



Campfires are a great way to have that *full* camping experience. Perhaps it roots from something primal within us? But a campfire, in addition to the romance, is a rather practical thing to have at the campsite.

Campfires provide:

- Warmth
- Hot food (with delicious subtle smoke flavours)
- Light
- Insect repellent
- A focal point for social gatherings

All that said, let's get into the detail of how to start one efficiently.

Preparation Prevents Poor Campfires?

Now, you could get all extreme by rubbing two sticks together, lighting a ball of wispy grass in your hand, and thumping your chest in a Bear Grylls-esque display of survival prowess. Or, if you take the time preparing the right materials, with a few simple cheats, one match should be all you need to get a fire started safely; sorry, that rules out that jerry can of petrol!

Before you leave home collect these items:

- **Tinder** – Newspaper, a few small twigs, firelighters (can be store bought or homemade).
- **Ignition method** – Lighter/matches/flint striker.
- **Wood processing items** – A saw, hatchet, knife + club.



Here we have some tinder (newspaper) and ignition, in the form of a flint striker, and a hatchet for splitting logs.

Collect all the wood you'll need to last at least half an hour

It makes for sloppy spectating watching someone who's finally got their first bit of flame in damp timber, running around trying to find some more material to keep it going. I personally collect all the timber I think I'll need for the whole time, and if there's any extra, I leave it as a gift for the next person.

Be environmentally conscious

Don't collect any standing timber, live or dead, as both are habitat for animals.

Organise the timber you've collected into size stacks based on categories of thickness

Starting with the finest twigs and working up to finger width, then arm width. It's a good idea to have them in lengths that will make for easy use – say half a meter. Use your wood processing tools to assist with this.



Collect your tinder

A crucial part of the process; it should be dry, fine and easily take a flame, and this is where having some already with you is handy. Otherwise look for dry grass underneath tussocks, dry leaves or the inside of bark (beware of huntsman spiders with that last one!).

Now light your campfire!

This is the part where it all comes together. It's all about escalating the size of fuel as required and utilising the wood stacks you made earlier.

Start by lighting your tinder (either natural, newspaper, twigs, or fire lighters you brought from home), with some small twigs loosely placed on top. Once alight, progressively lay larger sticks just before the previous stage is burning (this gives it time to dry and warm up). I recommend laying the wood in the typical tepee shape, as it gives good aeration and a large part of it is exposed to the flame. Once a base of coals has built up you can rest easy.



A nice little campfire, well on its way. Image: [Kooikkari](#).

Some final words of wisdom about campfires

- Beware of dry leaves, too many will smother a small flame.
- It's a good idea to not use all the timber from each stack the first time in case it does not work.



- With damp timber, you'll need more small fuel to get the bigger fuel to dry and catch alight – plan for this accordingly when making your size stacks.

From here, the fire can be made to do any multitude of tasks with different arrangements, such as for cooking, efficiency, warmth, or longevity. So know you've got the basics down pat, you can sit back and enjoy the warmth of your fire!

Got some tips of your own for any campfire novices out there? Let us know down below.