

The 4 Essentials

Fixing People, Fixing Equipment, Navigation, Communication

There are several philosophies regarding what equipment we should take on our outdoor adventures. Some examples might be; **Take everything every time**, some advantages of this are we always have everything, so whatever happens we can deal with it and we should be familiar with everything as we always have the same stuff. The down side is it can be heavy and over kill for some situation meaning we are more likely to leave it behind if we are “not going to do anything extreme” and as we all know many accidents happen close to home. **A kit for each situation or discipline**, e.g. 1 for ski, 1 for kayak, one for climb, 1 for day, 1 for multi day. We have what we need no more no less, however we might end up buying duplicates of many items to fill each kit, I’m not sure I can afford four or five \$100 multi tools. **Modular**, a small base kit light enough to be taken each time and add layers as appropriate. This is my preference and also my preference that each layer has a little of everything even if it is biased towards one aspect.

There are many lists of what equipment you need to bring for a particular activity or stuff you should bring for every venture into the outdoors. However list tends to be specific meaning they may be unresponsive to different situations and while useful as memory joggers can lead to not thinking about what equipment we take with us which limits efficiency and development. Also if I need more than one hand to count the items I need I’m likely to forget something.

As an alternative the 4 essentials is not a definitive list but identifies categories each of which need to be covered in an appropriate manner for the trip or activity. This should encourage thought about safe appropriate equipment selection. Each category needs covering every time but probably in a different way each time.

Fixing People; First aid but make it functional and something that will be carried, stuff that works e.g. tape, crazy glue, pocket guide. Don’t forget other things that get broken on people e.g. low blood sugar, hypo/hyperthermia, dehydration, snow blind, sun burn, blisters.

Fixing Equipment; general stuff e.g. gorilla tape, copper wire, glue, sewing, boot lace. Discipline specific; look at your equipment what might break how will you fix it e.g. hole in kayak, broken tent/ski pole, snow shoe binding. Tools is a leatherman enough? Do you need a specific wrench size for that ????

Navigation; is knowing to follow the river till the next road enough? Maybe sometimes but still recommend taking a map and compass. GPS, satellite photo, guide book. If you don’t or cant use it its no use.

Communication; Convenience (e.g. talk to base, arrange pizza delivery, say you’ll be late.) vs. Emergency (e.g. let someone know you are in trouble/need help). **Low tech;** whistle, flag etc. **High tech;** radio, cell phone, satellite (phone, epirb, spot etc.). **Everything in between**, flash light, flares, ground to air signals, strobes. **Recognized systems** e.g. 3 of anything (6 outside USA), SOS, 911 protocol. Pre arranged over due protocol.