



## CHILD BACKPACK FITTING GUIDE

This checklist has been developed to assist individuals to undertake a review of their backpack use.

### Getting ready:

Observe the individual. Observe their posture, movements and backpack used. Using the following checklists as a guide, look at the positive features of the way the individual wears their backpack in addition to areas that could be improved to benefit the comfort and/or efficiency of the individual.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

AREA	Y	N	COMMENTS
<b>1. Loading:</b>  <b>1.1 Does the backpack have separate compartments?</b> Use compartments to pack heavier objects closer to the body.  <b>1.2 Do these compartments allow the contents to be securely arranged?</b> Ensure that objects are secure and not free to move about the backpack.  <b>1.3 Have you selected the most appropriate sized backpack for your child?</b> Always use the smallest backpack that will suit your child's needs.			

<p><b>1.4 Many backpacks have built in wheels to minimize the load carried.</b> Can you purchase a bag that has wheels to avoid the need to carry the backpack at all times?</p> <p><b>1.5 Is the load comfortable and safely stored?</b> Sharp or hard objects should be packed in such a fashion that they do not come in contact with the body.</p> <p><b>1.6 Is the Backpack being handled correctly? Does your child bend their knees to lift the backpack?</b> The most ergonomic backpack is still bad if lifted incorrectly. Ensure that your child lifts with their knees rather than their back!</p>			
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<p><b>2. Weight:</b></p> <p><b>2.1 Is the weight of the backpack when loaded appropriate for your child?</b>  Guidelines suggest that the overall weight of the backpack should be between 10-15% of the child's weight. It definitely should NOT exceed 20% of the child's weight!</p> <p><b>2.2 Adults can tolerate larger loads</b></p> <p><b>2.3 Does your child lean forward when they are carrying their backpack?</b>  This is a sign that there is too much weight in the backpack</p> <p><b>2.4 Is your backpack made of durable and appropriate materials?</b>  Try to purchase a lighter backpack to assist in reducing the weight carried. Consider the materials that have been used in its production to ensure that it has been constructed from strong, durable and light-weight materials.</p>			
<p><b>3. Lumbar Support:</b></p> <p><b>3.1 Does the backpack offer support for the lower back?</b>  Purchase a backpack that supports the lower back. Ideally this will be a frame of some kind which follows the contours of the lumbar spine and provides support.</p>			

<p><b>4. Waist Straps:</b></p> <p><b>4.1 Does the backpack have a waist strap?</b> Waist straps are important for keeping the backpack stable and reducing excess movement which increase discomfort and fatigue.</p>			
<p><b>5. Shoulder Straps:</b></p> <p><b>5.1 Do the shoulder straps allow for adjustment to fit your child?</b> Shoulder straps need to be adjustable to ensure that the backpack can be kept close to the body.</p> <p><b>5.2 Always use both shoulders to carry the backpack</b></p>			
<p><b>6. Padding:</b></p> <p><b>6.1 Is the padding of appropriately located?</b> Padding needs to be located at all of the major contact points where the backpack meets the body.</p> <p><b>6.2 Is the padding of sufficient thickness?</b> Padding needs to be thick enough to be comfortable but not so thick that it produces a poor fit.</p>			

<p><b>7. Hygiene:</b></p> <p><b>7.1 How often to do clean out your child's backpack?</b> Regularly check your child's backpack to remove excess clutter that might reduce available space or restrict correct loading.</p> <p><b>7.2 How hygienic is your child's backpack?</b> Food and other materials left in the backpack can increase wear and tear which reduce the bags life span.</p>			
<p><b>8. Plan:</b></p> <p><b>8.1 Does your child's backpack appropriately packed?</b> Ask your child's teacher regarding what your child needs to take to school as opposed to what they can keep at home.</p> <p><b>8.2 Does everything really need to be there?</b> Can equipment for special activities (i.e. swimming, Library day) be carried separately?</p> <p><b>8.3 Are there heavy objects that are going to be in your child's backpack all day?</b> Perhaps a separate bag could be used for a laptop or other heavy equipment to prevent it needing to be carried all day.</p>			

<p><b>9. Educate:</b></p> <p><b>9.1 Can you child determine what they need to take to school?</b> Teach your child about how to minimize the load that they carry.</p> <p><b>9.2 How much time does your child spend wearing the backpack?</b> Ensure that your child understand the importance of minimizing the time that they spend wearing their backpack.</p> <p><b>9.3 Teach your child to respect their backpack.</b> Protect your investment by reduce wear and tear on the backpack through inappropriate use or reckless handling.</p>			
<p><b>10. Listen:</b></p> <p><b>10.1 What does your child say about wearing their backpack?</b> If the child complains of discomfort, check the other steps for problems. If this does not address the issue reduce the weight immediately.</p>			

<p><b>11. Posture:</b></p> <p><b>11.1 Does the backpack look comfortable on your child?</b> Ensure that your child can maintain a good posture when wearing the backpack.</p> <p><b>11.2 Is your child unable to stand normally when wearing the backpack?</b> Distortions to your child's posture can be an indicator that it is inappropriately fitted or too heavy.</p> <p><b>11.3 Does the child have any excessive curve in their lower back?</b> Poorly fitted backpacks commonly cause disruption to your child's spinal curves. If this is the case, please start from the beginning of this document and review.</p> <p><b>11.4 Does your child slouch at the shoulders?</b> Is the child's shoulder in a relaxed neutral posture without leaning? This is another indicator that the backpack is poorly fitted and should prompt review.</p> <p><b>11.5 Can the child wear the backpack and keep their head and neck in neutral position without excessive forward or backward tilting?</b></p> <p><b>11.6 Is the backpack being worn on both shoulders?</b> Hanging a backpack off one shoulder produces poor posture and is linked to numerous future health issues.</p>			
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<p><b>12. Fitting:</b></p> <p><b>12.1 Considering the following points when fitting a backpack to your child:</b></p> <p>12.1.1 Adjust the straps to fit your child securely.</p> <p>12.1.2 The bottom of the backpack should sit clear of the child buttocks.</p> <p>12.1.3 The top of the backpack should NOT be above the child's head.</p>			
<p><b>13. Participate:</b></p> <p><b>Do you have concerns over the backpacks availability? Or perhaps the school does not have lockers allowing the removal of unneeded books from backpacks impossible?</b></p> <p>School administrators are busy people so perhaps consider becoming involved in your schools parents group to facilitate change or address issues and concerns that you have regarding your child.</p>			
<p><b>14. Supervise:</b></p> <p><b>Maintain a mindset to reduce the load of your child's backpack!</b></p>			