



When you think about camping adventures, issues that may arise during your stay are likely not going to be at the forefront of your mind. Usually, the focus is on where we want to go, what we want to do, and how we want to do it.

One small but important consideration is the gear we need, and how we can ensure it performs during our time away. The frustrating catch is that we spend large amounts of hard-earned money on products that, in the pursuit of our adventures, can at some point break or become damaged. However, this is when the creative fun begins!

Having a toolkit is a pretty handy addition to any setup, be that in your hiking pack, the storage shed, or your car boot.



The first item you need to get sorted is the box or bag you're going to keep your tools in.

Image: Blacksmith Camping Supplies

Why is a Toolkit Important?

These toolkits are invaluable for the next time you're faced with a camping obstacle that needs to be overcome – whether it be trying to peg into solid ground, getting a fire going in wet and windy conditions, or fixing something that has snapped, ripped, leaked, or punctured. Toolkits can save you lots of money, as it changes your approach; you can find a creative solution with what's in your toolbox, which can save you from reaching for your credit card.

Whether you're kilometres from home, at your favourite campsite, or just back after a memorable trip, here is a range of items you should consider keeping in your toolkit. This will ensure you can get back to doing what you love with the gear you love, for a lot less than if you were to replace it.

Toolbox or Bag?

The first item you need to get sorted is the box or bag you're going to keep your tools in. Whilst it's easy to get carried away here, aim small because you don't want this to consume valuable space which can be taken up by other gear.

Solid and durable tool boxes work great for vehicle camping, whereas soft bags like the Blacksmith Camping Supplies tool bag and or Sea to Summit pouch are fantastic for lighter-weight adventures.



A well thought out toolkit can save you plenty of cash and will help make sure your trip runs smoothly. Image: Ben Trewen

Consumables

Once you've decided on the size of your tool box or bag, you can then start working on what consumables you might want.



Duct Tape

Capable of many uses, duct tape is a go-to option for when things need to be repaired or rejoined. Covering holes and repairing tears are just some of its many purposes.

Cable Ties

Like duct tape, cable ties can be used to re-attach or hold things together. Organising cables, ropes or hoses, closing opened food packets, locking tubs or bags, and mending broken hooks and loops on a tent – to name only a few uses.

Lubricant

It might be a screw that has gone tight, a pin that won't release, or a pole that can't extend. Having a lubricant spray like WD-40 available will ensure you can get out of sticky situations easily.

Glue/Sealer

Your shoe sole might be coming apart, your tent seam might be leaking, or the sleeping pad valve may be seeping air. Fixing tasks like these and many others requires a strong, adhesive, and fast drying glue to get the job done.



Having a solid set of consumables in your kit will make small repairs easy. Image: Ben Trewen

Repair Tape

A form of glorified duct tape, repair tape is transparent, very adhesive, and perfect for mending precious items of gear. It might be a tear in your tent fly, a rip in your rain jacket, or a slit in your hiking pack. Repair tape is designed to bring your gear back to life whilst still looking somewhat new or at least undamaged.

Sewing Kit

If repair tape can't fix the rip in your rain jacket, maybe sewing it up can. Whether the seam in your pants gives way, the buttons on your waistband pops or the visor on your hat unravels, having a sewing repair kit can take care of all these basic sewing jobs. It can also prevent issues from becoming worse.

Paracord

Easy to source, super strong to use, and small enough to carry, paracord is fantastic for all kinds of use. It can be used to reinforce your tent, secure your tarp, hang something from a

tree, create a clothesline, tow something to your camp, or secure something so it doesn't budge. The options with this versatile rope are endless.

Hexamine Tablets

Hexamine tablets burn smokeless-ly, don't liquify, and leave no trace of burning. They have a high-energy density, making them fantastic as either an emergency stove or as a supercharged fire-lighter.



Duct tape is a go-to option for when things need to be re-joined. Image: Blacksmith Camping Supplies

Tools

The next lot of items to consider are your tools. It's important to remember that the goal is to include multi-purpose gear which can be used across a range of applications. Here's what makes a good list:

Swiss Army Knife or Multi-Tool

When it comes to multi-purposeful tools, having a multi-tool on hand like the Leatherman Surge makes perfect sense. With 21 tools and a sturdy feel in the hand, it's a good choice when tackling any adventure. There aren't many unique tasks that this tool can't play a solving role in.

