

## \*The Alpha tent\*

Everyone probably has some old shock-corded tent poles laying around from old torn up dome tents, so gather them up and use em!

What you need to make an *Alpha Tent* is two flexible shock corded poles that are a total of 111 inches long, and you'll need 4 red electrical wire nuts (The kind with "wings" on the side work best). NOTE: I use the Military RipStop Ponchos... the rubbery Ponchos are a different size, I don't know the dimensions for those ponchos.

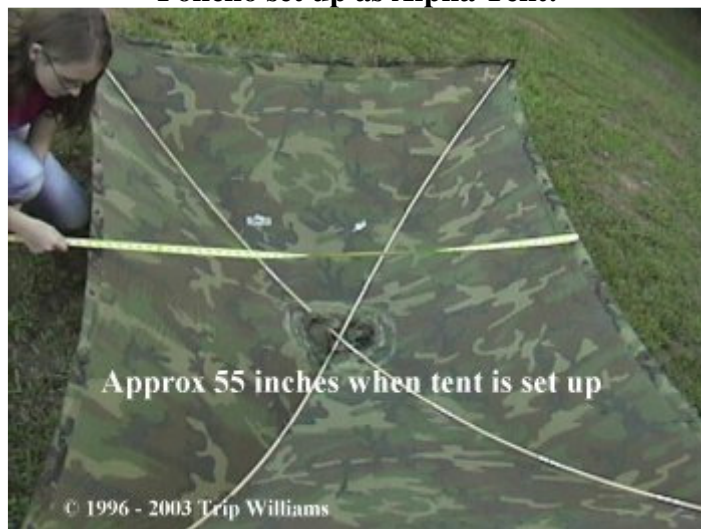
MANY people have written over the years to find out the dimensions of the Poncho I use. At the request of the forum users over at Packpacker.com I drug out the Alpha Tent and updated the photo's some.

**Poncho laid out flat:**





**Poncho set up as Alpha Tent:**



The inside center height when set up as an Alpha Tent is approx. 23 inches.

As for the Poles, I prefer THIN Aluminum shock corded poles (Cheaply available in any lengths from Easton), but thin fiberglass ones work just as well. If you do decide to cut old poles yourself, unstring your little poles, and cut each one till it is about one foot to 18 inches long ...cut them all the same length, and don't cut the end with the female socket, you'll need it to fit the other poles in as normal. At this point, PRE-PLANNING is crucial. While figuring what length to cut all your poles, remember that the TOTAL assembled length must be 111 inches, you lose a few inches when you stick the male end of each pole into the female socket, so figure accordingly. I like my poles to be around 13 inches long when collapsed, but your poles may have to be a different length depending on the depths of your pole sockets.



Again, Make SURE your poles end up being a total of 111 inches long when assembled. Take a red wire nut and drill a hole through the end. Put one on each end of your finished 111 inch pole. Now run your elastic shock-cord through the whole assembly as normal, wire nuts and all. (see pic below for how the wire nuts go on...)



Make a total of two tent poles as described above.

When you have your two 111 inch poles with wire nuts on each end, place one wire nut into the grommet in the poncho's corner, then run the pole across the poncho to the opposite corner (It will bend WAY over to one side at this point). Do the same thing with the second pole, corner to opposite corner. Now, push down on the poles and move them so that the poles cross in the middle of the poncho where the hood hole is. It should form a long "X" that crosses under the hood, and the tent should pop up into a long, low, sturdy dome. Sometimes I stick a long bread-tie where the poles cross to help hold it together when it's going to be used in the "boat" configuration or picked up and moved a lot.

When the poles cross in the middle you should have a very sturdy, self standing "mini dome tent" that is warm, water proof, IR proof, and VERY VERY hard to see when set in the woods, you'll stumble over it even with night vision, so be careful where you set it up. People (and animals) run into mine all the time because it's so hard to see.

Just lay out your sleeping pad, lift the dome up and place it over you like a big umbrella, adjust the hood hole for ventilation if needed, or close the hood if it's raining or cold (Be sure the hood is OUT of the tent, not hanging down on the inside). I carry 4 light aluminum gutter nails and use them to stake down the light tent in high winds (stake it through the grommets from the inside of the tent), but usually even the highest "normal" wind simply makes the little dome squat harder against the ground. This little tent is also MUCH warmer than a regular dome tent.

There is plenty of room in this little tent to roll over, stretch out or lift your knees up, depending on your size, you can even crouch in it and get some equipment under it. This little "tent" is VERY versatile as you will see below.





You can lift up one side of the "tent" and prop up the two lifted corners with sticks for use as a lean-too.

You can close the hood tight and turn the tent upside down, toss your equipment in it and use it as a mini canoe for river crossings (YOU can't get in it, but you can push your equipment in it while you swim)... No more sinking, bulky, balky, air filled "poncho rafts" (You military guys and gals know what I mean!)



You can use it as a hunting blind either by laying prone under it, or by lifting the long ends up slightly and propping them up with sticks, and use it to sit under.

The uses are limited only by your imagination. This little thing is light, sets up in under a minute, takes down and stows away in under a minute, and can be lifted up and carried elsewhere when you find out that you picked a thorn bush (or the biggest rock in the area) to lay on.

This isn't designed to be a replacement for a regular tent, but if you have to move fast and light, or you find yourself in an emergency, it'll be with you any time you have your poncho.

If you aren't sure what length poles you need, you'll have to do what I did... put a cap on one end of a set of poles and place it into the corner grommet. Then go to the other diagonal corner and bow the pole down into the poncho to whatever curve seems to give you the best height-to-length ratio... mark that spot on the pole and cut the pole there, add an end cap to the cut end and then make the other set of poles the same total length as the first set.

Different Ponchos stretch differently, so you may want to make sure your poles are the right length for your poncho tent using the method above BEFORE you cut your poles. The above "trial and error" method also works for small tarps (which can give you a better height-to-length ratio).... just remember, the bigger the tent, the more unstable it is.

As usual, feel free to use this idea for your own personal use, but don't try to make money off our ideas...

*A guy named Trip Williams wrote this hot-to and took all the pictures. I found it on-line and copied it into HTML so that if that website went down there would still be a document.*