Water and Water Bottles

Carrying water during an outdoor event, even for a short hike, is one of Scouting's "Ten Essentials." The rule is simple: **ALWAYS carry water**.

You must drink water throughout the day in order to remain healthy and fit so that you can continue to participate in the event. On strenuous hikes, you may need to drink as much as 8 oz. or more every hour, depending upon the temperature and other factors. Carry enough water to get you to the next water supply on the trail. For most day-hikes of 5 to 15 miles, that means 2 liters (2 quarts).

The best way to carry water is in a water bottle or a camelback:

- Use bottle with screw-on lid, holding 20-32 oz.
- Big mouth opening (e.g., Nalgene-type bottle) is preferred because it fits the water purifying kits. Nalgene bottles also are see-thru (you can tell how much is there) and have graduated markings (for measuring when cooking).
- Lightweight, plastic container that fits inside your daypack, on your belt, etc.
- You may need supplemental water inside your backpack on long hikes.
- Shoulder-strap canteens are impractical and uncomfortable for hiking.
- Military-style canteens (small mouth opening) are not as practical as big mouth containers and are made from heavier materials.
- Evaluate how much weight you want to carry in a camelback water carrier (2 quarts, or 32 oz. of water weights nearly 4 pounds; 4 liters of water weighs over 7 pounds). If you have to re-fill from a water source on the trail, you will need a Nalgene-type bottle to use a water filter.

Do not cook in your water bottle (heated liquids may interact with the plastic material) or use it for anything except water or water-based fluid replacement drinks (e.g., Gatorade). Do not put soda drinks (e.g., Coca Cola) in your water bottle. If you put Gatorade in a soft-plastic bottle, it becomes a "smellable" forever and must be hung overnight in your bear bag as the odor can't be washed out. Commercial bottles of water (e.g., "Arrowhead Water") can't be re-filled and it's easy to lose the screw-on caps.

ALWAYS fill your water bottle(s) before you leave home!

Assume that all stream, spring and lake water is polluted. You may become ill with digestive system disease if you drink from stream, spring or lake water without first purifying it. Therefore, all water taken from natural sources in the field should be treated before it is poured into your water bottle. Learn how to properly use a water purifying kit before you try to refill your water bottle on the trail.