The Victorinox Swiss Army Knife

It's like opening Christmas presents, as you explore all the different functions this little beauty can perform. Twenty-five altogether, in a compact 9cm body that weighs in at just 155gm. The size and weight are the winning factors for undertaking activities such as bushwalking, where it's usually slipped into the pocket of a pair of shorts or the outside pocket of a pack. Use a lanyard to carry it in pockets, and attach that to a belt too. That way, you can't lose the knife but can quickly retrieve it for use. The lanyard can also be easily attached to deck-lines on a kayak, for easy access.

The Leatherman Multi-Tool

A multi-tool doesn't have as many blades or functions as a Swiss Army Knife, but nevertheless is a very functional and effective tool. Having it available on a belt all the time makes it easy to quickly and efficiently repair minor fencing issues, cut wire tangled in equipment, and unscrew things – all without ready-access to a comprehensive toolbox. There is the facility to attach a lanyard to this also – but at 13cm, it is longer than the Handyman, and heavier at 266gm too.

What is a Multi-Tool?

A multi-tool is a single piece of camping and hiking equipment that has numerous functions. It's cleverly built around a pair of compact stainless steel pliers, with other pullout tools



neatly incorporated into the design:

- The pliers are either regular pliers or needle-nose pliers that are handy for tightening or loosening bolts, pulling out small nails, and bending wires. The better quality multi-tool pliers also have built-in wire cutting and wire stripping functions.
- Almost every multitool has at least one sharp knife for cutting, with a safe, foldaway blade. A second serrated knife, wood saw, or metal saw are also available on selected brands.
- For the handy bushman in you, another common multi-tool component is the screwdriver. Usually you'll have both flat and Phillips head options – an important tool for those 'fix it' sessions on the road.
- Some multi-tools also contain a file suitable for filing down timber or metal. Plus if you ever need to measure a short distance there's often a ruler incorporated into the extended length of your multi-tool.
- And where would you be without scissors to cut thin twine, fishing line, fingernails, material, paper, and plastic? Neatly cutting open packets of food rather than ripping them with your teeth – it's so much easier when you've got your handy multi-tool.
- Importantly, camp cooking and camp entertainment always benefit from your multi-tool's can and bottle openers, respectively.
- Some multi-tools even include an awl (or hole punch) for putting holes in tough materials like leather or thick canvas, which is useful – we just don't know when!

How to Choose Your Multitool

Choosing the right multi-tool is a balance between:

1. Finding a tool with the functions you need
2. How compact and lightweight the tool needs to be
3. Durability for years of use
4. How safe they are to use as part of a multi-tool, and of course,
5. How much you're willing to spend

Multi-tools can be an expensive purchase for young campers and, unfortunately, they're also easy to lose. Therefore you need to weigh up the return-on-investment for your multi-tool. Before you rush out and buy a multi-tool, write down a list of what you want your multi-tool to do. Sometimes the higher number of functions is not as important as making sure you've got the right tool for your intended activities.

On the flipside, you may want a multi-tool that does everything so that you're prepared for those just-in-case moments. Find out exactly what you need and want before you purchase your new multi-tool.

What to Look For in a Multi-Tool

- Safety First

If you're going to be applying pressure when you use the individual tools, in particular the blade, look to buy a multi-tool with a tool and/or blade-only locking mechanism. This will lock the blade safely in place so it won't close without you releasing it.



- Weight and Function

Second, consider the weight of the tool and how you'll attach it to you or your gear. Where are you going to keep your multi-tool so it's handy to grab when you're on the road, camping or hiking?

If it's a small multi-tool, a simple belt clip or lanyard ring will work to attach it to you or your backpack.

However if your multi-tool is larger and heavier, then it should be sold with a protective pouch made of durable material, such as leather or nylon, to attach to your belt.

If you're going to keep your multi-tool in the glove box and don't require a lightweight product, you may select a heavier multi-tool with more functions and greater strength.

The weight and 'hand feel' of your multi-tool is also important. Sometimes the trade-off for manufacturers is decreasing the comfort of the handle. The more tools added to the design, the more likely the handle to grasp the tool is more cumbersome.

- Steel Strength

Third, for strength and rust-resistance, the type of stainless steel used is important. A higher price tag for a multitool, in many cases, relates to the better quality stainless steel it's made out of. High quality stainless steel is extremely strong and resistant to corrosion (rust), however some lower quality stainless steels can occasionally succumb to the effects of salt and moisture, as well as weaken in structure.

