

# Common Outdoor Practices for Any Scout Unit



## Garbage

Garbage attracts wild animals (bears, raccoons, rodents, birds, and insects) and accustoms them to human food. Do not assume biodegradable things degrade quickly or at all. Climate and local bacteria favor some biodegradables over others, for example, orange peels do not decompose easily. Partially decomposed items are unsightly.

Try to create as little waste as possible. Repackage to facilitate ease of packing out, and plan ahead to consume everything. As a general rule:

- Pack out ALL garbage - Do not throw peelings away - Consider eating apple cores etc.
- Consider every small item - many apple trees have started from discarded cores.
- Some garbage (e.g. paper) can be burnt - some things don't burn well (aluminum foil).
- Food could leave some residue when burnt - Plastics give off toxic gases when burnt.
- Never bury garbage - it can be exposed by animals or frost action.
- Consider packing out garbage that others have left behind.
- Leave your campsite cleaner than you found it.

## Water & Sanitation

Due to heavy use and careless action, *ALL* water should now be considered contaminated. For example, the parasite "giardiasis" (gee-ar-die-assis), commonly called "beaver fever", can be found in the cleanest of waters. Other diseases may also be present.

Before consuming any water, boil the water (for 1 minute plus 1 minute per 1000feet of altitude) or use purifying tablets or use a purifying filter system as directed. Dispose of waste (grey) water (e.g. from washing) by broadcasting it at least 200 feet from any water source to avoid contaminating the water source. In coastal areas take advantage of the natural flushing of the ocean and dispose below the high tide mark.

Soaps should be biodegradable. Consider washing without soap. Some sources recommend swallowing toothpaste in fragile areas. Pack out disposable dish cloths, hand wipes, etc. in sealed bags. A major source of contamination is the improper disposal of human waste. Use unscented products (or learn to enjoy your own 'natural' odors). Animals love to explore new smells. Feminine products should be packed out. Human waste should be deposited of at a site at least 200 feet from any watercourse, even if it is currently dry. In coastal areas select a site below the high tide mark.

Dig a "cat hole" 4-8 inches deep, but do not dig below the topsoil into inert-looking soil. A small trowel makes this easy. Burn the toilet paper afterwards (unless there is an extreme fire hazard; one source recommends packing it out in this eventuality). Refill the hole. For larger groups, consider making one latrine for the whole group. In very dry soils or under winter conditions, use a "poop-vault". Don't forget to dispose of the contents upon returning to 'civilization'.