



10 ESSENTIAL ITEMS FOR YOUR CARRY-ON



Flying—arriving on time, waiting in line, going through security, fighting for overhead bin and armrest space—can be a pretty uncomfortable experience, even when you remember to pack everything you need. And flights feel a lot longer when you forget to pack a key item. From tiny toiletries to trip-saving tools, here's what should always be stashed in your carry-on.

Sanitizing Wipes

Planes and airports are gross, so you're going to need wipes and hand sanitizer. No one wants a cold or the flu to interrupt their long-awaited travel plans. Bleach wipes help disinfect surfaces, while hand sanitizer or wipes offer a gentler cleaning option for skin. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend hand sanitizer when you can't wash your hands with soap and water, though it [cautions that sanitizers don't kill](#) all types of germs.

Eye Mask and Ear Plugs

Some airlines might provide eye masks and ear plugs, but again, but we recommend bringing your own—they take up little to no room in your bag and you can invest in a variation you prefer, like this [contoured option](#) or [AcousticSheep SleepPhones](#), which are an eye mask, ear cover, and comfortable headphones in one.

Oversized Scarf

Blankets aren't very packable, and most people prefer to steer clear of airline blankets, even though most now come cleaned and sealed. Enter oversized scarves—wearable comfort that can be fashionable, easily stashed, and provide comfortable cover on a chilly flight. In winter, try a warm fleece option. In summer, pashminas and folded fashion scarves will do.

Headphones

No matter what your headphone preference is, you won't want to be in transit or stranded at the airport without them. Packable options include the aforementioned two-in-one facemask headphones, a noise-cancelling version, or simply the headphones that came with your device or smartphone, most of which have the added benefit of a built-in mic for easier phone or video calls.

Toothbrush

Even if you're not inclined to break for a tooth brushing mid-flight, you should always have a toothbrush and travel-sized toothpaste on hand in case your bags are lost. Foldable options are ultra-packable, or, you might consider a [pre-pasted disposable option](#) if you're just using it in the germey airplane lavatory.

Pen

Don't underestimate the power of a good pen. You'll need one to fill out paperwork before most customs checkpoints, which is a feat best done on the plane. Shared pens are shared germs, and besides, you never know when a good crossword puzzle will come along. We're big fans of the compact, write-anywhere (even, apparently, in zero gravity) [Space Pen](#).



A Small, Hard Tension Ball

The last thing you'd think to pack is probably a ball, but tension balls like [Rad Rounds](#) can save your comfort on long flights and after a long travel day. Firmly rolling one on your neck and shoulders during a cramped flight or on the floor of a hotel room can make you feel like a new person. It's basically a massage in a box.

Hydration Solutions

Keeping your skin and body hydrated is especially important on airplanes, which have dry cabin air and salty meal options. Dehydration tires you out and weakens your immune system, so make sure you to have, at the very least, a refillable water bottle. It doesn't hurt to pack a travel-sized lotion or lip balm, saline nasal spray, and a hydration/jetlag hack like [DripDrop electrolyte powder](#) or [an herbal jet-lag remedy](#).

Dry Shampoo

Especially on long journeys, you never know what you'll feel like when you get off the plane. If you struggle with oily hair or simply want to feel fresher when you get off a flight, a small can of dry shampoo can work wonders. We love [Batiste's tiny dry shampoos](#), but a small bottle of baby powder will accomplish the same thing if you're looking for a more versatile option. Simply apply to your roots and massage or brush through your scalp.

Back-up Charger

Airport charging stations can get swamped, and charging on the go is as easy as keeping a smartphone-sized back-up battery, like the [Jackery Fit](#) charger. This pack is more powerful than most, and it's compatible with any USB device, so you can use it for more than just your cell phone.