

# Scout Skills

## Camp Toilets

**info**

Scout  
Information  
Centre

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### INFORMATION SHEET

In many camping books and factsheets, toilets are sometimes called latrines. Many Troops now camp on camp sites where ordinary inside toilets are provided, but you may be camping in an area where these facilities are not available. In these circumstances you will need to construct your own.

Toilets are more important to a camp than you may at first think. If they are not properly used and maintained, germs can quickly spread and illnesses occur. Similarly, if they are dirty and smelly, some young people will not use them, making themselves ill - and it can certainly put some off camping for life.

#### Health and Hygiene

Standards of hygiene must be high. All those in camp will need reminding about hand washing and how to use each type of toilet (this is covered in more detail later on). You will also need to keep a discreet eye open to make sure that everyone has used the facilities and, if not, enquire as to why. If they are concerned, or even possibly afraid, they may need support. The problem may simply be due to the change of diet!

#### Inside toilets

If you are on a District or County camp site, these may be maintained and cleaned by a service crew. However, the responsibility of seeing that the toilets your Scouts are using are clean and up to a reasonable standard remains with the Scout Leader. Toilets and washing areas need to be checked two or three times a day by a responsible person.

This number of inspections will need to increase if it is wet or hot. The area will need to be swept out and toilets and basins cleaned using

disinfectant. Supplies of toilet paper should be checked regularly.

Hand washing facilities are extremely important - especially in camp, so soap and either towels or paper towels must be available. If towels are used, these must also be changed on a regular basis. If paper towels are used, a bin or some other receptacle should be provided.

If the facilities are very busy, you may wish to have a number of 'toilet kits' on your site. A toilet kit may consist of, for example, an outer waterproof bag and contain toilet paper, soap and disposable paper towels so that one can be picked up and taken into the toilets when visited.

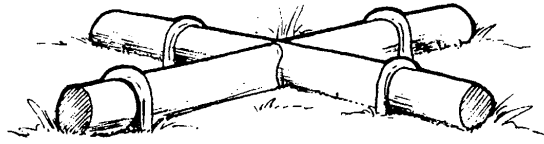
#### Outside Latrines

It seems strange to have to teach people how to use toilets but this is in fact vital. At the beginning of the camp the correct use of any outside toilets, particularly those that have been built for the life of the camp, must be explained to all those camping. There are two common types of outside latrines and for the purpose of this sheet these have been called 'modern' and 'traditional'.

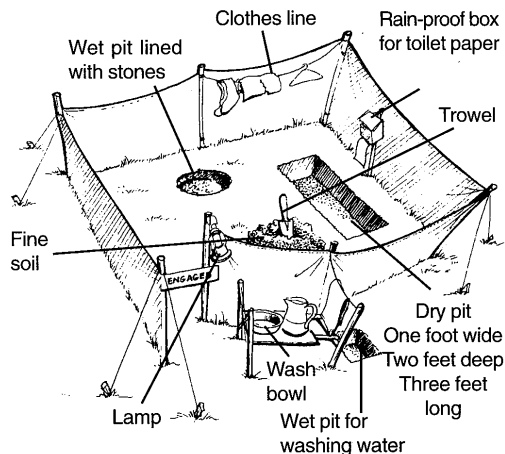
*Modern* - These days, chemical toilets are often used and many Troops have purpose built individual toilet tents into which these toilets are put. Chemical toilets, as the name suggests, are 'charged' (filled) with highly corrosive and toxic chemicals. For this reason they should always be emptied and recharged by Leaders or some of the older Scouts. Chemical toilets usually consist of an 'outer' with an attached or detachable seat and a separate 'inner' with a close fitting anti-spill lid. The 'inner' lifts out for emptying and there are separate handles on these and the main body. It is also possible to obtain chemical flushing toilets.

Chemical toilets need to be emptied regularly into a suitable 'foul' sewerage system and the warden or landowner will tell you if this facility is

available. If it is not possible, then the contents should be disposed of in a deep pit which is filled in and marked with a 'bad ground marker'.



