

MRSS OUTDOOR EDUCATION EQUIPMENT GUIDE

Introduction

The Outdoor Education program at MRSS extends from class 3 through to class 11. Feeling excited and looking forward to each trip is much easier if you are prepared. If you are comfortable, well fed and well slept, you are far more likely to appreciate a majestic tree or a spectacular view, or to have the empathy, understanding and patience that makes spending extended time with your classmates enjoyable. We do not need a lot of extravagant gear, but as the years progress, we do need some essential personal gear and some equipment that can be shared (group equipment like a tent or cooking stove).

It is not necessary to purchase special, and expensive equipment, however it is important that students are well prepared. This guide will help provide families with some basic knowledge that will assist them in purchasing new or used equipment, hiring equipment or borrowing equipment. The factors that separate reasonable equipment from junk (that often ends up in land fill after very little use) and things to look for, or avoid, are quite consistent. Good equipment will last many years if cared for and can be used across generations and between families.

In the primary years it is not necessary to kit your child out for a summit attempt on K2! Borrowing or hiring everything (if you don't have it) can be a great option. The trips for the younger years are in the warmer times of the year; they are not out for extended periods and most catering is provided. Children, annoyingly, also grow resulting in equipment no longer being usable the following year (or even a few months later!).

By upper primary and early secondary it is worth considering some purchases. By the start of class nine students will need to have a set of basic personal equipment and access to some group equipment. The following table looks at the outdoor program year by year and the equipment that will be needed.

Class / Year	Camp Description	Personal Equipment	Group Equipment
3 - 6	C3 = 3 days base camping at Sugarloaf farm C4 = 4 days coastal base camping C5 = 5 days base camping Grampians / Gariwerd C6 = 5 Days Coastal base camp sailing & snorkelling	Sleeping bag Sleeping mat Rain jacket (can be lightweight until Class 5) Head torch	Tent Stove (class 6 only)
7	Coastal base camp, 5 days Waratah Bay	Sleeping bag Sleeping mat Rain jacket (needs to be water/ wind proof with hood) Head torch	Tent Stove Eski Strong dry food box
8	Mutawintji base, 7 days	As above plus: Set of thermals	Tent Stove Eski Strong dry food box
9	6 camps ranging from 3 to 12 days. Some base camps and some mobile camps (hiking and paddling)	Sleeping bag Sleeping mat Rain jacket Walking boots/ shoes 2 sets of thermals	Tent Stove Eski Strong dry food box Tarp
10	5 days Rafting Mitchell River 5 days at one of three end of year 10 /11 camps	Sleeping bag Sleeping mat Rain jacket	Tent Stove Eski
11	5 days Rock climbing base camp 5 days at one of three end of year 10 /11 camps	Walking boots/ shoes 2 sets of thermals	Strong dry food box

Individual Equipment

The following items of equipment and mainly includes clothing that will protect students from exposure to the environment (heat, cold, UV, wet, wind).

Thermals

These must be wool or synthetic (poly propylene). Long legs and long sleeved. There are many brands and prices can vary from quite cheap (around \$20.00 per item) to very expensive (well over \$100 per item).

Rain jacket

For class three and four a lighter, unlined spray jacket will probably be okay. By class 5 A 3/4 length jacket is best as it also keeps your waist to knee area dry. The shorter yachting and cycling jackets are not adequate. Your waterproof jacket must have a hood. Jackets with lining (or puffer/ down jackets) are not a good idea as you can easily overheat when walking in them, and the lining is very heavy and difficult to dry when it gets wet - as it often does! **Nylon jackets are not sufficient.** Buy or hire a Gore-Tex, Pertex or comparable fabric jacket that has been seam-sealed.

Footwear / boots

Solid, simple, leather boots are very good and tend to last longer. Synthetic runner-style boots are okay if they support your ankle. Buy them a size too big to cater for thick socks and growing feet. Do not buy them just before a trip – give them time to be worn in well before the trip to avoid blisters! For many trips, especially for camps up to class 8, a pair of runners in good condition will suffice.

Sleeping bag

A good sleeping bag can make all the difference to sleeping ensuring you are warm and comfortable. Sleeping bags are a very tricky business, and the temperature rating system is notoriously inaccurate and creatively used by some manufacturers.

Design (mummy' shaped verses tapered rectangle) quality (e.g., how the baffles are stitched) and materials used (down or synthetic) and price are all factors that need to be considered. The best way to arrive at a decision is to try a few different bags (borrow from friends, hire etc.) in a range of conditions, especially in cold conditions.

Final tips:

- If you already have a good sleeping bag and it is a little big when packed, then you can buy a compression sack to reduce its size.
- Booster bags/Sleeping Bag Liners which go inside existing sleeping bags are available to increase the warmth of sleeping bags, protect your sleeping bag and are easier to wash than sleeping bags.
- If you are tall by an extra-long and if you are very short (and will remain so) consider buying a shorter bag (less area to heat, lighter to carry)
- Do not purchase heavy, hard to pack away 4WD sleeping bags. They are bulky, hard to manage and not always as warm as they look.

Sleeping mat

Combined with the sleeping bag this is the second most important personal item. Sleeping mats are often thought of in terms of comfort and while this is important it is the insulating properties of the sleeping mat that are most important. Being well insulated from the damp, cold ground is vital and no amount of down in a sleeping bag will compensate for a poor, or no sleeping mat.

