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5 Easy Steps To Packing Your Backpack Perfectly

There's nothing quite as exciting as pulling out your backpack to start packing for an upcoming trip. But it can be stressful when you look at your packing list and wonder how you're going to pack everything. We've done the research for you, so sit back and look at these 5 easy steps to pack your hiking backpack!



HOW TO PACK A BACKPACK IN 5 STEPS

So, you've got all your gear ready for the big hiking adventure, but now you need to figure out how to pack it all in a practical manner. Here are our top tips.

1. Find the Right Backpack for You

There are various considerations when choosing a hiking backpack since most hikers generally carry the same pack for years. When trying to establish what type of backpack to get, always take the following into account:

- **Size:** The pack should fit your body.
- **Volume:** Get a pack with enough capacity for your requirements
- **Multi-Day Hikes vs Day Hikes:** There's no need to get a multi-day pack if you mainly go on single-day hikes (and vice versa).

If you need any help choosing the right hiking backpack, take a look at this [helpful guide](#).

2. Get the Weight Right

Packing is one thing, but keep in mind that your body is only meant to carry a certain amount of weight, depending on the type of hike you're going on.

- **Multi-Day Hike:** Your backpack shouldn't weigh more than 20 – 25% of your body weight (If you weigh 80kg, your pack shouldn't weigh more than 16kg – 20kg).
- **One-Day or Overnight Hike:** Your backpack shouldn't weigh more than 10-15% of your body weight (So, if you weigh 80kg, your pack should weigh 8 – 12 kg).

3. Know What You Need to Pack

You need to know a few things when packing for your hike. First, what you pack depends largely on the location. For instance, are you going to hike in the mountains, the desert, or the bush?

This answer will prompt you to consider the weather in the area so that you know which clothes to pack. For example, will it be hot, cold, wet, or could you even encounter snow?

Next up, you'll want to establish how readily available water will be on your hike. Knowing this will help you know whether there will be opportunities to fill up your water bottle or water bladder at overnight accommodation. If not, it's always vital to know whether you'll have to rely on streams or rivers where you'll have to use a water filter or water tablets.

Do some research to determine how far you'll be from shops or other facilities. Of course, it's always important to know this in case of an emergency, but it's also good to know how far you'll be from shops if you forget to pack something.

4. Know What to Put Where

Pack your backpack with these tips to keep it balanced and organised:

- Pack any heavy gear towards the back lining of the pack to keep heavy items against your back.
- Pack light gear towards the front of your backpack.
- Keep the items you'll need to use often at the top part of your pack, like your map, snacks, and camera.
- Place items you'll use less frequently, like your sleeping bag, at the bottom.
- Pack the side pockets before the main body of your hiking pack.
- Always put the bulky and lighter items first, like your sleeping bag.
- Never pack any sharp objects close to your back. There's nothing worse than setting off on a trail only to discover that something hard or sharp is pushing into your back.
- If you're expecting bad weather, ensure that waterproof and warm tops are easily accessible.
- A well-loaded pack will feel balanced when resting on your hips and won't shift or sway while hiking.

5. Divide Your Pack Into Zones

There are generally five different zones to a hiking backpack. Knowing what goes where will make your outdoor experience much more enjoyable.

Bottom of Pack Zone

You'll want to pack the bulky items in this section that you won't need before making camp. These include:

- Sleeping bag (some packs have a bottom compartment intended for a sleeping bag)
- Sleeping pad (especially if it rolls up small)
- Additional clothing layers or clothes you'll be sleeping in
- Camp shoes (usually comfortable slops)

Packing this soft gear at the bottom area of your backpack will create a bit of an internal shock-absorption system for both your back and pack.

Centre of Pack Zone

Pack all heavy, dense gear you won't need to access during your hike in this section. These include:

- Your hiking meals (don't pack your snacks here)
- A cooking pot and eating utensils

- Small gas stove
- Water reservoir

Packing heavier items in this part of the backpack promotes a stable centre of gravity to direct the load downwards instead of backwards (into your back). When heavy gear gets packed too low, it will result in your backpack sagging. Conversely, if you place these items too high, you'll feel top-heavy, and it will feel as if your bag wants to tip over.

If you're concerned about bulkier gear shifting around in your backpack, consider wrapping some of your softer items around it. Also, use these softer or lighter items to stuff any obvious gaps to create a buffer between the larger items and your water reservoir. You can use some of these light options:

- Extra clothing
- Parts of your tent
- Rainfly

Top of Pack Zone

Your bulky trail essentials work well in the top section of your backpack:

- Insulated jacket
- Fleece jacket and pants
- Rain jacket
- [First aid kit](#)
- Water filter or water purifier
- [Toilet supplies](#) (these include a trowel, toilet paper, and a bag for used toilet paper if necessary)
- If you're expecting stormy weather conditions, you can also stash your tent at the top section of your pack to allow quick access to shelter.

Pockets

Packs differ in what they provide. For example, some have lid pockets, while others have front pockets, side pockets and hip belt pockets. These pockets are extremely handy to help you keep these smaller essentials organised:

- Map
- GPS
- Compass
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Lip balm

- Snacks
- Insect repellent
- Water bottles
- Raincover
- Headlamp
- Car keys (some packs have a clip inside one of the pockets)
- Your ID and some cash

External straps

You'll want to attach most of your larger gear that won't fit inside the pack to the external straps.

Most hikers attach the following items to their backpack straps.

- Trekking poles
- Tent poles
- A large sleeping mat
- A compact camp chair
- Ropes, crampons, etc. if necessary

Always ensure that these items are securely strapped in to avoid losing gear along the way or getting caught on rocks or branches.

Final Tip: Don't Let Dry Items Get Wet

If you're expecting rainy weather, you'll want to make sure that you keep everything that's supposed to stay dry, well, *dry*.

- Consider using a waterproof liner to line the inside of your pack
- Keep your sleeping bag in a waterproof liner
- Carry your toilet paper in a Ziplock bag

FINAL THOUGHTS ON PACKING YOUR HIKING BACKPACK

You're so much closer to getting on the trail, and hopefully, you now know everything you need to know about how to pack your backpack perfectly.

If you need convenient, lightweight hiking meals that will take little to no space (or weight) in your backpack, look no further than the Trail Food Company!

