

## What to Bring on a Caving Trip

The following checklist is an overview of the items that should be brought along on a basic horizontal caving trip. While every trip requires the same basic equipment and supplies to ensure safety, the specifics can vary and may depend on numerous factors, including the conditions in the cave, the length of the trip, weather, and your personal physical condition and physiology. What follows is recommended for most new cavers and assumes the use of LED lights.

Your most important items are your helmet and light sources. Your helmet should have a nonelastic three or four point suspension and quick-release buckle. A UIAA or CE approved mountaineering style helmet is best. You should have a minimum of three independent light sources each capable of allowing you to exit the cave on its own. One must be helmet mounted. The second should be helmet mountable but may be carried in your pack. The third can be a small flashlight, either in your pack or on a lanyard worn around your neck. Ideally all your light sources will use the same size batteries. You should have fresh batteries for each light source and at least one spare set (two for longer trips) for each source.

DO NOT bring anything into a cave that you do not wish to get wet or mud covered. Cave mud is very difficult to remove and will not wash completely out of most fabrics. In addition, clothing will likely be damaged; caves are harsh environments. Dress in layers so you can more readily adjust your temperature and avoid cotton; wool and synthetic fibers and blends are best. Also take the above ground weather conditions into account. Boots should have lug soles for traction and provide good ankle support (though some cavers prefer Wellington style boots.) Kneepads are generally recommended. Cheap basketball/volleyball type knee pads are thin, soft, and flexible and work better than those with hard parts or thick padding. Gloves can be cheap leather work gloves or gardening gloves.

You'll need a small, sturdy, lightweight pack to carry spare lights and batteries, food and water, *etc.* An old beat up day pack is good for new cavers; many experienced cavers use packs specially designed for caving or surplus military packs. You should carry high energy, non-crushable food/snacks unless you can go twice as long as the expected trip length without; carry extra in case the trip goes longer than expected. You should also have water in a plastic bottle. The amount varies but some sources recommend at least 16 oz. per 4 hours. Items in your pack should be packed in zip-lock bags to keep them relatively clean and dry.

Finally, be sure to bring a complete change of clothing, including shoes; this may be what you wear to the cave. Also bring an extra large plastic garbage bag for your dirty clothes. You may also want to bring some water and towels or wipes to aid in clean up as well as some snacks and beverages.

### **Equipment Checklist**

#### Clothing

- Helmet and light with fresh batteries
- Thermal undergarments
- Boots and thick socks
- Knee pads
- Coveralls or old rugged clothing (long pants and long-sleeved shirt)
- Gloves

#### Cave Pack and Contents

- Cave pack
- Backup helmet mountable light with fresh batteries (could be on your helmet)
- Spare batteries
- Small flashlight/third light source
- Drinking water in a plastic bottle
- Food/snacks
- Large plastic garbage bag for use as emergency heat tent/poncho
- Extra thermal shirt or small, lightweight jacket and hat/balaclava
- Zip-lock bags
- Small first aid kit in a waterproof container - should allow one to manage blisters, headaches, loose bowels, small cuts, *etc.*

### Optional

- Elbow pads
  - Handline or 1" webbing, 30 feet or so, and a carabiner
  - Empty plastic pee bottle (be sure you can tell this from your water bottle) for longer trips
  - Small pocket knife or multi-tool
  - Whistle
  - Watch
  - Cave map and compass
  - Camera (disposable or durable, best in a protective case)
  - Duct tape (wrap it around a small wooden dowel, a pencil, or your pee bottle)
  - Space blanket
  - Glow sticks and/or candles and waterproof matches (not counted as one of your three sources of light)
  - Hand warmer pouches
  - Note pad and pencil
  - Markers made from popsicle sticks and reflective tape
  - Retaining strap for glasses
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### Sources

Central Connecticut Grotto website, <http://www.caves.org/grotto/ccg/docs/checklists/Checklist%20of%20Caving%20Equipment.pdf>

Philadelphia Grott website, [http://www.phillygrotto.org/?page\\_id=33](http://www.phillygrotto.org/?page_id=33)

NSS Caving Techniques page, <http://www.caves.org/safety/techniques.shtml>

NSS Guide to Responsible Caving, <http://www.caves.org/brochure/NSS%20Guide%20Color%20809.pdf>

NSS Youth Group Liaison Equipment Checklist, <http://caves.org/youth/YGLC%20equip%20check%20list%20FINAL%201~09.pdf>