

Top 10 Backpack Safety Tips

Please keep these 10 simple backpack safety tips in mind when choosing and using a backpack.

1: Your child's backpack should weigh no more than 10% of his or her weight. If your child's bag is too heavy, they may lean forward to support the weight with their back rather than with their shoulders, through the straps. It may also pull them backward, placing even more stress on the developing spine and nervous system.

2: Reduce, when possible, the contents of the backpack. Take a few brief moments to go through the contents with your child and decide what items can be left at home, at school, can be carried, and/or are non-essential.

3: The backpack should be age appropriate. Grade school, middle school, and high school students are all different sizes. Their packs should be appropriate for their size. A grade school child should not have a pack that a senior in high school would wear.

4: Distribute the weight of the pack's contents evenly. Pack the bag evenly. If there are side pockets on the backpack, make sure both pockets have roughly the same weight in them to ensure proper posture.



5: Maintain proper center of balance. Place larger books, binders, or laptops directly against the back, then medium sized books or notebooks, and finally smaller books or items furthest away from the body. Make sure the contents inside the pack rest flat against the child's back, and that any pointed or bulky objects are packed away from the back.

References: acatoday.org, nsc.org, healthychildren.org, orthoinfo.aaos.org



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6: **Always wear both straps.** This will also help to safely and evenly distribute the backpack's weight. Carrying a heavy backpack using one strap shifts the weight to one side and will contribute to spinal health concerns.

7: **Adjust the backpack to shoulder and hips.** A properly adjusted backpack should be situated so that the top of the pack is at shoulder height and the bottom rests comfortably at, or just above the child's waistline. If the backpack is not set correctly it will place undue pressure on the shoulders and spine.



8: **Thick, wide and padded straps are best.** This will help to distribute weight and reduce shoulder and spinal stress.

9: **Chest and lumbar straps should be used.** These straps help to evenly distribute pack weight and reduce neck, shoulder and spinal stress. They are important components which promote healthy posture which is essential for keeping the growing spine and nervous system happy and healthy.



10: **We've followed the guidelines, but the pack is still too heavy!?!** Consider talking to your child's school for alternatives to big and heavy books or binders. Could some books be left at home? Are there web based resources that could be utilized? Could pages out of text books be copied? Are workbooks available?

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The only failure one man should fear, is the failure to do his best.

– Dr. D.D. Palmer (founder of Chiropractic)

BACKPACK HISTORY: Dick Kelty was an outdoorsman who loved to hike the Sierra Mountains. He did not have an efficient way to carry his hiking gear and wanted to make something better than the heavy gear at military surplus stores. In 1951, Kelty was hiking with his friend, Clay Sherman, and the two experimented with the positioning of their packboards, a fabric-covered wood or metal frame with straps so equipment could be carried. They found that by sliding the ends of their packboards into the back pockets of their jeans and resting the load from their shoulders to their hips, they could travel more comfortably. This idea motivated Kelty to experiment more. At home, his wife would sew together lighter materials such as nylon and aluminum, replacing the heavy materials with lighter materials. After making a modest sum off of his new creation, he added shoulder straps, padded waist, and zipper pockets on the outside of the backpack. Source: <http://thekingspage.com/2013/08/21/how-the-backpack-came-to-be/>

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