

The business of travel

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"Just in case" packing is a common but ineffective strategy used by most travelers. Many people burden themselves with a truckload of clothes only to come home with most of them unworn. The secret to effortless dressing is planning before you go.

Where are you traveling?
What's the climate like?
What will you be doing?
How will the others dress?

If you don't know, ask. Call the people you are visiting, or contact the organiser of the conference you're attending. Check with your travel agent or simply Google your destination. It's such an obvious step yet so few people ever do it.

Once you know the weather details, select an appropriate eight to twelve items of clothing that mix and match easily. These can translate into thirty different outfits when accessorised correctly. It's not as hard as it seems: The items must be in colours and styles that complement each other. Take more tops than bottoms. Two pairs of shoes (one smart, one casual) is generally all you should pack for any trip. Consider your activities when deciding on the styles. Pack a range of accessories, as these can make the same clothes look radically different.

If you travel frequently for business, it's a wise strategy to create a list of your mix- and- match items to make packing easier. This should include:

- * Two suits (or a smart and a casual jacket that match your bottoms)
- * Four shirts or tops that coordinate with both suits. Two should be in solid colours and two in prints
- * One knit that can be dressed up or down
- * One pair of jeans or shorts
- * Accessories that can translate from day to evening
- * Shoes and a small carry bag

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- * Toiletries and personal items.

If you've planned well, the actual packing should be a breeze. Remember:

- * Pack lightly but tightly. Wrinkling is caused both by under- and over- packing.
- * Place heavy items at the bottom of your suitcase – it will be easier to wheel around.
- * Place shoes along the border of your suitcase. Bundle each pair together, with soles out and heels at opposite ends. Use the insides of packed shoes for fragile items.
- * Button smart shirts and jackets – they will crease less.
- * Don't fold garments in half – this will create a crease line across the middle.
- * Roll some of your clothes instead of folding them. This works well with jeans, t- shirts, pants, skirts and sports shirts.
- * Use plastic or light fabric bags to put individual bundles in. If airport security searches your luggage, you'll be grateful that you did. It's also easier to unpack once you arrive at your destination.

Now, it's time to choose your luggage. There are a few things to keep in mind when selecting appropriate luggage. While you might be tempted to save money by buying from a discount store, your trip could turn into a nightmare if it falls apart halfway through. A designer suitcase on the other hand might be a fancy style statement but it's not your best option when it comes to functionality. Practically speaking, you want a quality bag made by a reputable luggage brand.

Design elements to take into account when making a purchase include:

- * Large rubberised wheels – these are a must to save yourself from too much pulling and pushing.
- * A lockable handle – choose one long enough so you don't have to hunch over.
- * Self- repairing synthetic zippers – they will hold together where metal ones won't.
- * A hook for an additional bag – handy if you do some shopping.
- * Plenty of pockets, both inside and out – you'll save time trying to find things.
- * A lifetime warranty.

Happy traveling!

Elena Reed is a speaker and stylist specializing in image and business etiquette. She runs regular webinars for professionals to help them create a winning image for career and personal success. Meet Elena at www.elenareed.com.au