

# Backpacks: Adjusting the Fit

Backpacks come with a number of straps that let you adjust your load for maximum comfort. This article and video discuss how to properly adjust those straps so that 80% to 90% of the load weight rests on your hips.

Before getting started, you may want to be sure you have the [right pack size](#).

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## The Steps to a Great Pack Fit

First, loosen all of the pack's straps and hipbelt. Start by putting about 10 to 15 lbs. of weight into the pack to simulate a loaded pack. If making these pack adjustments at home, follow the steps below in front of a mirror. Get a friend to help if possible, or visit an REI store for more assistance.

### Step 1: Hipbelt

- Put the pack on your back so that the hipbelt is resting over your hip bones.
- Close the hipbelt buckle and tighten it.
- Check the padded sections of the hipbelt to make sure they wrap around your hips comfortably. Keep at least 1" of clearance on either side of the center buckle.
- If the hipbelt is too loose or tight, try repositioning the hipbelt buckle. If this doesn't solve the problem, you may need a different pack (or hipbelt).

### Step 2: Shoulder Straps

- Pull down and back on the ends of the shoulder straps to tighten them.
- Shoulder straps should fit closely to hold the pack body against your back and thus keeping the load forward. They should NOT be carrying the weight.
- Have your helper check to see that the shoulder strap anchor points are 1" to 2" inches below the top of your shoulders.

### Step 3: Load Lifters

- Load-lifter straps are located just below the tops of your shoulders (near your collarbones) and should angle back toward the pack body at a 45-degree angle.
- Gently snug the load-lifter straps to pull weight off your shoulders. (Overtightening the load lifters will cause a gap to form between your shoulders and the shoulder straps.)

### Step 4: Sternum Strap

- Adjust the sternum strap as needed to a comfortable height across your chest.
- Buckle the sternum strap and tighten until the shoulder straps are

pulled inwards comfortably from your shoulders, allowing your arms to move freely.

- Pull the stabilizer straps located on either side of the hipbelt to snug the pack body toward the hipbelt and stabilize the load.

## Final Tweaks

- Pull the stabilizer straps, if equipped, located on either side of the hipbelt to snug the pack body toward the hipbelt and stabilize the load.
- [Go back](#) to the shoulder straps and carefully take a bit of tension off of them. This ensures the majority of the weight is carried by your hips.

Now you're ready to go!

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It would be great to include a picture and show the parts you are referring to. I am new to [internal frame backpacks](#) and I had trouble with some parts.

Posted by G Lee on Nov 07, 2012 17:01 PM

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Hey G Lee,

I worked up a diagram for you so you can see the anatomy of the parts described above. Stop in to your local REI store or call 1-800-426-4840 if you have any additional questions.

[IMG]<http://i.imgur.com/4EKZS.jpg>[/IMG]

Posted by Tallest On Earth on Nov 26, 2012 15:11 PM

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Hey G Lee,

I worked up a graphic of a pack's anatomy based on the above steps. <http://imgur.com/4EKZS> Stop in your local REI or call 1-800-426-4840 if you have any additional questions and someone will be glad to help you out! Happy Hiking!

Posted by Tallest On Earth on Nov 26, 2012 15:18 PM

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Hi Tallest,

I have not been able to access the diagram/graphic from teh link in your comment. I can get to "imgur" but cannot find your pictures.

Can you help?

Posted by James on the way on  
Dec 20, 2012 06:50 AM

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