

When I compete in figure, I make a list and check it twice before packing my bag for the big day. This is one time when being anal-retentive comes in handy. Here's my list of "Must-Haves" for the perfect backstage experience:

**Competition bikini.** I always bring mine in a Zip Lock bag in case other items leak.

**Earrings, bracelets, etc.** Some shows require that for prejudging you remove all jewelry except for your earrings. Have your bracelets and necklaces packed and ready for the evening.

**Large & small safety pins.** These are great for quick fixes and to pull the straps through the loops of your bikini bottoms when you tie into your suit.

**Small sewing kit.** You never know when you'll need to mend something in a hurry.

**Scissors.** These come in handy to cut the excess strap after you've gotten into your bikini. You might also need to trim threads here and there.

**Latex gloves.** Bring plenty of these to apply your Muscle Juice, etc. When oil mixes with Pro Tan, you end up with orange palms and nails.

**Several small hand towels.** Often, the bathrooms run out of paper towels.

**Extra gallon-sized Zip Lock bags.** You'll want something to put the dirty hand towels, etc., in so they don't mess up your bag.

**Pro Tan & applicator brush.** You may need a touch-up. Bring it in a separate Zip Lock bag in case it leaks.

**Bikini Bite.** If you use it, bring your own. There is nothing more annoying than having to pass around all your supplies because some girls don't think it's necessary to plan ahead. Bring it in a separate Zip Lock bag, as the bottle gets sticky after a few uses.

**Muscle Juice.** Again, you will need this, so buy your own and bring your own. Pack it in a separate Zip Lock bag, as the bottle will get oily.

**Paper towels/tissues/toilet paper.** By the evening show these are often gone from the bathroom.

**Competition heels.** Keep them in a separate bag to protect them from spills.

**Evening gown and special undergarments.** Now is not the day to forget your bra, etc.

**Curling iron or hot rollers.**

Use these to touch up between the morning and evening shows. I usually come in curlers that I take out just before the backstage line-up.

**Dry shampoo.** Bumble and Bumble now makes a line of dry shampoos (a very fine powder) for blondes, brunettes, redheads, etc. I like these better than the traditional white powder shampoos. It effectively removes the oil that gets in your hair from your back so you can restyle for the night show.



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**Hairbrush/comb/hair pick.** It will be a very long day if you forget any of these critically important items.

**Ponytail holder.** If you have long hair, you'll want to keep it off your back when you're not on stage.

**Your own mirror.** Backstage at a competition is like Saturday night at a sorority house. Be prepared with your own mirror. Get a large one with a handle that doubles as a stand so you can use it hands-free.

**Dental floss.** You'll be dehydrated and eating foods that stick to your teeth (rice cakes, etc.). Do not go on stage with a smile full of food.

**Food and water.** None may be supplied for the competitors, so make sure that you have enough to last the whole day.

**Makeup.** I think it's easier to apply your makeup at home and just make touch-ups once you arrive. The lighting backstage may not be adequate, and you'll be more comfortable primping at home.

**Flip-flops.** These are great to slip on when you are backstage.

**Bands/tubing to pump up.** The smaller dumbbells can get scarce with so many people pumping up at the same time.

**Contact lens solution.** If you wear contact lenses, you know that a tiny bit of debris can feel like shattered glass in your eye.

**Foot powder.** The clear plastic shoes always make my feet sweat; foot powder will keep you from slipping in your heels.

**Petroleum jelly.** Since you are dehydrated, you may need some petroleum jelly on your teeth to ensure that your lips glide into a pretty smile.

**Band-aids.** Your shoe may rub a blister on your foot.

**Your wallet and some cash.** On a stressful day with so many other details to consider, it is easy to forget the obvious. Most shows have display booths, so you'll need cash if credit cards aren't accepted.

**Cell phone.** Keep it on "vibrate" and don't annoy the other competitors with unnecessary chatter. I find it handy to have in case I need to briefly communicate with someone in the audience, etc.

**A camera.** You may want to snap some memories of the day aside from the pro shots that you'll purchase.

**Hairspray.** Whether or not you plan on using it, make sure you have some available.

**Nail file.** A jagged nail can snag a bikini or an evening gown, so be ready to make a quick fix.

**Hand lotion.** Chapped knuckles are a no-no.

Last but not least, bring a backstage assistant. I know that some girls compete without help, but I think that having another set of hands around is necessary. One final note: I've learned (the hard way) that it is better to bring something and not use it than to need something and not have it. Not having what you need will impede your performance, so better to be safe. ★

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# WHAT TO PACK FOR SHOW DAY