

❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️

❄️ ❄️ **WINTER CAMPING** ❄️ ❄️

❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️

Scouts need to be properly prepared for winter camping. Winter camping requires additional clothing and gear. Winter camping can be a fun, beautiful, and warm experience, even in below-zero, snow-covered conditions, if you follow the Scout motto, "Be Prepared." Here are some tips.

CLOTHING

Layers-layers-layers!

Long Underwear

Polypropylene long underwear pants and shirts. One to wear EACH DAY and one for spare. Polypropylene is great because it "wicks" or draws moisture (sweat, perspiration) away from the body, keeping the body dry. Dry means warm! If polypropylene gets wet, it dries quickly. Other wicking materials are available, too. Wool is good also because it insulates when it's wet--but takes forever to dry.

Most pros prefer polypropylene -- it's lightweight and not bulky and inexpensive. Absolutely **NO COTTON long underwear (even thermal)**! If cotton gets wet, you'll get COLD and stay COLD.

Places to purchase polypropylene (it's usually navy blue): Dicks, Sports Authority, Gander Mountain, Cabelas, Meijers (sports department), Vertical Drop. Sometimes can be found at Wal-Mart, K-Mart, or Target.

Pants

Over the long underwear bottoms wear fleece pants (polyester fleece, not the cotton "sweat pant" fleece) and over those, nylon wind pants. The fleece traps air to keep in body heat. The wind pants keep out moisture and wind, yet allow moisture to escape. Polyester fleece is warm and dries fast. These need not be expensive. Inexpensive fleece pants can be found at Meijer's, Wal-Mart, Target. Campmor also has sales on them. Of course, ski pants are good, too! They need not be expensive, though.

Shirts

Over the polypropylene underwear shirt wear a middle layer such as a turtleneck or long-sleeve tee-shirt. Wool or synthetic is preferable to cotton. Or, wear a fleece (polyester, Polartec) top. The fleece traps warm air. Always avoid overheating by removing a layer if necessary. Add it back on when you get colder.

Socks

No cotton socks--never, ever!

Always wear heavy wool socks, with synthetic liner socks. Liner socks wick away perspiration. Wool socks keep the feet warm. Always have **2 clean sets of wool/liner socks for each day**, and a spare set. Scouts play in the snow and feet get wet. It is important to keep feet dry in cold weather.

My sons and I love Smartwool brand socks. They are thick and and comfy and not scratchy. Smartwool makes socks in different thicknesses. For winter camping, I get the thickest, which is the Expedition Trekking kind. Smartwool socks are not cheap, but we've had ours for years and cherish them like gold! You cannot put a price on being properly prepared for cold weather camping. I've seen frostbitten feet on Scouts and adults who were not properly prepared. It's not a pretty sight.

Absolutely necessary: ALWAYS take off your socks and put on clean, dry socks before crawling into a sleeping bag. Your feet will feel instantly warm. If your feet are warm and your head is warm (wear that stocking hat to bed!), the rest of you will feel warm! Put on clean, dry wool socks, or Polartec/polyester fleece socks (Acorn is one brand) for toasty toes.

Boots

Invest in warm, insulated, waterproof winter boots. Always wear sock layers (liner and wool socks) when trying them on in the store. These can be a high-priced item, especially with boys' rapid-growing feet.

I found ones for myself at K-Mart that were more comfortable than the high-priced ones at REI and Dick's. Meijers carries the Coleman brand that have proven very good for my sons. Campmor often has good sales, too.

Boots should always be roomy enough to move your toes, even with all those socks and liners. Tight boots will constrict circulation and increase risk of frostbite.

NEVER wear tennis/athletic shoes! They will not keep feet warm or dry.

Headgear

Always bring a MINIMUM of 3 warm (stocking type) hats that cover the ears. One to wear and a second one to replace the first one after it gets wet. Keep a third hat dry to use when sleeping. Use hats that also have a face mask or bring a separate face mask or "turtle". A headband will not protect your face from cold breezes.

The human body will protect its most "valuable" part--the brain and head. It will take warmth away from other parts to keep the brain safe. If you want to keep your feet warm, wear a hat! And wear a hat that covers your ears to avoid frostbite.

