


To *stuff* or to *roll*, that is the question!

Whether your sleeping bag has a down or synthetic fill, the action is the same... stuff it!

Let's guide you through a step-by-step process for packing your sleeping bag. We've intentionally chosen two very different types of bag to help you understand that this method is suitable regardless of whether yours is a camping sleeping bag or something a little more technical for expeditions and multi-day hiking.

Entry-level or top of the range, synthetic fill or down, and irrespective of its temperature comfort rating, we still recommend the stuffing method! The only exception is canvas sleeping bags that generally come with a zippered bag, or roll up with straps similar to a swag.

For all other sleeping bags, the important thing to remember is to avoid folding or rolling which can create 'sheets' of fill that inhibit future lofting and over time, can break it down. Stuffing creates an irregular folding pattern that is unique each time you pack your sleeping bag away. This reduces the risk of tension within your bag and means it'll loft up better when you use it next time.


 *You'll be full of smiles using the 'stuff' method. Image: OZtrail*

The stuffing method requires a certain degree of assertion. You want to be forceful without putting pressure on any seams or stitching. It's also a good idea to remove any rings or sharp bits - there's no fun to be had if a rogue fingernail snags your outer fabric, or if that nobbly bit on your watch catches on the seam.

Although both synthetic bags and down bags enlist the same action, the process for each ever so slightly differs. Let's start with...


Synthetic sleeping bags

For this example, we've chosen the Essential 5°C Sleeping Bag from Black Wolf. A brand-new bag will be very tightly rolled so you want to teach that inner fill how to breathe in deeply and hold that air!

 *Grab the inside foot of your sleeping bag.*

Step 1

1. Have your compression sack nearby, open and ready to grab.
2. With one arm, reach inside your bag and with your other arm, meet the inside hand at the foot of the sleeping bag on the outside.
3. Grab your sleeping bag and scrunch it together.

 *Maintain a firm hold on the sack.*

Step 2

1. Keep a grip on the gathered foot end of your sleeping bag with the inside hand while you grab your compression sack.

2. Without being too rough, push the handful right down to the bottom of the bag.
3. As you stuff the foot into the base of the sack, you want to make sure you're pushing right down to the bottom of the bag because if you short cut this at the start, you'll be on the back foot and have to work harder to get the last of your bag into the sack once you get to the top.



Compact your sleeping bag to the bottom of your compression sack right from the start.

Step 3

1. Once the base of your sack has been filled, some people like to secure it between their feet, with the remainder of the sleeping bag bunched under their arm. Go with whatever works for you, so long as the base stays put while you continue to feed the bag into the sack, squishing as you go. Don't be afraid to make it a whole-body movement!
2. Holding one hand on the opening of your sack, continue using your other hand to grab bunches of the bag and punch them as far down into the sack as you can.
3. It's helpful for the hand that's on the outer to gently pull upwards to assist the other hand downwards.



Support the sack with your knee or between your feet.

Step 4

1. Keep punching the rest of the bag down into the compression sack, pivoting the sack as you go to spread the bulk and create an even stuffing.
2. Similar to how you began, try to get each punch and your fist as far down to the bottom of the sack as you can.



Use your fists to hold the sleeping bag down.

Step 5

1. Work your way around, supporting and twisting as you go, until the last of the bag is inside the sack.
2. Use your fists to hold the sleeping bag down, then relieve one hand for Step 6.



The toggle will help keep the opening pulled in.

Step 6

1. While the fist of one hand pushes against the sleeping bag closest to the top of your compression sack, use your free hand to scoop up the drawstring and pull the cord to tighten the top and create the gathered closure.

2. Secure the toggle into place as tightly as you can to the closed end.



Make sure your compression straps are not twisted before you fit the cap into place.

Step 7

1. Most compression sacks have a cap that can be moved into place over the top.
2. Fit this into place, making sure the straps of your compression sack aren't twisted and have been released from buckles, plus loosened off.
3. Depending on your activity and space requirements, you can pull the straps down to compress your sleeping bag even further or tighten the straps off just enough to secure the cap but not necessarily completely squish the bag.

If you want or need to reduce the size of your pack, then you can use your body weight by placing one of your knees on top of the sack and tightening off the compression straps. Avoid tightening too much though, as the strain may weaken the stitching of your sack and stress the buckles.



If space is limited, you can compress your packed sleeping bag using the compression straps.

Down sleeping bag

When stuffing a down bag, you must take a little bit more care because of the extra fabric and baffles inside.

