

# Filling The Void

*The proper way to stuff your pack and ease the burden on your back.*

There are two kinds of backpackers in the world: those who are organized and those who are not. I used to be a "not" and was constantly holding up the group while I rooted for iodine tablets or emptied my pack looking for my fleece jacket. A properly loaded pack will spare you the piercing stares of your anxious cohorts, plus it's better for your back to wear one that's weighted correctly. Here are some tips to keep you organized and well-balanced.

**1** The following items should always be at your fingertips in side pockets or a small accessory pouch that attaches to your hipbelt or shoulder strap: sunscreen, sunglasses, munchies, map and compass, and water.

**2** Your first-aid kit should also be relatively easy to get to in an emergency. A widget bag should include a headlamp, repair kit, candle lantern, notepad, pen, all of your personal hygiene stuff, and any other odd or loose items. Keep this in the top pocket of your pack where it's easy to reach.

**TIP:** Loosen all compression straps before you start loading. Pack stuff sacks tightly, making two or three side by side columns against the frame to keep the profile thin and close to your back. When finished packing, pull down hard on all the straps for a compact load.

**3** Dense, heavy gear, such as extra water bottles and tent, goes against your back as high as possible. Women, who naturally have a lower center of gravity, may want to experiment with packing heavy items more toward the midback.

**TIP:** Weight distribution is a personal thing. Some folks like to carry all the weight on their hips, while others like to balance it more between shoulders and hips. Our best advice is to experiment with your pack's adjustment straps until the weight distribution feels *juuuust* right. With external frame packs, the weight will naturally be higher up and more spread out across the width of your back, due to the shape of the frame and packbag. Internal frames will focus the brunt of the weight a bit lower and stacked away from your back, but not quite as spread out as externals.

**4** Separate the tent poles from the tent. If you're traveling in a pair, one person can take the poles, fly, and

stakes; the other can handle the tent body. Just make sure you don't lose each other come nightfall and get stuck with only half a shelter. For solo forays, poles go on the outside and the rest of the tent inside the packbag.

**TIP:** Organize all gear into color-coded stuff sacks or see-through mesh bags. Keep loose items to an absolute minimum, especially in the main body of the pack.

**5** Kitchen bag: Includes pots, stove, and lighter. If your stove doesn't nest inside your cooking pot(s), pack it in a padded cassette case or make a protective sack with an old piece of foam.

**6** Clothing bag: Roll clothes into tight tubes.

**7** Food bag: Pack a couple of extra zipper-lock bags for garbage and leftovers.

**8** Toilet paper: Store it in a zipper-lock bag along with a plastic trowel (for digging catholes) in an outside pocket so you can grab them when the urge hits.

**9** Stove fuel: Store in two zipper-lock bags away from food, clothing, and anything else you'd hate to have soaked in gas.

**TIP:** Only totally leakproof water bottles are allowed inside your pack. Bike bottles are out.

**10** Sleeping bag: If your pack has a built-in divider, the stuff sack is optional. If space is tight, try a compression stuff sack, which will make room for some extra clothing in the compartment. Either way, it never hurts to wrap your bag in a heavy-duty plastic garbage bag.

**11** Sleeping pad usually gets strapped onto the outside, unless it packs down *really* small. If you use a self-inflator, be sure to pack it in a heavy-duty stuff sack or you're begging for a puncture. Avoid the temptation to strap your self-inflator to the bottom of your pack, where it will take a beating every time you drop your pack to rest. Lash it to the side or top. On the other hand, you can strap a rugged, closed-cell foam pad to the bottom so it forms a stable base and allows the pack to stand upright.

**TIP:** Avoid hanging small items off your pack, especially when bushwhacking. You'll know why the first time you get hung up on a branch.

**12** Warm sweater and raingear: Tuck under the top lid for easy access.

—Kris Hostetter



## BACKPACKING GEAR CHECKLIST

### HEAD GEAR:

- Wool cap
- Ball cap
- Bandana

### TOP LAYERS:

- Synthetic fabric long underwear top
- T-shirt(s) [synthetic best]
- Fleece jacket
- Wool shirt
- Wind shell
- Rain jacket

### BOTTOM LAYERS:

- Underwear
- Synthetic long underwear
- Long pants
- Hiking shorts
- Rain pants

### FOOTWEAR:

- Hiking boots
- Light camp shoes/sandals
- Socks: liners and heavy
- Gaiters (optional)

### CAMP GEAR:

- Tent
- Backpack
- Sleeping bag
- Sleeping pad
- Ground cloth

### COOKING GEAR:

- Stove+fuel+lighter
- Cook kit:
  - Pot(s)
  - Cooking spoon and spatula
- Plate or bowl
- Utensils: spoon
- Pocket knife
- Dish towel
- Scrubby
- Strainer
- Cup or mug

