, bowl with lid, spoon, 32-ounce water bottle), personal care items (lip balm, sunscreen, hand sanitizer, bug spray), and camping sundries (headlamp, batteries, lighter). We also carry a selection of clothing, including wool socks, ball caps, hats and gloves, rain

jackets and pants, and base-layers. NOLS is a not-for-profit organization, and revenue from our Outfitting Department goes to serve the mission of the School.

- **Fourth, visit your local outdoor store.** Most gear shops, from REI and EMS to mom-and-pop outfits, are familiar with NOLS and its courses. They can advise you on purchases—but be wary of being “upsold” items you don’t really need! We encourage you to keep the tags on all equipment and clothing (and the receipt) so that you may return any unneeded items.

Equipment Fees

In addition to your course tuition, you will pay an equipment deposit. This deposit will be applied directly to the charges you incur for gear rentals, purchases, or any loss or damage to our equipment. Total charges will vary depending on the amount of equipment you rent or purchase from us; the prices listed below will help you estimate your costs. At the end of your course, you will be billed for any amount that exceeds the equipment deposit, or refunded any balance.

Quality Over Quantity

At NOLS, we fundamentally believe that you don’t need to own a lot of expensive gear to live and travel comfortably in the backcountry. By purchasing high-quality items and learning to care for them, you’re making a lifetime investment. Spend money on the few items that really matter, but don’t get lured into splurging on the trendiest fabrics or unnecessary gadgets.

Questions?

If you have any questions or would like more information regarding the items on this list, please contact NOLS Northeast at (518) 323-7800 or email at northeast@nols.edu.

How to Use This List

Items under the **Required** heading are items that you **must** either bring yourself or rent or purchase from NOLS as available. Items under the **Optional** heading are not required, and you may bring them from home, buy, or rent from NOLS as available. If you see an **X** in the price column, that means that an item is not available for rent or for purchase as indicated.

Upper Body Clothing

We layer our clothing, combining different garments to achieve optimum insulation and protection from wind, rain, and snow. We use either synthetic or wool fibers, both of which insulate when wet; merino wool products are increasingly popular. We avoid cotton, which is poor insulation when wet. It is common to need three insulating layers.

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Base layer (Mid- Weight Synthetic) (2-3)	X	X	Mid-weight underwear top made of wool, synthetic, or Capilene®
Top layer (synthetic or fleece jacket)	\$6	X	Synthetic full-length zip jacket. Fleece or fiberfill jacket of Polartec® 300 or equivalent weight.
Wind shirt	\$9	\$55	A lightweight, breathable, durable nylon wind shell, in either pullover or parka style
Rain jacket	X	\$50-100	A sturdy, roomy waterproof jacket with a hood. Both coated nylon and breathable fabrics such as Gore-Tex® are acceptable.
T-shirt (1-2)	X	X	A lightweight synthetic or merino wool t-shirt
Sports Bra or Tank (1-2)	x	x	Synthetic sports bra or a synthetic sports tank are recommended

Our advice? Bring the sweaters, fleece jackets, and synthetic layers you think might work. We'll advise you on the best combination for your trip, depending on the season and course area.

Lower Body Clothing

You will need 1–2 synthetic insulating layers (usually a base layer and, in early summer, a pair of fleece pants). All must fit comfortably over each other so that they can be worn at the same time. If you tend to get cold easily, add a middle layer of mid-weight bottoms to the base layer and fleece pants.

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Base layer (Mid- Weight Synthetic) (1-2)	X	X	Mid-weight bottoms of high performance polyester, synthetic, or Capilene®. Cotton and cotton blends are not acceptable.
Wind/ Hiking pants	\$8	\$60	Breathable nylon wind pants or lightweight hiking pant, roomy enough to fit over all lower body layers. We recommend renting NOLS wind pants. They are

