**Packing for South Korea**

There are loads of things you need to include in your backpack when you're about to transplant yourself in another country for a year. There is also something called OVERPACKING!

You would be amazed how many teachers pack irons only to find that there is a different power source over in Korea and they could have bought an iron over there for less than $20.00 or they could have all their dirty clothes laundered for less than $10 per week!

Shampoo is another one... it's heavy, it could explode and destroy all your clothing and think about it, do you think they don't wash their hair in Korea?

Since you will probably be working with kids, don’t worry about bringing formal clothes, the rule of thumb is comfortable casual- as long as you aren’t wearing jeans and a t-shirt, and your clothes aren’t dirty or wrinkled, you will be fine. It is important to note, however, that Koreans are image conscious, and you will be treated with far more respect if you dress nicely.

Korea is going to be your home so even though we are telling you to minimize, we also want you to make it feel like your home rather than seeing your apartment as somewhere to crash for awhile. One teacher says of the things she misses most, "I miss the personal items that I didn’t bring." (Alexandra Wood - Footprints teacher in Korea).

**Packing List for Teachers Heading to South Korea**

There are several things you can bring to make your life a bit more comfy.  Here is our list of suggestions:

* **A copy of your vital documents** - bring photocopies of your passport, degree, transcripts and photo ID in case you lose your passport or other documents and need to replace them.
* **Pictures from home** - bring a couple of photo albums with you with photos of your friends and family. Condensed versions of your photo albums are fine- don’t bore yourself and your class to tears with ten consecutive shots of Aunt Millie. This is a great way to combat homesickness, and you can also get a lot of mileage out of them in the classroom- your students will be endlessly curious about life in your home country.
* **Map from home** - people will always want to know where you're from.
* **Posters** - always nice to decorate your place with something familiar.
* **Books** - you will need a English to Korean - Korean to English Dictionary (listed in our Books on Korea section) and while there I suspect you're get a whole host of teaching books. Check out our Footprints Teacher Bookstore for titles that are most relevant and useful.
* **Prescription Medication** - they have great pain relievers here and cold meds but not your prescription, get a year's supply. Ask your Footprints representative if it's possible to get your medication over there.
* **Medicines and Pharmaceutical Products** - there is a drugstore on virtually every corner in Korea (yak- not to be confused with yok- which means subway station) and they will sell drugs for virtually every ailment over the counter. If you prefer western brand name medicines, here are some common ones you may want to consider bringing with you.
  + Advil
  + Tylenol
  + Midol
  + Pepto-Bismol
  + Tums
  + Neo-Citran
  + Neosporin
* **Nalgene** - the winters can be bad for dehydration
* **Deodorant -** is almost impossible to find and if located is incredibly expensive - TRUE - to put it in perspective - a 26 ounce bottle of vodka is 6,000 Won, a stick of bad deodorant is about 15,000 Won!

As a note in the personal section --- it's a good idea to go to a doctor and dentist before you leave. English speaking doctors in Korea (especially in rural areas) can be hard to find. I got a serious skin burn when I first got here from my temperamental stove and I had to get a Korean escort to a doctor.

PERSONAL STUFF TO BRING TO KOREA

This list is an ongoing collaboration of suggestions from teachers in Korea since 1996. YES, it has been updated since then. It's actually updated at least twice a year. 

