

The Pack on Your Back

Basic Wilderness Skills
Seattle Mountaineers
2015



The Pack on Your Back

- We are going to cover:
 - Types of packs
 - Classes of packs
 - Backpack Anatomy
 - Tips for picking a pack



A Golden Age of Backpacks

- Prior to 1950, packs were wood frames with canvas sacks attached and webbing or rope for straps.
- Today's backpacks are marvels of technology, engineering and design
- Lots of choices, lots of fancy options
- Problem or Embarrassment of Riches?

The Best Backpack

Aug. 19, 1924.

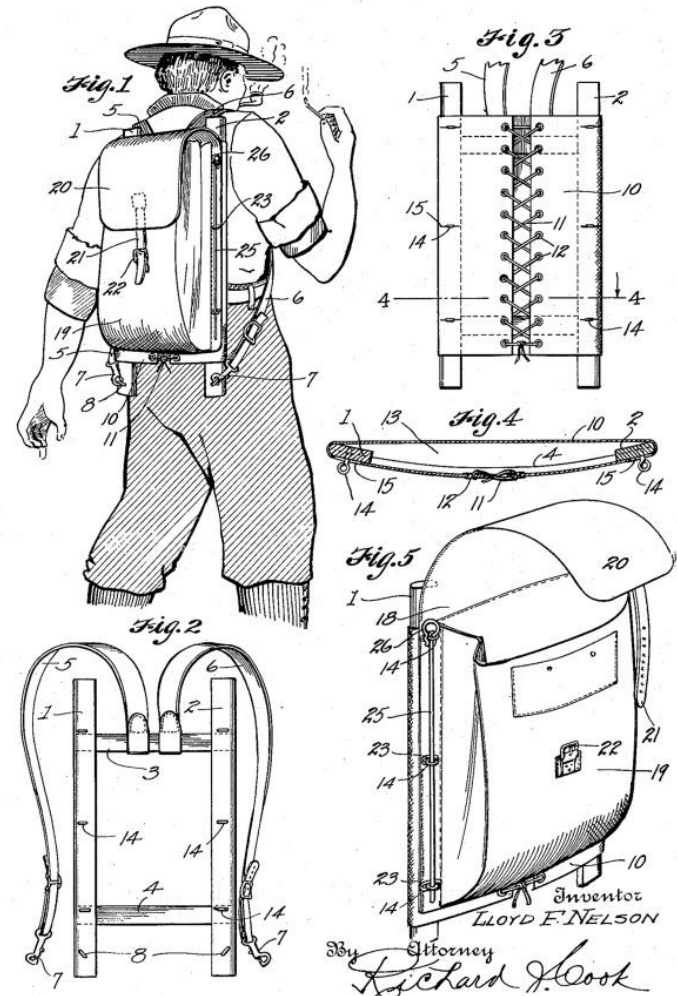
L. F. NELSON

1,505,661

PACK

Filed July 31, 1922

- The best backpack is the one that best fits you and meets your needs.
- Different packs for different sizes and different needs.



Backpack Types

- External frame
 - Usually larger, for extended backpacking trips
 - Good for strapping/tying things to
 - Less comfortable
 - Generally older
 - Can carry heavy loads
 - Not a good choice for day hikes



Backpack Types

- Internal Frame
 - Most common type now
 - More flexible, conforms to body's shape
 - More comfortable
 - Frame is either metal stays, a heavy plastic pad or a metal tube hidden in a compartment between the pack straps and the main compartment

Backpack Types

- Backpack classifications
 - Hydration packs
 - Designed to hold a hydration bladder and not much else
 - Not appropriate for Mountaineers hikes
 - Small, lightweight, generally no frame

Backpack Types

- Backpack Classifications
 - Small daypacks
 - Less than 1500 cu. in.
 - = limited capacity
 - Often no frame
 - May be acceptable,
depending on the
hike and time of year



Backpack Types

- Backpack classifications
 - Medium-size daypack
 - 1500 - 2500 cu. In.
 - Internal frame
 - Generally the right size for spring, summer and fall hikes.



