

Fitting a Backpack

The weight of the pack should be close to the body's centre of gravity to prevent the pack from pulling back on your shoulders.

The correct fit is close, high and centred over the body's pelvis. Heavy items should be placed at about shoulder height. In order to properly fit a backpack, it should be loaded with the straps loosened. Straps should be adjusted and tightened beginning with the hip belt, followed by the shoulder straps, and finally the other adjustment straps. When the waist belt is secured, the hips and legs should be supporting the major portion of the pack weight. Avoid overtightening the shoulder straps, as this lifts the load onto the shoulders, rather than leaving it on the hips.

Harnesses

Carrying comfort is crucial, and different backpacks offer varying features. Therefore, it is important to shop around and try on different packs with alternative harness systems, so that you buy the pack that best suits you. Choosing the right harness is one of the most important factors when buying a backpack. The shop assistant should be able to fit your pack, so that only minor adjustments are later needed.

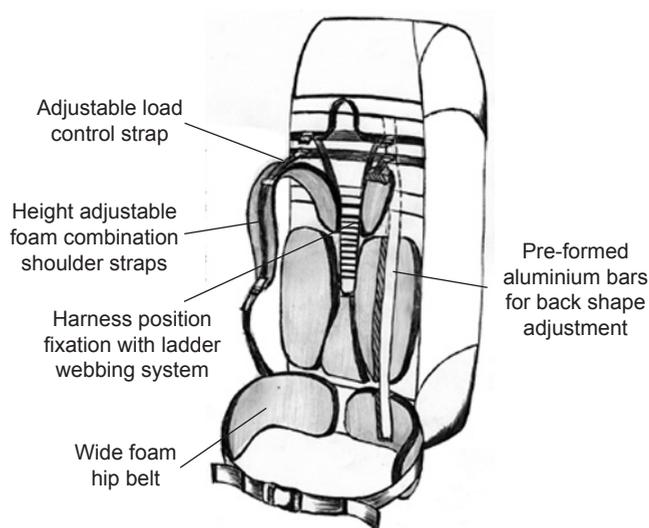


Figure 2.7: An example of a harness system

Harness size depends on a combination of your back strength and your shoulder depth. Your height is used as a guide. Many internal

frames are pre-formed, and can be readily adjusted to suit any back. Others consist of a light-weight six-arm spring-steel frame. Some packs use a buckle adjustment system to shorten the length of the harness, while other packs use a ladder webbing system.

Packing a Backpack

When packing your backpack, remember the saying:

'Heavy hangs high and close'

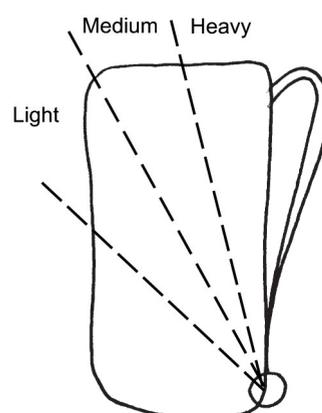


Figure 2.8: Placement of heavy, medium and lightweight items in a pack

Points to consider when packing your back pack include:

- lay everything out before you pack.
- the heavyweight items in the pack, such as food, water and cooking equipment should be placed towards the top of the pack, and as close to the back as possible. The sleeping bag and clothes (approximately 4 kg) should be placed at the bottom of the pack with mediumweight gear in the middle.
- pack sharp bulky items away from your back.
- fragile gear will need to be protected.
- fill all spaces, eg. inside a cup or a billy.
- use a pack liner, such as a large black plastic bag, especially if wet conditions are predicted. Use stuff-sacks for the rest of your gear.