

## RUCSACS.

The way in which you carry your sandwiches, waterproofs, spare clothing, etc, whilst out can turn your walk into a nightmare. Sore shoulders are second only to sore feet in putting people off walking.

Rucsacs come in all shapes and sizes. Choosing the one which suits you the best can be a daunting task.

For the occasional short, summer walk, a small rucsac (in the 15l - 20l range\*) is generally perfectly adequate. It is big enough for your sarnies, flask, waterproofs, First Aid Kit, map, compass, whistle, and apple. As this type of rucsac tends to be at the cheaper end of the market do not expect it to have a long life, especially if you intend to use it two or three times a week all year round.

A padded back is something to look out for.

A medium size rucsac (30l - 40l) is better if you intend to walk outside the summer season. In addition to the above mentioned items you will need spare clothing (mittens, scarf, hat/balclava, sweater, for if the weather turns cold), a survival bag, a larger quantity of food and drink, torch, and emergency food rations. When carrying such a load, a restraining 'waist' belt is useful. This will stop the rucsac swaying from side to side whilst walking. Frames and 'true'

hip belts (where the belt is fastened tightly round the hip in order to carry the load here) are not generally available on rucsacs of this size, but for serious walkers it is worth 'going up' a size (and price) for the extra comfort.

For weekend and long range day walking, a rucsac with a 40l - 55l capacity is required. Because of the extra weight being carried, it is essential to choose a rucsac with a well-padded back, a hip-belt, and an internal frame. The hip-belt should fit round the hip and not the waist.

For week and expedition walking, a large rucsac (55l - 70l) is required in order to accommodate all the extra food, towels, etc, etc.

Whilst the material of modern rucsacs, usually a form of nylon, is waterproof, the abundance of seams means that the sac itself cannot be considered so. Consequently a plastic liner is recommended for inclement weather (bin-liners are too thin).

Remove stains and dirt with plain water and a brush. If necessary, use a little mild soap - do not wash or clean with detergents.

*\* The capacity (size) of rucsacs is measured in litres (l).*

## Buying A Rucsac

When trying on a rucsac ask for some weight to be added to it in order to judge what it feels like when full.

Some points to watch out for in a rucsac:

Strong and secure stitching

Padded shoulder straps

A padded hip strap so that weight can be passed from back to hips

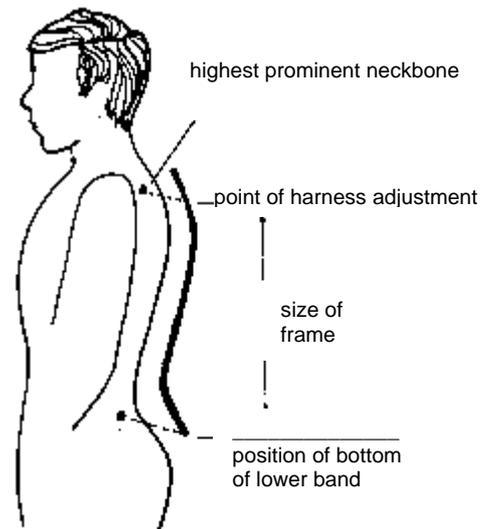
A number of outside pockets can be useful. A map pocket at the top of the sack and perhaps a front pocket or two side pockets.

Take the time to adjust the rucsac to fit you correctly. If your rucsac has an internal frame ask your retailer to demonstrate how this can be shaped to fit your back, and how the rucsac's back system can be fine-tuned to fit you. Periodically re-check that the rucsac is still correctly adjusted.

A number of looping points are useful if you wish to attach a sleeping mat or tent poles.

A sack with a top and bottom compartment is useful as you can gain access to equipment without pulling everything out of the sack.

The flap at the top of the sac should be adjustable so as to allow great versatility in the size of load you carry.



## Transporting Rucsacs

When picking up a loaded rucksack, take hold of the top haulage loop (usually found between the two shoulder straps) with one hand, slip the rucksack through one shoulder, release the grip on the haulage loop and slip the other arm through the second shoulder strap. Do not pick up the rucksack up by the

shoulder straps which are designed only to support the load.

If putting your rucksack onto public transport, place it inside a lockable bag or net to protect straps and belts from being damaged and the contents being tampered with.

