

### The Basics about sleeping bags

Choosing a sleeping bag for a backpacking trip is very subjective. There are several factors to take into consideration, temperature rating, shape, size and of course insulation

Down sleeping bag are lightweight, very compressible, and highly durable. Most quality down sleeping bags use goose down as insulation. While more expensive, a down sleeping bag will likely last two to three times longer than a synthetic sack, making down the economical long-term choice. Nothing beats down's softness or warmth-to-weight ratio. But keep your down dry—once wet, it offers zero insulation value. Down's insulation capacity is measured in fill power—the volume, in cubic inches, occupied by one ounce of the material. Down measuring 600 to 650 fill is excellent quality; the very best stuff can be 900.

Synthetic insulation retains their warmth even in foul weather. They are usually less expensive than down and are non-allergic. Sleeping bags made synthetic are easier to maintain. Synthetic insulations, such as Polarguard Delta, PrimaLoft PL2, and DuPont Thermolite, won't compress as well as down but can be easily machine-washed and -dried.

A hood adds tremendous warmth. So does a draft collar, which prevents heat loss around your neck. Look for a draft tube behind the zipper, too. And about zippers: One that's full length lets you ventilate on warm nights.

Manufacturers are pushing the limits of ultralight shell fabrics (some weigh less than an ounce per square yard). Most have a durable water-repellent coating. The latest trick? Eliminating stitching (and needle holes) by welding baffles to the shell.

The classic mummy-shaped bag is best for heat retention and weight savings, but the tighter ones can be claustrophobic. Test the sleeping bag in the store before they buy. For mild conditions, consider a semi-rectangular bag, with room to thrash

Look for nice touches like microsanded polyester to give the illusion of sleeping on silk. Sleeping-pad loops will prevent a 4 a.m. encounter with the cold tent floor.

Claustrophobes and warm sleepers should make certain that their ultralight mummy-shaped bag has a full zipper—to shave ounces, some go only halfway, while others dispense with a zip altogether

IN THE FIELD If base camping for several days, banish your inner neatnik and leave your bag splayed out to encourage air circulation and drying. A couple hours of full sun will help fry odor-causing bacteria.

**For those who prefer to use a professional to clean and/or repair your down garment/sleeping bag, we recommend,**

**Rainy Pass Repair Inc.:** 4415 Stone Way North, Seattle, WA 98103  
(888) RIP STOP or (206) 523-8135  
[www.rainypass.com](http://www.rainypass.com)





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