Things that get your bag pulled at TSA that you wouldn't expect

Most of them are in a carry-on right now. Every rule on this sheet comes from tsa.gov, and each source is numbered on the last page.

THE ONE RULE BEHIND MOST OF THESE

If you can spill it, spread it, spray it, pump it or pour it, it has to be 3.4 ounces (100 ml) or less in a carry-on. [1,2]

Everything that small fits together in one quart-size bag. Anything bigger goes in your checked bag. That is TSA's own rule of thumb for its 3-1-1 liquids rule.

Food that counts as a liquid or a gel

If it spreads, pours or spills, the 3.4 oz limit follows it through the checkpoint.

Peanut butter [3]

CARRY-ON · 3.4 oz max | CHECKED · OK

It spreads, so the liquids rule applies. A full jar goes in the checked bag.

Jam and jelly [4]

CARRY-ON · 3.4 oz max | CHECKED · OK

Spreadable, so the same 3.4 oz limit applies. A full jar goes in the checked bag.

Honey and maple syrup [5,6]

CARRY-ON · 3.4 oz max | CHECKED · OK

Pourable, so the same limit applies. Bigger bottles go in the checked bag.

Hummus, dips, salsa and dressing [7,8,9,10]

CARRY-ON · 3.4 oz max | CHECKED · OK

Creamy dips, spreads and pourable sauces follow the same 3.4 oz limit.

Yogurt [11]

CARRY-ON · 3.4 oz max | CHECKED · OK

TSA says officers may have you separate foods from your bag.

Soup [12]

CARRY-ON · 3.4 oz max | CHECKED · OK

Soup follows the same 3.4 oz limit in a carry-on.

Cranberry sauce, homemade or canned [13]

CARRY-ON · Check it | CHECKED · OK

TSA's holiday list names it under foods that must go in a checked bag.

Wine, champagne and egg nog [14]

CARRY-ON · 3.4 oz max | CHECKED · OK

TSA's holiday guidance: pack liquids and spreadable foods like these in a checked bag.

Canned foods [15]

CARRY-ON · Extra screening | CHECKED · OK

TSA says a can may not get through. It suggests the checked bag, shipping it, or leaving it home.

Water, coffee and other drinks [14]

CARRY-ON · 3.4 oz max | CHECKED · OK

Bring the bottle empty and fill it after security. TSA allows empty water bottles through.

Newer CT scanner lanes. TSA says passengers screened in lanes with CT units do not need to remove travel-sized liquids from the bag. Standard lanes still ask for the quart bag in a bin. The size limit stays 3.4 oz either way. [16,17]

Flight Plan B is not affiliated with TSA, any airline or any airport.

Not food, still a liquid or a gel

Gel-type candles [18,19]

CARRY-ON · No | CHECKED · OK

Solid candles are fine in both bags. TSA lists the gel type as checked bag only.

Snow globes [20,1]

CARRY-ON · Tiny only | CHECKED · OK

Only if the whole globe, base included, fits in your quart bag. TSA's travel tips say to check them.

Banned from both bags

Cooking spray [21]

CARRY-ON · No | CHECKED · No

TSA's page sends questions about the rules to the FAA website.

Torch lighters [22]

CARRY-ON · No | CHECKED · No

TSA: a thin, needle-like flame hotter than common lighters, reaching 2,500 F.

Party poppers [23]

CARRY-ON · No | CHECKED · No

TSA lists them as not allowed in a carry-on or a checked bag.

Alcohol over 140 proof [24]

CARRY-ON · No | CHECKED · No

More than 70% alcohol, which includes grain alcohol and 151-proof rum.

Carry-on only: keep these out of your checked bag

Power banks and phone chargers [25]

CARRY-ON · OK | CHECKED · No

TSA: spare lithium batteries, including power banks and phone chargers, are prohibited in checked luggage.

Vapes and e-cigarettes [26]

CARRY-ON · Prevent activation | CHECKED · No

Carry-on only, with protection against accidental activation of the heating element.

Cordless curling and flat irons [27]

CARRY-ON · Safety cover | CHECKED · No

Battery or butane models are carry-on only, with a safety cover fitted over the heating element.

Matches [28]

CARRY-ON · 1 book, safety only | CHECKED · No

One book of safety matches in a carry-on. TSA prohibits all matches in checked baggage.

Cabin: no. Checked bag: yes.

Corkscrew with a blade [29,30]

CARRY-ON · No | CHECKED · Wrap sharp parts

A corkscrew with no blade is fine in both bags.

