

GIRL GUIDES
AUSTRALIA

LIGHTWEIGHT CAMPING AND HIKING

Extract: When you're there

A RESOURCE KIT FOR GUIDES AND LEADERS

Hygiene and Toilets

It's important to think about your hygiene whilst you're out camping or hiking for your own health and both your own and your companions comfort. There are some simple ways to ensure you look after yourself whilst out exploring.

If there is a toilet available, use it, even if it is a smelly drop toilet. The park rangers ensure that this waste is composted correctly and that it does not pose a health hazard. If a toilet isn't available, make sure you go at least 100m away from any water sources. Be considerate about where you go.

Make sure it's not where someone is going to camp, cook or sleep. For number twos, dig a hole 15cm deep. Bury all waste and place a rock or branch over it to stop animals digging it up. You can either bury any used toilet paper as it degrades over time or carry it out. Try and use environmentally friendly toilet paper and as little as possible. Be prepared for your period. Sanitary items must either be burnt and buried or carried out.

It is important to remember to wash your hands regularly whilst out camping. You can also use antibacterial hand sanitiser. A quick sponge bath with a towel and some water or a Wet One can make a big difference. Wet Ones must be carried out though. Take care not to use soaps or shampoos that could contaminate rivers or lakes you swim or wash in. There are biodegradable soaps available which are best to use.

Do not bathe in rivers which are used as a water source. Clothes can be hung out to air once you have arrived at camp which can reduce odour. Deodorant is always good to take.

Don't forget to brush your teeth twice a day. You can chop off the end of your tooth brush handle and take either travel toothpaste or a kids' tube of toothpaste. It's ok to rinse into the bush.

Make sure you wash your dishes thoroughly in hot water to ensure they are kept as clean as possible. This is to reduce illness.

Group Management

Lightweight camping and hiking can be challenging at times. Whilst you are out and about, look out for the others around you. Ask them how they are going and help others where you can. That said, ask others for assistance if you need it whether it is physical or emotional.

You can choose to elect a leader for each day. They may take on roles such as map reading, time management and group care. A good leader will be able to resolve conflicts should they arise, build and maintain group morale, motivate people and be able to educate others on lightweight camping skills.

Simple activities like singing or playing games whilst you hike can help time pass, take people's mind off things and fade the blues away.

It is a good idea to plan a rough schedule for each day before you leave and evaluate it each morning. In addition, your group may come up with some walking rules. You may feel comfortable separating your group and deciding from the outset where you will stop and regather. Alternatively, you may wish to walk as one group with a leader at the front and a whip up the back. You could have the same people in these roles each day or change during the day. It is always a good idea to stop at track junctions to make sure you have everybody and are travelling along the same path.

Don't forget to evaluate extensively when you get home. It's really important you debrief the hike. Think about things like did you meet your objectives of the hike or camp? Did everyone enjoy themselves? What did you learn? What would you do differently next time? You will learn most through experiences, so don't let yourself forget the valuable lessons you learn!

ACTIVITY 1 TIME FILLERS

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: Pen and Paper

Preparation: None

Brainstorm some ways to pass time while you are at camp and walking.

Campsite Layout

Once you are at your campsite for the night, it is important you take some time to think about the layout of your site. There are a variety of things to consider when choosing your site to maximise your comfort, remain safe and look after the environment.

For a peaceful camp, it is a good idea not to pitch your tents on any pathways or main thoroughfares. Being close to toilets has its advantages in that it's not too far to walk at night and yet disadvantages are busy traffic and unpleasant smells. A compromise is suggested. However, it is advantageous to be close to the water supply if applicable.

The campsite ideally needs to be big enough for your tents and cooking areas. Your cooking area should be at least 3 metres clear of your tents and vegetation. Level ground or ground with a slight slope for drainage is best to sleep on. As with any camping, grass is the most comfortable. It is advised to scan the ground where you wish to pitch your tents and site in general, for any insect nests, uncomfortable rocks and sticks and holes in the ground which will fill with water if it rains.

As always, do not camp under trees or overhanging branches. Finding a site that is sheltered by trees and shrubs can provide you with protection from the elements.

