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Gear Care & Cleaning

It is almost impossible to keep your gear and clothes completely clean, especially when you're stuffing all your equipment and clothes into a backpack for a week long backcountry adventure. Whether it's your camping gear and clothing or the down jacket that you wear around town all winter, it will work better when it's clean. This brochure is a guide to how to care for and clean your outdoor gear and clothing.



Down & Synthetic Fill Insulation

All synthetic or down fill insulated clothing and sleeping bags require extra care when washing. They are all fragile in one way or another. Dirt, sweat and excess oils can reduce the effectiveness of these insulators. It takes a lot of wear to cause loss in loft, so cleaning should only be done when necessary.

There are several things to keep in mind when caring for either synthetic or down fill insulated items. Synthetic batting (filling) is stabilized by bonding at resinous junctions between the fibers. Over-washing, hot water, and harsh chemicals can break down these junctions resulting eventually in loss of loft. Natural oils in down insulation keep the fibers separate, water repellent, and reduce oxidation and brittleness. Down fill can be damaged by excessive heat and agitation also resulting in loss of loft. Great care must be taken with either fill type to avoid damaging the internal baffles that hold down in place and maintain loft. If you lose loft or damage the baffles, you will reduce the effectiveness and even distribution of the insulation to protect you against the cold.

How to Clean Insulated Products

When washing, avoid conventional soaps and detergents. Mild soaps, such as Ivory Flakes or HTO Specialized Down Cleaners have fewer surfactants (surface active agents). Surfactants are harsh on insulated products, difficult to rinse from face fabric, can reduce water repellency and can strip natural oils that maintain loft. Although some manufacturers mention machine washing (usually front-loading only), we do not recommend doing so with insulated products. In some instances, machine washing may tear them apart. Always check the care label on each item for specific cleaning instructions.

A note about dry cleaning: Down can be dry cleaned by a professional cleaner experienced in down product care. The dry cleaner must use down-specific dry cleaning products only. Standard dry cleaning products will strip the down of its natural oils and reduce its loft.

Down & Synthetic Washing Instructions

1) Fill the bathtub with five inches of warm water. The temperature of your wash and rinse water must not approach 140°F or your insulator may be damaged resulting in lost loft. Cooler water with more soaking time will get the best results. Cooler water will avoid color fading or shrinkage of the face fabric as well.

- 2) Dissolve your cleaning agent in the water. (up to 2 oz. for sleeping bags, less for garments.)
- 3) Apply a small amount (less than a teaspoon) of the soap directly to soiled areas of the parka or bag shell. Add a small amount of water and gently scrub the soiled area.
- 4) Immerse article(s), knead gently until wet.
- 5) Soak for 1/2 hour.
- 6) Knead the fabric gently again.
- 7) Drain tub, pushing load to rear of tub.
- 8) Refill the tub (5 inches), and repeat steps 3 through 6, this time soaking for only 15 minutes. Repeat step 8 several times.
- 9) Let the water drain out completely, press the bulk of the water out of the article(s) by hand. Do not wring, roll or twist the water out and do not lift the bag when completely wet or you may rip the baffles apart.
- 10) Lift article(s) onto drying screen or outdoor lawn lounge chair to dry.
- 11) Synthetics should be air dried. Down articles should be put into a dryer on the warm setting. Add a few dry bulky towels and/or some clean tennis balls to fluff the down while drying. All loose strings should be secured and the zippers should be open. Check the dryer occasionally making sure that the fabric is not sticking to the drum. Drying time for down products will be at least 5 times longer than your regular laundry.

Tip: If you do not like to dry the down items in the dryer, use a fan with a screen housing and you can blow air through the head of the bag and inflate-dry it. Make sure to jostle the bag often to fluff the fill.

Down & Synthetic Storage

Make sure your article(s) are clean and dry before storage to prevent mildew. Store garments on a hanger and sleeping bags in a large breathable laundry sack or a cloth storage bag. (Most bags are sold in cloth sacks for this purpose.) Do not use a stuff sack to store for long periods of time. (The small nylon bag that came with your bag.) Do not store insulated items in a hot attic, car trunk or other high temperature area. A cool, dry place is best for any insulated item.

