

## A Back-up for Backpacks

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If capitalism has given us something, it is a wide variety of products. Even for such a basic need as taking your things with you whenever you set foot on the street, the market has managed to present a choice of several options for you to choose. But of all the bags available, I pick the classic backpack. Even in times when people choose things by appearance rather than by their practicality, the backpack is still seen everywhere, and for good reasons.

It does not matter if you have to go to school, to your job, go out with your friends or even to the supermarket around the corner; the backpack will never let you down. It is a reliable option for everyone in every possible situation. This is sometimes an underrated trait that cannot be found in many products that are seen out there. The rolling backpack, for instance, is great for children under 9 years of age, who do not yet have the sufficient strength to carry their loads of books on their backs. Once they reach a certain age, they start to realise how inconvenient it is to carry that wheeled bag when going up the stairs, or how annoying the noise they make can be. And they eventually leave their rolling backpacks behind, even if that means having to say goodbye to their favourite superhero that has kept them company for so many years. Maybe when one reaches the second childhood, this kind of bag will be considered an option once again. Yet, for the longest part of our lives, it would be considered at least uncommon to be using a rolling backpack when heading to your destination.

What makes the backpack suitable for every occasion is its design. Not much thought is given to how efficient and advantageous the backpack's qualities are. One of its major characteristics is its comfortability, for it allows you to carry everything on your back thus keeping both your hands free to do whatever you need to do —tying up your shoelaces, your example. The modern ones even come with cushioned straps and back to make them even comfier. But sometimes, when going through crowded areas, carrying your backpack on your back can be tempting pickpockets —especially in public transport. It is true that backpacks have zippers, but they do not guarantee you the safety of your possessions, though. Luckily, society has found a way to prevent this from happening and has turned the backpack into what can be called a “chestpack”. With this change of placement, you may now have your belongings in plain sight while still having your hands free. You not only avoid being picked, but you now also have easier access to your various pockets and can take out whatever you need with no difficulty.

Usually, my second choice is the fanny pack. These are trending once again, after having disappeared for the last two decades—at least for the younger part of the population. Sometimes, we have to recognize that a backpack can be too big for the little things that we need to carry; and that is when this small but mighty option appears. Sharing some of the qualities of the backpack —such as being hands free, or the chestpack's characteristic of using it on the front— the fanny pack is perfect for those situations in which you go out with just your keys, your wallet and a few other small things that you cannot fit into your limited pocket space. Having this extra pocket on your belly or on your side, is even more helpful for women who, for some odd reason, still have to suffer not having big enough pockets in their trousers.

Talking about women's experience, the first thing that probably comes to mind is a handbag. This instant association, a result of the encouragement of a stereotype, is what

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pressures women to still use handbags, maybe without even considering the possibility of choosing any other kind of bag. Luckily for them, handbags are not entirely bad, and some good points can be said in their favour. One of the biggest reasons why someone would choose to use a handbag is how stylish they are. There is a sense of elegance around them that would definitely boost anyone's self confidence just by going out with one under their arm. A handbag's size is not to be underestimated; whenever my mother told me to get her something from her handbag, I would spend ten minutes fumbling as if it was a bottomless pot, with no result whatsoever. And by some kind of magic, when she was the one looking, her desired object would be conjured up as if manifested into existence at that very instant. I defend the idea that each person knows their way around their mess, but I would still find it hard to live with that chaos everyday.

There is only one valid reason to be using a gym bag, and that is to allow you to leave your house early in the morning and have different activities throughout the day without going back. This usually involves having notebooks, a laptop —or whatever tool you use at work— a pair of stinky trainers, and your meal for the day sharing the same space. The mixture of smells that is produced in there could set off a biohazard detector —if they actually existed. No air freshener, deodorant or disinfectant can mitigate this odour —and I personally think that it even makes it worse. We could think of the gym bag as a handbag on steroids, every negative aspect that the handbag may have, is even bigger in a gym bag. It cannot ever be comfortable to be carrying around a bag the size of a child on your hip. And if I consider a handbag to be bottomless, the gym bag would be the equivalent of opening a gate to outer space.

Every other bag that is not mentioned here is either too similar to the above mentioned, or are simply not used as much and its users should not be attacked for having the bravery to do so. But the bag that deserves to be attacked is the *Tote bag*. These cloth bags are trending and receiving increasing attention above any other kind of bag, and the one and only reason behind it is that they are considered a cute thing to add to people's outfits, with an infinite variety of prints, or the plain canvas for the more artistic to paint whatever they want on them. The original objective of these bags was to take them with you to the supermarket and reuse them so that the production of plastic bags should be reduced. If only they were used in that way, they would get the respect they deserve, as an honourable, easy to carry bag that has a mission. But this objective has been completely lost, the massive production of tote bags cannot be sustainable at all —and manufacturers are not the ones to blame. They are everywhere to be found. But luckily enough, their use is restricted for some obvious reasons. The first one is the weather: if it happens to be raining and you are carrying a cloth bag, you can consider all your possessions to be soaked and ruined. The second one is that they are not safe at all, they have no zippers, or buttons, or even a piece of Velcro to keep them closed, which makes it easier for things to be stolen or even fall out of the bag as it has no structure. Yet, I must admit that tote bags users are loyal, for, even knowing all this, they will still use them and defend them as if their families were being insulted.

I myself have to admit that bags are one's most reliable company and the least we could do is be loyal to them. With all the years of travelling together one develops a kind of friendship with their backpack and then finds it hard not to use it when it is not needed. The good thing is that you can have different backpacks for different situations, without it necessarily meaning that you like one better than the other—we do not want backpacks to be jealous of their siblings or worse, to feel unwanted. As friends, they complement and support one another, even in these hard times.