Handgear

Always bring a MINIMUM of 3 pairs of heavy, warm mittens. Mittens and gloves **always** get wet and there is no possible way to dry them on a campout. Mittens are better than gloves because the fingers keep each other warm. Get heavy mittens with some type of waterproof outer layer. Fleece gloves that have fingers that open at the knuckle may seem a good idea but they aren't, unless you wear a waterproof mitt over them. Heavy, warm, REALLY warm gloves are ok.

For doing campsite chores (setting up/taking down tents, eating, cooking, etc.), gloves allow easier manipulation.

Tip: get those inexpensive stretchy, one-size-fits-all 99 cent knit gloves for campsite chores. They WILL get wet and dirty, but will keep your good mittens/gloves clean and dry. These do NOT count as part of the 3-pair minimum!

Jacket

Get a good winter jacket or ski shell, with an attached hood. A jacket with lots of deep pockets and/or rings for clipping on mittens, gloves and hats is handy to keep everything close by without losing them. (Good mittens/gloves are expensive and you NEVER want to lose them on a campout!)

Sleepwear

NEVER sleep in the clothes you wore during the day. Thermal underwear and fleece pajamas or sweatshirts/sweatpants are good. Don't forget to put on dry, clean socks.

Ok, ok. I have been on winter campouts where I kept my longjohns on and put my pajamas over them. But, I always took off my outer clothes and always put on dry, clean wool socks or fleece socks!

GEAR

Sleeping bag

Invest in a mummy-type bag. It will eliminate cold spots, takes up less room, and you can draw it around your face to keep warm (it's a bad idea to cover your head with the sleeping bag--your breath will make the bag wet). Skip the 32 degree, skip the 20 degree, skip the 15 degree bags. Go for the 0 degree bag. These can range from under \$100 to over \$300. Coleman makes a good 0 degree bag for around \$50 - \$70. Look for sales online or at local stores. Campmor has sales all year round: www.campmor.com. Cabelas is a fun place to shop, in their store or online.

If you prefer a rectangular sleeping bag, it is still good to invest in an inexpensive fleece sleeping bag and use it inside the rectangular bag. Also, if one's legs do not reach to the bottom of the bag (i.e., your bag is taller than you are), fold the bottom of the closed bag over your feet. It will eliminate that pocket of cold air around your tootsies and help insulate your feet and ankles better.

Sleeping pad/mattress

A pad under the sleeping bag is a MUST in cold weather to keep the bag from getting wet from condensation. A self-inflating pad (Slumberjack, Therma Rest) is more expensive than a foam pad, but takes up a lot less room and is very comfortable. Foam pads should be at least 1 inch thick. NEVER use an air mattress or put your sleeping bag directly on the floor. If you don't have a sleeping pad, use a wool blanket. It's better to get a pad!

Blanket under mattress pad

Bring a heavy blanket (I use an old sleeping bag) to put under the sleeping pad. It provides additional insulation and keeps the sleeping pad/mattress dry.

Fleece sleeping bag

A good, inexpensive investment is a fleece sleeping bag. It's great in cool summer weather. For winter camping, use it inside a rectangular sleeping bag or in a mummy bag (if it'll fit), or unzip it and use it as a blanket on top of the mummy bag. Really helps! Look for sales at Target, K-Mart, Wal-Mart, etc.

Tip: Pre-arrange with your tent-mate to have one bring a heavy rectangular sleeping bag. Unzip it and use it over the both of you as an extra blanket.

Always label your clothing and gear with your name!

Tips: Pack clothing in zip-lock bags. Clothes will remain dry when those globs of snow fall off your jacket and hat into your duffel bag. Pack a set of long underwear, pair of sock liners, and pair of wool socks together in a zip-lock bag, one set/bag for each day. It'll be all ready in the morning without a lot of digging. Put the next day's clothing in your sleeping bag with you by your feet a half hour or so before getting up. Warms it up and avoids that cold body shock! But don't put next day's clothing in your sleeping bag the night before – it will get damp from perspiration and won't keep you warm.

