

How to Become a More Organized Traveler

(Courtesy of Carol McPherson, SmarterTravel)

There are few worse feelings when traveling than unzipping your suitcase at your destination and finding you've forgotten to pack socks...and sunscreen...and a toothbrush. Planning a trip can be stressful, and things can easily fall through the cracks (see: my trip to Italy where I *forgot to pack shoes*).

Whether you're a traveler who leaves half their gear behind or a fastidious packer who wants to help keep their companions a little more organized, these helpful items and tips will streamline your packing process and keep track of your items on the go.

All of the products featured in this story were hand-selected by our travel editors. Some of the links featured in this story are affiliate links, and SmarterTravel may collect a commission (at no cost to you) if you shop through them.

Béis Luggage

Even the best laid travel plans can be brought down by the wrong gear. [Béis](#), a luggage brand focusing on affordability without sacrificing the functionality or feel of high-end luggage, has options for every type of trip—from [weekender bags](#) to [travel totes](#) to the full range of [hard and softsided luggage](#). Travelers can even [create their own bundle](#) to save on a complete new luggage set.

Packing Cubes

Once you have your luggage selected, further divvy up the packing space with [packing cubes](#). These cubes let you separate your clothing and gear by category so you never need to rummage through your suitcase. Some [packing cubes also provide compression](#), allowing you to fit more into your bag.

Apple Air Tag

Possibly the most versatile tool in a forgetful traveler's arsenal, the [Apple Air Tag](#) allows you to track your items through your Apple devices. They can be used to track checked luggage (a lifesaver if the [airline loses your bags](#)), attached to the keys of your rental car, or kept in a daypack that's likely to be left behind on the bus.

Trackable Wallet

Never misplace your credit card again with a trackable wallet from [Ekster](#). This sleek leather accessory is available in ten colors and can be used with or without the Ekster tracker card. For Apple fans, the brand also manufactures wallets [specifically for use with Air Tags](#).

Pre-Packed Toiletries Kit

Rather than trying to assemble your own toiletry kit from scratch, grab an all-in-one travel kit that has the essentials already packed away. [This one](#) from Convenience Kits International includes everything from travel-sized shampoo and conditioner to frequently forgotten must-haves like hand cream and earplugs. All you have to do is remember to put it in your suitcase.

Medication and First-Aid Organizer

For campers and roadtrippers worried about organizing their first aid and medications, the

[VSSL First Aid Stash](#) is the answer. Made from stackable screw top storage tins, you can customize your First Aid Stash to carry OTC medications, prescriptions, bandages, and more. For an even simpler organizational tool, try a classic [pill box](#).

Note: While the TSA [does not require](#) medications to remain in the original prescription packaging, travelers should be aware of state/destination laws surrounding prescription labeling and pack accordingly.

Carabiner Clip for Keys

While it may be best to leave your house keys behind in the hotel room safe, there are still several keys you may need to manage while on vacation. Use a [carabiner clip](#) to secure the keys to your Airbnb and rental car to your belt loop or to the inside of your backpack or purse. You won't lose them and you won't need to fish around at the bottom of your bag to unlock the door.

Travel Cable Organizer

Chargers and other daily cables can quickly make a mess of your carry-on if not managed neatly. The [Bellroy Tech Kit](#) allows you to pack all your important tech accessories in one place, keeping them organized and making it easy to run through a checklist before you walk out the door.

Document Organizer

Similarly to cables, travel documents can quickly get out of hand. It's important to have exactly what you need at your fingertips. Big enough to carry your passport, credit cards, cash, and vaccine card copies, the [Bellroy document organizer](#) will keep your important documents from being misplaced or crumpled up in your carry-on.

Packing Tips to Keep You Organized

Now that you have the gear, here are a few ways to keep yourself organized before your next big trip.

1. Create a packing checklist

Having a checklist is the easiest way to make sure you're packing and preparing everything you need. We've got you covered for any type of trip:

- [The ultimate packing list for any vacation](#)
- [If you need to pack a carry-on](#)
- [If you're going to the beach](#)
- [If you're going to an island](#)
- [If you're going camping](#)
- [If you're traveling abroad](#)
- [If you're going skiing](#)
- [If you're going hiking](#)

2. Have a “Checklist Buddy”

When running through your final packing checklist, have someone else read it out loud to you. A fresh set of eyes can pick up on an item you may have overlooked. If traveling solo, don't underestimate the power of reading your list out loud to yourself. You'd be surprised what we miss when our eyes just skim the page.

3. Create a ‘Must-Haves’ List

To minimize the risk of forgetting something *really* important, create a pre-departure ‘must-haves’ list of no more than five to ten items. These are items that are crucial to travel, your health, or your accommodations. You could live without your [noise-canceling headphones](#) (although it would be a struggle) but not your license or prescription medications.

My typical must-have list looks like:

- Passport
- ID
- Boarding passes/tickets/paperwork/etc.
- Prescription medications
- Phone
- Charger (with any needed international adapters)
- A jacket suitable for destination