



DofE Expeditions

Frequently Asked Questions



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Equipment

What kit do I need?

Please refer to previous information emails. You can also find the full D of E recommended kit list here: <https://www.dofe.org/shopping/dofe-expedition-kit-list/>

What happens if I forget anything?

We bring a small stock of spare kit to each expedition so your DofE leaders may be able to help. Alternatively you may be able to visit a shop before you start. However you will not be able to take part unless you are properly equipped.

Why can't I wear trainers or approach shoes for the expedition?

In order to safely take part in an expedition you must have proper walking boots which cover the ankle bone. These must have soles with good grips and heels. If you do not have proper walking boots you will not be able to take part.

Why must my walking boots cover the ankle bone?

You will be carrying a heavy load during the expedition so in order to prevent injury; your ankles will need extra support from your walking boots. If you do not have proper walking boots you will not be able to take part. There is a small stock of spare boots in the stores if you wish to borrow some.

Do I need to bring a spare pair of trainers or flip flops?

This isn't necessary, however if you don't mind carrying a little more, then you can bring a different pair of shoes to wear in camp. You should not walk barefoot around the campsite.

Can I wear shorts?

If it is hot you may wish to wear shorts, however we recommend wearing long trousers when walking as they provide protection from sunburn, from cuts and scratches from long grass and from biting insects such as ticks. If you do wear shorts then you may need to put on your waterproof overtrousers when walking through undergrowth.

Can I wear cotton t-shirts or tracksuit bottoms?

Cotton absorbs lots of water and dries very slowly so if your cotton t-shirt, hoodie or tracksuit bottoms get wet, you will be cold and uncomfortable. Fleece and quick drying synthetic materials are better. A woolly jumper will also keep you warm while wet.

Why do I need to bring a woolly hat and gloves in summer?

Even in the middle of summer it can be very cold on the hill or at night. Therefore it is essential that you can keep yourself warm.

Do I have to bring waterproofs, even if the weather forecast predicts good weather?

Yes, you must have waterproofs. English weather is never set in stone. It is a requirement of the DofE conditions that participants are prepared for survival, this includes bringing waterproofs. If a participant does not have a suitable waterproof coat and trousers then this means they are not meeting the expedition conditions.

How many spare clothes do I need?

This will depend on the length of your expedition, but as a minimum, in addition to the clothing you are wearing, you will need a spare warm jumper and a complete change of clothing. Do not bring fresh clothing for each day as it increases the weight of your pack.

How many pairs of socks do I need?

As a minimum you will need 2 pairs, one to wear and a spare pair. However some participants prefer to have a fresh pair of socks for each day of their expedition.

Do you have any advice for backing my rucksack?

PACKING TIPS

- Pack your own kit
- Check the weight: no more than 1/4 of your body weight when fully loaded, including water. It is very important to keep the weight down in your pack. If you can find a way to save weight – **do it**
- Pay particular attention to keeping your kit dry (in a dry bag) - especially your sleeping bag.
- Make sure your bag is evenly balanced on both sides
- Adjust the straps correctly to take the weight on the hips rather than the shoulders
- Avoid cotton and jeans. Hoodies, jeans and cotton T-Shirts are not suitable clothing for an expedition.
- Nothing should be hanging off your rucksack. The exception to this is a foam sleeping mat, which can be tied securely to the outside of your pack.
- Ensure the heaviest kit is close to your back and balanced on each side, such as your tent.
- Make sure your rucksack transfers the weight of your kit to your hips and not on your shoulders.



Put things that you may need to access quickly at the top of your bag (e.g. head torch and waterproof) so they are easily accessible

Put heavy things (e.g. food and stoves) close to your body, if they are too far away you will not only topple over, but you can also damage your back if you're walking long distances

Put light weight things away from your body (for the same reason as above)

Put medium weight things (e.g. clothes) near the bottom of your bag so that you keep your centre of mass low and don't fall over, these things also won't need to be accessed on-the-go

Most bags have a separate compartment for sleeping bags

Can I bring my mobile phone?

Yes – but it is only to be used in case of an emergency. Please ensure that it is fully charged, and has plenty of credit. When you arrive the phones will be placed in a plastic bag and sealed for the duration of the expedition.

Can I bring other electronic devices i.e. smart watch, MP3 player?

No – we do not want to see or hear participants listening to music during the expedition. It is not in the spirit of the DofE, it is antisocial and it can even be dangerous to wear headphones whilst walking. Please consider that any electronic devices you bring are at risk of being lost or damaged.

