



A few extra poles in your camp kit opens up a world of shelter opportunities. You can extend the awnings on your existing tent (most tents have some sort of entry flap that can be extended this way), build a sheltered outdoor dining space, block out the wind or create shade on hot days.

You may also be looking to replace damaged poles or parts. If this is the first time you've looked into the range of tent poles, you may be a little befuddled over which ones will suit your needs.

Good thing is that unless you have a very specific need, most poles are going to serve the same purpose. The choice really comes down to which material you want, and what length you need.



There are a few different types of poles available, each with their own use for your camping set up.

Upright Poles

These are available in a myriad of brands, sizes and functions. But, at the end of the day, they all pretty much do the same thing... support your camping shelter.

We carry round tent poles rather than square as they are friendly on fabrics, are easy to handle and are compatible with numerous other fittings that allow you to add to your shelter.



They come in both steel and alloy materials and generally have a 'spigot' atop the pole. A 'spigot' is the pointy end that fits through the eyelets of your tent or tarp, or through the end cap of a ridge or spreader pole.

Most of these are adjustable, with the alloy poles generally featuring either a twist lock, or cam lock mechanism. The steel poles usually having a wing or 'T' nut lock. There are some kits that have fixed length poles that simply fold down into 3 sections.

Some brands produce their own pole kits to suit their tents. But for the most part, there are all interchangeable with the only variants being the material and the adjustable lengths.



Alloy Poles with a spigot on one end are ideal for supporting your shelter.

Ridge or spreader poles

A ridge pole enables you to create a rigid peak on your awning or tarp to enable efficient water run-off rather than having it pool in sagging sections of your shelter. These are almost always used in conjunction with two upright poles to create a frame that will support your shelter. The spigot ends of the upright poles fit through the holes at each end of these ridge poles.

As with upright poles, spreader poles come in various lengths right up to almost four metres in length and are also available in both alloy with twist lock extension, and steel with wing or 'T' nut adjustment.



The alloy poles generally have plastic end inserts which are a little kinder on tent fabrics than the flat ends of steel poles. Similarly, as with the upright poles - we only carry the round range. This is because they're compatible with numerous optional fittings and spare parts.



Put a peak in your awning or tarp to prevent water pooling with a Ridge Pole.

Adjustable C-Clip Poles

These are much like the previously mentioned spreader poles, only they feature a nylon 'C' clip at each end rather than the eyelet for pole spigots.

They are only more of an addition to a shelter structure rather than a necessity. You would usually only purchase them if you find that you need to minimise the sag of a shelter's roof or to brace a wind break or side wall.

The addition of these poles increases structural integrity by creating a horizontal brace across the middle of two upright, or in between two ridge poles. The C-clip fits 22.2mm diameter poles and is made of durable nylon which provides a secure grip.



C-Clip poles are great for minimising any sagging on the roof of your tent or shelter.

Lightweight Alloy poles

High-end dome tents and most lightweight hiking tents have flexible alloy poles. These are lighter and a little more reliable than their fibreglass counterparts. As with anything, there are varying qualities. DAC and Easton are known to produce the best quality lightweight alloy poles.

Mid-range hiking tents and swags come with unbranded alloy poles. But we have had good feedback on their performance in the past.

The downside of these poles is that you cannot buy a universal repair section. In almost all cases you'll need to source a new pole set or a specific pole section from the manufacturer.

This being said, with proper care and consideration, these poles are hard to break and are reliable in the field.

Fibreglass poles

If you've broken a fibreglass tent pole on a dome tent, then you don't need to buy a new pole set to set things right again. In fact, in most cases fibreglass dome tent poles are not sold as a set. Instead, replacement pole sections are available.



These pole sections usually come in a pack of four and are available in a variety of diameters and brands. There's no need to match the pole brand with your tent. You just need to find the correct diameter, then make sure you have a hacksaw to trim it to length.

These fibreglass poles come in varying qualities. The basic versions are usually black, while the better quality poles come with an extra wrap over the fibreglass to prevent it from splintering and add durability. The poles with this wrap can usually be identified by a printed pattern or brighter colour on the outside.



The AOS Swag pole kit allows your swag to be freestanding. A fibreglass pole kit will have your dome tent up and running again.

Specialty poles

There are a number of poles that are made for a specific purpose. However there is no reason why they wouldn't be useful for other specific purposes.

The Oztrail Swag Pole Plus Kit, for example, is designed for the Oztrail swag range to turn them into freestanding shelters. But, there is no reason why it couldn't be used as a ridge or spreader pole in instances where spigot ends are required.

And the AOS Swag Pole Kit, while designed for the apex swags from AOS, are just as useful for setting up a hootchie or tarp shelter, or for any swag or compact tent awning.



Steel or Alloy

Personally, on account of the weight-saving, I prefer alloy. I've never had a good quality alloy pole fail me. In some instances though, I would exercise caution. For example, in bad weather I'll take down all but the necessary forms of shelter until the weather passes to be on the safe side.

Same with transporting alloy poles. You might want to make sure that they're not rattling around in the back of your 4x4. The main downside of alloy poles is that once bent, they're not terribly conducive to being bent back into place. Basically, the more they are bent back and forward, the weaker they get.

A steel pole weighs more. But for this extra weight you get a practically indestructible pole that can be hammered, bent and shaped back into place should any damage occur... and they're cheaper.



Alloy Ridge Poles will be a bit lighter compared to steel, so they're great for weight-conscious campers.

Don't forget to add some guy ropes

The best way to add stability to your shelter is to add more anchor points. You do this by increasing the number of guy ropes and peg out points.



Adding extra guy lines to a standard upright spigot pole is easy, all you need is a loop to place over the top of the spigot end, peg it out and tighten.

Having two guy ropes on each of the key upright pole locations increases the stability of your shelter two-fold. So for that reason, it's good to have extras on hand.



Don't forget to bring those extra guy ropes and pegs for securing your shelter in the elements.

The pole is only as good as the pegs holding it upright

There's no point in having sturdy poles and plenty of guy ropes only to use the short and thin pegs that are included with many shelters. Make sure you add a handful of pegs that are specific to the location and ground conditions you will be camping on.

Check out [this guide](#) to help choose pegs to keep your camp set up grounded, so you can enjoy a sturdy set up for the whole of your trip.

What are the essentials poles that you have on hand for putting together your ultimate campsite?