

PACK WEIGHT

Dave Suttie, July 2019

EVERYTHING that you put in your pack adds weight, so your goal should be to carry only what you need. Easier said than done I know :-)

Modern hiking gear is much lighter than the old stuff, so consider weight when replacing gear. Even so, if you stuff your large pack with light gear, it will still be heavy!

Getting your pack weight down is a discipline that takes time to accomplish.

One way to start is to think of things in terms of needs and wants.

Simply put, a **NEED** is something that would be difficult or dangerous to do without on your hike...and everything else is a **WANT**...so let your wants be few!

As Thoreau said: simplify...simplify...simplify.

At the end of every trip, think about the things that you carried and never used, or could have easily done without. Use this process to weed out unnecessary items from your pack, until nearly everything in there would be difficult or dangerous to do without.

Multi-use items are a bonus when hiking. Bear bag line=cloths line. Z-seat=stove wind screen. Stuff sack=pillow, etc. Thinking about the different uses for an item will lead to a lighter pack.

One challenge of backpacking is that loading extra stuff into your pack can actually give you a good feeling. You are ready for anything!

This good feeling however, comes at a cost - the extra weight that you will carry day after day.

The extra items in your pack are often the result of "What if" questions such as:

What if it snows? What if I run out of food? What if my batteries die? etc.

In themselves, "What ifs" are all good questions, but be careful of the answers.

"What ifs" can cause you to carry too much food, water, fuel, cloths and gear.

While it is always wise to leave some margin of safety, be realistic about the risk associated with the "what if". Before deciding to carry extra gear or supplies, judge the likelihood and consequences of the "what if" happening. Is it likely to happen at all? If it does happen, will it be a serious problem or just an inconvenience? This is always a balancing act, and a bit of a gamble, so best err on the side of safety.

Over time, as you gain experience, your pack will become lighter.

As the saying goes: "if your feet are pointing in the right direction...just keep walking".

Here is some final advice from one of the hiking greats:

"CHOOSE THE THINGS YOU REALLY NEED, NOT WHAT YOU WANT, AND YOUR PACK WILL NOT BE A GREAT BURDEN. IT'S FREEDOM FROM ALL THOSE THINGS THAT WILL INSPIRE MEMORIES THAT WILL NEVER FADE." - Nimblewill Nomad