

# Camp Sites

Choose a campsite that will have minimum impact on the environment

- Practice low-impact camping.
- Set your tent on a durable surface like rock, bare ground, sand, or gravel to protect fragile areas.
- Camp at established campsites when possible.
- Camp at least 200 feet away from water.
- Good campsites are found, not made!!!
- If fires are permitted keep them small and use only OFFICIAL fire rings or a fire pan according to area rules.
- Campsites can sometimes be closed because of past abuse.



A good campsite will have a clearing for your tent that is on relatively flat, well-drained terrain

- Ground that has a slight rise will help to avoid puddles in case of rain.
- You want a campsite that has some elevation and not in a depression.



Pick a campsite that will let you relax



- Scenic views are nice. There are few things more relaxing than soaking in a beautiful landscape. Some need a scenic overlook, waterfall, some just need to be surrounded by trees to relax.
- For privacy and to be courteous of others, choose a site away from trails and out of view of other campers.
- Many areas have regulations on how close to trails and scenic areas you can camp.
- Morning sun will dry tents and warm you up. Afternoon shade will shield you from the hot sun.
- Avoid areas heavy with mosquitoes and other insects.
- Mosquitoes like low marshy places, still water, tall grass, and bracken fern.
- Breezes can keep down insect numbers. Keep windward of mosquito holes. They travel with the wind not against it.
- Avoid tall grassy meadows because chiggers, ticks, ants, and other bugs live there.

When choosing your campsite make sure that it is safe.

- In rocky terrain beware of snake-infested ledges.
- Avoid areas known for avalanches and rock slides.
- Don't camp at the bottom of cliffs with loose or falling rocks.
- Camp over the high-water mark in dry stream beds or river canyons subject to flash floods.
- Beware of areas that have lots of poison ivy or oak.
- Don't camp under "widow makers" (fallen trees leaning on other trees) or threatening limbs.
- Natural wind blocks like large boulders, rock outcroppings, or dense stands of trees protect against high winds.
- Tall, dominant trees and single trees or small clumps of trees are targets for lightening.
- Dense stands of trees, all the same height, in a relatively low area, away from water offer the best protection from lightening



## Miscellaneous Tips to help you Choose a Campsite

- Breezes blow up canyons or mountains during the day, and down at night.
- Hollows and valleys are usually the wettest, coldest, and foggiest spots around.
- If you camp near a mountain stream, cold air travels down water corridors and settles in low places.
- Cold air collects in meadows.
- When winter camping, don't set your tent or build a fire under trees that have snow on their branches.

**Start to make camp 2 hours before sunset.**

## Tarps

Advantages:

**Low Cost.**

**Low Weight.**

**Cooking.**

You can easily cook under one, A great rainy day advantage.

**Camp fires.**

Where appropriate, you can build a fire in front of one, which is nice in cold and wet weather.

Of course you can build a fire near a tent, but those expensive nylon tents don't react well to flying sparks, and they don't concentrate the heat of a fire anyway. Burn a hole in a cheap tarp and all you have to do is simply patch it with duct tape.

A properly rigged tarp can reflect the warmth of a fire and create quite a cozy little sanctuary.

**Closeness to Nature.**

After all, this is why we're out there, isn't it? So why enclose yourself completely in a nylon envelope if you don't have to.

Under a tarp you can have shelter and still see the wind and rain, taste the air and see the stars. One is still part of the great outdoors.

Inside a buttoned up tent, you might as well be in your backyard.

**Disadvantages****Bugs.**

This is perhaps the single biggest complaint of tarp shelters.

If the blackflies are so thick you get twenty calories of protein with every breath, or the mosquitoes so bad your hiking companions look pale from blood loss, then a tarp might not be the best idea.

**Above The Tree Line.**

It's nice to have a handy tree or two to string a tarp from. This is where the weight savings really shine.

Tarp shelters can be used in treeless areas of course, if you are willing to carry poles or spend some time looking for sticks.

But there are times when a true freestanding tent is called for, like crowded camp grounds or when a storm is trying it's level best to blow you off a mountainside, or really wet weather when the rain and wind is swirling around, constantly changing direction from every compass point, or when it's so cold out you need to conserve every last calorie of heat.

**Skill.**

Tarps take more skill to use. You have to know a few knots for one thing, and every time you set one up you have to decide how best to do so, taking into consideration the weather and the surroundings. You have to look for not only a nice flat spot with good drainage and no deadfalls ready to come down on it, but also handy trees, bushes, rocks or whatever to hang the tarp from. Which way is the wind blowing? Will it change direction after nightfall? Need to cut or find poles? With a tarp, taking advantage of natural windbreaks, dips in the terrain and so forth is far more important.

With a tent, you couldn't change things around even if you wanted to. All the design and engineering has been done for you, and all you do is assemble it, the same way you do every time you use it regardless of the conditions or location.

## Tarp Setups

### Classic A-Frame:



This shelter is a popular old-standby because it's relatively quick and easy to set up, offering decent protection from the elements whilst also providing good ventilation. It requires 4 stakes and a ridge-line (or two separate lines as seen in photo). Tie the ridge-line first, and then stake the 4 corners to the ground. You can change the angle of the "A" by adjusting the ridge-line lower or higher and staking the corners further out or closer in. For increased ventilation, tie the ridge-line higher up and attach guy-lines to the corners, tying them to stakes or convenient trees.



