

RUCK IT

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Getting from point “A” to point “B” with a heavy load on your back, has been a requirement for everyone from the military and hunters, to hikers and refugees. Understanding how to do this as efficiently as possible, is in and of itself an art form, and you can usually tell who’s been doing it for a while, and definitely, who has not! In the end, you just “Gotta suck it up and do it.” because no one is gonna carry it for you, right?

There have been plenty of good suggestions across the blogosphere on everything from the correct way to pack your gear, to ways to get yourself to the point you want to be at, from a physical fitness standpoint. [DTG](#) offers some pointers [here](#) on packing your rucksack (this is what we call the backpack in the American military), and [here](#) they talk about actually getting out and “Rucking” (American military term for backpacking on the road, or cross country).

My recommendations, concerning “Rucking”, **are geared towards a “Bugout” scenario**, for the NPT member, or survivalist, **not a reconstruction of the US Army EIB** (Expert Infantry Badge)/Infantry standard, which is 35 lbs. of dry weight in the rucksack, this does not include the weight of their load bearing gear, which contains water and other gear (the standard is 12 miles in three hours). **My recommendations** for load bearing gear are [here](#), and I use a Large Alice rucksack or a [Malice pack by Tactical Tailor](#) modified like [this](#).

First things first. My minimum recommendation to shoot for in training, is to be able to carry your load bearing equipment (LBE) with the basic load for your rifle (6 extra mags, or 100 extra rounds for your boltgun), two 1-quart canteens, a personal blow out kit, and a knife. What ever your load bearing gear weighs, the ruck should make up the difference in the weight to equal half your body weight. Example: LBE weighs 25 lbs. you weigh 150 lbs., so the ruck would weigh 50 lbs. **THIS IS A GOAL, NOT YOUR INITIAL RUCK WEIGHT!** I ruck on the road a good bit now, and carry one of these [blueguns](#) to simulate the feel and weight of my weapon.

OK, so now we have a goal to shoot for, right? Is it a practical goal? Well, you be the judge. How much will a sustainment load weigh if you are carrying two weeks’ worth of dehydrated food, sleeping gear including shelter, and the rest of the needed gear to survive in a non-permissive environment? Wait, I know, you plan on living off the land exclusively, right? Let me know how that works out for you, because that is the fantasy, not the reality. I will carry 75% (150lbs) of my body weight every once in a while, simply for “gut check” purposes. Why? One, I’m realistic about what a sustainment load might weigh. Two, It might be my best friend or one of my kids I have to carry to safety or medical aid, and it’s nice to know I can still do it.

Now, how are we going to reach our goal?

Here's my suggestion, and this comes from over a quarter of a century of "Ruckin" with loads that have reached 75% of my body weight (200 lbs.). My first step suggestion is to start with a two mile walk with your loaded LBE, and enough weight in your ruck to equal 25% percent of your body weight. Time yourself, and see how you do. Next time, use the same load, but increase your distance to four miles, trying to maintain the same pace you did on the first two mile "Ruck". Here's a suggestion for the four miler, get a water blivet and fill it to help equal the weight you want to carry. If performing the four miler with the weight you have in your ruck becomes too much, empty the blivet, and continue to the finish. Each time you "Ruck", increase the distance towards the four miles finish, before you dump the blivet water, till you've achieved the four mile point with the weight you wanted to.

Next up, you will start to add weight to your ruck in 10 lb. increments, still walking the 4 mile course, till you are at the 50% body weight figure that was your original goal. After this, it's just a matter of first trying to decrease your time, on the course you're already doing (gives you a good idea of your performance level), then you start to increase distance.

Tips for "Ruckers". GOOD BROKE IN BOOTS, AND GOOD BOOT SOCKS! Don't skimp, your feet will thank you. You have enough to think about, pain wise (shoulder, back, hips, knees, etc.), without having to worry about something you can mitigate or eliminate initially, right? In cold weather, make sure you are not comfortably warm (longjohns, goretex, etc.)

when you start your ruck march because you will overheat quickly and, as stated earlier, why do something that will cause problems, when you can mitigate it right off the bat.

Conclusions: This isn't the "Be all, end all" to ruck marching (not even close), but you have to start somewhere, and why not take the free advice of someone who's carried a few pounds over perfectly flat terrain a few times in his life.

BTW, I take my own advice. Last September, I totally rupture my left Achilles. I was fortunate that I had an option on whether to have surgery or not from the Orthopedic Doc, and chose "Not" (only a 1 cm gap). I went into aggressive physical therapy at week 5 (not my first serious ankle injury, Hell, I've dislocated both ankles in the past), and was back to work in two months (Docs told me in the ER the night I was hurt it was a minimum of four months out of work, and definitely needed surgery).

I started ruckin' at three months with 50 lbs. and at four months I was carrying 85 lbs. and doing 15 min. miles (the 6 degree weather helped "motivate" my speed). I have been ruckin' with 100 lbs since the beginning of March (month 6), and will be back to 120 lbs (what I was ruckin' weekly before I was hurt) by June. You can do it, but you have to overcome the biggest hurdle, and that is you mind. I set what I believed were reasonable, realistic goals before I started ruckin' again, and I've been fortunate to be able to meet them.

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P.S. Make sure someone else knows your planned ruck route, and an expected return time. Also, have the ability to communicate with your support base, in case you have problems (I have to use a radio, because there isn't cell signal where I live).

JCD

"Parata Vivere"-Live Prepared.