

Shop Smart: Tents

Your tent is your home away from home. Pick your dream dwelling with this explainer.

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TYPE	DESCRIPTION	BEST FOR	BUYING TIPS
NON-FREE-STANDING TENTS OR TARPS 	<p>Minimalist single-wall shelters usually weigh less than 2 pounds and often use trekking poles for support.</p>	<p>Ounce-counters and speed demons willing to give up livability for a lighter pack</p>	<p>These shelters require precise pitches for maximum strength in adverse conditions. If you mostly camp in foul weather and heinous terrain, consider a different design.</p>
DOUBLE-WALL 	<p>Standard backpacking tents include a separate tent body and rain fly. The combination maximizes weatherproofing and breathability.</p>	<p>Anyone and everyone: comfort-prioritizers, over-nighters, and thru-hikers</p>	<p>Set it up in the store and crawl in—make sure it's long enough for your height, tall enough to sit up-right, and has enough room you and your gear.</p>
SINGLE-WALL 	<p>Lighter than double-wall tents, single-wall shelters forego the inner tent body and are fast to set up.</p>	<p>Cold, wet environments and saving weight</p>	<p>Without a mesh inner tent, these shelters lack breathability. Pick a tent with high-low vents to help with condensation. You might have to purchase a vestibule separately.</p>
CAR CAMPING 	<p>These are heavy duty and roomy enough for families, pets, and groups. They also leave space for luxury gear like cots, and often have enough headroom to stand.</p>	<p>Campgrounds, backyards, festivals, and family fun</p>	<p>It's worth paying extra for a more durable tent. Lower-end camping tents are notorious for failure in wind and rain and too often end up in landfills after a few uses.</p>
FOUR-SEASON 	<p>These burly shelters have beefier poles, optimized wind shear, and ample guy-out points, so they won't collapse under snow load or high winds.</p>	<p>Mountaineers, ski tourers, and dedicated winter campers</p>	<p>Vestibule space for cooking and extra floor space to stow gear become higher priorities in winter. When a storm rolls through, you'll need to hunker: Pick a shelter that can harbor you and your entire kit for hours or days.</p>