

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, although that is easier said than done :-)

Modern hiking gear is much lighter than the old stuff, so having lightweight gear is important. Even so, if you stuff your large pack with new gear, it will still be heavy!

Maximum pack weight should be about 1/6 of your body weight.
20 pounds for a 120 pound hiker, and 30 for a 180 pound hiker.
*this can be exceeded by 5 pounds if necessary.

Getting your 5 day pack weight down to these weights takes time, discipline, acceptance of some discomfort, and being ok with not being prepared for every single situation that may come up...no matter how unlikely.

To start reducing pack weight, begin 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 left is difficult or dangerous to be without. You are then in the position to add a few luxury items if the weight allows.

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.

The desire to be prepared for every possible situation is a big cause of overloaded backpacks.

It feels good to be prepared, and feels bad when we are not.

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

An overloaded pack is often the result of "What if" questions about these possible situations.

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.

While it is wise to leave some margin of safety, be realistic about the risk. 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? Logically, you don't need to be prepared for everything, just the important things. This is always a balancing act, and a bit of a gamble, so remember to 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