

Laptop Bag Checklist

What lives permanently in your bag · More Than An Editor · morethananeditor.com · 2026

These things live in the bag. They are not packed for a trip. The point of the list is that you never think about it again.

For anybody who walks out of the house with a laptop — and especially for traveling, whether it is a few hours or two years abroad.

Power and connectivity

- ☐ Your laptop's **power block**, if it has one
- ☐ **Multiport GaN wall charger**, 65W or higher, several USB-C and USB-A ports. Most ship with barrel-plug tip adapters — pack the right one
- ☐ **Compact power bank**, 10,000mAh. **Must be FAA approved**, or the local equivalent
- ☐ **Global travel adapter** with surge protection
- ☐ **One good braided USB-C to USB-C cable** — not an anonymous one from a drawer

A good cable states: PD 3.1 EPR 48V/5A 240W · a data speed (20Gbps, 40Gbps USB4, or 80Gbps USB4 v2 / Thunderbolt 5) · an e-Marker chip, with the logos to prove it.

Video

Carry a hub and short adapters, not full-length cables. Check the hub has the video ports you actually need before you buy it.

- ☐ **USB-C multiport hub** — HDMI, USB-A, SD card reader
- ☐ **Short HDMI cable**, three to six feet, slim and flexible
- ☐ **HDMI to VGA adapter** — many lecture halls still run VGA projectors
- ☐ **USB-C to DisplayPort adapter**, if you present on modern office monitors
- ☐ **The adapter for the port your laptop does not have.** HDMI laptop? Carry HDMI-to-DisplayPort. DisplayPort laptop? Carry the reverse

If you work on more than one monitor

Three separate things decide what you can drive: what your laptop's ports output, what the hub passes through, and what cables you have with you.

- ☐ **Checked what your laptop's ports can actually output.** A USB-C port may carry no video at all, or only one display
- ☐ **Two screens:** hub advertises *dual independent displays* and states the refresh rate on both. If it does not say so, assume it mirrors
- ☐ **Three screens:** a DisplayPort MST hub or a dock — and the laptop must support MST. Or combine paths: one screen from the laptop's own port, the rest from the hub
- ☐ **Tested that exact layout at home**, before you needed it
- ☐ **One cable per screen.** The adapters are small; the cables are what you will be short of

Productivity

- ☐ **Wireless travel mouse** — compact, low-profile, works on glass
- ☐ **Noise-canceling earbuds or headphones.** *Consumer Reports* rates the Monolith best of the inexpensive ones, about \$50 in 2026
- ☐ **A good pen**
- ☐ **Tech pouch** — one small case for every cord, dongle and drive

Personal and emergency

- ☐ **Band-Aids, a wet wipe, a small notebook**
- ☐ **Face mask**, depending on where you are going
- ☐ **Mini multi-tool or scissors** — TSA-friendly
- ☐ **Mints or gum**
- ☐ **Aviation Bluetooth transmitter** — optional. Our founder has never carried one; he uses a cable on the aircraft that lack Bluetooth, and more have it every day

Two laptops

Our founder never travels with one. A powerful laptop with a large screen for real work, and a light one for the plane or the train.

The comfort is the excuse. The insurance is the point. Hardware fails, gets stolen, or is dropped by somebody at an airport — and a candidate abroad with one dead laptop and a deadline is in genuine trouble. **A serviceable second machine costs less than a single lost week.**

The second machine does not need to be new.

Every lightweight travel laptop we use is an ex-corporate refurbishment. Search *corporate class* or *business class* refurbished — usually lightly used, and easy to find one powerful enough. **Our founder's is an HP EliteBook.** They are built for people who drop things in airports.

Make sure it has a Core i5 or better, or the AMD equivalent. Writing is not what makes a machine work hard.

And work from the cloud when you travel. Your dissertation does not live on the machine that just died, and picking up on the other laptop is a matter of signing in.

Working abroad for months, not days

Different problem. You are not packing for a trip. There is no store nearby that sells the replacement when something fails.

- ☐ **Two of everything that breaks** — a second USB-C cable, a second plug adapter
- ☐ **Found out what the local electrical supply is actually like**, before you arrived. The wifi is advertised; the voltage stability is not
- ☐ **Know where to buy a UPS locally**, or shipped one in — and a spare
- ☐ **Know what you would do if the laptop died tomorrow.** Where you would buy one, what it would cost, how long your work would stop

One trick worth the page on its own

Carry a US-to-European plug adapter for domestic flights.

Many aircraft power ports are worn out. You plug in, and your plug falls out. **Those ports accept European Type C plugs as well** — and almost nobody uses one on a domestic flight, so that side of the socket is unworn.

Plug your device into the adapter. Plug the adapter into the seat. You are connected, and you have just amazed the person beside you.

They cost about a dollar. A six-pack is worth having — for spares, and for giving away. **Buy the cheapest you can find, so that losing one does not matter.**