



Groundsheets, footprints, floor savers. Call them what you will – if you care about your tent then they're a crucial piece of camping kit.

The purpose of a groundsheet (we'll call them this for the sake of this blog) is to protect your tent floor against the jagged, tent floor-wrecking ground. An insurance policy if you will. You're much better off financially, replacing a groundsheet every so often than your entire Black Wolf Turbo or MSR Hubba Hubba.

But groundsheets aren't some one-trick pony. Depending on which you buy, they can help waterproof the floor of your tent, stop condensation, help keep your campsite tidy, make it easy to pack away your tent in muddy or wet conditions, protect the ground and allow it to 'breathe' (a requirement in some caravan parks), and even double as an emergency shelter or stretcher.

There are two main types of groundsheet – solid and mesh. Here are some pros and cons of each:

Solid, Tarp-Style

Pros: Added level of waterproofness. Low cost. A solid wall of defence. Keeps your tent clean and in tip-top condition. Easier to clean – just hose or wipe off. May provide insulation against the cold ground.

Cons: They get dirty. If you select one that's too large, it can actually channel water and mud under your tent. They can encourage condensation.

Mesh, 'Shade Cloth'-Style

Pros: The dirt and water fall straight through – no flooding and a clean campsite. They allow the ground underneath, especially grass, to breathe. Great for your awning and comfortable to walk on. If you don't have a shade cloth, use one of these instead.

Cons: Pointy objects can still poke through. Harder to clean. More expensive.



The popular Oztrail Ultramesh Groundsheet.

Here are some of the groundsheet options on the market:

Footprints to Suit Black Wolf, Oztent, and MSR Tents

Many popular brands of tents purpose-make footprints or floor guards to suit their tents. This is especially the case for some of the more serious touring and hiking tents. They are made to fit perfectly to the floor of the tent without overhang.



The footprints that come with high-end hiking tents like the MSR's and Wilderness Equipment are extremely lightweight and are vital to keeping that delicate floor in good condition.

Here are some of the tents with purpose made groundsheets:

- Black Wolf Turbo Tent
- Oztent RV Tent (solid and mesh)
- Oztrail Tourer & Cruiser
- MSR Hubba, Carbon Reflex, and Freelite
- Wilderness Equipment Space 1 and 2



The Black Wolf Turbo Tent groundsheet not only protects the tent floor but provides a great floor for the outside awning.

Oztrail Ultramesh and C-Gear Floor Saver

These are not made for specific tents but come in a wide range of sizes to suit many popular tents. They're also commonly used for awning floors, under kiddie pools, as windbreaks and sails, and a whole heap of other things. The Oztrail Ultramesh gives you many of the benefits of the purpose made footprints but at a lower price. As for the C-Gear Multimat well, heck, they can be used as helipads.

tarpground



Look at that sand just fall through the C-Gear Multimat. Just the thing for those neat-freaks that don't like tramping sand into the tent and sleeping bags!

Heavy Duty Tarp

Nothing is more versatile than a quality tarp (or tarpaulin to some). You can use one to waterproof the gear in your trailer or roof rack on the way to your destination and then throw it under the tent while you camp. Tarps are available in all sorts of shapes, sizes, and thicknesses and are a really no-nonsense way of protecting your tent floor.



When all else fails, a good tarp is a great groundsheet for your tent.

DIY Groundsheets

There are heaps of other things you can use as a makeshift groundsheet for your tent. A few items that come to mind:

- Shade cloth
- Emergency blanket -handy for those ultralight hikers that already carry one
- An old tent fly or floor
- Closed-cell foam
- Builders plastic - the sort you might use to line a garden bed
- Sisalation - used for insulation

So, do yourself a favour and protect the floor of your precious tent and invest in a groundsheet.

Do you use a groundsheet with your tent? If not, why?