



So. You've just made a sizeable investment in a quality swag or tent, and you're looking for ways to ensure it stays cared for and protected for as long as possible?

The first thing you should consider is a groundsheet – sometimes also referred to as a footprint, ground tarp, or floor saver. Call them what you will, but regardless they're a crucial piece of camping kit. For the sake of this blog, we'll call them groundsheets.

Groundsheets exist to protect the floor of your tent against everything that nature throws at it, from the ground up! An insurance policy, if you will. You're much better off financially to replace a groundsheet every so often than your entire Black Wolf Turbo or MSR Hubba Hubba!

They're often not as cheap as you'd hope, but it certainly does soothe the frustration when faced with damage, in that you only need to replace the groundsheet as opposed to the entire tent or swag.



Groundsheets can do a whole lot more than just protecting the underside of your tent or swag. Image: Oztent

Benefits of a Groundsheet

Groundsheets also assist with waterproofing your tent or swag floor, act as a barrier in wet conditions, preserve the vegetation underneath your swag or tent, act as a wind or weather break, help to prevent condensation, and offer an emergency shelter when needed.



There are many benefits to owning a groundsheet. Image: Coleman

Regulations of Groundsheets

Believe it or not, there are some rules around the use of groundsheets – especially in privately operated caravan parks.

The most common is that groundsheets in some camping and caravan parks can only be made of open-weave shade cloth fabric. This is to allow the grass to breathe and minimise damage. No one enjoys a dusty campsite, and grass does require some upkeep to be maintained.

Some caravan and camping parks are now also asking that you lift or even move your groundsheets (as well as the tent or swag) at frequent intervals, to help maintain the health of the grass.



Mesh groundsheets will be necessary for some places to protect the grass. Image: Black Wolf

Options:

Made-to-Fit

These are groundsheets designed by manufacturers to specifically fit under their compatible tents. In most instances, the groundsheet also fits underneath the awning. Usually made with mesh fabric, some are still only available in solid fabric.



The major benefit here is that you can purchase with confidence, assured of a perfect fit without hassle.

Some of the tents in the current range at Snowys have made-to-fit groundsheets available separately include:

- [Black Wolf Turbo Tents](#)
- [Oztent RV Tents](#)
- [Zempire Aerodome Tents](#)
- [Most Hiking Tents](#)



*The Oztent [RV1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#) and [5](#) are models that have made to fit groundsheets available.
Image: Oztent*

Mesh Style

These groundsheets aren't made to fit, but rather available in a variety of sizes. This can be a challenge in establishing what groundsheet fits, but also provides some freedom to set it up as you wish.

Made from a heavier-duty shade cloth material, the major benefit to this design is that it allows the grass underneath to breathe, while also allowing moisture, dirt, and debris to fall through. This ensures that the groundsheet won't start pooling if it rains. They're also comfortable to walk on.

The only real challenges with these styles are that they aren't as durable as solid fabrics, a little more expensive, and can be hard to clean.

Currently, there are 3 mesh options available in a range of sizes:

- A durable and almost indestructible [C-Gear Multimat](#)
- The popular and affordable [Oztrail Ultramesh](#) option
- The versatile and tougher-than-turf [L-Shaped Multimat by C-Gear](#)

These are not made for specific tents, but come in a wide range of sizes to suit many popular tents. They're also commonly used for awning floors, under kids' pools, as windbreaks and sails, and more. C-Gear's L-Shaped Multimat is both reversible and rotatable, particularly ideal for use under a 270 or 180 4WD awning.

The [Oztrail Ultramesh](#) provides many of the same benefits as the purpose-made footprints, but at a lower price. As for the [C-Gear Multimat](#) - heck, they can be used as helipads!



