

# Packing



- **Do you like going on trips? What kind of trips do you enjoy most?**
- **How do you feel about having to pack for a trip?**
- **Have you ever discovered on a trip that you have forgotten to pack a few things you very much need, or that you can't find them easily?**
- **Does this make you angry or does it make you laugh at yourself?**

**Now read this description of how the author and his friends pack.**



1. I SAID I'd pack. I rather pride myself on my packing. Packing is one of those many things that I feel I know more about than any other person living. (It surprises me myself, sometimes, how many such things there are.) I impressed the fact upon George and Harris and told them that they had better leave the whole matter entirely to me. They fell into the suggestion with a readiness that had something uncanny about it. George spread himself over the easy-chair, and Harris cocked his legs on the table.



2. This was hardly what I intended. What I had meant, of course, was, that I should boss the job, and that Harris and George should potter about under my directions, I pushing them aside every now and then with, “Oh, you!” “Here, let me do it.” “There you are, simple enough!” — really teaching them, as you might say. Their taking it in the way they did irritated me. There is nothing does irritate me more than seeing other people sitting about doing nothing when I’m working.



3. I lived with a man once who used to make me mad that way. He would loll on the sofa and watch me doing things by the hour together. He said it did him real good to look on at me, messing about. Now, I'm not like that. I can't sit still and see another man slaving and working. I want to get up and superintend, and walk round with my hands in my pockets, and tell him what to do. It is my energetic nature. I can't help it.



4. However, I did not say anything, but started the packing. It seemed a longer job than I had thought it was going to be; but I got the bag finished at last, and I sat on it and strapped it. “Ain’t you going to put the boots in?” said Harris. And I looked round, and found I had forgotten them. That’s just like Harris. He couldn’t have said a word until I’d got the bag shut and strapped, of course. And George laughed — one of those irritating, senseless laughs of his. They do make me so wild.



5. I opened the bag and packed the boots in; and then, just as I was going to close it, a horrible idea occurred to me. Had I packed my toothbrush? I don't know how it is, but I never do know whether I've packed my toothbrush. My toothbrush is a thing that haunts me when I'm travelling, and makes my life a misery. I dream that I haven't packed it, and wake up in a cold perspiration, and get out of bed and hunt for it. And, in the morning, I pack it before I have used it, and have to unpack again to get it, and it is always the last thing I turn out of the bag; and then I repack and forget it, and have to rush upstairs for it at the last moment and carry it to the railway station, wrapped up in my pocket-handkerchief



6. Of course I had to turn every mortal thing out now, and, of course, I could not find it. I rummaged the things up into much the same state that they must have been before the world was created, and when chaos reigned. Of course, I found George's and Harris's eighteen times over, but I couldn't find my own. I put the things back one by one, and held everything up and shook it. Then I found it inside a boot. I repacked once more.







7. When I had finished, George asked if the soap was in. I said I didn't care a hang whether the soap was in or whether it wasn't; and I slammed the bag shut and strapped it, and found that I had packed my spectacles in it, and had to re-open it. It got shut up finally at 10.05 p.m., and then there remained the hampers to do. Harris said that we should be wanting to start in less than twelve hours' time and thought that he and George had better do the rest; and I agreed and sat down, and they had a go.



8. They began in a light-hearted spirit, evidently intending to show me how to do it. I made no comment; I only waited. With the exception of George, Harris is the worst packer in this world; and I looked at the piles of plates and cups, and kettles, and bottles, and jars, and pies, and stoves, and cakes, and tomatoes, etc., and felt that the thing would soon become exciting. It did. They started with breaking a cup. That was the first thing they did. They did that just to show you what they could do, and to get you interested. Then Harris packed the strawberry jam on top of a tomato and squashed it, and they had to pick out the tomato with a teaspoon.



9. And then it was George's turn, and he trod on the butter. I didn't say anything, but I came over and sat on the edge of the table and watched them. It irritated them more than anything I could have said. I felt that. It made them nervous and excited, and they stepped on things, and put things behind them, and then couldn't find them when they wanted them; and they packed the pies at the bottom, and put heavy things on top, and smashed the pies in.





10. They upset salt over everything, and as for the butter! I never saw two men do more with one-and-two pence worth of butter in my whole life than they did. After George had got it off his slipper, they tried to put it in the kettle. It wouldn't go in, and what was in wouldn't come out. They did scrape it out at last, and put it down on a chair, and Harris sat on it, and it stuck to him, and they went looking for it all over the room.



11. “I’ll take my oath I put it down on that chair,” said George, staring at the empty seat. “I saw you do it myself, not a minute ago,” said Harris. Then they started round the room again looking for it; and then they met again in the centre and stared at one another. “Most extraordinary thing I ever heard of,” said George. “So mysterious!” said Harris. Then George got round at the back of Harris and saw it. “Why, here it is all the time,” he exclaimed, indignantly. “Where?” cried Harris, spinning round. “Stand still, can’t you!” roared George, flying after him. And they got it off, and packed it in the teapot.



12. Montmorency was in it all, of course. Montmorency's ambition in life is to get in the way and be sworn at. If he can squirm in anywhere where he particularly is not wanted, and be a perfect nuisance, and make people mad, and have things thrown at his head, then he feels his day has not been wasted. To get somebody to stumble over him, and curse him steadily for an hour, is his highest aim and object; and, when he has succeeded in accomplishing this, his conceit becomes quite unbearable.







13. He came and sat down on things, just when they were wanted to be packed; and he laboured under the fixed belief that, whenever Harris or George reached out their hand for anything, it was his cold damp nose that they wanted. He put his leg into the jam, and he worried the teaspoons, and he pretended that the lemons were rats, and got into the hamper and killed three of them before Harris could land him with the frying-pan.



14. Harris said I encouraged him. I didn't encourage him. A dog like that doesn't want any encouragement. It's the natural, original sin that is born in him that makes him do things like that. The packing was done at 12.50; and Harris sat on the big hamper, and said he hoped nothing would be found broken. George said that if anything was broken it was broken, which reflection seemed to comfort him. He also said he was ready for bed. We were all ready for bed. Harris was to sleep with us that night, and we went upstairs.



15. We tossed for beds, and Harris had to sleep with me. He said : “Do you prefer the inside or the outside, J.?” I said I generally preferred to sleep inside a bed. Harris said it was odd. George said: “What time shall I wake you fellows?” Harris said: “Seven.” I said: “No — six,” because I wanted to write some letters. Harris and I had a bit of a row over it, but at last split the difference, and said half-past six. “Wake us at 6.30, George,” we said.



16. George made no answer, and we found, on going over, that he had been asleep for sometime; so we placed the bath where he could tumble into it on getting out in the morning, and went to bed ourselves.

**JEROME K. JEROME** [an extract from **Three Men in a Boat**]





# Thank You