

Buying A New Camping Tent? Features of Camping Tents

What Features To Look For When Buying A New Tent

From [David Sweet](#), former About.com Guide

When shopping for a new camping tent, look for features that will let you enjoy the use of that tent for many years to come. Know your budget and decide ahead of time how much you can afford to spend. I'm not necessarily advocating that you buy the most expensive tent available in your price range, but it will help you know what your choices are. Once you know how much you can spend it's time to analyze the features of the camping tents in that price range. Let's begin by looking at the most important feature of a tent:

How big should a tent be?

If you're not planning to backpack or canoe camp, the size and weight of a tent doesn't matter so long as it fits in your vehicle. Tent capacity is based on the square footage and how many standard sleeping bags will fit in it. For example, a 2-person tent will accommodate just two people. There will be very little elbow room or extra storage space. You'll find a 4-person tent will be more comfortable for two people, and you will have space to spread out and store your gear too. For a family of four I recommend a 6-person tent. As a rule-of-thumb buy a tent that has a capacity rated two people higher than the number that will actually be using it.

You may want to check out the multi-room tents. If you're camping with the kids, a 2-room tent provides a little privacy. Multi-room tents come in 2-room styles, where the rooms are separated by an inside tent wall with a zippered door. There are 3-room styles that are like the 2-room ones but with an added screen room, which is nice for changing wet or dirty clothes before entering the other rooms, and which are great for setting up chairs or a table to use in case it rains. There are also 2-room tents, which have just one large sleeping area and an attached screen room. Tents with screen rooms attached are great for storing gear outside the sleeping area.

What tent features should I look for?

- **A tent with aluminum poles.**

Tents may come with fiberglass poles, but they are fragile and more likely to break. If you bend or break a pole, most camping stores sell replacements or repair kits.

- **A tent with an adequate rainfly.**

The rainfly is your tent's umbrella. The bigger the better. Look for a fly that comes well down the sides of the tent rather than just across the top. Rainflies are waterproof. Tent walls are water-repellant.

- **A tent with folded seams and double stitching.**

If you can pull the material on either side of a seam and see through the stitches, this tent will leak. Be sure to use seam sealer on all seams.

- **A tent with a one piece tub floor.**

The floor should be made of waterproof material, and it should come a few inches up the sides before it is sown to the tent walls. No seam in the floor means there is no place for water to seep in.

- **A tent with adequate guy lines.**

Tent walls, and sometimes rainflies, have loops sown near the middle. These loops are used to attach guy lines that pull out the walls so that they are taught. It's impossible to sleep in a tent that's flapping in the wind.

- **A tent with good-sized stake loops.**

There should be loops at the base of your tent in every corner and at the center of each side. These loops need to be big enough to accommodate the large plastic stakes sold in camping stores. Material stake loops are preferred. Plastic ones might break when you hammer in the stakes.

- **A tent that uses noseem meshing.**

This is the best material for keeping those nasty little bugs out.

- **A tent with a roof vent.**

Opening this at night will help create some air circulation and eliminate condensation inside your tent.

- **A tent with heavy-duty zippers.**

You'll be in and out of your tent a lot so you want zippers that will hold up to frequent use.

Additional Tips To Prolong The Life Of Your Tent

Never store food in or around your tent, and never eat in your tent. The smell of food alone will tempt critters to tear into your tent to get at it. If your campsite has a picnic table, eat there and store food in your car. If you have a tent with an attached screen room, it's okay to eat there, but be sure to thoroughly clean up afterwards or you will be bothered by ants, bugs, and other critters. If you camp in an area that is prone to pests, consider buying a separate screen room to set up as an eating area.

If your tent comes with a ground cloth, use it. These footprint tarps are made slightly smaller than the base of your tent. Their purpose is to help protect

the tent floor from sticks, stones, and rough spots. They also help to keep ground water from seeping into the tent. You can use a regular tarp, but be sure to tuck the edges under the tent so that rain doesn't run down the tent walls onto the tarp and consequently collects under the tent.

When you return from a camping trip, set your tent up in the yard and air it out. This will help prevent mold and mildew.

Do not store your tent in a stuff sack. Store it loosely in a dry ventilated area. Use the stuff sack to pack your tent when going to and from the campground.

Check the links below for more tips.

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