



## CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 52

# Choose a backpack designed for cycling

The humble backpack can be a handy accessory for cyclists who need to carry small loads a moderate distance.

They are very convenient, easy to access, and a well-designed pack can comfortably carry up to five kilograms. Any heavier than that and you really need to start thinking about using panniers or a rear-mounted basket.

However, not all backpacks are the same, with those made for hiking or school usually being less than ideal for someone riding a bicycle.

If you plan to use your backpack on a regular basis, consider paying a little more for a brand such as Deuter from Germany, that makes units specifically for cyclists.

Good quality cycling backpacks are laterally stable, lightweight, waterproof and include stowaway zones or pockets for items such as helmets and water bottles.

When browsing for a new backpack, look for padding on the main supports and for extra straps across the chest and waist.

A few people actually find that a messenger or courier bag worn across one shoulder is a more comfortable option.

Perhaps the most important consideration in our climate is adequate ventilation – nobody likes riding around with a large patch of sweat permanently on their back.

Some of the newer cycling backpacks on the market help overcome this problem by having a small gap between your body and the pack allowing air to circulate.

Other useful features you may like to look for include a media player/iPod cache and speaker cable outlet, reflective piping and a carry handle.

One downside of any backpack is that it can change your centre of gravity significantly more than lower-to-the-ground carrying options such as panniers or trailers.

This instability becomes a particular problem when leaning into corners, especially if the load is poorly packed.

The solution is to take corners slower than you normally would and to reduce the excess cargo area so that items cannot move around.

Some riders use pieces of rigid foam rubber to fill up the spaces and this seems to work well.



***This fact sheet is one of a series dealing with the use of bicycles for recreation and transport in Western Australia. The series looks at a range of cycling-related topics including ride routes, touring tips, maintenance, safety, road rules, insurance and product reviews. You can find more cycling fact sheets online at [www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling)***

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