Waterproof/Breathable Shell Care

Waterproof and Breathable Shells should be cleaned by hand washing in cold water with powder detergent (No Bleach), rinsed twice, and then dried in the dryer at low heat. DWR (Durable Water Repellent) finish will have to be re-applied to shells after every 4 or 5 washes to keep the repellency of the shell intact.

Special care should be taken with Gore-Tex® shells. Do not dry clean Gore-Tex® garments. Dry cleaning solvents will contaminate the Gore-Tex® and cause it to leak. Follow the care instructions above for hand or machine washing these types of garments.



Polar Fleece Care

Fleece is completely machine washable and dryable. Turn garments inside out, use a mild detergent and warm water. Machine dry inside out on low heat. Some pilling on the outside of some fleece is experienced after much use, wear and repeated washings. To minimize pilling, always turn the garment inside out, wash on the gentle cycle and use a small amount of fabric softener. Brushing with a soft brush while drying will also help minimize pilling.



Wool Care

Wool garments can either be dry cleaned or hand washed, depending on the care label on each garment. If applicable, hand wash in cold water with Woolite and lay flat to dry. Remember, even the most careful hand washing of wool will result in a small amount

of shrinkage.

Tent Use & Care

Before using your tent, you should perform some basic preparation. Be sure to know how to set it up and disassemble it before your trip. Make sure to seal all of the seams on the tent floor and waterproof the sidewalls and flysheet if not already pre-sealed by the manufacturer. Most tents that are not pre-sealed, come with a tube of seam sealer. To apply, just rub the sealer along the seams and let it dry. Two thin coats work best for total coverage rather than one heavy coat. An occasional spray of silicone on the zippers and pole section ends will help them operate smoothly in all temperatures.

Even though all the materials in the tents we carry are flame retardant, you should not pitch your tent too close to a campfire or ever cook inside of your tent. You risk burning and damaging your equipment and yourself.

While camping, do not leave your tent up in direct sunlight any longer than necessary. UV rays will eventually weaken the fabric after prolonged exposure. Many high-end tents now come with UV protective coatings. Please ask our staff for details.

After camping, turn your tent body inside out to shake out any dirt trapped inside. To clean your tent, set it up outside and wash it down with a soapy sponge with mild detergent. Any wax, food, grease or pine pitch can be removed with some spot lifter. Sponge it down with clean water to remove all of the soap. Always let the tent dry completely before putting it away to prevent the growth of mold and mildew. Mildew can be arrested by washing the tent thoroughly as indicated above, however, mildew damage is permanent and can not be repaired. When the tent is thoroughly dry, store it in a cool, dry place.

Stove Use & Care

An Important Note about Use: Never completely or closely surround a stove to block wind in order to keep the flame lit. Doing so may result in excessive heat buildup, safety valve release (usually a 2-3 foot high flame) or, at its worst, an explosion.

Wiping food residue off of your stove after each use will go a long way towards keeping it clean and operating smoothly. Should your liquid fuel stove become less efficient than it used to be or have trouble starting, you can carefully disassemble it and soak the pieces in acetone or pure, clean, filtered white gasoline. Make sure you remember exactly where every piece belongs for reassembly. Use an old toothbrush to help remove the built up carbon on the soaking components.

Wipe down the parts with a dry, lint-free cloth after cleaning and make sure each part is dry before reassembly. Open the valve and blow the generator out with a high pressure air hose like you find at a gas station. This clears carbon deposits which most often are the cause of improper burning. Replacement generators are available for all stoves and lanterns and will eventually need to be replaced. Please ask our staff for details if you believe replacement of your generator is necessary.

Please note, unless you know exactly what you are doing, we do not recommend that you disassemble the self-cleaning needle mechanism in your stove.

When reassembled, fill your stove fuel canister with clean, fresh fuel and light. If your stove is still operating poorly, please bring it in to any of our locations to have our staff send it to our stove mechanic for expert diagnosis and repair. If your stove needs to be sent to the manufacturer for repair, you will be contacted about the condition, charges, and length of time expected for the repair.

Please keep in mind these guidelines for care and cleaning of your outdoor gear and clothing to make your equipment last a long time. If you have any questions on any particular product's care, please ask



our experienced staff for assistance.

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