Backpack Types

- Backpack classifications
 - Large daypacks
 - 3000-4000 cu. in.
 - Good for all four seasons
 - Internal frame



Backpack Types

- Backpack classifications
 - Backpacking packs:
 - Over 4000 cu. in.
 - Internal frame, sometimes external
 - Large and bulky



Backpack Types

- Backpack classifications
 - Ski & snowboard packs
 - Usually in the 1500-2500 cu. in. range
 - Special attachment points for strapping on skis and snowboards
 - Can be used as a hiking pack but not it's real purpose

Backpack Types

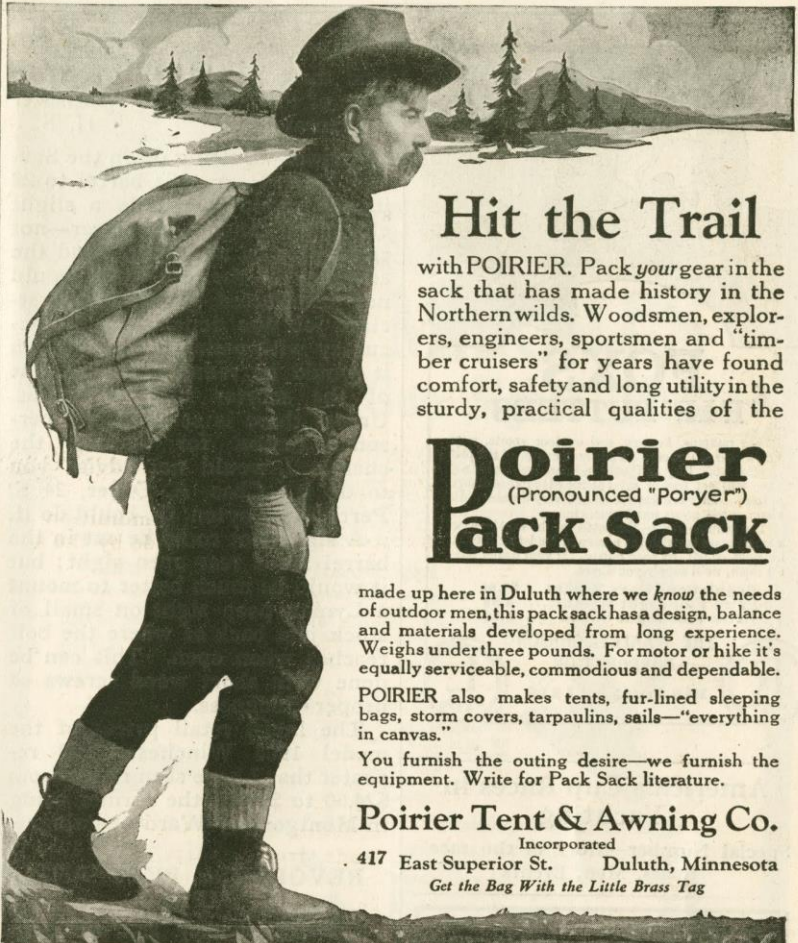
- Pack Classifications
 - Alpine / Climbing packs
 - Usually have a narrow profile
 - Lots of attachment points for hardware
 - Can be used on a day hike but not it's real purpose.

Backpack Types

- Pack Classifications:
 - Ultralight packs
 - Just what they sound like: everything is lighter
 - Fabric, straps, buckles, frame
 - Can carry just as much gear as a regular pack
 - Less durable / weather-resistant due to lighter materials

Backpack Anatomy

- Frame
- Suspension
- Sack
- Accessory Straps
- Pockets



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Backpack Anatomy

- Frame
 - Provides the structure to which the suspension and sack are attached.
 - Located behind shoulder straps & hip belt.
 - Metal Stays (2)
 - Plastic sheet
 - Perimeter tube frame

Backpack Anatomy

- Suspension
 - Connects you to the frame and sack to the frame
 - Shoulder straps
 - Sternum strap
 - Load lifter straps pull the top of your pack closer to your body
 - Hip belt
 - Stabilizer straps pull the bottom of the pack closer to your body
 - Compression straps
 - Compress the sack into the frame