*Traditional* - Traditional Scout toilets are made simply by surrounding a number of pits in the ground with a hessian screen. The pits usually consist of a 'wet pit' (urinal) of which the bottom is lined with stones to assist drainage and a rectangular dry 'squat' pit usually 1 metre long x 0.3 metres wide x 0.6 metres deep. The excavated soil should be left next to the dry pit and everyone instructed that all excrement must be covered completely with soil. A hand trowel should be provided next to the excavated soil for this purpose. As the traditional toilet has no roof, it is important that the toilet paper is in a sealed container or plastic bag to keep it dry. Washing facilities such as bowl, water, soap, towels, and so on, must of course be provided nearby and some means provided for keeping the towels dry. Camp latrines need to be inspected regularly by an adult to make sure they are kept in good condition and to decide when it is time to dig new ones.



## Mixed camps

In mixed camps, toilets for males and females should be completely separate and a sufficient

distance apart to ensure privacy for both sexes. For females it is important to include a supply of sanitary towels in case of emergencies and for female members to know of their availability. Disposal facilities for sanitary towels also need to be checked or incorporated with the minimum of fuss.

## Tricks of the trade

- Sinks in toilet blocks rarely have plugs so a supply in each Patrol box of different sizes is a good idea.
- You will need four times the amount of toilet paper that you might expect because it will disappear to help light fires, clean billies and so on.
- Even if using chemical toilets, it is worth digging a 'wet pit' urinal for the Scouts to use as this will greatly reduce the number of times the chemical toilets need emptying.
- 'Vacant' and 'In Use' signs will often prevent embarrassment.
- If it would contribute to the good health of all in camp, it may make sense for each Patrol to construct their own latrine.

## Further Information

Have a chat with the staff in your local Scout Shop about what chemical toilets and provisions are currently available.

## TEACH YOURSELF

When young people are away from home at camp, one place they will always visit is the toilet, or 'latrines' as they are sometimes called. If these facilities are poor or inadequate, they may avoid trying to use them thereby making themselves distressed, embarrassed or possibly even ill. It is therefore important that you understand the hygiene issues and know how to maintain and, if necessary, erect or construct toilet facilities.

### Time

This may take from 20 minutes to two hours. You probably have basic hygiene knowledge so most of the time will be taken up learning how to erect toilet tents or suitable screening, and how to use portable toilets.

### Equipment

- Portable toilets with cleaning chemicals;
- Toilet tents;
- Hessian screen and guy lines, pegs and mallet;
- Scout Shops or camping equipment catalogues;
- Toilet rolls, soap, towel, disinfectant, spade, trowel, string, pegs.

### Learning all about it

To begin with you will need to read the Information Sheet sections on Health and Hygiene, and Inside toilets.

*Inside toilets* - Many places where Scouts camp today have inside toilets, running water, and all the necessary ablation facilities. On Scout camp sites these may be cleaned and maintained by the staff or service crew. It is still the Scout Leader's responsibility that toilets used by the party, are satisfactory and this can only be done by checking the facilities (a checklist is provided later). If the facilities are unsatisfactory, such as blocked toilets or lack of toilet paper, then you need to inform those responsible. Don't expect someone else to do it or for staff to notice as they may be busy with many other tasks.

Before each camp, you will of course need to contact the site you are visiting to find out exactly what is available be it toilet blocks, 'foul' disposal systems or nothing at all.

*Outside latrines* - If you are going to provide outside toilet facilities then you will need to know:

- How portable toilets are used and maintained.
- How to put up and take down toilet tents.
- How to erect hessian screens.
- What pits go within the screens.

Although it is just possible to achieve all these on your own, another pair of hands, even if they are inexperienced, will help considerably with tent pitching and screen erecting.

*Toilets* - Portable toilets come in a variety of shapes and sizes ranging from a simple bucket type with a lid on it, to multi-chamber systems with a flush. The catalogue from Scout Shops or a camping supplier will show you the different types available.

