

Use_Of_The_Barrel_1992.txt

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Roll Out the Barrel
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One of my favourite things, especially for camp, is the versatile, indestructible five gallon (23 L) plastic barrel or pail.

Where can you get plastic barrels? Ask nicely, and your local hamburger-and-fries restaurant will save their pickle barrels for you. Check with your neighbourhood plasterers, too. They often use premixed drywall compound that comes in barrels. Ask the parents of the kids in your section. Some of them are sure to be doing some chore at home that requires material in a barrel. And, remember to get the lid as well.

Clean out the barrel with water and household bleach. Then, leave it in bright sunshine for a day or two, perhaps with some charcoal or kitty litter in it to get rid of any lingering smells. It won't smell any worse than the average Scout after a weekend camp. Now, it's ready to use.

At Camp

Use_Of_The_Barrel_1992.txt

If the barrel originally stored food, you can use it to carry drinking water at camp. If it contained materials like drywall compound, don't keep drinking water in it.

But, talking of water, try this at camp. Paint the outside of a barrel matte black. Fill it with water and leave it out in the sun as a water warmer. It not only saves time and fuel when you need boiling water, but provides warm water for a quick wash of hands and faces before supper (in a separate basin, of course).

To help you do your laundry, build a camp washing machine: a barrel with a toilet plunger through the lid as an agitator. The barrel washing machine is manually (and vigorously) operated and, depending on the operator's enthusiasm can safely clean even delicate garments.

Use plastic barrels for storage. Stash all your camp tools in one place--hand axe, tent stakes, ropes, twine, trowel, brush, clothes pegs, mallet. Or use the barrel to protect your empty lantern and lamp oil in a tightly capped bottle during transport. Or keep together all your camp kitchen items; cooking utensils, plates and bowls, cups and mugs, staples like salt and pepper, dish washing supplies, cutting board, pots and pans, and mixing bowls.

A barrel is also a dry place for your camp fire kit wooden kitchen matches, wax paper (cereal box liners) or candle stubs, kindling, charcoal, and a small grill. And remember to set out a couple of barrels full of water to serve as fire extinguishers.

Use another barrel as a container for your kitchen table -- a roll-up lathe-strip table set on top of two horizontal poles lashed in parallel between two trees. After you've erected the table, use its barrel as a food or drink cooler either stored in

Use_Of_The_Barrel_1992.txt

a stream or covered with a damp cloth in the shade. If you'd rather, use the barrel as a stool to sit at the table in comfort. Or get another barrel and set up a bench at the table with the barrels as bench legs.

On a canoe trip, a tightly sealed barrel is an ideal water- and animal-proof food locker. You might also use one or two sealed barrels as outriggers on your canoe to help you convert it into a sailing craft. Or how about four barrels as raft pontoons? I'll leave the design to you, but be sure to send details to the Leader. And, while you're playing on the water, use a glass-bottomed barrel to look beneath the surface of our ponds and rivers.

Inside and out

Back home, a barrel can be a patrol box that acts as a base for the patrol flag and provides rugged storage for section handbooks, pencils, or note paper. After each patrol decorates their barrel, stack the barrels one on top of the other to build an impressive troop totem pole. And keep a few barrels to organize your games equipment.

You can even use the barrels in games, perhaps as goal posts or bases. Or try the game where one Cub stands on top of a barrel and wields a long stick to deflect a ball thrown at the barrel by the other Cubs arranged in a wide circle around him. A Cub who hits the barrel with the bail swaps places with the Cub on the barrel, and the game continues.

Scouts can use the barrels as jousting pedestals. Set two barrels about two metres apart with a Scout standing on top of each. With a padded staff, each Scout tries to push the other

from his perch.

Venturers at camp can fill a barrel with water and carry it along an obstacle course. A guiding twine threaded through the barrel's handle defines the route they must follow. The objective is to complete the course in the fastest time with the most water left in the barrel. Drilling some holes in the sides and bottom of the barrel adds a little urgency to the exercise. The urgency increases if you poke in more holes than the number of fingers available to the carrying team.

Rovers might try running a weekend camp where campers are limited to the personal gear (including bedrolls) they can pack in one barrel. No backpacks or additional bundles allowed, but food and water are provided by the camp organizers.

At winter camp, build a snow-fort brick-maker. Cut a small hole in the bottom of a barrel. Fill the barrel with snow, then put your hand through the hole in the bottom to push out the snow brick. Stack the bricks to build a fort. Or try ice sculpting. Fill another barrel with water and freeze overnight. Slide out the block of ice and start carving. A light coating of vegetable oil inside the barrel makes it easier to remove the block.

You can improvise snowshoes from barrel lids or use barrels as stilts. One barrel makes a handy booster stand to help you see over parade crowds and will serve as a sand-castle bucket at the beach.

The beat of barrel tom-toms will establish a dramatic atmosphere at your campfire. If you cut the barrels to different lengths, you'll change the tone of each drum. And a barrel makes a fine resonating sound-box for a broom-handle string bass.

Use_Of_The_Barrel_1992.txt

You can use a barrel as a planter or a mini-garden. Use another as a composter. Barrel gardening is perfectly sized for apartment dwellers who have balconies.

Try some hay box cooking. Start your food cooking, then store the closed pot and its contents inside a barrel you've lined with insulating material such as hay or dry leaves to keep in the heat.

And, to repay the supportive parents in your group, offer to organize a winter kit for their car trunk. Assemble in a barrel all the items they might need for a winter roadside emergency; starter cables, windshield scraper, old coat, galoshes, gloves, tire chains, and sand. You provide the barrel and a list of suggested items, they supply the items, and you put everything together.

Half the fun with barrels is dreaming up new ways to use them. Collect a few for your section and figure out your own. You'll recycle the barrels and develop yourself mentally at the same time. And, please remember to share your great ideas in the Leader.

Program Links

Winter Camping 4e; Scoutcraft;
Troop Specialty Badge

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