Bowling balls, bats and clubs [31]

CARRY-ON · No | CHECKED · OK

TSA says they are prohibited in the cabin and must travel in checked bags.

Cast iron cookware [32]

CARRY-ON · No | CHECKED · OK

TSA's page gives no reason. It lists the skillet as checked bag only.

Magic 8 Ball [33]

CARRY-ON · No | CHECKED · OK

TSA's page answer: "Outlook not so good!" It lists it as checked bag only.

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Allowed, but they can get your bag pulled

Ground coffee, tea bags, spices and creamer [34,35,36,37]

CARRY-ON · Bag may be pulled | CHECKED · OK

TSA lists them Yes in both bags and says officers may have you separate foods and powders. From our own trips, not a TSA rule: bags with these, sealed or not, were pulled for a second look. TSA's list has no creamer entry.

Powders over 12 oz [38,39]

CARRY-ON · Own bin | CHECKED · OK

TSA's protein-powder page: over 12 oz goes in a separate bin and may need to be opened. Its powders FAQ ties the 12 oz rule to flights into the U.S. from abroad.

Ice and gel packs [40]

CARRY-ON · Frozen solid | CHECKED · OK

Allowed only if frozen solid. Partly melted or slushy packs have to meet the 3-1-1 rule.

A dead phone or laptop [41]

CARRY-ON · Power it on

Officers may ask you to power up a device. TSA says powerless devices will not be permitted onboard.

Wrapped gifts [14]

CARRY-ON · Wrap may come off | CHECKED · OK

TSA: a wrapped present that triggers an alarm will need its gift wrap removed.

Cremated remains [42]

CARRY-ON · Clear X-ray image | CHECKED · OK

TSA: a container made of a material that makes an opaque X-ray image will not be allowed.

Two exemptions most people don't know about. Say so at the start of screening. Breast milk, formula and baby food over 3.4 oz are allowed in a carry-on and do not need to fit in the quart bag. Medically necessary liquids in reasonable quantities for your trip are allowed over 3.4 oz too. TSA says to tell the officer at the beginning, and either one can get extra screening. [43,44,1]

Not sure about an item? Search tsa.gov's What Can I Bring? list, or text "Travel" to AskTSA at 275872. TSA lists live help from 8 am to 6 pm ET, 365 days a year, and the MyTSA app has a searchable item database. TSA also says the final decision rests with the officer at the checkpoint. [41,45]

Planning a trip? Flight Plan B is a voice in your ear for each airport step.
Which checkpoint, where to be and by when. Opens in your phone's browser.

flightplanb.com

Rules checked against tsa.gov on October 5, 2026. TSA changes its rules, and the officer at the checkpoint makes the final decision on whether an item goes through. Flight Plan B is not affiliated with or endorsed by TSA, any airline or any airport. Sources, numbered in the order they appear:

Item pages, all under tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/items/: [3] peanut-butter · [4] jam-and-jelly · [5] honey · [6] maple-syrup · [7] hummus · [8] creamy-dips-and-spreads · [9] salsa-and-sauces · [10] salad-dressing · [11] yogurt · [12] soups · [15] canned-foods · [18] gel-type-candles · [19] solid-candles · [20] snow-globes · [21] cooking-spray · [22] lighters-torch · [23] party-poppers · [24] alcoholic-beverages-over-140-proof · [25] phone-chargers · [26] electronic-cigarettes-and-vaping-devices · [27] hair-straightener-flat-iron-cordless · [28] matches-safety-matches · [29] corkscrews-blade · [30] corkscrews-no-blade · [31] bowling-balls · [32] cast-iron-cookware · [33] magic-8-ball · [34] spices-dry · [35] coffee-beans-or-ground · [36] tea-dry-tea-bags-or-loose-tea-leaves · [38] protein-or-energy-powders · [40] ice · [42] cremated-remains · [43] baby-formula · [44] medications-liquid

1. tsa.gov/travel/travel-tips
2. tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/liquids-rule
13. tsa.gov/news/press/releases/2025/11/25/tsa-prepares-for-busy-thanksgiving-travel-miami-international
14. tsa.gov/news/press/releases/2024/12/10/tsa-prepared-christmas-and-end-year-travel-out-philadelphia-area
16. tsa.gov/news/press/releases/2026/07/13/tsa-installs-new-computed-tomography-screening-technology-juneau
17. tsa.gov/travel/travel-tips/travel-checklist
37. tsa.gov/travel/security-screening
39. tsa.gov/travel/frequently-asked-questions/what-policy-powders-are-they-allowed
41. tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/all
45. tsa.gov/mobile