

Winter Activity and Clothing Hints:

There is no such thing as bad weather, just poor choices in clothing.

WINTER CLOTHING

- When winter camping, dress in layers so you can easily adjust your clothes to regulate body moisture and temperature. Three types of layers are considered normal: a wicking layer against your skin (long underwear - polypropylene), an insulating layer (fleece), and a water- and wind-proof outer shell layer.
- Don't overdress. Layers work best because you can take something off when you're sweating or add layers if you're chilly. Choose garments with zippers because they increase airflow and reduce sweating. Too much moisture in your clothes will make you cold as it evaporates.
- In the winter, COTTON KILLS. Cotton loses its insulating qualities when it gets wet, whether from rain or sweat. Cotton also takes a long time to dry out. Wool or synthetic materials are much better suited to winter camping in cold weather conditions.
- Protect against heat loss through your head by wearing a toboggan, balaclava, etc. Over half of your body heat can be lost through your head.
- Your boots should have waterproof outer shells such as oiled leather or plastic. Even though fabric and leather boots may have Gore-tex linings, the outer layers will absorb water, which will eventually freeze, placing a block of ice next to your foot.
- Do not wear too many pairs of socks. If the blood flow to your feet becomes constricted, your feet will get cold regardless of how many socks you have on. Tightening your bootlaces too tight will constrict the blood flow as well.
- Be sure to carry plenty of dry socks. Put on dry socks as soon as camp is set up. Socks that are wet from hiking will not keep your feet warm for long.
- Make sure your gloves, especially liners, are not too tight on your hands. If they are too tight, they can constrict the blood flow and keep your hands from warming up. Carry extra gloves or liners to change into if your first pair gets wet.
- Expect that something unexpected may happen or that someone may forget something or come unprepared. Be sure to bring along extra clothing, gloves, socks, and blankets. Better they are taken and not used than someone be cold and miserable.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Be aware of the signals your body is sending you. Cold fingers or toes indicate you should stop and address the cause of the problem if possible. Cold toes can be caused by boot laces being too tight, damp socks.
- Chemical heat packs can be used to warm feet and hands if necessary. Most types usually last several hours.

Winter Activity and Clothing Hints:

- Personal organization is crucial during the winter. You must know exactly where each and every single bit of your gear is at all times. This will enable you to find the items you need quickly and prevent you from unpacking everything to find one small item. Arrange items in your pack, etc where they can be easily found. Items such as snack foods, water, extra gloves, or a headlamp / flashlight should be easy to get out when needed.
- Tie loops of cord to all of the zipper pulls on your pack and jacket so that you can operate them with gloves or mittens or cold fingers.
- Store flashlights and extra batteries in your sleeping bag or close to your body to keep them warm. Cold will reduce the life of the batteries significantly.
- Walking sticks or a ski pole is another way to help you keep your balance on icy or snowy trails. If you do slip while hiking with a full pack, try to land on your back so the pack will take the brunt of the fall instead of your rear end.
- An insulated coffee mug will keep hot drinks hot much longer than regular cups. Large insulated mugs can also be used for soups, etc at mealtime. Keep plenty of hot drinks available in the evening. The extra fluids are helpful and the heat is welcome.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks before going to bed. They may keep you awake and will tend to send you to the bathroom in the middle of the night.
- Snack before you go to bed so that your body will have enough fuel to generate heat during the long winter night.
- Exercise for a few minutes before getting in your sleeping bag. This will warm up your body and make it easier to warm up a cold sleeping bag.
- Don't breathe inside your sleeping bag at night. Breathe through a stocking cap or bandana instead. Moisture from your breath will wet your sleeping bag and reduce its insulating ability. Don't forget to seal it well.

FOOD and WATER

- Include plenty of carbohydrates in your diet to provide fuel for hiking and for simply keeping your body warm. One-pot meals for supper are the easiest way to cook in the winter. Food should be easy to fix and tasty enough to be appetizing.
- Drink plenty of water, even though you don't think you are thirsty. Dry winter air will dehydrate you quickly without you noticing until it is too late. Water is necessary for your body to generate heat. A good rule of thumb for checking hydration is the color of your urine. Urine will be light colored or clear if you are properly hydrated.
- Keep your water bottles from freezing in your pack by putting them in a wool sock or insulated bottle cover. You can make bottle covers by taping closed cell foam around your bottles. Water mixed with something such as Gatorade, lemonade, etc will freeze at a lower temperature than plain water.