



Repairing Zipper Slider

A zipper that keeps separating behind the slider can often be fixed by squeezing the front and back plates of the zipper slider closed just a little.

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INTRODUCTION

A zipper that separates behind the zipper slider is a very common zipper failure mode, esp. on tents, backpacks and luggage. It's an easy fix with a vise grip: the goal is to carefully squeeze the front and back plates of the zipper slider just ever so slightly closer.

TOOLS:

- [Locking Pliers \(1\)](#)

Step 1 — Identifying a Bad Zipper Slider



- A zipper that separates behind the zipper slider like the one shown on this tent is a very common zipper failure mode on backpacks and luggage too. It's an easy fix with a locking pliers: the goal is to carefully squeeze the top and bottom plates of the zipper slider just ever so slightly closer.

Step 2 — Positioning Locking Pliers to Repair a Zipper



- With the locking pliers in the locked position: use the screw adjustment at the back to close on the zipper slider. (Make sure you're clamping just the zipper slider and NOT the zipper pulls or fabric.)
- Remove the locking pliers and tighten the screw adjustment ever so slightly: a 1/16th or 1/8th of a turn should be enough: you're trying to apply the slightest pressure to both sides of the zipper slider when you re-apply it.
- Return the locking pliers to the proper position on the zipper slider and clamp the locking mechanism down: this time, the locking pliers should lock just a little as you clamp down. Clamp the zipper slider on BOTH sides with the same setting before changing anything.
- It might take a few tries with successively tighter settings on the locking pliers but eventually the zipper will start zipping properly again.

Step 3 — Miscellaneous Zipper Slider Tips



- This technique even works with pitched tents, which is typically when you figure out that the zipper needs fixing. It works on luggage, backpacks, any zipper that has a metal slider.
- If you overdo it with the locking pliers the zipper might get hard to zip. You can open the gaps on both sides in the zipper slider a little with a thin flat blade screwdriver, but it's best to work slowly and avoid that scenario.

i Don't have locking pliers or vise grip? You can use a regular pliers in a pinch, as [this person did with their backpack](#).

i Someone took a video of me using this technique to repair a backpack: <https://youtu.be/BhehrLek2XM>

Congratulate yourself on having saved yourself from replacing an expensive fabric item (or at least a zipper.)