

Coordinator's Guide to Cold & Rainy Days

On days that are rainy or extremely cold (and/or windy) it may prove to be your best bet to hunker down under a tarp, or inside of a group shelter.

Under such conditions under-dressed students, and smaller students need to be monitored for early signs of hypothermia, and you need to proactively ensure everyone's comfort, especially early in the day.

Make sure students don't rain gear *before* underlayers get wet.

Once a student gets soaked for any reason, he or she will begin to lose heat steadily. The colder and windier, the faster they lose heat. If the student will be picked up soon, this may not be much of a concern, but if it is early in the day, you need to find a way to establish shelter and fire.

Extreme days can, and often are, great adventures – they should be seen as opportunities for practicing important advanced survival skills.

Shelter: Plan to use group shelter or set up a tarp in an area sheltered from the wind and widowmakers.

Fire: Plan to have and enjoy a fire, potentially skills or cooking on it

Games: Plan to have active games when conditions allow, and potentially under-tarp games too.

Pitching a tarp:

[clove hitches, bowlines]

Using poles to elevate tarp

Selecting good location for tarp set up

Landscape level: use map to find area sheltered from wind

Micro level: good seating, drainage, trees for tying onto

Damp weather fire-making challenges:

Wet 1-match fire: red cedar, spicebush, sassafras, mountain laurel, red maple

Splitting up wood to make kindling, shavings

Bow-drill challenge for advanced students that have already achieved coals.

Finding/making dry-ish leaves, tinder, coal extenders

Camp set-up: making (log) benches for the fire [bow saw], dry logs over fire.

Make tea or cocoa

Bring or have brought whichever is relevant:

- **cocoa**
- **sugar**
- **tea of choice**
- **cups**
 1. student or instructor brings small paper (unwaxed) cups
 2. students bring steel or plastic cups
 3. make bamboo cups (need 1+ folding saws, knives, 1"+ diameter bamboo)

Harvest one of these (if available/abundant):

- spicebush twigs (year-round)
- sassafras root (year-round)
- pine needles (year-round)
- mints (seasonal)
- Other wild tea plant in your area

Campfire cooking meals & treats:

- ash cakes
- hot dogs
- hobo packets
- bananas (optionally w/chocolate)
- smores (not generally recommended unless it's the final day, or as morale boost in extreme conditions)
- wild greens
- rice
- stew
- freshly caught (or purchased) fish

Be sure to consider if and what cookware and eating utensils will be needed – you can bring them, or ask others to bring them, in addition to ingredients. Or, consider work-arounds like leaves as small plates, improvised chopsticks. Assign bring-in items so that no one person is bringing too much, and try to vary it up relative to previous times. Keep a record for future reference.

Fire-based activities & crafts

- **Rock boiling** [need suitable rocks, instructor might have these, sometimes can gather them]
- **Burn out spoons, bowls** [will need folding or bow saw to prep wood – tulip, maple work well]
- **Fire-harden throwing sticks, spear points, arrow shafts**
- Make **water-resistant tinder and matches** [melt paraffin and saturate paper, twine, strike-anywhere matches, cotton balls inside of it]
- Make and fire **small potteries** (e.g. beads, medallions, coins, small pots or paint holders – sometimes these can be made, dried and fired within an hour's time)

Under-the-tarp skills - warm weather (cold fingers don't work very well):

- **Pottery** – humid conditions can be convenient for working clay. BUT: to bring finished pots home, you will need some way to carry them back without them getting rained on. Either find a place to cache them on-site, or you may need plastic or something to protect them on the hike out.
- **Cordage** – damp conditions can be great for making cordage, as fibers are often more pliable when wet.

Under-the-tarp games:

These are games that you may be able to enjoy under the tarp, potentially around the fire, even if it is wet out.

- Rock, rock
- Chief and Tracker
- Brainy Bee
- Black widow
- Ninja
- Samurai sword

Rainy day active games:

If you anticipate that we will be under a tarp avoiding rain for much of the day, be sure to plan for vigorous games at some point: either before it rains, or after it rains, or during a lull in the rain. Students get tarp fever pretty easily!

If it rains non-stop all day, consider ending the day with an active game even it's still raining. As long as students are highly active, they should have fun and stay warm enough, and if they do get cold it's manageable as they will be going home soon anyway.