

How to Pack a Bike to Ship or Fly

1. Put a piece of duct tape or electrical tape around the seat post where it connects to the bike. This way you will know the exact height of your seat when you reassemble your bike. Detach the seat. Leave it attached to the seat post and remove it as a unit.
2. Remove the handlebars by loosening the bolt at the top of the handlebar stem, which is the elbow-shaped piece of metal that clamps to the handlebars. Remove the stem bolt from the bike, keeping in mind that the handlebars and stem should come out as a unit. Leave brake cables attached.
3. Tape handlebars to bicycle's top tube. Tape the bolt to the handlebars so you'll know where it is. Any small part that you remove can put in a zip-loc bag and put in the bike box's pouch if there is one, but if you don't think you will remember where this part goes when you are reassembling the bike, you are better off taping it to the bike near where it should go.
4. Use a pedal or crescent wrench to unscrew the pedals where they attach to the crank - where the inside of your foot sits on the pedal. The left pedal will be reverse-threaded; turn clockwise to unscrew. In other words, turn towards the back of the bike to loosen, towards the front to tighten.
5. Remove both wheels. I like to put a piece of styrofoam between the fork to keep the fork from being crushed during shipping. Put the skewers in your parts bag or tape them to the inside of the box.
6. Either undo the derailleur and tape it to the bike, or wrap it well with bubble wrap.
7. Put pedals and seat in a bag. Tie or tape the bag to the bike's frame, next to where the handlebars are taped, or somehow secure the pedals so they don't move around inside the box. I like to use see-through zip-loc bags. The airlines will open anything they can't see.
8. Lift the bike frame carefully into the box and center the bike. Next fit the wheels in the box, slipping one wheel on each side of the frame.
9. I usually go nuts with bubble wrap – better safe than sorry. If you are using a cardboard box, seal your box with heavy-duty packing tape. With a soft-sided bike case, you will want to check that everything is well padded. With a hard case, you should be good to go.
10. Don't forget to pack your tools to reassemble the bike.

One note of caution: DO NOT FLY WITH CO2. This is on TSA's forbidden items list and if they suspect you have CO2 or find CO2 in your bike box, you won't like the condition in which you find your box when you retrieve it after the flight!