

BACKPACK ERGONOMICS



Throughout college, you'll likely spend a fair amount of time with your backpack. However, when used incorrectly, backpacks can cause severe back, neck, and shoulder pain or even injury. College is hard enough; avoid the ache by following these simple tips for safe backpack use.

JUST THE ESSENTIALS

I'm sure you have great intentions to study chemistry at the Union after class, but do you really need to haul around that 5lb book? Probably not. If you really do need a book, leave it home and pick it up *after* class.

CLEAN IT OUT

Every few weeks, go through your backpack and take out the unnecessary stuff that's accumulated – garbage, extra pens, that calculator you needed one time for class, etc. All of those little things add up to unnecessary weight.

STRAP UP

Regardless of how cool every 90's teen looked, one-strapping it can be really hard on your back. Distribute the weight by using both straps, and make sure they're adjusted to sit evenly on your shoulders. If possible, use your chest or hip straps, as well, to take the pressure off of your shoulders.

10%

Your backpack should be no heavier than 10% of your body weight. For example, if you weigh 160lbs, your backpack should weigh less than 16 lbs.

Backpack should fall below your shoulders and above your hips.

shoulders



hips



Utilize the various pockets in your backpack. Put the heaviest items closest to your back with lightest items furthest away.

BUYING THE RIGHT BACKPACK

If you're in the market for a new backpack, consider purchasing an ergonomic backpack. An ergonomic backpack is designed to support and protect your body. It will be more adjustable than other standard backpacks and straps and back will be more cushioned. Regardless of whether you choose an ergonomic backpack or not, follow these simple steps for picking out the right backpack for you:



❖ Size

Choose the smallest backpack that fits your functional needs. The backpack should not go above your shoulders or fall below your hips.

❖ Compartments

Backpacks with more than one compartment allow you to distribute weight. Pack heavier items closer to your back and lighter items toward the outside.

❖ Straps

Look for straps that are adjustable and have a sufficient amount of padding to protect your shoulders from the weight of the backpack. Use both straps to distribute the weight evenly.

❖ Hip and Chest Belts

Hip and chest belts can be used to improve balance and reduce pressure put on shoulders.

❖ Fit

You're going to be wearing your backpack A LOT, so make sure to try it on just like you would a pair of shoes.

SAFE LIFTING

It may seem unimportant to properly lifting your backpack, but because we lift and move our backpacks so often, it is even more important! By following safe lifting techniques, you can protect your body from avoidable injuries and pain.

- ✓ Lift with your legs
- ✓ Don't bend to the side
- ✓ Keep your back straight
- ✓ Use both hands
- ✓ If lifting with one hand, keep wrist straight

