if your suitcase could talk

It would roll out this handy advice to help your travel go smoothly.

I like to be recognized.
Black hides dirt, but a bold hue helps you spot your bag quickly. Add a sturdy tag, not the flimsy free kind from the check-in counter, and write your name, cell number, and email address. To prevent theft while you’re out of town, don’t include your home address.

Test my handle.
A wonky handle is not only maddening but also hard to fix. Before you buy, run a few tests. Move the handle up and down to see if it glides without sticking. When it’s fully extended, check that it doesn’t jiggle back and forth. Finally, make sure it locks firmly in place when it’s all the way up and when it’s down.

It’s what’s on the outside that counts.
A soft-sided suitcase often has zippers that let it expand, great for overpackers, plus external pockets to keep things like itineraries handy. Hard-sided ones might have expanding zippers, but they generally don’t expand as much. A hard shell is also better at protecting breakables.

You can lock me up.
Yes, you’re still allowed to secure your stuff! Look for a zipper with two D ring fasteners that overlap and fit a lock. Then buy a TSA-accepted one, which can be opened with a TSA master key.

I’ve got moves.
Spinner-style suitcases have four pivoting wheels and are designed to roll upright next to you. In-line fixed bags have two wheels and are pulled behind you. While spinners are more ergonomic, in-line fixed wheels are better on bumpy sidewalks and curbs.

Take my measurements.
There’s no industry-wide correct carry-on size. Requirements vary by airline, but anything larger than 22 inches by 14 inches and 9 inches deep will have to be checked. The standing height should include the wheels and handle, but they’re not always in the specs, so confirm with a tape measure or, if buying online, call the company to check.

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