- Functions

Lastly, look for components of a multi-tool that do more than one thing. For example, the bottle opener arm may also be a flat head screwdriver or the can opener may also be a twine cutter. This versatility lends itself to a more compact multi-tool design.



It's like opening Christmas presents! Image: Victorinox

Swiss Army Knife Vs Multi-Tools: Pros and Cons

Victorinox Swiss Army Knife

Pros

- Small and lightweight
- Versatile
- Perfect for bushwalking and activities where weight is a criteria

Cons

- Lacks robust pliers

Leatherman Multi-Tool

Pros

- Versatile
- Perfect for activities where a more robust tool is needed, particularly the pliers

Cons



- Large and heavy
- Harder to pull out the tools you need

Torch

While we're likely to have a headlamp or lantern amongst our gear, a multi-purpose lighting back-up is never a bad thing.



Don't waste valuable space and weight by selecting multi-purpose tools. Image: Ben Trewen

Mallet

When it comes to camping and hiking, the value of mallets surely speaks for themselves. While the pressure of your foot or the weight of a rock can often do the job, having a heavy-duty mallet on hand to put all your pegs into the ground is much easier.

The beauty of a mallet is that the peg puller at the end of the handle offers just as much help when its time to pack down and pull all the pegs out of the ground. If you're more of the lightweight hiker type, you could consider a lightweight mallet.

Tri-Fold Shovel

Whether you're adjusting the wood on the fire, digging up coals for your camp oven or clearing space for the bowels to open up, having a shovel is incredibly handy. Many choose to opt for adding a long-handled option to their gear kit, however you could get away with a simple tri-fold shovel in my toolbox. It's small and compact but still gets the job done.

Hatchet

Not critical, but very useful, especially during fire season. Hatchets are great for chipping away at kindling, clearing vegetation at campsites and cutting down wood to fit. They're also multi-purpose as you can use the other end of the head as a hammer for putting pegs into the ground.

Butane Gun

Sure, you can just use matches, but having a butane gun on hand will help to light a fire in testing conditions. Whether you're lacking tinder or struggling with wet or windy conditions, having a steady flame can be beneficial. Butane refills are very cheap and the convenience is absolutely worth it.

Water Tank Spanner

Again, not critical but very useful – especially if you plan to carry water in reusable tanks. Having a tool to ensure your lids and bungs are screwed on tight and that your taps can be



removed for transit may not seem that valuable... until your water tanks start leaking.

Spare Parts

Lastly, are the spare parts. While this list can quickly become endless, there are some common parts that are regularly sought after. Adopt this for whatever gear you carry, as you need. Don't be afraid to add items after you've learnt from your mistakes... it can take breaking four buckles on a hiking pack before you start carrying a spare!



Check that you've added spare parts to your kit in case you get caught out mid-adventure.

Image: Ben Trewen

Tent Pole Splint

The unfortunate reality is that no tentpole is indestructible and once it becomes damaged, it's a pain to manage. Having a sleeve handy makes repairing a crack or break easy. Sleeves are usually included as a spare with your tent. Just slip it over the damage, then reinforce with your duct tape or cable ties as needed. It's a much sturdier option than a taped pole that doesn't have adequate support.

Spare Bungs

Be it for your esky or your water tank, having leaking fluid going everywhere is the worst! Spend a couple of dollars to ensure you're covered just in case you lose or break your bung.

Stove Service Kit: O-Rings, Knobs, Adapters

Gas Stoves can often be fidgety pieces of gear, complete with many different parts that often need maintaining. With hiking stoves, it's relatively easy as many come with pre-assembled repair kits.

Camping stoves are a bit trickier. A great way to try and stay on top of things is to carry correct-sized rubber O-rings for your seals, stove knobs, and gas hose adapters for use between 3/8 to POL to BOM fittings.

It never hurts to also read the manufacturer instructions, in case they make any recommendations on parts as well.

Spare Pegs

If you've been camping for a while, you'll know that broken, misplaced, or un-returned tent pegs are a frequent occurrence. Having a few extras on hand can never hurt. It's pretty easy to get your hands on heavy-duty steel pegs or lightweight alloy pegs.



Repair Buckle

While many wouldn't even think of buckles breaking, the inconvenience when they do can be pretty frustrating. Whether it be in your tent, backpack, or awning – buckles play a part in the setting up of many pieces of gear.

All it takes is for that misplaced footstep along with some pressure – and the next thing you know, the buckle is crushed!

Do you have anything else you take along in your toolkit when you head out on an adventure? Let us know in the comments.