

Inside Out **That back-to-school feeling**



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Tenor Christopher Gillett just can't shake off the post-holiday feeling that assails him when September arrives. All the things he meant to do – pay the taxman, practise his scales, learn new roles – loom as large as his old school's Holiday Reading List.



Socks, dark - 6 pairs

Underpants, plain – 6 pairs

Vests, white – 6

It's that time of year again. Autumn is coming and I'm packing. Packing to go away. I suppose everyone has this feeling in early September. The summer holidays are nearly over; time to go back to school.

Trousers, various – 3 pairs

Where have the last two months gone? What have I done? I certainly didn't sit on a beach or laze by a pool at a Spanish hotel. I rarely seem to 'do' holidays in the conventional sense. There's always something that needs to be done, much like there always used to be a school Holiday Reading List of worthy books, most of which never got read; something I used to fib about once term started. It's not so easy, though, to be blasé about a new role that starts the new season. Can't bullshit about that.

Shoes, formal – 1 pair

At school, whenever I was set the inevitable English essay to write, 'What I did during my holidays', I would chew my pen and stare at the wall for an eternity before finding anything to say. I'd do much the same today. I seemed to be busy all the time but I just can't remember actually doing anything.

The singer's trick of practising while you hold a pillow over your mouth will at least prevent the rest of the hotel from breaking the door down and holding the pillow for you

Shoes, informal – 2 pairs

When I have done 'proper' holidays, I've often found myself having to do some singing – unbelievably tedious vocal exercises and scales, usually in the shower – just to keep myself in shape. You tend to feel like a social pariah, belting out some Berlioz in a Benidorm hotel, but the singer's trick of practising an aria while you hold a pillow over your mouth will at least prevent the rest of the hotel from breaking the door down and holding the pillow for you.

Pyjamas - 1 pair

Sunbathing, holiday overindulgence and singing do not go well together, especially if you've got to work within a couple of days of getting home. You'd probably rather not sing at all. It's just a good idea to keep the engine ticking over while you're away; which rather defeats the whole object of the exercise - having a holiday - in the first place.

Jacket, casual – 1

The other problem with holidays is that there's a good chance you've spent much of the year away. All you want to do during a break from work is to potter about in your own home, fixing the dripping tap in the bathroom or painting a child's bedroom.

Suit, formal – 1

Besides, there is always something else needing your attention – taxes or some other thrilling piece of administration. And then there's always that learning. Much like the English teacher's reading list, there's the pile of music to be studied and memorised. There's only so much you can cram in, in a state of panic, during the last week before term starts. No, to do it properly, you really have to spend months learning a new role.

Penknife, Swiss – 1

That's it though. Too late now. Term is about to start and we'll see how well I've done with the Holiday Reading List.

Raincoat – 1

Unlike school, I'm looking forward to getting back to work. I just wish I could remember what I've done all summer.

Toiletries – toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo...

[christophergillett.co.uk \(http://www.christophergillett.co.uk/index.htm\)](http://www.christophergillett.co.uk/index.htm)

[saddoabroad.blogspot.com \(http://saddoabroad.blogspot.com/\)](http://saddoabroad.blogspot.com/)