

HIKE

# HOW TO SIZE A BACKPACK



## How to Size a Backpack: Daypack and Backpack Volume Guide *Adapted from sectionhiker.com*

### Recommended Backpack Volumes

How much volume should you get in a daypack, weekend backpack, multi-day backpack, or expedition backpack? Here are some volume guidelines and advice so you can start shopping for back packs in the appropriate size range.

### Daypacks

Most daypacks range from 20 liters to 35 liters on the high-end. While a smaller sized backpack is usually sufficient for 1/2 day hikes, you'll want a larger pack in the 35-liter range for all-day hikes so you can carry extra water, food, clothing, and the ten essentials (see Ten Essentials article in the Resource Center for more information). The daypack category also includes hydration packs which can be a good option - just make sure that you have sufficient volume to carry your extra gear.

If you're a winter day hiker and snowshoer, think about sizing up to a 40-45 liter backpack capable of carrying snowshoes, microspikes, and bulkier insulated clothing. You need a beefier backpack than a small daypack to carry snowshoes when they're not needed.

### Weekend Backpacks (1-3 Nights)

You can't use most daypacks for overnight and weekend backpacking trips because you need to carry a lot more gear, such as a sleeping bag/quilt, sleeping pad, sleeping clothes, tent/shelter/hammock, stove, cooking pot and utensils, and more food. All this extra stuff requires more space, even if you take a minimalist or ultralight approach to gearing up. For a 1-3 night weekend trip, the sweet spot is going to be a backpack with 40 to 50 liters of volume.

### Multi-day Backpacks (3-5 Nights)

The biggest difference between shorter weekend and multi-day backpacking trips is the need to carry more food and possibly a bit more technical gear, depending on the kind of activities or climate you'll be hiking in. For multi-day trips, you're going to want 50 to 70 liters of backpack volume, but if you go ultralight or use compressible gear that doesn't take up a lot of space, you might be able to get by with less than that.

# Walk to Run Protocol



## Expedition Backpacks (5+ Nights)

Expedition backpacks are the behemoths of the backpacking world and range in size from 80 liters up to 110 liters or more. They're designed to hold a mammoth amount of food and gear, usually for professionally guided mountaineering trips. If you're going on a trip like this, it's probably worth asking your guide for backpack recommendations. They may also have gear that you can rent since expedition backpacks can be quite expensive.

## How Backpack Volume is Measured

Most major backpack manufacturers measure the volume of their backpacks by adding up the total volume of the closed storage on their packs, including the main compartment, pockets, and hip belt pockets that can be closed or zippered shut.

However, many smaller manufacturers use a different method and include open pockets like side water bottle pockets or rear mesh pockets in addition to the closed storage. This can make weight-to-volume comparisons a little misleading when comparing packs from different manufacturers. When in doubt, contact the manufacturer to ask what method they use to measure backpack volume. You can use a smaller backpack, with less internal storage, if you can attach gear to the outside of it.

## External Attachments

If you plan to carry a lot of bulky gear, you don't have to carry all of it inside the closed storage of a backpack. Bulky sleeping pads, tents, rain gear, snowshoes, and water bottles are commonly stuffed into exterior pockets or attached to the sides, back or bottom of a backpack with webbing or compression straps. This lets you use the same backpack for medium and longer trips, without having to buy a second larger pack to carry your extra gear.