**Diamond:**

The Diamond is the preferred setup for hammock camping because the diagonal distance is longer than the length along the sides, allowing for more coverage above the hammock. This configuration provides excellent ventilation and a nice view of your surroundings, especially if you raise one of the staked corners and connect it to a tree with a guy-line. The downside to this is that heavy precipitation tends to pool on the open side because the angle is not as steep. An overall disadvantage to the Diamond structure is that, no matter how hard you try, it is nearly impossible to avoid the slight sag in the middle of the tarp, even with a very taught ridge-line. This will inevitably catch precipitation instead of shedding it.

**Plough-Point:**

The Plough-Point is named as such because the shape mimics a farmer's traditional plough. Essentially, it's the same structure as the Diamond, only with two sides touching the ground. It also shares the same problem of a slight sag down the centre, though this can be remedied by stretching the mid point with a guy-line or by pushing out the centre from the inside with a short stick or a trekking pole. Ventilation is also great, but the high point and concave design inhibits air flow, making it unsuitable in windy conditions. Setting up this shelter against a boulder will help with this problem. The Plough-Point requires 3 stakes.

### **The Improved Adirondack:**



This is a modified version of the simple open-sided lean-to (ridge-line on one side of the tarp with the two corners on the opposite side pegged to the ground), based off of the Adirondack shelter portrayed in D.C. Beard's book *Shelters, Shacks, and Shanties*. The name itself originates from the time the Adirondack mountains were first used as a luxury spring and summer retreat for the wealthy. An open-sided lean-to may be sufficient for fair weather days during the warmer months, but offers little protection from the wind and precipitation. This shelter is meant to be an improvement that offers more coverage from the sides and front.





To set up this shelter, start by laying out the tarp on the ground in a diagonal, or diamond, shape. From the back corner, peg the second tie-out on each side, creating a triangle flap which you can then tuck inside. Now pull the front side corner tie-outs to match in line with the two in the back, and peg them. Lift up the remaining bulk two tie-outs high on both sides, and string it up in place with a ridge-line...alternatively, you can use two 150 cm/5 ft poles with two guy lines each. The remaining triangular flap in the front can be flipped over and tied to another attachment point with a guy-line so that it's out of the way. In the event of precipitation, untie it and reconnect it to the ground in the front for some added cover, as shown in the photo below.



The Improved Adirondack has excellent ventilation, but as with the Plough-Point, its concave structure catches wind very easily. I'm sure that I am not the first person to come up with this modified design, so I won't take any credit for it.

### **Pup Tent A-Frame:**



This configuration is based on the old US military pup tents used in WWII, Korea, and Viet Nam. Each soldier was issued a shelter half, two of which when buttoned together formed the tent. They were not very roomy, especially for two soldiers. With a tarp, the structure is made by tying a ridge-line fairly low to the ground, and pegging the next two tie-outs on each end to the ground. What you end up with are two flaps of excess tarp which can be tucked inside as a sort of groundsheet. While the Pup Tent is a bit cramped and not as luxurious with space as a Classic A-Frame, its low profile makes it an ideal stealth camp shelter.

### **The Summit/Enclosed Wedge:**





The Summit, or Enclosed Wedge is something I've been fiddling around with for some time and have come to love. It has a similar shape to a Holden setup, but this configuration allows for the option of being fully enclosed.



To set up the Summit, lay the tarp out on the ground in a square. From the centre tie-out in the back, peg the first tie-outs on either side. Now pull the tie-outs on either side before the front corners to be in line with the back corners you've just created, and peg them in place. Tuck the excess side flaps inside. Now you will need a ridge-pole just over 168 cm/66 inches to erect the shelter... this will create the "summit",

pardon the pun. I use my hiking staff because the height is just right. Place the top of the pole just under the front centre tie-out of the tarp, stand it up, and secure it in place with a bit of cord tied around the outside of the tarp. Use a guy-line to connect the top of the pole to the ground for stability. The two triangular flaps in the front will act as doors. For ventilation, leave them open and fasten the corners down. If you want added protection from the elements, you can tie them closed from the inside. Be aware that leaving the shelter enclosed will inevitably cause condensation problems. With heavy precipitation (especially snow), it may be wise to prop up the centre line down the back under one of the tie-outs with a short stick or trekking pole, or to attach a guy-line to stretch it out.



Here's an inside view of the setup. As with the Improved Adirondack, I do not think that I'm the first to come up with this design, so I won't take credit for it. If this setup has a proper name, do let me know in the comments. "Summit" and "Enclosed Wedge" are just names I came up with based on its appearance.

## Laavu:



Laavu tents and shelters have become quite popular as of late, and for good reason. The design has been tested through time by peoples worldwide such as the Plains tribal nations, the Saami, and Evenki. This particular setup uses only 5 pegs and a center ridge-pole...it does not need additional support from guy-lines.



Begin by laying out the tarp on the ground in a square, with the center line of tie-outs towards you. Peg the two tie-outs that are just before the back corners. Pull the front corners together so that they are about 61 cm/2 ft apart, and peg them. Now go to the back and pull the center, middle tie-out, and peg it in place. Tuck in the remaining triangular flaps. To finish, you will need a ridge-pole around 132 cm/52 inches tall, an inch or two of which will be driven into the ground for extra stability. Take the second middle tie-out



in the front, and hold it up. Jam the bottom of the ridge-pole into the ground, centered to the tie-out you are holding, and move the top of the pole under it. Secure the pole in place by tying some cord around it from the outside of the tarp. The flappy bit that remains can be attached to a guy-line on either side. The shelter should not have any sagging, but it can be a bit tricky to get this configuration right at first, so you may need to do some final adjustments.



This tarp configuration offers a spacious interior and great protection from the elements, but because ventilation is only allowed through the fairly small entrance, condensation can be a problem.

#### References

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