

Personal Clothing and Equipment List

You should carry at least the following equipment, do not assume that someone else will have spares available for your use. It is best practice to carry equipment to the high level list whatever you are doing in the hills:

- Windproof/waterproof (preferably breathable) shell over-jacket
- Windproof/waterproof (preferably breathable) shell over-trousers that can be put on without removing footwear
- Waterproof hat
- Gloves
- Personal first aid kit & Medication (as required)
- Snack
- Drinks, at least 1 litre of water or similar is recommended

Optional additional equipment: Map, Guide book, Notebook and pen/pencil, Mobile phone (switched off or on silent), Camera, Binoculars, Trekking poles (two should be used).

All clothing should be sufficient to suit the anticipated conditions, fleece pullover or similar should be carried or worn. Drinking materials should also suit the expected weather, remembering that even in the warmer seasons it is possible to suffer from hypothermia, or dehydration in cold weather. All spare clothing should be contained in a sealed dry-bag, as no rucksack is totally waterproof.

Low Level (up to 300m asl) up to 2 to 3 hours walk duration (Thursday Summer walks)

Two/three season walking boots, wearing appropriate fleece, pullover etc,
Rucksack up to 25 litres containing the above equipment and also:

- Gaiters
- Spare socks
- Packed lunch and warm drink or the means to make a drink during meal stops
- Pen-knife
- Whistle
- *Optional: Small head torch*
- *Optional: solo bivvy-bag/shelter and space blanket*

High Level (above 500m asl) or an extended day (over 3 hours), with inclement weather (Tuesdays all year round unless in winter when that list needs to be added)

Three season hill-walking boots, carrying or wearing fleece, gloves, waterproof hat, and gaiters. Rucksack of app 30 - 35litres containing the above equipment and also:

- 2 pairs of spare gloves
- Spare fleece
- Spare hat
- Drinks, consider at least ½ litre per hour of water or similar
- Food for additional meals or snacks
- Small head torch and spare batteries
- Solo bivvy-bag/shelter and space blanket
(Remember that the weight of a small stove and gas canister is similar to a flask and heats up far more water than can be carried in that flask).

Winter

Winter conditions will require the high level list, but supplemented with additional pairs (3 or 4) of gloves similar to ski gloves, and a belay jacket to put on over your existing jacket when stopped (or at least another fleece). In a blizzard or high wind a balaclava and goggles are advised, especially if navigating. A pair of 4 season boots are also strongly recommended. If the weather is snowy and or icy then crampons and ice axe will be required on all high level walks. At low levels spiked walking aids will probably be an adequate substitute. If you bring this additional winter equipment then a 40l rucksack will probably be necessary. We have ice axes and crampons available.

The recommendations are average and based on dealing with most contingencies. Pragmatic reality may suggest not taking all the equipment listed, especially if the weather is benign. The weather can change markedly over the course of a day and being caught out in a chilly wind without a warm drink or food can be rather uncomfortable.

Points to note are that nothing is actually waterproof. Even the best materials will only withstand continuous wetting for 3 or 4 hours. Rucksacks will always let rain in so lining it with a dry bag or heavy duty bin bag helps keep things dry. The covers provided with many rucksacks are not very effective especially if you carry poles or other things on the outside. They are usually very loose and in windy weather will flap around and can often be blown off.

Gaiters are a matter of choice. If trekking through heather or long grass with the occasional burn immersion then they are really a very good idea. If nothing else they stop ticks climbing up inside your trousers and keep twigs and other things out of your socks. If these problems are not something you worry about then if you keep a few spare pairs of socks then even if you do get wet feet then you have something dry and warm to put on. Once you have emptied the water out of a boot, and putting on fresh socks you will be surprised how quickly they dry out and warm up.

Gloves are another problem area. These also will wet out particularly if you are handling things like maps, gates, fences, trekking poles and so on. Fleece gloves even though not waterproof work just like a wet suit. Any water they soak up creates a warm layer next to the skin. If you are not holding things and don't need your fingers then over mittens are a very good alternative, with fleece gloves on the inside. Navigating in mittens is not recommended!

Boots are also a matter of choice. Ideally they should be stiff and provide support for the feet. Unless walking on firm tracks then ankle boots are strongly recommended. Provided what you wear are comfortable and fit properly then you will be able to make do with whatever you like (except in winter) Boots are probably the most important item of clothing and not something to be skimped over. Save money on anything else except boots, you will only regret it otherwise.

If navigating you should use and be proficient with a map and compass. GPS systems are fine within their limits, particularly battery life but are not reliable. They are complex devices in their own right and you need to be proficient with them as well. As a fall back they can (*if* in line with enough satellites) provide you with an accurate position fix, which will locate you on your map which you can then use to navigate to safety.

Safety devices such as bivvy bag or shelter are another item of personal choice and do make the difference if you end up having to sit out the night. In this unlikely scenario a head torch and snacks also help to keep up morale. If you do end up benighted then unless you are comfortable with getting yourself back to a road or civilisation the safest thing to do is stay where you are. If you have left your route plan with someone then rescuers will have a good start point. If you have wandered off your route then you are much harder to find. Don't leave it visible in your car – it's a good advert telling people how long you will be away!

Weather forecasts show predicted temperatures and wind speed/direction based at sea level. Temperature drops off generally between ½ and 1°C per 100m height gain, and wind can be 2 or 3 times as powerful on the tops of high hills than on the bottom. Winds of over 60mph especially gusting will blow you off your feet. Rather hazardous near a steep drop! Wind is also affected by the shape of the surrounding hills so may come from an unexpected direction. If you are navigating in windy and wet conditions goggles will be required in order to read your map (or GPS if you insist on using one).

Water crossings have a lot of potential for disaster. Rapidly flowing water deeper than knee height should NOT be crossed unless in a competent and trained group. Take your socks off, put your boots back on so that your feet don't get cut or injured and cross using walking poles to help steady yourself. Only move one leg or pole at a time. If it is necessary to cross, divert to a known safe crossing point even if it does mean going out of your way. Going upstream will be better as the width to be crossed will reduce. Remember that wet stones are very slippery. If you are crossing water loosen rucksack straps so that you can let it go if you do fall in otherwise it will tend to drag you down. If you find yourself in the unfortunate position of being swept downstream try and stay on your back with your feet first and side paddle to get to a bank.

If you have an accident, your whistle is the main means of attracting attention and can more easily be heard above the wind than a shout. 6 blasts over a minute, with a minute gap before blowing again. The pause allows you to listen for any answering whistles. If at night flashing the torch in a similar pattern also works, though obviously it has to be in the direction of any rescuers.

Finally enjoy yourself, but don't be overconfident and be prepared to alter your schedule or route if conditions dictate.