

Healthy Working MOVE

HANDY HINTS AND TIPS FOR CHOOSING AND USING A SCHOOL BAG

Schools bags are an important part of every child's school life but with so many to choose from, it's difficult to know what to choose. This helpful guide for parents will help you and your child to decide what is the most suitable school bag for them and explain how to correctly pack and carry it safely.

The most important consideration is school bag weight. Children should aim to carry around 10% of their body weight, with a maximum limit of 15%. Research studies have shown weights above this can cause spinal damage in young, growing spines.

To find how much your child is currently carrying as a percentage of their body weight:

$$\frac{\text{Child's weight wearing bag (lbs)}}{\text{Child's weight (lbs)}} \times 10 = \text{Weight of bag as a \% of child's body weight}$$

It is helpful for your child to get into a routine of packing their back EVERY night, only carrying what they need. You can help by arranging a storage area for heavy files and books at home and suggest they carry current work in a lightweight folder or file.

If your child is still carrying more than 10% of their body weight and says they need everything in their bag for school, you need to speak to their teacher to find an alternative solution e.g. are lockers or safe storage areas available at school? Children should not be made to carry unsafe loads.

Choosing the most suitable bag

Design: Backpack, single strap bag, or wheeled case

How will your child travel to and from school?

If walking or cycling, a backpack with firm support next to your child's back is most suitable as this makes the bag more rigid so lessens the

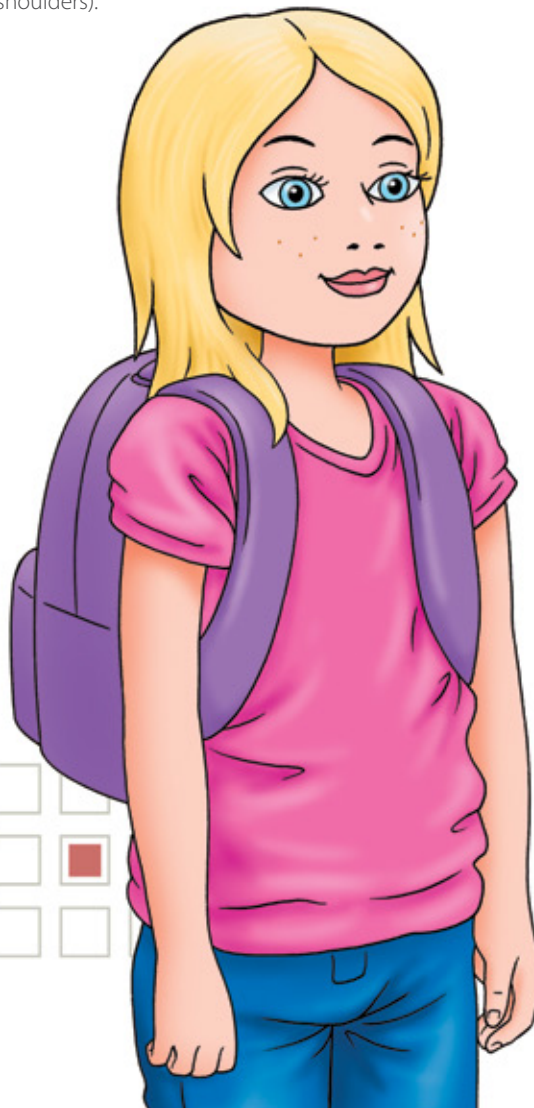
need to twist their back to re-adjust their bag. A bag with a waist strap can also help, but make sure the strap is fastened when walking or cycling so it doesn't get caught on something!

Will your child's campus be flat?

If your child's school is spacious and without many steps a wheeled trolley case may be suitable. Wheeled backpack bags are available but these can be heavy and are not always practical in school.

Is fashion important?

Despite parent's best intentions, children will decide how they carry their bag and fashion is important to them. It is often more realistic to encourage your child to safely wear a mono-strap bag (worn across their body) rather than insisting on correctly wearing a backpack (worn over both shoulders).



Size

- What does your child need to carry?
- Will your child need a padded laptop or tablet section in their school bag?
- Will they find a “visible timetable section” useful?
- Will they need to carry A4 files or anything larger?
- Will they need to carry their bag around all day or are lockers available?

It’s important to get a bag with compartments large enough to fit their equipment and to help their organization but not too big that it is too heavy (aim for their packed bag to be 10% of their body weight).

If valuable equipment is being transported a small “zip” padlock might be useful.

A separate water bottle pocket is also beneficial.

If your child needs to carry their bag all day, they may find a bag with a sturdy/rigid base helpful so it can easily stand up on the floor. There are also bag options which fasten to the backs of school chairs (but take care as these can sometimes tip the chair backwards when not seated).

Correct packing and adjustment

- Try to minimize the amount of weight your child has to carry. Pack heavier items so that they will be closest to your child’s back when the bag is worn.
- Rucksacks should be worn with a tightened but comfortable strap over each shoulder. The bag should be worn higher up the back, with the

lower part of the bag level with the top of the pelvis/hips. If the bottom of the bag is lower than their hips, a waist strap is recommended.

- Single strap bags should be worn across the body (not on one shoulder as this will cause neck problems and muscle imbalances). Importantly, your child should regularly alternate which shoulder they use to carry it. The top of their single strap bag should be approximately hip level.
- Encourage your child to be security conscious when carrying expensive devices.

Safer lifting

As well as correctly packing and adjusting your child’s school bag, your child should also be familiar with how to pick it up and put it down safely. This will help form good habits and reduce injuries in the future.

Children should bend their knees and not their back when picking up their bag and putting it down and should avoid twisting and sudden awkward movements too.

Good luck!



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