Can I bring a camera or video recorder?

Yes – this is a great idea, you will want to record all of those great DofE memories. They can then be uploaded onto your eDofE or used to record your aim. If you do bring a camera or video camera, please ensure that it is well protected from the elements. If you don't have one that you can bring then you can use your mobile phone with the sim card removed. The sim card will need to be removed and sealed in a plastic bag and carried by the participant.

Do I need walking poles?

Some participants find walking poles very useful, when used correctly they take some of the weight off your legs and can help you to balance when walking on rough ground. They are particularly useful for participants who suffer from ankle, knee or hip problems.

Do I need to bring any money?

Yes - you may be able to buy some food and drink on the journey to and from your expedition and at the end of the expedition. If you have forgotten anything you may be able to visit a shop before you start and it is also a good idea to bring some extra money with you in case of an emergency. During the expedition you should not be buying items unless in the case of an emergency.

What fun item should I bring?

Whatever will boost your morale and keep you entertained during the expedition. Some people bring a pack of cards, a book, a cuddly toy, a Frisbee. Do not bring a football as it is too large and you will not have space in your pack.

I lost or damaged a personal possession during an expedition, am I insured?

Your possessions may be covered by your house insurance, however we recommend taking out a travel insurance policy which will cover your personal possessions during the expedition. Your possessions are not insured through the DofE or PCSA.

Will you charge me if I damage or lose any kit belonging to PCSA?

That depends – if the damage or loss was accidental e.g. breaking a tent pole whilst trying to pitch a tent in stormy conditions, then we will not charge you. However we reserve the right to make a charge if we believe that the damage or loss was caused wilfully or by misuse or negligence.

Food and water

How much water should I carry?

You should carry 2 litres of water with you when walking. But you will need to drink more than this during the day to stay hydrated, so we recommend drinking water in the morning before you start and more when you arrive at your campsite in the evening.

Will I be able to top up my drinking water each day?

Most campsites will have taps with drinking water. In very hot weather we may meet you with a supply of water during the day, but as you need to be self-sufficient you should plan to carry all of the water you will need.

Do I need water purification tablets?

No – at most campsites you will have access to clean drinking water. Where you need to take water from streams we recommend you purify this by boiling rather than using purification tablets. This should not be necessary on Bronze or Silver expeditions.

Can I use a camelbak, platypus or other hydration system?

These are good as you don't need to stop and take your bag off to drink, so they can help you to stay hydrated. The downside is that you also can't easily see how much you're drinking and it is easy to drink a day's supply of water in a couple of hours. Hydration systems are also prone to leaking so in addition you should bring a 1 litre water bottle with you too.

How will I cook my food?

Your group will be given a number of Trangia stoves – typically 1 for each 3 participants. The stoves are fuelled by gas, which is safe and easy to use. Each stove has 2 pans, a lid and a handle, so you will be able to boil or warm food. You will not be able to fry, toast, roast or oven cook food so you need to choose what to bring carefully.

How much food do I need?

Your daily intake of calories should be approximately 3000 - 5000 calories, to take into account the heavy bag you will be carrying and the amount of energy you will be exerting. Energy should come predominantly from slow energy release foods. Do not be tempted just to pack sugar-rich foods. Dehydrated food such as pasta and cereals only require boiling water to prepare and are light-weight. Also, dried fruits and nuts are full of energy and are light-weight.

What food do I need?

This has been communicated in previous updates. The idea is that you should bring light nutritious food that is easy and quick to cook using a Trangia. There are some excellent expedition food packs available from outdoor retailers, particularly the following, who all offer D of E discounts:

Outdoors & active - The Firepot packs are particularly good, you can also purchase in store - <https://www.outdoorsandactive.co.uk/>

Taunton Leisure - <https://www.tauntonleisure.com/>

Go outdoors - <https://www.gooutdoors.co.uk/>

Blacks - <https://www.blacks.co.uk/>

Do you have any advice for the food?

Yes, although these are not rules and are just personal experience:

- The dehydrated food packs are better than wayfayrer packs. Mainly as they are lighter.
- Don't bother with the dessert packs, instead bring hot chocolate sachets for a hot evening drink and protein bars for dessert.
- Do not bring pot noodles, they are bulky and do not provide enough calories
- Porridge sachets are excellent in the morning

Should I avoid any foods?

Yes – do not bring any raw meat, poultry or fish. Anything which needs refrigeration should be eaten within 4 hours, so ham sandwiches for lunch on day 1 are probably ok, but after that to avoid food poisoning please eat dried, preserved or long life foods only.