It is strongly advised that you do not camp within 100 metres of any water's edge (river, stream, lake or beach). Firstly, this is to ensure that any food and human waste products do not make its way into the water. Secondly, these areas are generally more damp, prone to flooding in extreme weather conditions and are breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

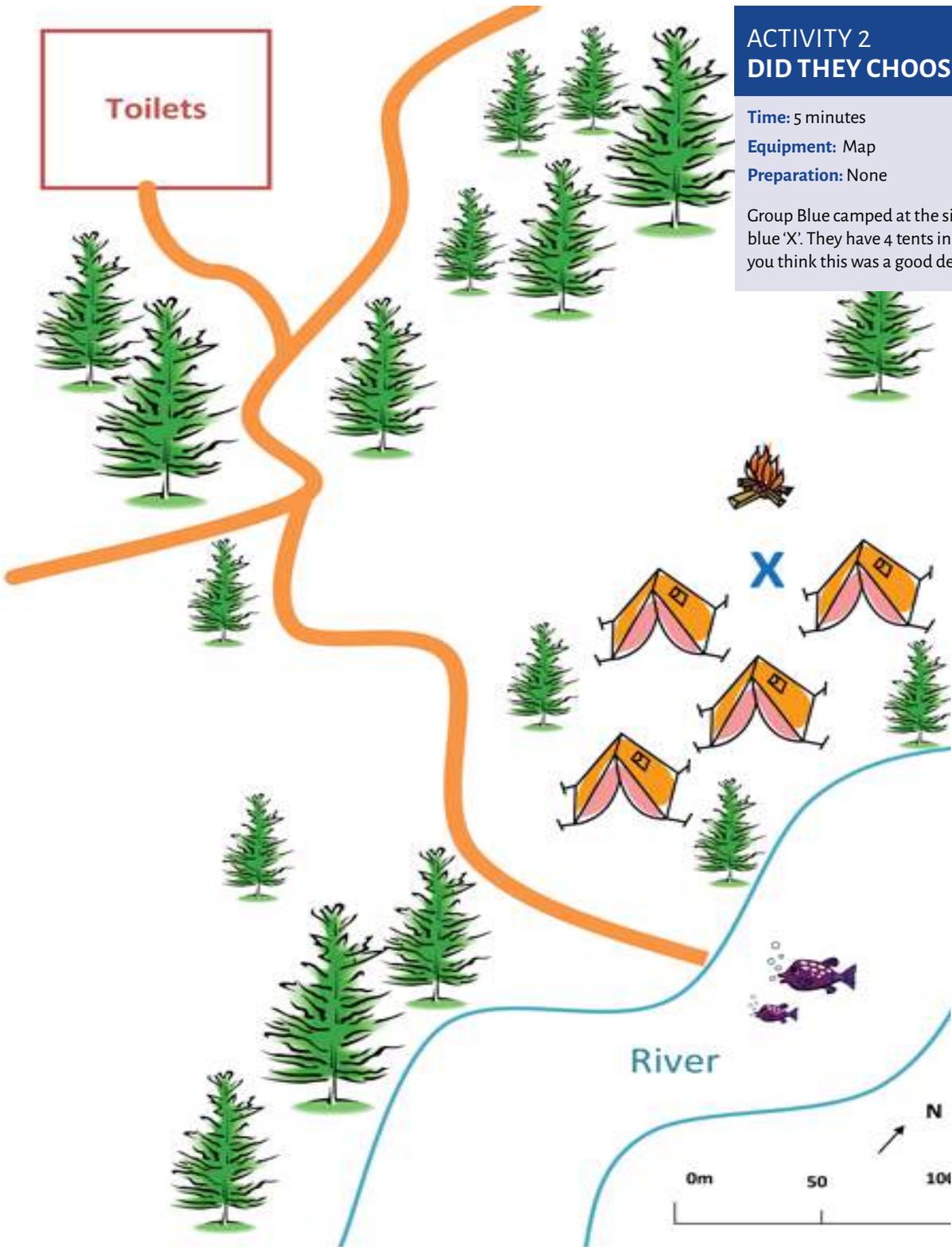
ACTIVITY 1 WHERE TO CAMP

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: Pen and Paper, Map (right)

Preparation: None

Below is an aerial map of a campsite. There are several possible sites to choose from at this campsite. Which one would you choose for a group which has three tents and needs a cooking area? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this site?



