

# Down With Heavy School Bags!



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"First thing in the morning I'm ringing the school about the amount of homework he's getting."

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by Mark Parisi

NO PULITZER WINNERS OR NOBEL LAUREATES, BUT OUR SCHOOL HAS PRODUCED SOME OF THE WORLD'S BEST SHERPAS...



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# TRUE STORY!



- There was once a Primary 1 girl who came to school crying. She could not open her bag as it was stuck. So a teacher went to assist her.
- The moment she lifted the bag she was shocked by its weight. We then placed the bag on a weighing machine and the pointer indicated **8.5kg!**
- Now that girl weighed 19.0kg. That meant she had been carrying **45% of her body weight** around since the beginning of the year!

Thus we come to the crux of the matter –

**Carrying school bags that are too heavy or even poorly designed can lead to back problems later in life**



Research states that ideally, **children should not carry a school bag which weighs more than 10% of their body weight.**

Thus if a child weighs 30 kg, then the schoolbag should not weigh more than 3 kg.

Dr. Kevin Loughlin, a chiropractor, quoted "The human skeleton doesn't really form completely until a person is between 19 and 22 years old, so you can actually create physical change in a person by overloading their spine and overloading their capacity to carry weights."

Furthermore, there are also warnings that lifelong spinal problems can be caused when children carry poorly designed school bags or carry backpacks over one shoulder, using sling style bags or carry brief case type bags.



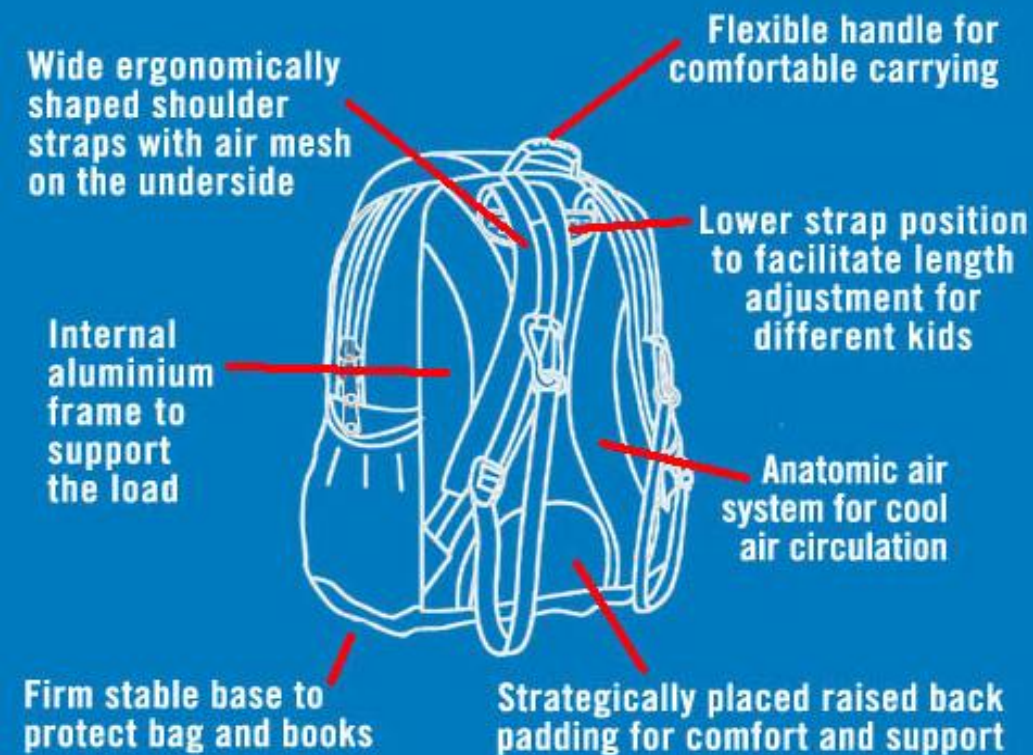


# Ideally, a good school backpack should have :

- Wide-shoulder straps and a padded waistband strap
- Multiple compartments inside to allow the child to distribute the weight more evenly
- A padded back panel to help stop the load from digging into the back
- Compression side straps to keep the load close to the body.



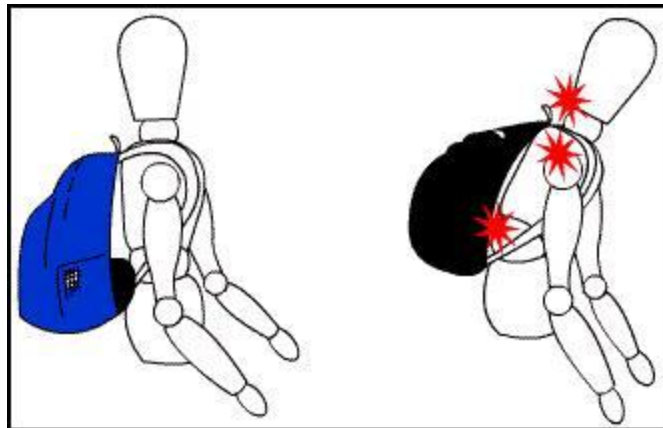




**Back pack is not wider than child's shoulders and not taller than child's shoulders when sitting**

# Warning Signs :

*If your child struggles to get the backpack on or off, has to lean forward to carry his pack, has back or neck pain, and numbness or weakness in his arms or legs.*



What about trolley or wheeled bags?



# Consider this :



- At some point of time, a pupil will have to lift his / her bag up / down flights of stairs. Accidents can happen if the pupil does not have the physical strength to carry his / her bag. In one instance, a pupil in a Singapore school dislocated his arm when he tried to free his wheeled bag from an obstruction!
- The weight of an **empty** wheeled bag may weigh 80% more than an empty backpack.
- Because of the *perception* that more things can be carried, the pupil may end up bringing 15 kg to 20 kg more things. It also enforces the bad habit of not checking the timetable and packing the bag properly, and simply bringing *everything* along.

- Falls have resulted because of wheeled bags obstructing the movement of pupils.
- Structural damage to the stairs and flooring when pupils drag the bags (instead of carrying them) up or down the stairs (because it is too heavy to carry!).
- Instability of the load because the wheels are too small or the handle is too short / long (and the bag too heavy!).
- Improperly handled e.g. pushed in front of the pupil, causing loss of stability and danger of tripping someone



Hence it will be much better if we adopt more prudent measures instead :

- Prioritizing the bag's content by packing what is needed for the day only (pack according to timetable) and not bringing unnecessary items e.g. 4 storybooks instead of 1.
- Educate your child the correct way of carrying the bag e.g. using both straps hitched at mid-back, as opposed to “fashion” trends such as “dragging” the bag at legs level.
- Pack the heavier loads nearer to the back. Use compartments where possible.
- Use a separate folder bag for bulky items e.g. art folio, files

THANK YOU

