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Ben and Lauren's friendship is built on a solid foundation of understanding, patience, and compassion.

Put it this way: if their friendship was a tent, some may say their tough PVC flooring is robust enough to not require the added protection of a groundsheet...

In this episode of the Snowys Camping Show, our gear gurus discuss the necessity - or lack thereof - of groundsheets in both camping and hiking tents. From mesh that defies the dust and debris to tarps that double as wind breaks, Ben and Lauren stay grounded in their disagreements and tackle this dialogue from the ground up!

Mentioned in this Episode:

Podcasts:

[Ep8 - Unexpected Wind & Rain When Camping](#)

[Ep38 - Awnings, Shelters & Shades for Summer](#)

[Ep59 - Shelters for Rainy Days](#)

Products:

[Dome Tents](#)

[Touring Tents](#)

[Coleman Instant Swagger 3P Tent](#)

[Tarps and Matting](#)

[Supex Caravan Annex Floor Matting](#)

[C-Gear Multi Camp Mat](#)

[OZtrail Ultra Blue Poly Tarp](#)

[OZtrail Ultramesh Tarp](#)

[Footprints](#)

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[Tent Pegs](#)

[Gazebos](#)

[Sleeping Mats](#)

[Hiking Tents](#)

[MSR Hubba Hubba 2 Hiking Tent](#)

[MSR Universal 2P Footprint](#)

[OZtrail EVA Foam Floor Mat](#)



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Lauren's Opinion...

Having camped in many adverse environments and weather conditions, she maintains that she's yet to require a groundsheet. In Lauren's view, a groundsheet is yet another expense for an unnecessary addition to your camp kit.

That said, Ben points out that covering the ground beneath the awning is still a good idea, where a groundsheet is often necessary. In her camping career, Lauren has owned a number of standard dome tents, the Coleman Montana 12 CV Family tent, and a canvas touring tent; each featured heavy-duty PVC flooring, and - aside from the odd patch - she is yet to experience issues or identify damage after 30 years. Likewise, the floor of the Coleman Instant Swagger tent also boasts sufficient strength and durability, though instead a woven, tarp-like material construction.



The need for a groundsheet depends on the set-up.



Do You Need a Groundsheet?

The primary objective of a groundsheet is to protect the tent floor. In some instances though, a tent's flysheet exposed to UV can become more damaged than many of its flooring components. That said, Ben clarifies that a groundsheet is best used in areas of high foot traffic, such as inside the door where campers are consistently stepping and applying body weight. On harder grounds such as the solid, sunbaked soil of outback Australia, or gravelly terrain, a groundsheet is also beneficial for protecting against wear and tear. Nonetheless, most tent floors are still likely to see a long life without a groundsheet given their high durability.

Another benefit of a groundsheet is how it assists with pack-up, ensuring the tent floor isn't wet or dusty when it comes time to disassemble. That said, Lauren maintains that this can be avoided simply by using a trusty dustpan and brush. As well as being only a minor inconvenience, she appreciates the ritual associated with monitoring the state of the tent floor and keeping it under control. Plus, a groundsheet is just another piece to pack up - and just as unclean as your tent floor would have been without it anyway. Even so, Ben has never fussed with cleaning his groundsheet - he simply folds it as is and slides it into this wheel bag.

Lauren admits there could be a stronger argument for use of an annex mat within an annex, given its handiness as a non-permeable layer limiting the build-up of moisture. This can go both between the tent floor and the ground, and on top of the tent floor itself; the caveat being the style of camping you're partaking in.

It's wise to note too that some campgrounds and sites necessitate the use of a groundsheet, to protect their grass and aid in maintaining their terrain.

Groundsheet Types

Available in various shapes, sizes, and options depending on setup, the two groundsheet types are those of a mesh or shade cloth, and a solid tarp. The most common has a mesh construction, ideally fitted beneath the doorway and extended to under the awning.

