

SLEEPING BAGS

When you require something to snuggle down for the night in, what do you do?

Do you buy a cheap polyester sleeping bag or an expensive down one? Here are some pointers to help you.

What keeps you warm is the air, heated by your body, trapped in the bag's filling - polyester-based (synthetic) or down "feathers").

Synthetic

Polyester-based fillings are:

Hollofibre - crimped (coiled) polyester with a hole through the middle;

Hollofil - longer lengths of hollofibre, thereby reducing heat loss at the end of strands;

Quallofil - crimped polyester with four holes.

Down

There are various qualities of down used as sleeping bag (and duvet) filling. Man has yet to improve on it for heat retention. Whilst expensive to start

with, down will last a lot longer than synthetic materials, which tend to uncoil with age.

Stuffing

When packing a sleeping bag into its stuff-sac, literally do just that - stuff it in! Folding and rolling not only takes

longer, but will eventually form creases which result in cold-spots.

Storing

When not in use, filled sleeping bags should be stored loosely in a large cotton bag (such as a pillow case), hung up in a wardrobe or laid flat under a bed. Do not leave your bag compressed in the supplied stuff sack. Doing so will shorten the bag's useful life. Fibre-pile bags may be stored in their stuff sacks.

Note that all down and synthetic bags will eventually lose some thermal efficiency after several washes. Using an internal liner and occasionally wiping the outer with a damp sponge will minimise the number of times a sleeping bag has to be washed.

Cleaning

Synthetic bags can be cleaned in a large washing machine or bath using a small amount of mild soap powder or soap flakes (not detergent). Rinse the bag several times and tumble dry on a very low heat. Air and dry thoroughly before storing.

Cleaning a down bag is a time-consuming business that needs to be done carefully. For this reason many

manufacturers and retailers recommend the services of a specialist down cleaning company. If you wish to hand-clean your own bag, contact the manufacturer for detailed advice.

Warning: under no circumstances dry-clean any sleeping bag. The chemicals involved in dry cleaning may damage the bag, and the fumes released are poisonous.

Top Sleeping Bag Tip

A child can use an adult-sized sleeping bag by half turning the bag inside out or by tying off the bag with a belt at the

point where the child's feet reach to. As the child grows taller, the belt can be moved down the bag.