

“The Damascus Loop”

50 Miles on the Appalachian Trail and the Iron Mt. Trail



Backpack Tips:

The method of packing a backpack can make the difference between drudgery and enjoyment during the time spent on the trail. A few simple principles, which are often overlooked, can make a difference.

Technically speaking, the body has a center of gravity located directly over the ankles. When standing normally there is very little forward of the body. However, when a pack is placed on the back, the body leans forward to bring the pack's center of gravity directly over the ankles. Consequently, it is advantageous to keep the pack's center of gravity as close to your back as possible to prevent unnecessary forward lean. There are two primary ways to consider distributing the weight in your pack.

Illustration #1 is most common and a very efficient way to pack gear. The negative side to this method is that you can be somewhat top-heavy as a result of a high center of gravity. Illustration #2 is great when you are on cliff-sides or unstable footing. Often people that have a naturally high center of gravity (tall) will choose this method as their primary way to pack.

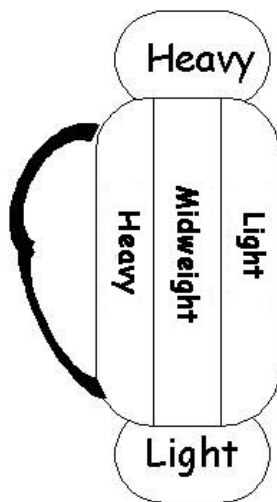


Illustration #1

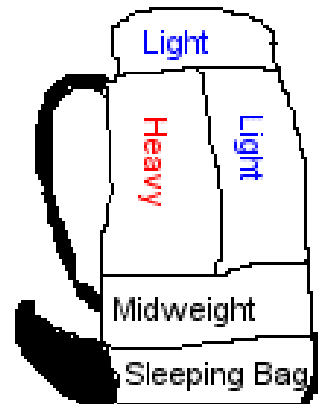


Illustration #2

When packing an internal frame pack, the most important thing to remember, after weight, is order of importance. You need to put gear that you will need as soon as you get to camp on top and move down progressively. Try to keep heavy gear (tent) close to your back or on top. Put your sleeping bag or lightweight items in the bottom compartment. If you have a sleeping pad that is too big to fit inside, you can put it through the compression straps that are located on the sides or bottom. It is a good idea to categorize gear and put it in separate bags (such as all your cloths in one bag, or all food in one bag, all cleaning stuff in one bag, etc. While loading up your bag, keep in mind that each side needs to be somewhat equal in weight in order to stay balanced. It is always a great idea to keep everything in plastic zip-lock bags in case of rain. You may want to pack your gear slightly different each day, depending upon what you will need handy and the terrain you will be hiking on.