FIELD GUIDE · NO. 30

Equipment Maintenance

Good equipment stays dependable when you inspect it, clean it, and replace what is worn — before it fails.



FROM THE BOOK

1. Before a trip: check flashlights and headlamps; test radios and other electronics; verify batteries; inspect knives and multi-tools; confirm water filters are clean and working; inspect cordage for cuts or fraying; make sure the repair kit is complete and that critical gear is easy to reach.
2. After a trip: clean off dirt and debris, dry wet gear completely before you store it, replace used supplies, recharge batteries, repair or replace damaged items, and put everything back where it belongs.
3. Knives: clean and dry after use, keep the blade sharp, oil lightly when appropriate, and store the knife in a sheath or folded closed. Multi-tools: clean joints, lubricate pivots occasionally, and check locking mechanisms.
4. Lights: test them regularly, replace weak batteries, and inspect seals and switches. Store batteries in a cool, dry place, not loose against keys or coins. Remove batteries from equipment going into long-term storage when the manufacturer recommends it.
5. Water filters: clean as the manufacturer directs, backflush if required, protect from freezing, and replace elements as recommended. Cordage: dry it if wet, coil it neatly, and replace damaged sections. Restock the repair kit, including tape, thread, fasteners, and adhesives that may have dried out.
6. Inspect regularly, practice using the gear, and replace worn items before they fail. The goal is not to own the most equipment — it is to know that what you already have will work when you reach for it.

PRACTICE IT

Lay out the gear you actually carry, run through the before-trip checks above, and fix or replace one neglected item (a weak battery, a dull blade, or a frayed line) today.