

Hoisting the Pack onto Your Back

Prevent "Pack Lifting" injury. Jerking a heavy pack off the ground and swinging it onto your back is a good way to injure your back. There's several popular, and safe, ways to do it. The best way to learn how to get the pack onto your back without straining is to watch experienced backpackers do it, then practice imitating them. The first time, do it with an empty pack, and then work yourself up to the full weight you will carry. At the beginning or when the pack is heavy, it helps to loosen the shoulder straps a little. Bring the pack up to rest on your knee/thigh/hip with the back (strap side) facing me, and then lean it to one side. Slip the closest arm through the shoulder strap and, with a smooth motion, swing it around behind you, reach down and catch it by sliding the other (free) arm through the other (free) shoulder strap. A couple of small jumps or jiggles allows you to position it squarely high on your shoulders (for stability and so that the hip belt is above your hips). Then clip the hip belt, followed by adjusting the shoulder straps and fastening the sternum strap.

This may have taken a lot of words to explain, but it's relatively fast and safe. Another method is to rest the pack on a tree stump or embankment and squat down to slip into the shoulder harness. Yet another method is to have someone hold the pack while you slip into the harness.