Pack Anatomy

- Sack
 - Main fabric compartment that holds your gear
- Pockets
 - Top, side or rear
- Accessory straps
 - Ice-axe or trekking pole loops
 - Attachment points
 - Daisy chains

Picking a Pack

- How do I get to my gear?
 - Top loading packs
 - Rear loading packs
 - Hybrids



Picking a Pack

- Top Loaders
 - Pack is one big sack, accessed from the top only
 - Can be hard to locate stuff in your pack
 - Difficult to see what's in your pack

Picking a Pack

- Rear Loaders
 - Usually a long zipper that runs in an inverted ‘U’ shape up one side, across the top-rear and down the other side of your pack
 - Allows you to access more of your pack at once
 - Easier to see what’s in your pack and find items
 - The zipper can be a drawback as it presents an entry point for moisture

Picking a Pack

- Hybrids
 - Usually a top-loading compartment on top, a rear-loading compartment at the bottom.
 - Some pack have zips on the sides or a modified/reduced rear load zipper for access.
 - More common in larger packs than in daypacks.

Picking a Pack

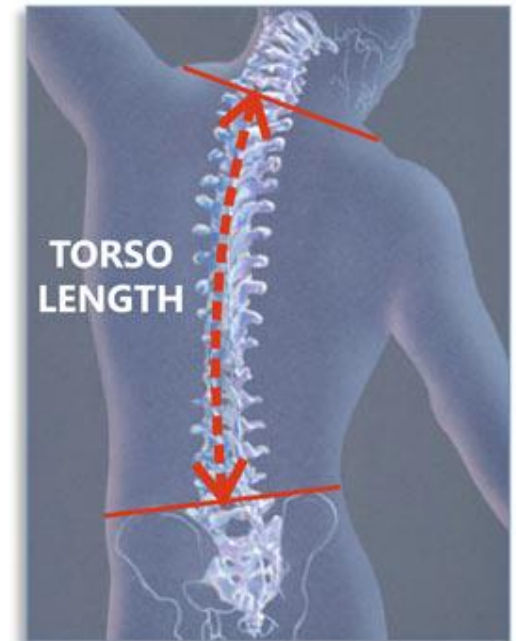
- Capacity vs. Size
 - Capacity the the volume of the pack
 - How much space for carrying gear
 - Measured in Litres or Cubic Inches

Picking a Pack

- 10 litres = 610 cubic inches
- 15 litres = 915 cubic inches
- 20 litres = 1220 cubic inches
- 25 litres = 1526 cubic inches
- 30 litres = 1831 cubic inches
- 40 litres = 2441 cubic inches

Picking a Pack

- Packs come in different sizes
 - Small, medium, large
 - Based on torso size, not capacity
 - Measure your torso
 - Distance between the top of your hipbone and the base of your neck



Picking a Pack

- Pack size and torso size:
 - Extra Small: Fits torsos up to 15 ½”
 - Small: Fits torsos 16” to 17½”
 - Medium/Regular: Fits torsos 18” to 19½”
 - Large/Tall: Fits torsos 20” and up



Picking a Pack

- Pack sizes
 - Some packs offer hip belts in different sizes
 - Hip belt may be interchangeable
 - Hip belt rests on top of your hip bone, not around your waist
 - Shoulder straps on day packs usually only come in one size
 - Make sure they are long enough not to pinch your chest

Picking a Pack

- Look for something with a capacity in the range of 25-40 L / 1500-2500 cu. in.
- Bring or ask for something heavy to put in the pack before you try it on
- Try several packs in several sizes to get an idea how they differ.
- Check for pinch points in the shoulder straps or hip belt

Picking a Pack

- Finding the best pack for you is usually a matter of trial and error. You may go through several packs before you find one you like.
- If you get into hiking in earnest, you will likely find yourself with more than one pack.

Picking a Pack

- The best pack for you is the one that best fits you and meets your needs.