Look at the type your Group has and the type of chemical that it uses. Read the label on the chemical bottle very carefully - it is usually a very strong corrosive and needs diluting carefully with water to prevent burns. You normally 'charge' (fill) the bottom section of the toilet where any excrement will sit. If the toilet has a 'flush' system, you will need to fill the upper part with water.

If it is too complicated to work out for yourself (and some are!), then ask your Group Quartermaster for advice.

*Toilet tents* - These are usually small, upright tents with either four corner poles or a fully interlocking frame.

Unpack the tent carefully so that you know how to pack it up again. Assemble the poles and look to see how they relate to the canvas. If there are four separate uprights, you may find that two are longer and these will go at the front of the tent. The canvas is unlikely to be square and so make sure that you have it on the frame the right way round. When you have the tent erected, peg out the guy lines so that the tent is secure. Just as an experience, put the toilet inside the tent and sit on it - anything missing - paper, for example?

The tent may have a pocket for toilet paper but it should still be kept in a plastic bag as, if the canvas gets wet, rain will leak through onto the toilet paper.

*Hessian screens* - These usually consist of lengths of hessian with a pole attached, or a place for a pole every two metres or so, with a guy line attached at each pole point. As they are just screens, they have no defined shape and so you need to design your toilet area before erecting the screens. Sketch out on a piece of paper what you wish to enclose, for example, a wet pit and a dry pit (see Information Sheet for more details), bearing in mind the overall length of the screen that you have. Remember you will need to leave an overlap for a doorway so that you cannot see in from the outside.

Here, your commitment to training yourself comes into play. Using some string or sisal, mark out the area where the hessian will go and mark each pole position. Then either mark out the position of the pits within the screen or, if you want to do it properly, turf and dig the pits according to your plan. Now erect your screens and kit out the area with toilet rolls, washing area, lamp and so on. This will help you to remember what is needed.

When you have finished, stand back and ask yourself honestly whether you would be happy to use it or not. Does it look safe and secure, for example?

*Clearing away* - When you have used your outdoor latrines for real, you will need to refill the pits, replace the turf and then mark the pit with a soiled ground marker (see Information Sheet).

You will also have to make sure that the hessian is completely clean and dry as urine and/or chemical splashes will rot the hessian - not to mention smelling awful!

*Toilet facilities* - All toilets, both indoors and out, will need checking regularly and you will need to consider the following:

#### **Checklist:**

- Clear signs for 'Ladies' / 'Gents' and 'Vacant' / 'In Use';

- Washing area checked regularly with clean water available; • Soap and water for washing hands; • Hand drying (paper towels - supply and disposal or ordinary hand towels replaced regularly);
- Sanitary towel supply and disposal receptacle (if necessary);
- Toilet and basin cleaning facilities;
- Supplies of toilet paper;
- Cleaning facilities for floors and/or surrounding areas.

#### **Can I do it?**

When you feel confident about the subject, check how you are doing and see which of the following you can tick off:

1. Explain the importance of hygiene at camp.
2. Set up, charge and empty a portable toilet.
3. Erect a toilet tent.
4. Devise and build an outside latrine.
5. List all the equipment needed for good camp toilet provision.
6. List the eight items on the checklist (without looking!).

#### **Your notes on this session**

# HOW TO TRAIN OTHERS

This section is designed to give some practical ideas about how you can help other people to understand about camp toilets. This might be Leaders or Scouts either in an informal way on a Troop night or more formally at a skills workshop, training course or similar.

## Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- I. Explain the need for hygienic conditions in indoor and outdoor camp toilets.
- II. State the procedures necessary to ensure the provision of satisfactory indoor and outdoor facilities at camp.
- III. List the equipment needed to equip indoor and outdoor camp toilets.
- IV. Demonstrate the ability to erect toilet tents and screening.

## Time

Approximately one and a half hours.

