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sleep and head off on holiday. But my wash bag had other ideas, the disorganised b*stard. It particularly irks me because this is my field of expertise: I am a beauty buff, I have access to all I need. But it is Never. Enough.

This time, I was surprisingly organised about the clothes. Yes, I overpacked (I always do), but I found it easy to stuff in something for every occasion - times two, sometimes three.

But the washbag... The last time I went away, I was up until 2am the morning of the flight just trying to find the see-through bag for hand luggage, before tracking down my mosquito spray and miniature toothpaste. I made a vow to myself: have a kit ready to go at all times. Have two if needs be.

The very best version of myself agreed that yes, of course I'd do this - what simple genius! That version of me is now drowned in the rumpled clothes that were left unpacked for at least three weeks from the last trip, but she taunts me: 'I told you so!' It's a matter of discipline and the only way I can make it happen is by applying logic, thus: make a list.

You will have more of an idea of what you need if you write it down in advance - not when you're packing. That is like going food shopping when hungry - all rationality is lost. My checklist and tips are as follows...

First, make up two washbags (the Anya Hindmarch clear hand-luggage ones are the best, or try Boots for cheaper alternatives. These are allowed through security so you don't have to decant into the airport's plastic bags. Revelation). Use them on rotation. Miniatures are not expensive and what it will cost in money, it will save in sanity. Take one bag on your next trip. Then, when you return, you've got one ready to go so you can replace, at your leisure, what you used. And repeat.

But, at this point, I'd also advise you to double up on your make-up liquids so you can keep your home make-up kit intact, while never being far from an emergency mascara or liquid liner.

I'll let you know if I manage to take my own advice next time. We're about to start our descent.

Holiday prep - the washbag

Packing the essentials always takes military precision, says ELLE's Sophie Beresiner

I am writing this column from seat 29C on a flight to South Africa. Needless to say I've missed my deadline, since I'm filing it while flying. But why the mad rush? In part, because packing is the bane of my life. I had grand plans about wafting about the place dropping freshly laundered linen into my case, perfectly organised by outfit for each day and occasion - very efficient, very capsule. Then I would sit with a glass of wine, finish and send off my work to my editor, get a good night's

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MY WASHBAG CHECKLIST



1. Anya Hindmarch In-Flight Travel Bag, £150. 2. Boots Women's Health Vitamin B6 Tablets, £3.05 for 90. 3. Holland & Barrett Timed Release Vitamin B12 Tablets, £12.99 for 100. 4. Elemis Papaya Enzyme Peel, £32. 5. Lancaster Tan Maximiser, £24. 6. Tresemmé Salon Finish Extra Hold Hairspray, £4.99. 7. Aveda Protective Hair Veil, £21.50. 8. Lee Stafford Breaking Hair Leave In Treatment, £7.99. 9. Nails Inc. Professional nail file, £6. 10. Sisley Youth Protector SPF 50, £109. 11. Clinique Moisture Surge Tinted Moisturizer SPF15, £22.50. 12. Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser, £8.99. 13. Mavala Nail Colour Cream in Wichita, £4.75

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