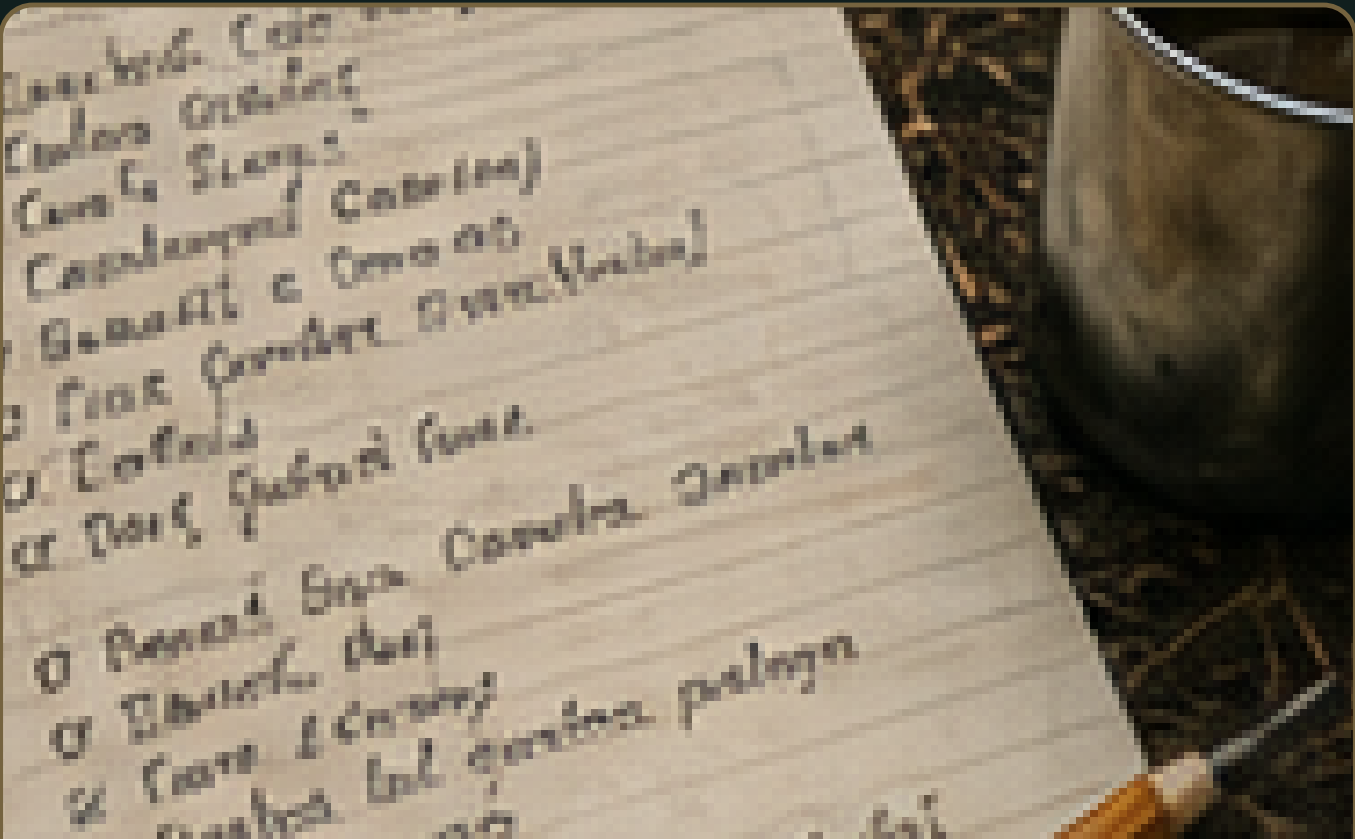


ENERGY BUDGET AND DAILY CAMP SYSTEMS GUIDE

Calorie-return planning, task triage, route design, work-rest cycles, inspections and operational records.