* **Clothing** - bring enough clothing for two seasons. Yes, you can buy clothes here but sizes are sometimes hard to find. If you are average height and weight and smaller you can find clothes. If weigh more than 120lbs for women it may be difficult. The fashion sense here is different. It’s fairly conservative so you may have trouble finding shops with your kind of fashion. I brought only summer clothes and now it’s rainy and cold and I’m stuck wearing sandals until payday! For women, skirts are popular as well as suits. They wear a lot of colour though black is the most common. Low necklines aren’t popular for women. Summers are hot, humid and wet so clothing that is light is best. Winters are not terribly cold but there are exceptions.
* **Shoes** - bring shoes for all weather. Shoes here are made for small, narrow feet. Women wear high heels to the beach. In the wet season it is important to have shoes with a heel or platform so you can wade through the puddles. Bring a STRONG umbrella.
* **Underwear** - women, bring as many bras as possible. They are all padded here and very small. Anything larger than a B cup is really expensive and hard to find. Fellas if you like boxers bring 'em. Tighty whitey's are the go here and it might be difficult to get anything over a 38 waist.
* **Deodorant** - I don't think Koreans really sweat and all they seem to have is trendy "foo-foo" deodorant which is useless and hard to find, bring enough for a year.
* **Birth Control** - whether you're into pills, foam, condoms or something else it is best to bring it with you. Condoms tend to be smaller, you can't get Depo Provera, it's difficult to communicate with doctors about pills so it's best to just be prepared.
* **Spices** - there are some spices here: basil, cinnamon, ginger, are readily available but if you like others bring your own.
* **Bedding** - bring some Western style sheets. It's next to impossible to find them in Korea. If you can't find out the size of your bed just bring the size that you usually sleep on and get the bed when you're over there. Queen is always a safe bet. Forget about a king size.

**Food Stuff to Bring with you to Korea**

It is not necessary to bring any food with you outside minor provisions.  
  
Most teachers are able to find their favorite spices, chocolate, coffee, tea, cheese etc. in [Korea](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/teaching-jobs-in-asia/teaching-jobs-in-korea). Cheese is limited. No old cheddar, but it’s adequate. If you're going to a smaller city or a rural area your access to imports will be limited.

Here is a list of suggestions:

* **Western Cooking Spices** - Koreans primarily spice their foods with garlic, pepper and salt. If you plan on doing some western style cooking you may want to bring western cooking spices with you- oregano, thyme, basil, tarragon- whatever puts lead in your pencil. A word to the wise- bring them in their original packaging unopened with clearly marked labels- you could find yourself spending several hours explaining to a surly airport security guard that your suspicious looking baggie of dried herbs is for a fettuccine bonanza. (“No, really officer, taste it…” Same goes for bringing unmarked baggies of Vitamin C.
* **Coffee** - Coffee in Korea tends to be poor quality and expensive. If you like good quality coffee and drink lots of it, bring a few kilos of beans and a counter top bean grinder with you. Recently quality coffee has become more available in Korea, but it is expensive. Within the past few years Starbucks have become commonplace in Korean cities. In Seoul, particularly in the Gangnam and Chongno neighborhoods there are great little Espresso Joints called Café Express. A caramel latte never tasted better. The next teacher heading to Seoul who stops by our office gets a free Café Express Membership Card- buy nine more lattes and get your tenth for free!
* **Honey** - Honey is available in Korea but is expensive- it also makes great gifts when visiting Korean households. Be sure to bag it and make sure it isn't going to explode and ruin things.
* **Oatmeal and other hot breakfast cereals** - For those mornings when you don’t feel like rice and fish soup for breakfast, although cold cereals are available in Korea.
* **Dried soup mixes** - A nice comfort food to have when you are feeling sick, blue or hung over. You can get curry mixer and cream of mushroom and cream of corn but chicken noodle and French onion soup are not easily found.
* **Cheeses** - Korean stores are started to offer more than just processed cheese- the equivalent of Velveeta, cheese in any form is expensive and hard to find. In the import sections of some department stores you may come across the occasional lonely block of cheddar, but it will cost the same as a mid-sized sedan.
* **Mexican style foods** - largely unavailable in Korea- and that which is available isn’t worth mentioning. (The last Mexican restaurant visited by the resident Footprints food critic featured pickled radishes and kimchee….)
* **Dried fruit and nuts** - Dried cranberries and raisins are available, and peanuts are available everywhere. Other nuts and dried fruits - walnuts, brazil nuts, etc. can be next to impossible to find.
* **Baking supplies** - Don’t expect your apartment to have an oven. However, if you are lucky enough to have access to an oven and you plan on doing some baking bring baking supplies with you, i.e. baking powder, cream of tartar, etc.

**Girl Stuff To Pack for Korea**

Here is a packing list for the ladies who are heading to teach in Korea.