			the most popular piece of equipment NOLS has designed.
Underwear / Briefs (2-3 pairs)	X	X	Wear what's comfortable; cotton, silk, or synthetics are fine.
Optional Items			
Rain pants	X	\$70-100	Although not required, some people like to use rain pants in conjunction with a rain jacket.
Nylon shorts	x	x	Optional, if you prefer hiking pants. Loose-fitting nylon athletic/river shorts. No cotton shorts please.
Our advice? Bring the synthetic base layers, rain gear, and exercise clothing you think might work. We'll advise you on the best combination for your trip, depending on the season and course area.			
Head, Neck, and Hand Layers			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Baseball cap or wide-brim sun hat	X	\$12-20	To protect ears and face from the sun; baseball hats available with NOLS logo
Wool or fleece hat	X	\$15-20	A warm hat made of wool or fleece. Thick enough to keep you warm on chilly nights
Liner Gloves	X	\$15-25	Wool or fleece
Packs and Bags			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Backpack	\$20	X	Our rental packs are large expedition models with a volume of 5000 to 6000 cubic inches. If you bring your own pack it must be in the range of 4500 to 6000 cubic inches (roughly 70-95 Liters).
Small stuff sack (1-2)	\$2	X	Small nylon or mesh sacks for organizing items in your pack
Our advice? An expedition backpack is a major purchase. If you don't already own one, we think you should rent ours, gain some experience, then make an informed decision after your course.			
Sleeping Gear			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes

Required Items			
Sleeping bag	\$20	X	Synthetic-filled bags (Quallofil®, Hollofil®, Polarguard®, etc.) perform well in the variety of conditions we encounter on courses. A bag with approximately 3 pounds of fill rated to 0°F.
Compression sack	\$3	X	A sleeping bag stuff sack with straps attached to compress contents.
Plastic trash bag (2-3)	X	\$1	2-3 heavy-duty (3-6 mil) lawn-and-garden bags (33 gallon) to help waterproof your sleeping bag and backpack
Closed-cell foam or inflatable sleeping pad	\$4 (foam)	X	Full-length closed cell foam pad to insulate and pad between the ground and your sleeping bag. Therm-a-rest and Insulmat pads are acceptable. Please bring a patch kit if you bring an inflatable pad.
Ground cloth	\$4	\$10	A waterproof nylon sheet to go between your sleeping pad and the ground. We rent Tyvek® ground cloths
Miscellaneous Items			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Bowl	X	\$6	Plastic or Tupperware bowl. A screw-on lid is handy. 500ml plastic Nalgene bowls are popular
Spoon	X	\$1	Lexan spoons are light and durable. One that fits inside your bowl is ideal.
Water bottle (1-2)	X	\$10-20	Wide-mouth quart- or liter-size plastic bottles (2 liter capacity). Nalgene® bottles available with NOLS logo.
Lip balm	X	\$3	Stick, cream, or tube-type moisturizing balm, SPF 15 or greater
Sunscreen	X	\$2.5	A 3oz. tube, SPF 30 or greater
Bandana (2-3)	X	\$3	A few of these are always handy.
Headlamp	X	\$20-60	Durable and lightweight. Headlamps are preferred over flashlights.
Disposable lighter	X	\$1	For lighting your camp stove
Toiletries	X	\$2-5	Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, and feminine products. Travel or trial sizes are plenty.

Watch	X	\$25-40	A watch with an alarm is a nice feature. We sell Timex Ironman watches in various colors.
Pen/pencil (2)	X	\$2	For journaling and taking notes during classes
Notepad	X	\$5-10	A small, lightweight pad is fine.
Sunglasses	X	\$25-45	Any good quality sunglasses with dark lenses blocking 100% UV protection will work fine. If you wear prescription lenses and have limited vision without them, bring your own prescription sunglasses or look for a quality pair of clip-on polarized shades.
Prescription medications	X	X	Please be sure you have enough for your entire course and travel days.
Change of Clothes	X	X	We will provide you with a towel, shampoo, and soap for showering at the end of your course. Be sure to bring a fresh change of clothes for your travels home.
Optional Items			
Instant hand sanitizer	X	X	2 oz. bottle is a good size for keeping hands clean. One bottle per students is provided by NOLS.
Insect repellent	X	\$5	1 small bottle is optional. No aerosol spray cans. Ben's is a popular brand.
Prescription glasses and contact lenses (2-3 pairs)	X	X	If you wear them, bring a spare pair of glasses or lenses. Contact-lens wearers should also bring a pair of glasses as backup. Prescription sunglasses are also nice to have in reserve.
Book or e-reader	X	X	A small paperback reading book or lightweight e-reader, such as a Kindle. Please note that tablet-style e-readers (e.g., iPads, Kindle Fire) are not allowed on NOLS courses.
Trekking poles	X	\$60-90	Highly recommended in the Adirondacks. Sturdy 2-3 section poles for easy packing. Good for steep, muddy trails.
Camera	X	X	Lightweight, compact digital cameras are sufficient; bring a protective case. Avoid heavy lenses and elaborate set-ups. (Please note: you may not bring your smartphone or tablet into the field to use as a digital camera.)
Camp chair	X	X	Crazy Creek-style, or a Therm-A-Rest adapter.