The campsite

What sort of tent will I sleep in?

Our standard tents are Endurance Altitude 3 berth tents. These are lightweight and simple to pitch. Each tent can sleep 3 people and you will be issued with the correct amount for your group. We don't have two berth tents as standard. This was a choice made based on having a simple selection of kit and the weight differential between 2 and 3 berth tents is only around 200 grams.

What will the campsite be like?

This will depend on where you are doing your expedition. The campsites we use are usually commercial campsites with toilets and showers. We will camp separately from the general public. Whilst on expedition any additional amenities such as shops or activity areas are out of bounds for expedition teams as they are not in the spirit of the DofE conditions.

Will I be able to shower?

This depends on the campsite and should not be relied upon, in addition some campsites charge for their use. You will be able to wash, although there may not be hot water. We suggest either bringing a flannel and small bar of soap or using wet wipes.

Will there be a toilet at the campsite?

All of the campsites we use will have toilets – some may be proper flushing toilets, others may be more basic portaloos.

Should I bring toilet roll?

Yes – you need to be self-sufficient. Some campsites do not provide toilet rolls or you may find that other campers have used them before you arrive. Remember to protect your loo roll from the elements – it won't be of any use to you if it is soggy!

Medical and emergency procedures

What happens if I am ill or injured during the expedition?

Your DofE leaders will be on hand to give you support and first aid. If necessary you will be seen by a medical professional. If you are unable to continue with the expedition then we will contact your parent/carer to arrange for them to collect you.

What happens if I get bitten by a tick?

Ticks are common in some of the expedition areas. You can prevent tick bites by covering up and using insect repellent. If you get bitten by a tick during your expedition please let your instructor know. If you find a tick when you get home then you can find advice on safe removal and information on the signs and symptoms of Lyme disease.

What happens if I have my period on expedition?

It's helpful to be prepared if you will (or think you might) have your period while on the expedition. There are small things you can do to make this a bit easier. For example:

- Bring a small bag with period products, medicines, a ziplock bag and spare underwear so you can easily find what you need.
- There are few places during the day to dispose of sanitary products so it's helpful to have an extra small rubbish bag on you.
- Consider using period proof underwear.

The DofE leaders will have spare sanitary products with them and if anyone is having any problems at all, the female leaders are very approachable and supportive, please just ask. Remember to tell a leader if you are taking any medication.

What happens if I get a blister?

Prevention is better than cure with blisters. Make sure your boots fit well and wear good quality walking socks, these have padding and moisture protection fabric. Make sure you have worn in your boots, just wear them around the house. Any part of the boot that rubs can cause a blister, insoles can often make a boot fit much better and are a cheap way to get extra comfort. Have blister plasters in your pack just in case.

Can I bring my mobile phone?

Yes – but it should only be used in case of an emergency. Please ensure that it is fully charged, has plenty of credit and is well protected from the elements in a tough plastic bag – a zip lock bag would be ideal. To aid in an emergency please download the following two free apps:



OS Locate



What 3 Words

Will I be able to contact friends or family during the expedition?

Your mobile phone should only be used to contact your DofE leaders during the expedition. It is not in the spirit of the DofE to use your phone for communicating. You need to save your battery and phone credit. Phone signal may be poor in the expedition area and friends and family may worry if they are expecting you to call them and you cannot.

Will my parents be able to contact me during the expedition?

You should tell friends and family not to call you during the expedition. You need to save your phone battery for emergencies. You may also be in an area with poor phone signal and they may worry if they cannot get hold of you.

How can I get a message to my child during an expedition?

If your message is urgent please contact us and we will contact your child if required. The emergency phone numbers in use are below:

Main emergency contact: 07507 351 956

Reserve emergency contact: 07933 035 214

My child has called me and is lost or upset, what should I do?

Please reassure them, and tell them they need to call or speak to their DofE leader who will be able to help. There are regular checks on the group's progress and participants are all given an emergency procedure card with contact numbers for the DofE leaders. Phone signal may be poor in the expedition areas, so if participants cannot get hold of their DofE leader they should leave a clear message and send a text giving their location and information about the problem.

If you are concerned please use the emergency contact numbers above. If you cannot get hold of the DofE leader then leave a clear message and send a text giving their location and information about the problem.

Please try not to worry, expeditions are challenging and participants may want to call parents if they are tired and upset. They often forget to call you back to tell you that everything is OK later on. This is one of the reasons we provide clear emergency procedures to allow issues to be dealt with appropriately.