FIELD GUIDE · NO. 02

Filter Maintenance & Backflushing

A filter lasts longer — and works more reliably — when it is cleaned, stored, and practiced with before you need it.



FROM THE BOOK

1. Collect the clearest water available. Mud, algae, and debris clog a filter much faster than relatively clear water.
2. If the water is cloudy, pre-filter it through a clean cloth, bandana, or coffee filter to remove larger particles before they reach your primary filter.
3. Reduced water flow is a common sign that a filter needs attention. Many modern filters can be cleaned by backflushing — forcing clean water through the filter in the opposite direction to remove trapped sediment. Follow the procedure recommended for your model.
4. Never allow a wet filter to freeze. Expanding ice can damage internal filter elements even if the housing looks unharmed. In freezing weather, many hikers keep the filter in a jacket pocket during the day or inside a sleeping bag at night.
5. After use, clean the filter according to the manufacturer's instructions, store it clean and dry if recommended, and inspect hoses, seals, O-rings, and connections before each outing. Replace worn or damaged parts on the manufacturer's schedule.
6. A simple filter you have practiced with and maintained is far more useful than an unopened one. Practice assembling and using your filter before you rely on it in an emergency.

PRACTICE IT

At home or on a camping trip, assemble your filter, treat a bottle of clear water, and practice the backflush or cleaning method in the instructions so the steps are familiar.