

Vertex Photographic

V2 Molar Bean Bag™ - Product Instruction Sheet

Fill Material

Here in the U.S. there are a lot of different materials that can be used for filling the bag. The most common heavier fills are beans, rice, bird seed, and shelled corn (the same kind used to feed deer). With any of these heavier fills the bag will weigh around 16-18 lbs. Theoretically the heavier the bag, the more stable it should be, so typically if you have a really big lens like a 600mm or 800mm I would recommend the heavier fill. I do know lots of people using 500mm and 600mm lens with lighter fills like buckwheat hulls. The downside to the heavier fills is moving the bag around and in some cases finding 16-18 lbs. of the fill. There are lots of other fills like poly beads. They might be harder to find and possibly more expensive.

The common fills mentioned above can pretty much be found easily here in the U.S. and are not super expensive. Most of the organic fills can be dumped out and something will eat it. I have been told by several customers that if you leave your bag accessible to mice they may eat a hole in the bag to get to a birdseed fill. If you want a slightly lighter fill try black sunflower seeds, they will make the bag weigh around 10-12lbs. An even lighter fill is buckwheat hulls, which will make the bag weigh around 5lbs. We usually have buckwheat hulls in stock if you can't find them. We sell them for \$16 and \$16 for shipping. I have tried polystyrene and it is way too light.

If you are going to fill the bag at home and use it locally you can choose just about any fill which suits your needs. If you intend to take the bag on a trip and fill it when you get to your destination then you may have fewer choices. Places like Lowes and Home Depot usually have a good selection of bird seed and of course grocery stores have beans and rice. Some people choose to fill the bag with buckwheat hulls and carry it in their checked luggage. That way they don't have to worry about filling the bag when they get to their destination.

If you are going to Africa you will probably end up with beans. When you arrive in Africa you can ask your tour leader or driver/guide to help you get enough fill for your bag. Remember in Africa they will be using the metric system so you will need to get around 8-10 kilos of beans. It is always better to have a little extra than not enough so 10 kilos is the safe choice. The beans will probably be in some kind of burlap sack. Save the sack so you can dump the beans back in the sack when you are done with your trip. You can give the beans to your African driver/guide who can always cook them, or give them to someone else that would like to have them.

It is not a bad idea to test fill the bag at home before going on a trip so you can get an idea of how full you prefer the bag and also go out and shoot with the bag so you know how it works. Practicing at home with your bean bag and lens/camera before your trip is always a good thing to do and will make you more comfortable.

Filling the V2 Molar Bag

First of all, be patient. This task can be frustrating if you let it! Your fill can end up spilling and going everywhere. You may want to fill the bag over a bucket, box, or large plastic bag to catch any fill you drop. If your fill is in plastic bags you can cut the corner and slowly pour the fill into the zippered opening on the bean bag. You can also make a large size funnel by taking a piece of fairly stiff paper and rolling it into a funnel. Place a couple of pieces of tape on the paper to make it hold the funnel shape. Make sure the hole on the bottom of your funnel is pretty big so your beans will pass through easily.

If you have a large empty plastic fruit juice bottle you can cut the top off and it makes an excellent funnel. Wal-Mart sells a funnel called the Scoop n' Funnel in the bird seed section which works very well also. If you use a funnel don't let go of it until all the fill has passed through the funnel. If you take your hand off the funnel it will tip over and your fill will spill everywhere. As you fill the bean bag you may want to shake it every now and then to get the fill into the corners of the bag. Once you have the amount of fill in the bag you want, close the zipper completely. The little black zipper pull tab should be pushed under the nylon tape cover.

Using the V2 Molar Bag

For use on a vehicle door or window the two vertical portions with the 1" nylon tape handles hang down over the door or window providing a flat surface on the top. The bag will always be more stable if the window is rolled down all the way and the bag is resting on the door frame. Sometimes you have to raise the window to get the viewfinder on your camera to a comfortable position for your eye. If you have electric windows be careful raising or lowering them when you have the bean bag and/or your camera gear on the bean bag. The motor in the window is probably not designed to lift a lot of weight.