A mesh tarp is probably the most versatile option for a groundsheet. Image: Coleman Australia



Made from a heavier-duty shade cloth material, mesh groundsheets allow moisture, dirt, and debris to fall through. Image: Paul Goodsell



Solid Style

Solid styles aren't made to fit, but also come in a range of sizes to suit. These aren't as popular as mesh due to restrictions now placed upon them in caravan and camping parks. The pros of the solid style groundsheets include that they offer more protection, compared to mesh. They're also lower in cost, and may provide insulation against the cold ground. While being a little easier to clean and providing a solid defense, solid groundsheets don't allow for grass to breathe, can increase the chance of condensation and, worse still, will collect water underneath your tent floor when it rains (as opposed allowing it to fall through). The latter is especially true if you select one that is too large.

At Snowys, the most common style of solid groundsheet available is the humble and multi-purposeful tarp. Nothing is more versatile than a quality tarp (or 'tarpaulin'). You can use one to waterproof the gear in your trailer or roof rack, then throw it under the tent while you camp. Tarps are available in all sorts of shapes, sizes, and thicknesses.



Solid heavy duty tarps are more hardwearing and offer more protection. Image: Ben Trewren

DIY Groundsheets

The last option for a groundsheet is to get a little creative with items you may already have! You might have some extra shade cloth, building materials such as Tyvek or plastic, Sisalation (used for insulation), disposed-of curtains, or old pool covers. There are a few possibilities here for you to recycle what you already own. Hikers could consider using items such as an emergency blanket from their first aid kit too.



There are a few possibilities in recycling what you already own. Image: Coleman



A great option is to re-purpose what you already have as a groundsheet. Image: Ben Trewren

Measuring Up for a Groundsheet

A question we get asked a lot here at Snowys is, 'will this groundsheet fit my tent?'

So, here's how we figure out whether a groundsheet will work:

1. What Area do You Want to Cover?

You need to first think about what space you want to cover with a groundsheet. The base of the swag or tent is a given, but would you like some protection throughout the awning area(s), or beyond the perimeter of the tent itself?

2. Check Your Tent's Dimensions

Once you've decided on the area you want to cover, look at the external dimensions of your tent. We list these in the 'specifications' column on each of our products pages, as well as in the tent floorplan (usually the last image). This will give you an idea of measurements for the area size you want to cover.

Once you've seen the sizes available, determine whether you'll be able to acquire the



coverage you're after with one groundsheet or if you'll need two or more together.

3. Making It Fit

It's unlikely you'll get the perfect fit. You can opt for a slightly smaller size that doesn't give complete coverage - this makes it easy initially, but in the long run it leaves your tent exposed to damage.

Alternatively, you could choose a slightly larger size to provide complete coverage. However, you'll likely need to make some alterations.



You may need to use more than one tarp side by side to achieve a good fit for your shelter.

Image: Ben Trewren

Can I Alter my Groundsheet?

We recommend against altering the size of the groundsheet. You'll risk cutting it crooked, lose valuable coverage for other uses, and remove the reinforced edging (which will cause fraying).

Rather, we'd encourage you to fold the excess underneath the tent, or allow the excess tarp to exceed your tent and peg through the groundsheet.

Pegging through the groundsheet is a common alteration - but to ensure you get it right, here are our tips:



Consider the position of your tent, make the hole, and then reinforce it to prevent fraying.

Image: Ben Trewren

How to Properly Peg Through a Groundsheet:

- We recommend laying your groundsheet out, then placing your tent on top of the groundsheet as desired.
- From there, look to peg out the tent as you normally would - but on this occasion, penetrating through the groundsheet.
- Take your time to ensure you only need one attempt at each peg, and only peg what is required.
- Important: you may need to reinforce each hole with tape or brass eyelets to stop it from fraying or continuing to rip. You can do this by using a heavy-duty tape, an adhesive glue, or stitching strong thread around each hole.
- It's also worth noting on your groundsheet where the front/rear is, so that your tent and holes align next time.

Ben and Lauren discuss groundsheets in [Episode 69](#) of the [Snowys Camping Show](#):

If you have any further questions about protecting your tent, fire away in the comments!