

Organizing Your Gear

Make sure you have the right gear for your outdoor adventure.



A common complaint on multi-day hiking trips has to do with an overloaded pack. While some people are easily able to shoulder 60 pound packs, others are needlessly burdened by several extra jackets for “just in case.” Organizing your gear, typically with the help of a checklist, helps you think more carefully about what goes into your pack as well as ensures you do not forget any of the Ten Essentials.

Make a checklist. Fill up your pack like you normally would and keep inventory of everything that goes in. Put a star by the Ten Essentials as well as by things like a sleeping bag, tent, and extra socks. Then review what did not receive a star and consider if it is absolutely necessary. Odds are that five pairs of socks are too many for a weekend getaway.

Practice using your gear. What good is \$100 dollar micro stove or a flashy new tent if you can't set them up? Have a general idea of the various components of your equipment in case you need to be MacGyver on the trail and repair something with limited resources. It helps to find out before you go on a trip that the stove's fuel jet is clogged or that your tent is missing a few stakes.

Remove excess packaging. Packaged food from the supermarket generally doesn't come already prepared to meet your hiking needs. For example, most hikers don't need an entire box of noodles for their trip. You'll probably only use a portion of what comes in the packaging. Taking items out of their bulky containers and moving them into plastic bags or containers gives you greater control over how they fit into your pack. Cut out directions from the box to ensure you know how to prepare the food properly.

Pack your pack! Literally! Put everything inside your pack as you might have it on the trail. Know where everything is in case you need to reach it at some point. For example, remember to keep your raingear in an outside pocket or near the top for easy access during a sudden shower. It's a good idea to actually know how much of your pack's room your equipment takes up. Factor in space needed for additional group gear or food, if necessary.