## Equipment

- Portable toilets with cleaning chemicals;
- Toilet tents;
- Hessian screen and guy lines, pegs and mallet;
- Scout Shops or camping equipment catalogues;
- Toilet rolls, soap, towel, disinfectant, spade, trowel, string, pegs;
- Large sheets of paper, pens.

## Training method

This session is essentially practical, however, the importance of it needs to be stressed; if camp toilets are not clean, smell and generally put individuals off using the facility, it can put people off camping for good. There are two main areas that the session looks at:

1. The health and hygiene reasons why it is important to provide clean, sanitary conditions;
2. The practical elements of providing and looking after indoor and outdoor toilet facilities.

**A.** Start by asking the participants the reasons why it is important to provide clean, sanitary conditions. Record the answers on a large sheet of paper or flipchart. Make sure that the following are covered:

- prevent illness
- discourage germs and bacteria
- prevent smells
- bad conditions may discourage people from using the facilities
- bad conditions may put people off camping (irrespective of age!)

**B.** Put up two cards with the headings Responsibility and Equipment on. Give the information as follows:

*Responsibility* - If you are the Leader or Patrol Leader of a camp, it is your responsibility to ensure the toilet facilities (indoor and outdoor) are suitable and are kept in a satisfactory condition.

This will mean:

- Asking the warden or landowner about the usual arrangements;
- Regular checks throughout the day (more so in hot or wet weather) for general tidiness, and that the toilets and basins are not blocked;
- Checking that there are adequate supplies of soap, toilet paper, disinfectant, sanitary towels and so on;
- Checking that the hand washing facilities (including soap, clean water, towels and so on) are in place.

*Equipment* - You should include the following items, some of which are appropriate for inside facilities, some for outside, and some for both:

Signs: Ladies/Gents and Vacant/ In Use	Portable/chemical toilets
Toilet brush	Toilet paper
Screening	Toilet tents
Cleaning agents	Soap
Disinfectant	Spade
Hand or paper towels	Trowel
Sanitary Towels	Sweeping brush
Lamp	

Ask participants to state whether they would be required for indoor facilities, out-door or both.

It is worth stressing that it is always better to take all the equipment you might need rather than assume it will be available at the site.

As an alternative method, you may like to use the above list in a wordsearch or anagram type quiz.

**C.** Have available at least one example of a portable and/or chemical toilet. Put the participants into small groups and demonstrate how they work and are maintained, and the importance of taking care with the chemicals.

**D.** In small groups, let the participants practise erecting toilet tents or toilet (hessian) screening. The need for privacy whilst in use should be stressed, so thought should be given to the siting of these on a camp site. They should be convenient (not a quarter of a mile away!), but screened from the rest of the site. The session leader should either outline the type of layout within the screening, or give a plan of such a layout to the participants (see the Information Sheet for details).

The following should also be outlined for anyone setting up outside toilets or latrines:

If it is to be emptied, a suitable 'foul' sewerage system will need to be located. If this is not possible, contents should be disposed of in a deep pit which is filled in and identified by a bad ground marker (see Information Sheet).

If 'traditional' latrines, not portable or chemical, are being used a 'wet' pit lined with stones and a 'dry' squat pit, need to be dug. Soil removed from the pits is then available close by to cover excrement using a hand trowel.

Hand washing facilities need to be provided with a towel or other drying facilities.

Separate facilities need to be set up for both sexes.

Ensure that there is a sign on prominent display showing 'Vacant' and 'In Use' and which is suitable for all weather conditions.

A light visible at night and a torch for individuals to use should be left in a safe and convenient position.

Much of the information conveyed to participants on this subject is common sense, but the awareness of responsibilities, sensitivity, and knowledge can always be improved.

### Checking their progress

Ask participants whether they feel happy with their ability to:

1. Explain the importance of hygiene at camp.
2. Give examples of 'modern' and 'traditional' latrines.
3. Set up, charge and empty a portable toilet.
4. State the factors necessary to ensure satisfactory conditions.
5. List the equipment needed for camp toilets.
6. Devise and build an outside latrine.

### Your notes on this session