



Pack Your Bag

Have you ever gone to a race and discovered minutes before it was time to take the start line that you were missing a vital piece of equipment? Perhaps you drove 2 hours to a ride only to discover you forgot your cleats. Or, maybe after a big ride you dug into your bag looking for some food and a cold drink only to find some spare change and a bunch of lint. The following guidelines can help you avoid these problems and ensure that you have everything you need come race day.

Gear Bags

It may seem obvious, but packing your bag starts with the bag itself. Gear bags come in all shapes and sizes. There are literally dozens out there that will work. The key is finding one that will let you put everything you need into it neatly and well organized. Some things to look for include:

- Multiple compartments and sections to store things
- Large Center Section with room for clean and dirty clothes
- Storage for water bottles
- 2 End Compartments (1 for Shoes and 1 for a Helmet)

A good habit is to keep your bag packed with the basics all the time. That way, if you need it in a rush, it is ready to go. Furthermore, whenever you finish an event re-pack it before putting it away. This ensures that you will never show up without an essential item.

Paperwork

For every event you will need some type of paperwork. In some cases you can register in advance but in others you will still need to turn in forms at the registration table. Come with as much paperwork already filled out as possible and keep extra blank copies in a folder somewhere in your bag. Here are a few documents you should keep in your bag just in case:

- USA Cycling forms & releases (Pre-filled out & signed minus date/event info)
- Copy of your racing license
- USA Cycling Rule Book
- Race Resume



Equipment

Anyone who rides knows how important it is to arrive with at least two main pieces of equipment, your helmet and Bike. Without these two items, you can't race. However, it is equally important to remember to bring some extra gear along as well

- Spare Parts (common items like nuts, bolts & chain links for a quick fix in a pinch)
- Extra pair of cleats
- Spare parts for your shoes (If they have replaceable pieces)
- Spare Tube(s)
- Tire Pump
- Trainer (For warming up)

Clothing

Some events you can come dressed and ready to race. For others you may not have that option. A good habit is to put all your gear into your race bag the night before regardless of whether you can dress before you leave the house or not. This way you will be sure everything is in the bag and if time and circumstances allow you can just reach in and pull out what you need. Basic items you should plan on having include:

- Glasses (with spare lenses for various weather Conditions)
- Helmet
- Shoes
- Socks
- Jersey
- Base Layer
- Shorts/Bibs

In addition to these items it is also a good idea to keep a number of items in your bag at all times just in case. Mornings can be cold and if the weather turns on you having them can be a lifesaver.

- Lightweight jacket
- Arm warmers
- Leg/Knee warmers
- Finger gloves
- Vest



Finally, a set of street clothes for after the race is a must. You should never sit around in sweaty dirty clothes and it is a lot more refreshing to change into something comfortable.

- Shorts/Pants
- T-shirt
- Fleece pull over (in case it is cold)
- Shoes
- Clean socks
- Street Shoes (Sandals are ok as an addition but not replacement to shoes)

Food

One thing people invariably forget is food and water. Although these are items you can't pack and leave in your bag for days or weeks on end, some simple things can be left in there all the time. They include:

- 2 empty water bottles
- Money to buy food
- Packs of single serve Raisins, Dry Fruit, and/or Granola bars.
- Pre-portioned packs of sports drink powder
- Bag of trail mix

Avoid Goos and Gels as well as other heavily processed items to the greatest extent possible and stick to simple easy to eat healthy items that appeal to you.

Extras

In addition to everything else you bring there are a number of items that you can keep on hand that will make life a little easier and less stressful if you keep them in your bag at all times.

- Small sewing kit (you never know when you may get a rip or tear in your clothes)
- Money
- Pen and small pad of paper (to take notes or exchange info with others)
- Index cards (use them to tag your extra wheels at crits)
- Toilet paper(great when the port-o-potty runs out)
- Full sized backpacking towel (great for changing and/or washing up)
- Safety pins (keep them pinned right to the handle of your bag)
- Zip lock bags (lifesavers in rain or to have a place to store things)
- Zip ties
- Electrical Tape
- Small replacement parts for helmets, shoes and your bike
-



Hygiene and Health

Finally it is important not to forget health related items you may need. From things you can use to clean up after a race to contacts or medication be sure you pack it all and if possible keep them in your bag at all times. Some common items include:

- Sun block
- First aid items (Band-aids, antiseptic and antibiotic cream).
- Something to use to wash up after a race (Baby Wipes and/or body wash)
- Deodorant
- Personal items you may need
- Medication

By packing well before your big day and getting in the habit of stocking your bag with the things you know you will need at any given time you can eliminate a lot of stress allowing you to focus on riding and not on just getting ready. Attached is a basic checklist you can use to pack your bag before an event. Run off a copy and go through it the night before to be sure everything you need is there.

Alan Martin is a USA Cycling Level I Coach, Certified Skill Instructor, and owner of Central Ohio Velosport, LLC (www.cohvelosport.com) a bicycle coaching business that trains cyclists to become better riders and competitors. For questions or input he can be contacted at centralohvelo@gmail.com.