FIELD GUIDE · NO. 27

Go-Bag Layout

A go-bag covers the first day or two away from home — built around likely needs, not every possible scenario.



FROM THE BOOK

1. A go-bag is not meant to support weeks in the wilderness. It provides essential items for the first day or two of an unexpected evacuation, a roadside emergency, or a time when you cannot return home immediately. The checklist in the book is framed around the first 24–72 hours.
2. Do not try to pack everything you own. If the bag is already hard work to carry in the driveway, simplify. Choose a comfortable, durable backpack or small duffel you will actually take with you.
3. Think first about water, food, shelter, warmth, light, first aid, communication, and simple tools. A compact water bottle, a small first-aid kit, a flashlight with fresh batteries, a lightweight rain jacket, and a few shelf-stable snacks often beat heavier, specialized gear.
4. Include a complete change of clothes appropriate to your climate (especially dry socks), plus everyday personal items: prescription medications, eyeglasses, basic toiletries, a phone cable, and a small power bank. Add a notebook, a pen, copies of essential documents in a waterproof sleeve, and a list of important phone numbers.
5. Leave a little room for last-minute items. Keep the bag where everyone in the household can reach it — a closet or near the front door — not buried in an attic. Protect it from excessive heat and moisture.
6. Inspect it regularly: replace expired food, refresh water if appropriate, check batteries, rotate clothing with the seasons, and keep medications current. Inspect at least twice each year. The best test is to carry it on a short walk or a weekend trip.

PRACTICE IT

Weigh your go-bag, carry it around the block, and then unpack and repack it so the items you would reach for first are easy to find.