* **Clothes** - remember that Koreans are generally of a different body shape than most Western women. Most people will have trouble finding clothing, if not for size then because of fashion.
  + If you fit into the following categories you may have trouble finding clothing:
    - over 5'7" or 173cm
    - over a size 32 in pants
    - over a B cup bra size
    - feet bigger than a size 8
  + If you fit into one of these categories be sure to bring your wardrobe.
  + Those that are interested in buying clothes in Korea, clothes can be cheap or expensive; everything depends on your taste. You can pick up some great buys on Northface or Gortex, you just have to look. The knockoffs are pretty good. Many clothes will have labels on them but they'll be fakes, be careful not to overpay.
* **Cosmetics** - bring deodorant, your favorite perfume and favorite skin cream. There are lots of perfumes here and there are lots of skin cream (in fact some really good ones too and they are much cheaper) but they won't have your favorite. Deodorant is also tough to find.
* **Tampons** - they have tampons in Korea (not expensive) but only with applicator so if you prefer without you’ll have to bring some with you.

**Apartment Stuff to Pack for Korea**

When you're settling in, it's always nice to have some "hominess" in your apartment.  
  
This is a list of suggestions on what to bring to make your apartment in [Korea](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/teaching-jobs-in-asia/teaching-jobs-in-korea) a little more homey.

* **Bed Sheets** - I repeat this point, sheets are hard to find and expensive. Bring queen size unless you know your bed is a different size.
* **Towel** - bring a couple of cotton towels and face cloths with you. Koreans tend to use polyester towels that don’t absorb water terribly well.
* **Pillows and pillow cases** - you can get them over there but they won't be the same as home. Bring your pillow. You'll be amazed how comforting you own pillow will be.
* **Books** - you can buy them but they are expensive and the selection is very limited.
* **Candles** - bring candles of you like them. They are almost non-existent here.   
  Family Photos - they will make your home feel homey and your kids will love to see them.
* **Decorative Objects** - these little additions, whether a poster or a coaster, will make your apartment feel homier more quickly. This is important when you are feeling home-sick.
* **Bring electronic adapters** - Korea predominately uses the 220 Volt system (2 round pegs, with no third wire for ground). Don’t bother buying a fancy converter before you leave, these are expensive and VERY heavy. You can buy an electrical converter in any hardware store in Korea for around USD $25.
  + Remember to buy a converter that changes the voltage and not just a cheap plastic adapter that changes the configuration of the plugs or you run the risk of blowing up your hair dryer or computer. Some electronics will allow you to put the adapter on but not all will. Be careful.

**Teaching Stuff to Bring to Korea**

Your school in Korea will be stocked with textbooks, games and other materials to supplement your classes with, and your students will be expected to bring notebooks, pens, pencils and erasers with them to class.  
  
Don’t worry about having to stock your school with enough teaching supplies to last 50 kids for a year.

If you wish to bring some teaching stuff with you, a good idea is to bring several packages of stickers with you that have English words on them – “great”, “good job” etc. Not only is this an effective way to reinforce vocabulary, but they make great rewards for good behavior, doing homework on time, etc. Use rewards judiciously or else all of your students will expect rewards all the time.

Western games such as Twister, Monopoly or Monopoly Jr., and Boggle are great ‘fun time’ activities. Western holiday theme materials also make for great lesson plans- check the teacher’s lounge on our website for more ideas.

If you live in or near Seoul there is an ESL bookstore- English Plus- a block or so down from the Kyobo Bookstore in Jongno that has virtually all of these materials as well.

It's also not a bad idea to bring over things related to holidays. It is amazing how much value you'll get from them.

**Guy Stuff to Pack for Korea**

Guys, it's important to be organized... let's not fit stereotypes here... hang on, if you're reading this you're already a step ahead of the stereotype.  Here's a couple suggestions to help you pack:

* **Clothing** - styles and sizes are different. Prepare yourself with casual clothing for summer and fall. It never gets too cold. The weather is like that of Southern Pennsylvania or Washington D.C.
* **Shoes** - anything over a 10 is hard to find.
* **Condoms** - if you're active come prepared.
* **Deodorant** - bring a year supply. You can get some deodorant at the Body Shop in major cities but getting good stuff is tough.
* **Cologne** - duty free is a great place to pick up your favorite scent. They have cologne in Korea but you may not be able to get what you're looking for.

[](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/teach-abroad/asia/teaching-in-korea)