



Back2Backpack Basics

Tips for Carrying a Backpack and Avoiding Back Pain

Backpacks can be a good way to carry the items you need at school. Follow these guidelines to ensure that you are using your backpack properly and safely.

- **Choose a backpack that is an appropriate size** for your body size. A backpack that is too large will sag below the waist, stressing the lower back and shoulders.
- **Always use both shoulder straps.** Slinging a backpack over one shoulder may be easier than using both straps, but it can strain muscles and may increase curvature of the spine.
- **Tighten the straps** so that the backpack is close to the body. The straps should hold the backpack two inches above the waist.
- **Select a backpack with wide, padded shoulder straps** to help protect your shoulders and neck from irritation.
- **Pack light.** If you are forced to lean over to move forward, your backpack is too heavy. Ideally, the weight of your backpack should remain under 20 percent of your total body weight. Carry only the books and other items that are necessary for that day.
- **Bend using both knees** when you bend down. Do not bend over at the waist when wearing or lifting a backpack.
- **Organize the backpack** to use all of its compartments. Pack heavy items closest to the center of the back.
- **Clean out your backpack once a week** to eliminate unnecessary items like old papers and materials you don't need.



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