Ben owns an Oztent groundsheet specific to the Oztent RV which, while durable and visually appealing, has been cut to the same footprint as the tent itself and isn't entirely necessary for all set-ups. Instead, the same effect can be achieved with material measuring only two-thirds of that length to simply cover the doorway, allowing the pre-existing heavy-duty PVC tent flooring to protect the inside. This eradicates the excess, unnecessary fabric of a fitted groundsheet.



Ben's groundsheet is cut to suit the footprint of the Oztent RV. Credit: Snowys Outdoors

Hiking tents tend to require a more solid groundsheet, given the harder nature of the grounds encountered. However, most camping tents suit mesh groundsheets, which both allow for dust to fall through to keep the area tidy, and provide a more comfortable surface to walk on. Alternatively, a 'footprint' is placed beneath the tent itself and usually matched to its shape (including the vestibule areas). This is the case for the BlackWolf Turbo tents, Oztent RV / RX series, and Coleman varieties. Footprints for the latter are small, though adequate to cover the front door area where campers more often place their feet. Fit to the size of your tent, a benefit of a footprint is how it eradicates the concern of securing the guy rope or pegs. Their edges also tend not to protrude from beneath the tent base, conveniently allowing for rain to run down and underneath the tent as opposed to catching on the footprint and ponding in the centre. In some cases, customers simply pay extra to have the footprint custom-cut to their tent.

What Size of Groundsheet is Best?

This is different for every adventurer, as it depends on the area you aim to cover.

Ben and Lauren first suggest asking yourself why you may want or need a groundsheet. If it's solely to protect the tent floor, simply measure the floor (e.g. the living area) and buy as close to those dimensions as what's available. Depending on how large or tedious the space, another idea is to buy two footprints, attach them to each other, and tailor them both to cover your space. For example, between one and two long sheets is often enough to cover the space beneath a Gazebo.

It's also wise to consider where you *don't* need a groundsheet. For example, the tent floor



won't need protection from foot traffic in the areas where there's a sleeping mat, or in areas where campers are mostly stationary or asleep. Plus, in determining the size of your groundsheet, consider whether there may be a dual use for it - for example, a tarp shelter or a wind break.

While both mesh and tarp are suitable, mesh material as a wind break allows a slight breeze, lessens the wind pressure, and prevents the billowing sail often typical of a solid tarp. In Ep8 - Unexpected Wind & Rain When Camping, Ep38 - Awnings, Shelters & Shades for Summer, and Ep59 - Shelters for Rainy Days, Ben and Lauren discuss various methods in which shelters can be applied, including the use of groundsheets and tarps. Ultimately, keeping more than one groundsheet in the camp kit allows more versatility and room to move with how each can be applied.

A large groundsheet with a moat surrounding a tent for the annex can often require pegging through the groundsheet itself. While the position of the holes may vary based on how your groundsheet is placed each time, frequently puncturing holes can nonetheless damage and deteriorate it over time. To prevent this, Ben and Lauren recommend fitting the groundsheet with eyelets.

Groundsheets for Hiking Tents

Commonly referred to as a 'footprint', these are more beneficial for hiking tents due to their lighter-weight structure. In turn, the groundsheet itself is lighter in construction, which keeps pack weight to a minimum. Many footprints, such as that for the MSR Hubba Hubba, can be set up in various ways - including as a groundsheet with the flysheet over the tent's inner. Like most groundsheets, a hiking tent groundsheet is ideally used in the high-traffic areas of hiking tents. When hiking, Ben utilises his insulative, multi-use, silver space blanket as a groundsheet, emergency shelter, windbreak, and a surface to sleep on.

Generally speaking, hiking tent or not, interlocking EVA foam mats are another option - though in wetter conditions, these can become sodden and difficult to maintain. Alternatively, non-stick mesh annex mats are soft on the foot; Lauren admits she is now considering this as a flooring component of her camp set-up.

Are you a groundsheet user? If so, what size is yours, and what's your set-up?

Thanks for listening, tune in again for next week's episode!

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If you have any questions for Ben and Lauren, make sure you head over to our Facebook group and let us know as we'd love to hear from you.

Catch you out there!