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Gear I Use

Featuring: Jib 35

URL: <http://tinyurl.com/25xr2en>

There were two things I made sure of before letting my son carry a backpack instead of a daypack on our family backpacking trips: that he was ready and eager to do it, and that the pack I gave him fit him. The first question I let him answer: I waited until he asked to carry a backpack. The second question I answered by measuring his torso properly and trying packs on him. Many kids are not big enough to fit in a children's backpack until age nine or 10—and carrying a poorly fitting pack might be the best way to turn a kid off to backpacking. My son has used and likes both the Fox 40 (skiing to a backcountry yurt in Idaho's Boise Mountains) and the Jib 35 (backpacking in Utah's Capitol Reef National Park), carrying 18 pounds in each pack. The 11-year-old daughter of friends also carried the Jib on our yurt trip. I think both are excellent kid backpacks, though they have different strengths.

The Fox 40 fits the smallest kids best, and has a little more padding in its hipbelt, shoulder straps, and back than the Jib 35. But the Jib delivers a bit more support and rigidity, with its frame of aluminum rods and flexible tensioners in the hipbelt, giving it a slight advantage when your kid starts carrying upwards of 25 pounds. The Jib's hipbelt is also adjustable for a wider range of waist and hip sizes—it can grow with your child. As for organization and features: Both are top-loaders with roomy lid pockets, deep, stretchy side pockets, and a safety whistle on the sternum strap; but the similarities end there. The Fox 40's large, zippered, bellows side pockets (above the stretch pockets) have a functionality edge over the Jib's front stuff-it pocket. But the Jib's two zippered hipbelt pockets—big enough for a few snack bars each—are more useful for backpacking than the Fox's hipbelt gear loops. Lastly, both are well-constructed packs built to last, with high-quality stitching and tough, 420-denier nylon.

Your first priority in choosing a pack has to be which one fits your kid best. Either would probably last a kid until he or she is ready for an adult-size pack. If you need a pack for a young teenager who's capable of carrying more than either of these models will hold, check out Osprey's larger version of the Jib, the Ace 48.



Osprey Jib 35
\$129, 35L/2,136 c.i., 3 lbs. 3 oz.
One size, adjustable to fit torsos 13 to 19 inches
ospreypacks.com

