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Tips on Shopping for a Backpack

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Written by Marcus Woolf on April 3, 2012

Having worked in an outdoor gear store, I realize that shopping for a backpack can be intimidating. Packs these days can be a bit techy, and many people aren't sure how to adjust packs and get a proper fit. Plus, most folks aren't sure of what questions to ask salespeople. If you use the talking points below, a good salesperson can help you choose a comfortable pack that meets your needs.

1. Shop at an outdoor specialty store

While big-box stores like Wal-Mart carry backpacks, you need to visit an outdoor specialty store to find a high-quality pack that's going to fit comfortably and last a long time. Outdoor specialty stores not only carry the most comfortable, durable products, but they also have staff members who are trained to help you choose the right product that really fits. Of course, a quality pack will cost more, but I recommend that you spend a bit more on your pack, shoes and sleeping bag, because these greatly affect how good — or bad — you feel during a trip. Also, cheaper gear often falls apart more quickly, so, in the long run, you end up paying just as much with replacements. You can go to the websites of top pack companies like Gregory, Osprey and Deuter, and search in the "dealer locator" section for a store near you.

