

The First Swing Packing Checklist

Everything to pack before your first FIFO swing — and what to leave home

FIFO Life

Real talk for FIFO workers & families

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Introduction

Your first swing sets the tone. Turn up under-prepared and you'll spend two weeks borrowing chargers and buying overpriced sunscreen from the camp shop. This checklist comes from workers who've done hundreds of swings between them — pack it once, save it, and you'll never think about it again.

Rule of thumb: the site supplies your PPE and the camp supplies your bed and meals. Everything that makes the swing comfortable is on you.

1. The Non-Negotiables

These are the items that cause real problems when forgotten. Photo ID and licences come first — you will not get through the gate or the induction without them. Bring your driver's licence, any high-risk work licences, VOC paperwork and your Standard 11 certificate if you have one, plus bank details and your super fund info for day-one paperwork.

Medications are next, in original packaging, with enough for the full swing plus three spare days in case of delayed flights. Camp shops don't stock prescriptions and the site medic can't hand out yours.

Phone charger and a long cable — camp room power points are never where you want them. A double adapter earns you mates in rooms with one usable socket.

- ✓ Photograph every licence and certificate and email them to yourself
- ✓ Pack medications in carry-on, never checked baggage
- ✓ A 2-metre charging cable beats a 1-metre cable every single swing

2. Comfort Makes the Swing

The camp gives you a room; these items make it yours. Your own pillow (or at least a pillowcase from home) is the single most recommended item by long-term FIFO workers — camp pillows are a lottery. Thongs for the walk to the shower block are non-negotiable. Earplugs, because someone on your corridor snores like a dozer, and an eye mask if you're on nights.

For downtime: headphones, a tablet or book, and downloaded content — never trust camp wifi with your streaming plans. A drink bottle you actually like drinking from will do more for your hydration than any toolbox talk.

Sunscreen and a decent moisturiser sound soft until you've done a summer swing in the Pilbara or the Bowen Basin. Your skin will thank you.

- ✓ Download shows, podcasts and playlists before you fly — camp wifi is for messages, not Netflix
- ✓ Two sets of thongs: shower pair and verandah pair
- ✓ Pack washing powder pods — camp laundries have machines but rarely detergent

3. Leave It At Home

Every first-timer overpacks. You don't need seven casual outfits — you'll live in work gear and wear civvies twice. You don't need your own towels at most camps (check your camp's list), and you definitely don't need anything valuable: camps are generally safe but rooms change, bags get misdirected, and nothing ruins a swing like losing something irreplaceable.

Alcohol rules vary hard between camps — many are dry, most limit what you can bring in, and getting it wrong on your first swing is a bad look. Check before you pack a single can. Same for anything that could be questioned at a bag search: if you're not sure, leave it out.

Final check: weigh your bag. Charter flights enforce limits strictly — usually tighter than commercial. Your travel confirmation will state it; believe it.

- ✓ Check your camp's specific list — some supply towels, some don't
- ✓ Charter baggage limits are enforced to the kilo — weigh before you leave
- ✓ When in doubt about alcohol, arrive without it and ask on site

Final Word

Print this, pack once, and screenshot your final bag layout for next swing. After three swings it becomes muscle memory — until then, this list has your back. Safe travels and good luck out there.

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