ACTIVITY 2 DID THEY CHOOSE WELL?

Time: 5 minutes

Equipment: Map

Preparation: None

Group Blue camped at the site marked with a blue 'X'. They have 4 tents in their group. Do you think this was a good decision? Why?

What to do When...

You think you are getting blisters

Blisters are terrible! Not only are they painful, but they can effect the mobility of the whole group. The most important thing here is to prevent them happening in the first place. Make sure you take the time and have the resources to look after your feet.

To prevent blisters, it is best to strap the heels of your feet and any points where your shoes rub over time. Band-aids do not work by themselves as they simply rub off quickly. Some people also wear two pair of socks to prevent rubbing (a thin pair, then a thick pair). If you feel a blister forming, stop and tape the area. It is best for you and your whole group in the long run and your group will enjoy the short break.

If you already have formed or broken blisters, it is best to leave them alone. Place a non-stick dressing such as Melolin over the blister and cover with tape.

You are cold or it becomes extremely cold

Exposure to cold creeps up on you and may be overlooked initially. Again, prevention is the best thing. Make sure you eat well, especially before heading to bed. Stock your body up with plenty of energy. Shelter yourself from the wind in terms of the clothing you wear and your location. Wear your waterproof / windproof jacket and locate your tent in a sheltered area if possible.

Stay dry. Wet clothing “wicks” the warmth from your skin. Make sure you always wear dry clothes. Ensure you have dry clothes by wearing your waterproof gear if it is raining, put your clothes away properly and waterproof everything in your pack.

Layer your clothing. The best combination of clothing is as follows: Thermals, an insulating wool or fleece layer and then your water / wind proof gear. When you stop, put on an extra layer of clothing before you feel cold.

Be aware of early signs of coldness or hypothermia such as tiredness, shivering, loss of coordination and lagging behind or stumbling.

You are hot or it becomes extremely hot

Being active in hot or humid weather challenges our body's cooling system of evaporation.

Before you begin walking and whilst walking, drink plenty of water. If it is very hot weather avoid being active during the middle of the day. Be sun smart; wear a hat, suitable protective clothing and use sunscreen.

Stay in the shade where possible and remove any unnecessary clothing. You need to be careful of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Early warning signs are thirst, cramps, headaches, weakness and feeling faint.

If your group becomes separated

Firstly, what members remain of the group should remain together. They should search the immediate area, the track just travelled and any tracks that could have been mistakenly taken. After a few hours and / or darkness, it is unlikely the missing person/s will be located and you will need to seek external assistance. If you can't contact the police by phone, a competent subgroup should be sent for the nearest help, with the others remaining as visible as possible near the last point of contact.

If your group becomes lost

Stay together with your group. The best strategy is to stay calm and think. Identify your last confirmed position and estimate your present location. You can retrace your steps. Alternatively, you can proceed to a known landmark such as a road or river. If unsure, make contact with the police. Stay where you are, remain calm and seek shelter. Devise ways of attracting attention to your location from the air. For this, it is best to move to an open area, a clearing or above the tree line.

Lay out colourful items such as tents or garbage bags or light a smoky fire to attract attention. Foot patrols may also search for you. They may make three blasts of sound in sequence (shouts or whistles) and you can too to attract their attention. Three flashes of light in sequence can be used at night. This sequence of three is for emergencies only and should not be misused.

If there is an accident

Apply relevant first aid. Assess the situation taking into consideration the seriousness of the injury or illness, the urgency and availability of external assistance and the resources of the group. If it is not wise to proceed and no contact can be made to the police by phone, a competent subgroup should be sent for the nearest help with information about the nature of the injury or illness and a detailed description of the location of the group.

ACTIVITY 1 WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Time: 30 minutes

Equipment: None

Preparation: Read information

Discuss each of the above scenarios in detail. Imagine these are real. Think carefully about what you would do. Who would you send for help? Who would stay and look after the patient/s? What have you packed that would assist you.