## Load Carrying

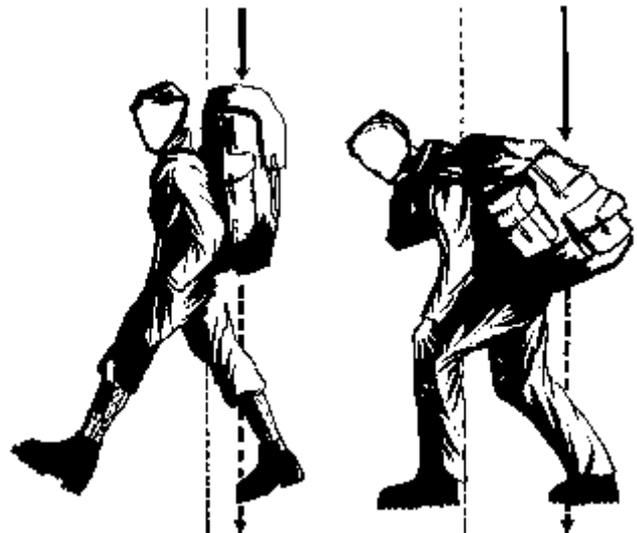
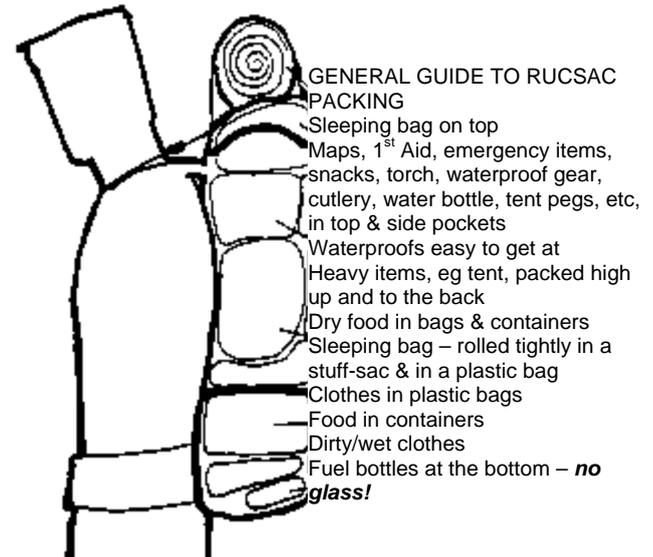
There have been many incidents of people reaching a state of exhaustion because their packs have been too heavy. As a general rule the weight of a pack should not exceed a quarter of the bodyweight of the carrier. Forty pounds should be the absolute maximum and rarely should it exceed 30 pounds.

A heavy load is best supported by the human body when it is carried vertically above the centre of gravity of the body. Modern rucsacs are designed with this principle in mind.

Distribution of the weight being carried can aid balance and make the load more comfortable to carry (see packing chart).

Keep the load as light as possible while still observing the rules of mountain safety. If you are taking part in a 2 /3 day expedition such as a Mountain Pursuit Challenge heavy equipment such as tents and stoves should be broken down into small parts and distributed among the members of a Patrol or party. There is a tendency to take more than you need - just in case. With experience you will learn those items you most need.

Watch out when going on camp or expeditions that young Scouts are not carrying large bottle of drinks in their packs. Liquid is one of the heaviest things you can carry. It is also a useful exercise to fine tune your equipment,



perhaps doing an analysis of items according to weight. A half tube of toothpaste is less weight than a full one, one extra pullover rather than two, and do you really need that campfire blanket!!!

## Packing a Rucsac

Being able to pack a rucsac correctly is an important skill. In an emergency situation being able to reach the first aid kit or waterproofs without having to

throw all your other gear out could save some-one's life.

Always pack your rucsac in reverse order - **First In Last Out**

### Side Pockets

Remember to pack the outer pockets neatly before you pack the inside of the main rucsac (otherwise you will not be able to get anything into the outside pockets once the inside of the rucsac is bulging full!). You must pack neatly. Small items like socks can be used by leaving

until last and squashing down into all the little gaps. Think carefully about which items you will need first and pack these last so that they are on the top. You must be able to reach the following immediately in case of an emergency:

First Aid kit  
Torch

Survival bag  
Compass

Waterproofs  
Map

Whistle  
Water bottle

### Left for Food Right for Life

Soups

Matches

Cooking tins

Energy bars\*\*

Sugar

Tea

Coffee

Milk

Knife, fork,  
spoon

Water bottle

Torch (spare)  
battery

Penknife

Plastic bag

Pencil & paper

\*\* *a minimum ratio of carbohydrate to fat is 5:1; 6:1 or more is better.*

### Front Pocket

Toilet Kit - Soap, Towel etc.

### Main Rucsac

From Top to Bottom:

Waterproof survival bag  
First Aid kit  
Waterproof (top & trousers)  
Cooking utensils  
Spare clothing  
Shoes  
Main clothing  
Other items  
Sleeping bag

All items should be in a strong, waterproof plastic bag within the rucsac.