### FIRST AID:

- Band-Aids
- Moleskin
- Gauze
- Antiseptic
- Aspirin
- First aid tape
- Knee brace (optional)

### PERSONAL ITEMS:

- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Comb/brush
- Deodorant
- Razor/shave cream
- Feminine hygiene prdts.
- Lip balm
- biodegradable soap
- Personal prescriptions

### MISCELLANEOUS:

- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Sunglasses
- Flashlight
- Compass and map
- Trowel
- Toilet paper w/plastic bags
- Note pad w/pencil
- Duct tape/repair kit
- Ear plugs (optional)

### THE ESSENTIALS

#### FOR ANY HIKE:

- Extra clothing (at least a dry shirt and socks)
- Extra emergency food
- Pocket knife
- Water+purification tabs
- Firestarter + matches
- Flashlight/extra batteries
- Whistle
- Sunglasses + sunscreen
- Map + compass
- Emergency shelter

## BACKPACKING EQUIPMENT LIST-- [Non-Winter] -- bring packed to shakedown

Consider borrowing equipment you don't already own. Everything must be packed in. Keep weight down; bring as little as possible but be sure to bring essentials. Total pack weight is not to exceed 25% of body weight. All clothes, sleeping gear and food are stored in waterproof bags.

[BB] = goes in bear bag, away from tent area.

[SD] = stored in sump or dining area away from tent area.

### Basic Gear

- Frame pack with hip belt
- Pack cover (packs stay outside tent; heavy garbage bag OK)
- Sleeping bag/blankets in waterproof (garbage) bag
- Sleeping pad (optional)
- Hiking Boots (stiffest high-top shoes) - not on ground at night
- [BB if mix] Water bottles/canteen - 1 qt. for every 100 lbs. weight
- Extra plastic bags for trash, dirty clothes, etc.

### Camping/Hiking Gear

- Map (supplied) in ziplock bag
- Compass
- Pocket knife
- Small flashlight with extra/new batteries
- Whistle - accessible; not packed
- [BB] Matches in waterproof container

### Clothes (wearing + packing)

- Socks (2 heavy wool pairs, 2 liner pairs)
- Shorts/pants (2) and belt
- Shirts (2)
- Underwear (2)
- Sleepwear
- Lightweight jacket or wool/flannel shirt
- Poncho or rainsuit
- Hat & bandanna
- Sandles/light sneakers to relax in camp (optional)

### Toiletries/Personal (BB items not used after 5:00pm)

- [BB] Biodegradable soap
- [BB] Toothbrush/paste
- [BB] Sunscreen
- [BB] Lip balm
- [BB] Insect repellent
- [BB] Small first aid kit -- moleskin, bandages, drugs for medical conditions (allergies) or to self-administer (aspirin), copy medical form
- Toilet paper in ziplock bag (unscented or goes in BB)
- Woman's sanitary items in ziplock bag (packed out, scented or soiled goes in BB)
- Watch
- Money

### Cooking & Eating

- [BB] Food (suggestions below)
- [SD] Spoon/utensils
- [SD] Cup (preferably standard size or measuring)
- [SD] Pot for heating water, etc.
- [SD] Cleaning/scrub pad

### Shared with buddy

- Tent (novices avoid heavy and difficult-setup (Pinnacle) tents)
- Ground cloth for under tent (recommended)
- [SD] Backpacking stove & fuel
- Water filter, iodine or chlorine
- Light rope or twine (25 ft.) for lashing

### Shared Crew Equipment

- Bear bag
- 75-100 ft. rope
- Shovel or trowel (for catholes & sump)
- [SD] Sump strainer
- [BB] "Yonka" bag (food not passing through strainer is packed out)
- Dining fly (optional)
- [BB] Repair kit - needle, thread, duct tape, zip ties, etc.
- [BB] Crew first aid kit and medical forms
- Tour permit

## SOME SIMPLE FOOD SUGGESTIONS (links to other recipes & menus given below) -- bring menu and food to shakedown

### Breakfast

- Oatmeal
- Cream of Wheat
- cold cereal (bring dehydrated milk)
- hot chocolate
- powdered fruit drink (Tang)

### Lunch/snacks

- Trail mix
- Granola bars
- beef jerky/pepperoni
- peanut butter & crackers
- cheese & crackers

### Supper

- Ramen Noodles
- Lipton Dinners (may need cooking oil to substitute for margarine)
- cup-o-soups
- instant potatos
- canned chicken/tuna

- Setting Up Camp explains the "Bear Bag", "Sump", and "Dining/Cooking" areas.
- Packing That Equipment explains how to pack equipment.