

HOW TO CHOOSE A TENT

Here are some useful tips on purchasing a tent:



Your tent.....it's your home away from home. It's your protection from the elements; rain, wind, cold, bugs, critters, and Sasquatch. Even though it is only a few well-stitched panels of nylon, your tent is your intangible sense of security and well being. Choose wisely!

Background Information

Categories of Tents

Three-season tents are intended for spring, summer and fall use in climates such as Ontario. They perform well in wind, rain, and bugs but they are not designed to withstand snow.

Four-season tents usually integrate additional poles into their designs to fortify walls and help them stand firm against heavy wind or snow loads.

Convertible Tents are four-season models that can be converted into three-season tents.

Single-wall Tents are designed with the minimalist in mind. Essentially, they are rain flies equipped with a few vents that can be zipped open during warmer conditions.

Bivy Sacks are minimalist solo shelters that offer little space for anything but you and your sleeping bag. If you like room to move inside your shelter, look elsewhere.

Family Tents can accommodate larger groups. Dome-style models can be used in the backcountry as long as group members are willing to share the load; Most family tent models are intended for campgrounds and car camping.

A Few Terms Explained

Tent Fly: a waterproof nylon or polyester fly that covers the tent body allowing the tent to be waterproof but still breathable.

Vestibule: an extension of the waterproof fly that offers an additional protective area in front of the door(s) for storage.

Footprint: a ground sheet or tarp designed for specific tent models. They are placed under the tent floor for added protection from rain and to increase the life of the tent floor.

Freestanding Tents: a tent that has a pole configuration that does not require stakes in order for the tent to stand up. You can pick up a freestanding tent and move it to a different

location. It is still recommended to stake the tent, as it very inconvenient if your whole tent blows away (embarrassing too!)

Dome Tents: A pole configuration involving some form of rounded geodesic-dome design. Most 3 and 4-season tents are dome tents. Flat spots are minimal allowing rain and snow to shed easily. They withstand wind and provide good interior headroom.

Considerations when Buying a Tent

- **size/floor space** - how many people does it sleep? Does it have room for gear?
- **height/head space** - can you sit/stand? How much interior space does it offer?
- **weight** - how light weight do you need it to be?
- **packed size** - how much space does it take up in a pack?
- **ventilation** - how easily will air move through in warm humid conditions?
- **ease of set up** - can you set it up by yourself if needed?
- **additional features** - storage areas? vestibules? colour?
- **warrantees** - does it have a good warrantee and if something does go wrong will it get looked after?

A few more in-depth questions and answers

Q: What times of year will you use your tent?

Winter campers need a four-season tent. If you're a three-season hiker who heads out in early spring or late fall, give yourself some extra security and get a four-season tent or at least a convertible. If you're a recreational traveler and do the bulk of your camping between May and September, choose a three-season model.

Q: What size tent do you need?

Tent size is probably the most important consideration when making your purchase. Manufacturers classify their tents according to sleeping capacity: solo tents, two-person tents, three-person tents and so on.

If you travel with a partner you need at least a two-person tent. If you are large people or you like space, choose a generous two or even a three-person tent. Likewise if there 4 of you, you might consider a 6-person model in order to accommodate you and your gear. Most people who "size up" are glad they did!

TIP: Measure your sleeping pad and use its dimensions as a general guide when you consider a tent's measurements. Example: A standard Thermarest is 72" long and 20" wide. To fit two people inside, you will need at least 40 inches of width, if you don't mind being cozy with your partner. If you need a few inches of separation, then add a couple of inches. If you thrash around a lot at night, consider a 3 person.

TIP: If your group size varies you'll probably need more than one tent to fulfill your needs.

TIP: If you're sharing a tent with a partner(s) consider sharing the load as you hike or canoe. One person can carry the poles, another person the body and fly.

Q: Won't a cheap tent from a discount store work just as well as a brand-name model?

Department-store tents are typically mass-produced and less well made.



Examples: You'll find a greater number of stitches per inch in a brand name than you'll find in the discount tent and you'll often find seam-sealing as well. Quality tents use high-grade aluminum poles while bargain tents often rely on fibreglass poles, which are less shatter-resistant. Good brand-named tents are often better designed and give you more ventilation options, better coverage from rain and they are also likely to weigh less.

When it comes to warranty situations, a brand name tent means you will get service if your tent should ever need maintenance or repairs.

Still not sure?

At Tumblehome we'll take time to discuss pros and cons of various models and we can help you set up a tent in our upstairs area. This way you can learn how it is done and you actually get to go inside to experience the tent before you buy it.