16

MANAGE

ENERGY

WIN

THE

LONG

MANAGE ENERGY. WIN THE LONG GAME.

SYSTEM PRIORITIES

START WITH THE SYSTEM

Spend energy only where it protects life or produces repeatable return

Long-duration survival is a budget problem. Shelter, water, wood, food, maintenance and recovery compete for limited calories and daylight. A good camp converts repeated work into routines, infrastructure and shorter routes.

1 Core principles

- Prioritize threats before improvements: exposure, injury, water, unstable fire, wildlife and critical equipment failure.
- Measure repeated tasks by time, distance, load and result; memory underestimates routine costs.
- Build infrastructure only when it reduces future work more than it costs to create and maintain.
- Group trips and tasks by route, weather window and tool setup to reduce transitions.
- Preserve sleep, food, hydration and recovery because exhausted judgment wastes more calories than it saves.

A beautiful camp that consumes every day is a monument to overhead.

2 First-hour priorities

- Create a camp map with shelter, firewood, water, food work, storage, latrine and hazard zones.
- Log one baseline day: minutes, trips, distance, loads and outcome for every major task.
- Identify the largest recurring cost and redesign that system first.
- Set minimum daily standards for water, fuel, food effort, drying, maintenance and health checks.
- Create stop rules for construction, travel and low-probability food pursuits.

Avoid false precision. Estimates are useful when they compare options consistently, not when they pretend to measure exact metabolism with a pencil.

FIELD RULE

Every major task should answer one of three questions: What threat does it control? What repeatable return does it create? What will make me stop?

TASK VALUE MATRIX

CHOOSE DELIBERATELY

Task value matrix

Score tasks before starting, especially late in the day. High urgency and high repeatability deserve first claim on energy.

Task class	Examples	When to do it	Stop condition
Immediate safety	Shelter leak, severe cold, injury, unsafe water, wildlife breach	Now; suspend lower-value work	Threat controlled or professional help activated.
Daily sustainment	Water, essential fuel, food handling, sanitation, health checks	Scheduled minimum every day	Daily reserve and clean system secured.
High-return food	Known fishing window, active trapline check, ripe patch	When evidence and conditions align	Time or energy limit reached; return falls below threshold.
Preventive maintenance	Drying, edge care, line inspection, shelter tension	Before minor degradation becomes failure	Critical gear restored and documented.
Infrastructure	Wood rack, path, bench, drainage, storage	When payoff repeats across many days	Expected future savings no longer exceed build cost.
Comfort improvement	Decoration, extra space, low-use furniture	Only after margins are secure	Any core system or recovery need becomes underfunded.
Exploration	New food area, fuel source or route	With a hypothesis, map, turnaround and reserve	Evidence fails, weather changes or return margin closes.

Decision note: Add a confidence score. A high theoretical return with weak evidence should rank below a modest, reliable daily system.

DAILY OPERATING RHYTHM

REPEATABLE BEATS HEROIC

Daily operating rhythm

Routines protect cognition. The sequence should reveal threats early, use weather windows and end with tomorrow prepared.

1

MORNING STATUS CHECK

Assess body, sleep, weather, shelter, fire, water, food inventory, wildlife sign and critical gear before committing to travel.

2

SET THREE PRIORITIES

Choose one safety or sustenance task, one food task and one maintenance task. Everything else is optional.

3

BATCH MOVEMENT

Combine water, fuel, inspection and observation routes while preserving clean and dirty workflows.

4

USE THE WEATHER WINDOW

Schedule drying, fishing, cutting, travel and preservation when wind, precipitation, light and temperature favor them.

5

CLOSE THE CAMP

Refill water and fuel, secure food, dry gear, inspect systems, record results and stage the morning restart.

ENERGY DECISIONS IN THE LONG GAME

ADAPT BEFORE CONDITIONS FORCE IT

Energy decisions in the long game

The same task can be wise in one context and wasteful in another. Judge timing, probability, repeatability and recovery cost.

