

# A Parent's Guide to Packing for Walden

...from a former camper, counselor, parent of two campers,  
and assistant camp director!

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I love packing my kids for camp! I am all about lists, piles, labels, and more. I strongly suggest that you pack with your child so they can **take ownership over** what they are bringing and how/where it is being packed.

At camp, young kids especially are trying to figure out how to get dressed, shower, make their own beds, etc. The more involved they can be in the packing, and knowledgeable about what's in their duffels, **the more organized they'll be at camp**. This will also get them excited to go to camp!

I've created a [Google Site](#), with links to all the camp items your camper will need and then some! The site also includes Walden's suggested packing list. **These are all suggestions**--some of them my kids use, some not. Any linked items are those I have seen campers with at camp. Feel free to shop around, especially at our preferred Michigan camp outfitters, [Brody's](#) and [Perfect Trading Co.](#)



## Where Should I Start?

The sooner you begin the less stressed you will be. But before you begin, **make sure you have a plan** in place in terms of how you are going to organize everything and your timeline for packing.

After you have established where you will be packing (i.e. a room that ideally doesn't get a lot of traffic!), make sure you have the right duffel bags for camp. I will tell you from personal experience, both packing and moving bags around, that **bigger is not always better**. My kids' use [this bag](#). It's large enough for me to pack them with 12-14 days worth of clothes, plus bedding and towels, with no problems. I use two duffels per kid. (When you pack in larger bags, they get too heavy, and that's when the straps rip from pulling.)

Next, you probably have a lot of the items on the list already, but there are going to be some that you need to purchase or re-buy. Use the provided camp list as your guide and then **create a supplemental list for/with your child**. I like to print out the camp list and then make a second list of things I need to buy and the quantity.

## Packing 101

When I start packing my kids, we first go through the camp's list and lay out everything that we already have by category: **clothes, toiletries, bedding, games, etc.** Then we add anything from our own personal list within each category.

Once we everything laid out, I make two **NEW** lists: one is for everything I need to buy; the other is a list of items that we already have but are holding off from packing (you can't pack **your child's favorite t-shirt** three months before they leave for camp!). I also write the **things are we missing on sticky notes** and put those next to each pile.



Remember your kid(s) is/are are going to camp. ***I would not recommend packing things that could break, or easily get damaged, or anything that your child would be terribly upset over losing. Expect that there will be stuff that you pack that won't make it home.***

After you have gathered all of your items, it's time to **start labeling everything**. When I say everything, **I mean EVERYTHING!** There are a few different ways to label your items. Things I know I am going to toss after camp get labeled in Sharpie (mostly toiletries) and other items get sticker labels (I like [Label Daddy](#), [Olivers Labels & Label Land](#)). You can also purchase custom name stamps. I get mine from [Mabels Labels](#). I don't love the stamps for some things because I have found that they bleed through light colored shirts. However, stamps are great for PJ's, socks, underwear, or certain tags. Make sure the ink is dark enough to survive a commercial washing machine!

After you have all items labeled, you can start bagging them. I bag my items a few different ways: packing cubes and a variety of reusable Ziplock-type bags. **Clothes go into packing cubes by category (t-shirts, shorts, long pants, socks, etc.).** I also keep one aside for novelty items that they would use on Special Days\* (e.g. Color Clash, 4th of July, Capture the Camp, etc. For instance, colored tutus are popular or sweat bands in various colors). Ziplocs-type bags are the best for packing towels and toiletries. I put **their towels in the jumbo-sized bags** and use various other sizes to pack their toiletries. I always **double bag** things like shampoo, conditioner, face soap, toothpaste, etc.

## Do I Need to Pack More?

You know your kid best: Does he like to put on a clean outfit twice a day? Is she happy in the same t-shirt all day (and maybe the next?!). **The camp's packing list is a general guide**, so there might be things you will want to take a few more of. Just remember that for campers staying more than two weeks, laundry will go out weekly (on Thursdays, typically) and cleaned clothes will return to camp three or four days later. (This is why campers need two laundry bags; dirty laundry will go out in one bag, so they'll need the other in the meantime.) Laundry does not go out for two-week campers.

There are also items that you will want to add or at least think about that aren't on the official the packing list. **Some campers like to personalize their space with posters, pictures, a calendar, etc.** They might also want a fun pillow case, frisbee, coloring supplies or games to play with their cabin. (Counselors will provide masking/painters tape for campers to safely adhere items to the cabin walls. Scotch tape is too hard to peel off, and duct tape takes the lacquer off the wood.)



## First Day Apparel

### *What to put in the bus (or car) bag*

Lots of kids will come to camp wearing Walden gear—t-shirts or sweatshirts with a Walden logo on them. Most also have some sort of “carry-on” bag/backpack with them. This should include **a swimsuit and towel (maybe goggles) for the swim test**, so a camper doesn't have to dig through duffels to find those items. The “carry-on” usually includes a water bottle and whatever else didn't make it into the duffel (comfort items, clothes that are needed and didn't get packed) games, a book, snacks for the bus ride. Campers taking the West Bloomfield or Chicago buses to camp should have a nut-free lunch packed, too.

\***Special Days** usually consist of the camp divided into different “color” teams—red and yellow for Capture the Camp, for instance. Teams are determined at camp, and kids usually borrow from friends if they don't have a t-shirt that is the “right” color. Walden also has t-shirts for kids to borrow. Typical Color Clash colors are red, yellow, blue, green, purple, orange, black and white.