

**Inside the Mind of an Professional Organizer - By Jessi Bushman aka “Organizer Jessi”
Efficient Packing Methods**

We are half way through 2022 and so many of us are ready for a vacation! That said, the idea of vacation means something different to everyone.

Vacations range from a home stay-cation or a quick, over night-visit to someone's home or local attraction. You may have a camper and plan to relax at your reserved destination or even explore various parks. If you are a jet-setter, you may be traveling across the globe! Whatever your ideal vacation is, there is one thing leaving your house means...**packing!**

The majority of my adult life, vacation time has been spent building houses. It's easy to say, I've enjoyed a fair amount of stay-cation's in my lifetime.

As others talk about past and future adventures, I love hearing about how others prepare for their time away from home. Over-packing and under-estimating needed necessities is easy to do...trust me, I've done both!

1st, I want to talk about camping! This vacation concept has exploded over the past couple of years due to COVID-19 restrictions placed on us. If you are a long-devoted camper, I'm sure you can agree, campsites have become harder to come by. There is a lot of planning when it comes to stocking your camper, since you are essentially managing 2 households.

I believe there are two approaches to managing your “second home.”

- 1) The owner has purchased a duplicate set of items for the camper.
- 2) The owner packs up existing items from their primary home to furnish their camper for the season.

I see a benefit to both options, but ultimately, I feel it's more manageable to utilize items you already own within your primary home. From what I gather, many people will take camper items back to the house during off season to clean and store. These items typically end up in the garage, banished to a space in the basement or put back into rotation of your daily items, which may be maxed out already.

So...where do you begin when stocking your camper? I'll touch on my **5 Principles of Organization** to help you understand your repeat process – **Role, Space, Stuff, Accessibility, Flexibility.**

The **Role** of your camper is to offer a scaled-back amount of daily essentials and activities.
The **Space** your camper offers is typically limited, so creativity is needed.
The **Stuff** you need encourages the primary reason you have retreated away from your home.
The **Accessibility** factor includes being able to retrieve items quickly and easily.
The **Flexibility** of your mindset promotes the understanding that your needs and wants of items will vary over time.

You can categorize your items pretty easily:

- 1) Food/Beverages and utensils used to cook and consume.
- 2) Linens and clothing that needs to be washed.
- 3) Physical objects to sit in, play with, provide entertainment or store items within.

This presents a prime opportunity to utilize similar sized clear storage bins and vacuum bags to transport your essentials. It may be an easy option to keep your stuff in bins if you are ultimately planning to relocate after the season. This idea is aimed towards things stored anywhere other than your kitchen cabinets.

2nd, take into consideration your suitcase. I find it helpful to categorize your smaller clothing items and utilize zip lock bags or clear travel pouches. This makes for less chaos when getting ready. For example, toiletries. I have 3 zip-lock bags containing shower items, makeup/vanity, and toothbrush & consumable supplies. I'm sure everyone has experience something leaking or blowing up at one point and making a mess of everything else! These items are relatively small - finding your earrings or medication quickly vs. rummaging around a large bag will save you time and your sanity in the long run.

I also suggest you have a dirty laundry bag. This saves you time at the end of your vacation when packing up and unloading your suitcase. Sounds crazy, but also fold/roll your dirty items within your laundry bag to take up less space. This preserves any clothing you did not wear, preventing the effort to wash unworn items.

Last tip for packing your suitcase/bag. Roll items! Jeans and tops are easy to identify when you can see them vs. pulling out a stack of various categories.

Whatever your ideal vacation is, I hope my input provides simplicity when packing for your next adventure!

The greatest advantage of organization is there is no right or wrong way to do things. You can always modify your strategy. The most important step is to **START!**

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Jessi is a member of the **Iowa Professional Organizers Association**