1 Shelter versus food

- Fix leaks, drainage and dangerous instability first.
- Stop cosmetic building once sleep is dry and wind-protected.
- Shift to food when shelter improvements have diminishing returns.
- Use bad-weather periods for indoor maintenance.
- Track whether construction reduces daily fuel and drying costs.

2 Firewood economics

- Measure trips and burn rate.
- Process sizes that match actual fire use.
- Build covered storage only to the level needed.
- Use saw, axe and routes that minimize handling.
- Do not burn premium dry wood for avoidable open-air waste.

3 Food pursuit threshold

- Estimate probability, travel, setup, wait and recovery cost.
- Favor repeated evidence and known feeding windows.
- Use a hard turnaround time.
- Record calories or meals, not just sightings.
- Suspend methods that repeatedly fail to cover their labor.

4 Recovery day

- Maintain water, food safety, shelter and essential fire.
- Reduce heavy cutting and long travel.
- Repair feet, hands, clothing and sleep debt.
- Use low-cost observation and camp maintenance.
- Resume workload based on function, not guilt.

FAILURE
 MODES
 AND
 CORRECTIONS

DIAGNOSE
 THE
 SYSTEM

Failure
 modes
 and
 corrections

Energy systems fail through hidden repetition: extra trips, poor storage, unfinished tasks, constant relighting, scattered tools and construction without a payoff date.

Failure signal	Likely cause	Best correction
Day is full but core work is unfinished	Too many transitions, no priorities or comfort projects	Set three priorities, batch routes and defer optional work.
Firewood demand keeps rising	Shelter leakage, inefficient fire, wet fuel or oversized heated space	Improve envelope, fuel storage and fire purpose before cutting more.
Food effort produces little	Weak evidence, excessive travel or poor timing	Set ROI thresholds and redirect to reliable methods.
Gear failures repeat	No inspection rhythm or temporary repairs forgotten	Create daily and weekly maintenance lists with owners and dates.
Sleep and judgment decline	Work extends too late, cold system weak or recovery ignored	Protect evening closeout and schedule recovery before errors multiply.
Camp layout causes constant walking	Zones placed by convenience rather than flow	Move high-frequency functions closer while preserving sanitation and wildlife spacing.

FIELD CARD, RED FLAGS AND SOURCES

CARRY THE STANDARD

Daily energy budget and closeout card

A well-run camp turns yesterday's work into today's margin. A poorly run camp asks for the same payment every morning.

FIELD CHECKLIST

- ☐ Body status, sleep and injuries assessed.
- ☐ Weather and daylight window reviewed.
- ☐ Shelter, fire, water and wildlife threats checked.
- ☐ Three priorities written before optional tasks.
- ☐ Routes batched and turnaround times set.
- ☐ Food pursuits tied to evidence and ROI threshold.
- ☐ Heavy work paired with hydration, food and rest.
- ☐ Tools staged and returned to defined storage.
- ☐ Drying and preservation windows used.
- ☐ Water, fuel and food secured before dark.
- ☐ Results and failures recorded.
- ☐ Tomorrow's first task staged before sleep.

STOP / REASSESS

Persistent dizziness, weakness, confusion, injury or inability to recover overnight.

Core shelter, water or food-safety work is deferred for construction or exploration.

Travel continues without turnaround time, map or weather margin.

Firewood or water demand increases for several days without system diagnosis.

Decision-making becomes impulsive, hopeless or unusually rigid.

AUTHORITATIVE STARTING POINTS

National Park Service - trip planning
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/healthandsafety/trip-planning-guide.htm>

National Weather Service
<https://www.weather.gov/safety/>

CDC - physical activity and heat
<https://www.cdc.gov/heat-health/>

HISTORY - Alone series overview
<https://www.history.com/shows/alone>

Energy needs and medical tolerance vary substantially. This planning guide is not nutrition or medical advice. Persistent decline, illness or injury requires professional assessment and may require evacuation.