Hydration system	X	X	Very handy and popular, though we do sell water bottles, which serve the same purpose.
Sunglasses retainer	X	\$8	Chums or Croakies for keeping track of your glasses or sunglasses. Available with NOLS logo
Pocketknife	X	X	Not needed. Should you want to bring one, please choose a very small knife or multi-tool.
Coffee	X	X	Starbucks VIA Ready Brew packets or other instant coffee brands are quick and easy to use in the backcountry.

Our advice? Keep the toiletries, pocketknife and other gear to small sizes. We work to keep our pack weight as low as possible. Saving every ounce is essential!

Footwear

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Boots	X	X	Sturdy backpacking boots with good ankle support and proper fit are critical for hiking on uneven terrain with expedition packs. All-leather or leather-and-synthetic uppers are fine. The most common mistake is buying boots that are too small. (See “Boot Recommendations” below)
Wool socks (3-4)	X	\$13-20	Mid- to heavyweight wool socks. All pairs of socks should fit comfortably in your boots.
Gaiters	X	\$35-50	Shin- or knee-high, durable. Gaiters keep dirt and other debris from entering the boot, and are a critical part of your footwear system.
Camp shoes	X	X	Running, tennis, or cross-training athletic shoes. Crocs™ are also a popular option

Our advice? Your boots will be a critical piece of gear. If they're not sturdy, don't provide enough support, or don't fit properly with wool socks, we won't let you use them. If you have any doubts about boots, feel free to give us a call.

Boot Recommendations

NOLS has been outfitting students with boots for many years and our priorities have remained the same: we want you to have boots that provide adequate protection for your feet, are durable enough to withstand extended rugged wear, and provide reasonable comfort. Many boots available on the market do not meet these criteria, and a boot that is good for weekend day-hiking use may not be a good boot for your NOLS course.

Medium-weight, off-trail backpacking or light mountaineering boots work best. They provide good support for off-trail hiking with heavy packs, and usually require less break-in time than heavyweight mountaineering boots. Here are some features to look for:

- Constructed from full-grain, one-piece leather upper or a combination of nylon, Gore-Tex, and leather
- A sole that provides good traction, like Vibram® or other lugged sole
- 1/2- to 3/4-length shank or full poly mid-sole stiffener within the sole to provide foot support and protection
- Ankle support! Trail running shoes and below-the-ankle hiking boots are not acceptable.
- Comfortable fit with your preferred hiking socks. Boots that are too small commonly cause blisters.

The following list of acceptable boots is not exhaustive and is to be used for suggestions only. It is fine to substitute a similar boot for one of those listed here.

Asolo: Power Matic series; TPS series; Power Light series; Matrix series; Energy series

Garmont: Dakota; Synchro Plus; Cypress, FC Eco 4.0

La Sportiva: Thunder II; Cascade

Lowa: Tahoe; Tibet; Banff; Pingora

Montrail: Feather Peak

Oboz: Wind River

Scarpa: Mustang; Barun; Nepal Pro; SL M3; Escape

Vasque: St Elias; Wasatch; Bitterroot; Summit; Sundowner; Clarion; Breeze; Taku

***Please note that boot manufacturers often rename their product line. Visit the manufacturer's website or contact us if you have questions.**

Shared Group Equipment—NOLS will supply

Expedition members share both the use of and the responsibility for the group gear that NOLS issues. NOLS charges only for group equipment lost or damaged. Keep in mind that NOLS evaluates gear from a number of perspectives beyond those that an individual user might consider. Performance, durability and simplicity are all contributing factors towards our gear selection.

Tents and shelters
Trowel or shovel

Camp stoves
Fuel bottles and fuel
Cooking gear
Maps and compasses
Bear-resistant food containers
Pepper spray (Bear repellent)
Equipment repair kits
Reference books
Water treatment

First aid kits:

Our instructors carry adequate first aid kits. There is no need to bring your own.