Sometimes, depending on the vehicle window height, seat height and your body length you may find your eye does not come up to the viewfinder when the window is rolled all the way down. This is particularly true if you are using a plate on your tripod foot of your lens or a ball head or gimbal head. You may need to be creative and put some sort of seat cushion or rolled up blanket on your seat to raise your eye level up. You can raise the window if you need to get your camera/ lens higher but having the bean bag on the door frame is the most stable option. If at all possible test before you go out and shoot. If you are at home and using your own vehicle you should be able to determine the best position. If you are on a trip with a rental vehicle or any unfamiliar vehicle, test the position before you head out to start shooting.

The V2 Molar bag can also be used on the hood of your car or on the roof. It can be turned upside down or on its side. Just experiment with different positions and you will find a good stable position.

Care and Maintenance

Try not to drop or throw the bag around. Even though we have hot cut all the fabric and double stitched all the seams, it still puts unneeded stress on the bag when it is thrown around or dropped a lot. Try not to get the bag wet. The fabric is coated with a water repellent finish, but some moisture can still get in. Some fills like rice will absorb water. We do not recommend leaving the bag exposed to sunlight over an extended period of time. Nylon does deteriorate from UV exposure. The normal amount of sun exposure the bag gets in normal use is not a big thing, but if you just leave the bag out in the sun for no reason it will slowly but surely weaken the material and thread. If you want to wash the bag, do it by hand with gentle agitation and any mild soap. Do not put the bag in the washing machine. Let it air dry indoors or in the shade, not in the sun.

Warning

Any time you put your lens/ camera up on any bean bag on a car door or window you risk the chance of it falling out and causing serious damage. This is especially true when you attach a gimbal head or ball head with a Side Kick because your camera gear has a higher center of gravity and more weight up higher as opposed to resting directly on the bean bag. With that in mind, please be very careful and pay attention to the stability of your camera gear. You may find when you are driving around in a photographic area you will be tempted to leave the bean bag on the car door and maybe even your lens/camera on the bean bag. Often, we only have seconds to get a picture of a bird or animal so having your camera gear ready to go is sometimes desirable.

If you do decide to leave your gear on the car door while you are changing locations make 100% sure you have a firm grip on your camera gear and realize there is a risk involved. You may want to consider attaching a piece of cord or bungee cord to the 1" tape carrying handle on the bottom of the bag to some point inside the vehicle to help stop the bag from falling out of the vehicle. Finding a place to attach a cord or bungee cord is more difficult these days now that electric windows are more prevalent. If you go to a foreign destination like Africa and want to leave your bean bags installed on the vehicle please consider lashing them to something on the vehicle. The roads in Africa are very rough and if you don't secure the bean bag it could easily bounce out of the vehicle.

Here is some new information to consider. I received a bean bag from one of my customer that had some small holes in the fabric. After inspecting the bag, it was evident some very small bugs in the birdseed he used to fill the bag had actually eaten holes in the fabric. Some birdseed is cleaner than others. So the bottom line is if you use birdseed as a fill you may encounter this same problem. Beans are pretty much a safe fill. I have not had any reports of problems with beans. We have also had reports of mice eating holes in a bean bag filled with birdseed. That customer had left the bag in a place where mice could get to it. I just had another customer who lives in Canada (where a lot of bears are around) report a bear actually broke a window in his vehicle to get the sunflower seeds in his Molar bag. So if you use any organic fill keep in mind some animal may try to get to it.

Plate Options

If you want to shoot off the tripod foot of your lens as opposed to laying the lens directly on the bean bag, then you may need to attach some sort of plate to the foot of your lens to give it a wider more stable base. Our new V2 plate is extremely versatile and cost effective. It can be Velcroed to the top of the bag and have a ball head attached or a ball head and Side Kick screwed on to the plate. You can also attach a gimbal head like a Wimberley head. The plate can free float on top of the bag and be directly attached to the tripod foot or you can install an Arca Swiss style clamp to make the plate quick releasable.

There are several other options. You can use two Wimberley M-1 quick release arms and attach one on each side of the tripod foot. These arms cost about \$66 each and can be purchased from www.tripodhead.com. A second option is one of Walt Anderson's panning plates. It has an Arca Swiss clamp on top of the plate that swivels. They cost about \$200. You can buy them at B&H Photo. The last option is to just take a piece of wood and drill two holes that correspond to the spacing on the bottom of your tripod foot or attach a clamp on top of the wood to make it quick releasable.

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