The sleeping mat options are broken down into two broad groups. Closed cell foam mats or some form of inflatable mat. As with all outdoor gear there is a huge price variation between the most expensive at well over \$500 and the cheapest at under \$20. Be aware there are some very cheap inflatable mats that are notoriously unreliable, poorly insulated and heavy. The readily available blue closed cell foam mats are reliable, excellent insulation and are very cheap.

Back pack

A hiking pack for our trips needs to be at least 65 liters, internally framed, strong, preferably canvas (Cordura, a heavy nylon / synthetic is also okay), and has as few breakable parts as possible (such as zips and buckles). Simplicity and comfort are the best criteria.

Getting the pack fitted in store can be invaluable to ensure that the pack is the right size for your child. We do have a couple of packs at school, which can be loaned out on a trip-by-trip basis. This is one item we recommend hiring and/or borrowing prior to purchase to ensure the pack fits and is comfortable.

Torch

A reliable head torch that has a rechargeable battery but can also use AA or AAA batteries. Brands to consider are Petzel, Black Diamond and Led Lenser.

Other items

In addition to the above items every student should get used to packing the following items for every trip:

- Beanie (wool or synthetic fleece)
- Broad brimmed sun hat (not a cap)
- For cooler weather trips a pair of wool gloves or mittens and a second set of thermals
- For warmer trips a light weight, long sleeved, collared shirt

Group / Shared Equipment

There are several items which are shared between groups. These items tend to be quite expensive, and time should be taken to ensure money is not wasted on inappropriate or unsafe equipment. If you have any concerns, please reach out to the Outdoor Education team for support.

Tent / Fly

There are more tents in landfill than any other outdoor item! The purchase of a tent requires more consideration than perhaps any other piece of equipment due to the initial cost of a reasonable tent and the number of completely useless tents on the market. Tents can range from less than \$100 for a land fill item (guaranteed to fail on the first trip with any rain or wind) to well over \$1,000 for quality brands and designs.

Tents are generally shared between 2 or 3 people. Tents are something that the students will continue to use in future years on the outdoor program so can be a good investment. There are many alternatives. Beware of poorly made tents, look for locally owned manufacturers and quality construction. Choose a 2 to 3-person hiking tent. There are many designs / shapes, tents vary in their functionality (e.g., ease to set up and pack up), the style (single, multi or integral pitch) and design purpose (e.g., extreme weather conditions verse ultra-light weight).

Hiring or borrowing a range of tents will give you a cheap way to test and assess what works for your family (and friends). It is important to consider if a tent will be used outside the school outdoor program or not, if not it is probably best to hire or borrow. Hiring a tent also allows you to hire a more spacious tent for base camps and a lighter tent for hikes. Hire tents are also cleaned and dried at the end of a trip by someone other than your tired child!

Stoves

Can be shared between 2 to 3 people. 'Trangia' type are the best. They burn methylated spirits which is safer than gas or shellite. They are compact and light, and they contain cooking pots as well as stove components. A similar stove is manufactured by Sigg, which is also excellent. Quality is highly variable so do not rush out buy the cheapest camping stove it is far better to hire stoves.

Trusted outdoor shops and brands

There are several outdoor shops, brands and manufacturers that produce consistently good quality gear. For tents, sleeping bags, rain jacket / over pants and packs (note some brands do not make all items) the following brands are worth considering:

Mont	Patagonia
One Planet	Arcteryx
Wilderness Equipment	MSR
RAB	

Trusted shops that stock almost entirely high-quality gear include:

Bogong Equipment

374 Little Bourke St, Melbourne VIC 3000 (ph: 9600 0599)

Ajays Snow Country Sports

119/121 Canterbury Rd Heathmont 3135 (ph: 9720 4647)

Paddy Pallin Ringwood (and Melbourne CBD)

88 Maroondah Hwy, Ringwood VIC 3134 (ph: 9879 1544)

One Planet Shop

1/377 Little Bourke St, Melbourne VIC 3000 (ph: 9670 7070)

Eastern Mountain Centre

68 Whitehorse Rd, Deepdene 3103 (ph: 9817 1477)

HIRING EQUIPMENT

There are several places that equipment can be hired from. In most cases the hire outlets are providing equipment from quality manufactures that we have recommended above. Organising hire equipment early is clearly better as it permits time to try the equipment before the camp. If there are sizing or quality issues, then this can be addressed with the provider. Leaving equipment to the last minute adds an unnecessary level of stress.

Outsports Hiking Hire

Outsports is an Australian company and has been involved in the Outdoor education industry for over 30 years. The equipment hire website is easy to use and the equipment lists for MRSS camps have been curated by the MRSS OE staff. A link will be provided early in the new year.

One Planet

One Planet is an Australian company and has been involved in the Outdoor education industry for many years. The equipment hire and purchase lists for MRSS camps have been curated by the MRSS OE staff. The website is easy to use and the gear can be tried and then the same item can be purchased new if appropriate. A link will be provided early in the new year.

Ajays Snow Country Sports

Ajays have also been around for many years and located close by in Heathmont. Ideally it is best to organise hire gear at least two weeks prior to camp from the shop in Heathmont.

Daniel, Jarrah and Kim.