Here we're jumping way up to the other end of the scale and using one of the high-end bags from our range, the [Spark SP4 Sleeping Bag](#) from [Sea to Summit](#). Regardless of which bag you have or how much it cost, you want to take care of it as best you can. But if you're investing some serious dosh into a specialised expedition bag, then you want to do everything possible to maintain its quality and longevity.



Most high-end down sleeping bags will come with both a compression sack and a loose-fitting bag for storage.

Step 1

1. Have your compression sack nearby, open and ready to grab.
2. Use one arm to reach deep inside your bag, grab the foot and in a dual movement with your other hand on the opening of your sleeping bag, flip the whole thing inside out.

Down sleeping bags often have a waterproof coating on their outer fabric which inhibits their breathability when packing and during storage, so turning it inside out means your sleeping bag will be able to breathe.



Once the down sleeping bag is inside out, you can begin stuffing.

Step 2

From here, the process is very much the same as what you do for a synthetic bag. However, down bags do tend to stuff and squish more easily, you've just got to show that air who's boss!

1. With your bag inside out, reach one arm inside your bag and work its way to the foot.
2. Meet the inside hand at the foot of the sleeping bag with your free hand on the outside.
3. Grab your sleeping bag and scrunch it together with your inside hand.



Fill the base of your compression sack as much as possible.

Step 3

1. Once the base of your sack has been filled, some people like to secure it between their feet, with the remainder of the sleeping bag bunched under their arm. Go with whatever works for you, so long as the base stays put while you continue to feed the bag into the sack, squishing as you go. Don't be afraid to make it a whole-body movement!
2. Holding one hand on the opening of your sack, continue using your other hand to grab bunches of the bag and punch them as far down into the sack as you can.
3. It's helpful for the hand that's on the outer to gently pull upwards to assist the other hand downwards.



Double action stuffing! One hand opens and pulls the sack upward, while the other punches the bag down to the bottom.

Step 4

1. Holding one hand on the opening of your sack, continue using your other hand to grab bunches of the bag and punch them as far down into the sack as you can.
2. It's helpful for the hand that's on the outer to gently pull upwards to assist the other hand downwards.
3. Keep punching the rest of the bag down into the compression sack, pivoting the sack as you go to spread the bulk and create an even stuffing.
4. Like how you began, try to get each punch and your fist as far down to the bottom of the sack as you can.



Down sleeping bags are easier to pack than synthetic varieties.

Step 5

1. Work your way around, supporting and twisting as you go, until the last of the bag is inside the sack.

2. Use your fist to hold the sleeping bag down and relieve your other hand for Step 6.



Keep squishing the bag down into your sack while pulling the drawstring.

Step 6

1. While the fist of one hand pushes against the sleeping bag closest to the top of your compression sack, use your free hand to scoop up the drawstring and pull the cord to tighten the top and create the gathered closure.
2. Secure the toggle into place as tightly as you can to the closed end.



The cap protects the toggle and gathered opening of your compression sack.

Step 7

1. Most compression sacks have a cap that can be moved into place over the top.
2. Fit this into place, making sure the straps of your compression sack aren't twisted and have been released from the buckles, and loosened off.



Avoid pulling your compression straps too tightly.

Step 8

1. Depending on your activity and space requirements, you can pull the straps down to compress your sleeping bag even further or tighten the straps off just enough to secure the cap but not necessarily completely squish the bag.



Storage bags allow your sleeping bag to breathe and keep the fill lofted.

A note on storage

Most down bags come with 2 different sacks - one for when you're hiking or camping and you need to keep your gear compact and minimal. The other is a loose-fitting, zippered storage bag to house your sleeping bag between trips.

Down bags are best stored inside out and uncompressed. Using a loose-fitting breathable bag allows the down to remain lofted and keeps things dry and fresh. Most quality down bags will come with a cotton or mesh storage sack that will accommodate the bag in a loosely packed fashion. If your bag does not have one of these then you can use a large pillowcase or similar, then store it in the top of a cupboard or somewhere it won't get squashed.

If you have space, the most ideal way to store your bag is to hang it from the foot end using a clipped coathanger. This method keeps the insulation as lofted and aired out as possible. However, it's not the most realistic option for most people, so a loose-fitting breathable bag is a good second choice.



Packed and ready for action - the Spark SP4 down sleeping bag and the Essential 5°C

synthetic sleeping bag.

The moral of this story is simple: *stuff* your bag. It's easier for you and better for your bag, which means you'll get the most out of it for years to come!

If you're still a little bit unsure or you're eager to check out how Ben uses his feet to hold the base of the sack in place while he stuffs, check out our YouTube video:

What's your go-to method for packing up your sleeping bag?