MOST IMPORTANT!

Boy Scout Troop 10 Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters **expect** that **you and your parents** have prepared yourself with the proper equipment for winter camping. If you do not have what is required, please contact a Troop Leader, *at least a week before the campout* for assistance in borrowing equipment. Scoutmasters might bring extra gear on the campout, but do not count on that.

Scouts and Adults! Please tell a Leader immediately if you discover that you are becoming very cold. Whether it be due to not taking proper precautions outdoors (e.g., rolling around in the snow getting soaked) or to lack of proper clothing or gear (e.g., forgot to pack extra wool socks), the Leaders will do what they can to help. Do not be afraid to ask. Safety is the #1 concern.

Some additional information:

WINTER CAMPING By Hiker

This is what I pass out to my Scouts about a month before our winter camporee. That gives us a couple of meetings or more to discuss cold weather survival skills, and a chance to inform parents of the dangers of cold weather camping when one is not fully prepared.

Hiker - Assistant Scoutmaster and Outdoors Activities Planner Troop 120. Computer re-typed and reformatted by Chuck Bramlet, ASM Troop 323, Thunderbird District, Grand Canyon Council, Phoenix, Az

PLANNING FOR WINTER CAMPING

Most of this information can be found in the Boy Scout Handbook. If you are going to be doing a lot of outdoor activities, this book is an invaluable source of know-how and advice.

"One has to lie deep in the snow to learn how warm and protective it is. A den in the snow confines the body heat like a blanket or overcoat. It is a snug place, no matter how hard the wind may howl. One who holes up in the snow understands better the mysteries of the woods in the winter. He knows why the severe weather grouse squirm their way under soft snow and be quiet. He understands why deer bury themselves in drifts, lying a half day or more with just their heads sticking out. He learns something of the comfort of the bear in hibernation." --William O. Douglas, 1950

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT WINTER CAMPING

Myth #1: Leather hiking boots will keep your feet warm.

FALSE The snug fit of most leather hiking boots can limit the circulation of blood in the foot, especially with thick socks on. Overboots cut generously enough to hold your foot and shoe are much more effective. The cloth stitching in leather boots can also wick moisture into the shoe. Nothing is worse than wet feet in cold winter.

Myth #2: Waterproof clothing is ideal for cold weather camping.

FALSE To keep warm, in the cold, your clothing must allow body moisture to escape. Moisture that is trapped too close to the body can wick heat away through evaporation. It is better to layer your clothing on in cold weather. Wool, Goretex, and polypropylene garments work nice in the cold. Always wear insulated underwear.

Myth #3: Winter camping does not require much preparation.

FALSE Arctic conditions exist when the wind is blowing and the temperature drops below 20 degrees F. There are only seven states in the U.S. that do NOT experience arctic weather. Illinois is not one of them. It is very important to prepare and even over prepare. I've never heard anyone complain about being too warm or having too many dry clothes on a winter campout.

Myth #4: Mental attitude has little to do with winter camping.

FALSE A positive mental attitude is the most important ingredient in the success of cold weather camping trips. The demands of winter will drain your energy and you'll have to rely on yourself to keep your spirits high.

Myth #5: In cold weather, tasks can be done just as quickly as in warm weather.

FALSE Every effort in cold weather takes longer to complete. Be sure to bring some winter patience with you when you camp in the cold.

CONSERVING BODY HEAT - THE PRIME OBJECTIVE

There are three ways to lose body heat. Keeping them in mind will help you be much more aware of what you are or could be doing to keep your body warm.

RADIATION - The emission of body heat, especially from the skin areas exposed to the elements. A good set of gloves, hat, and face mask can help best in keeping bare skin to a minimum.

CONDUCTION - The absorption of cold by the body when sitting or laying on cold ground, or handling cold objects such as metal cooking utensils and metal canteens. This is why a decent sleeping pad is required for cold weather camping. The same goes for wearing gloves. A camp stool is a must on a winter camping trip. Try not to sit on the ground.

CONVECTION - The loss of body heat due to wind blowing across unprotected body parts. This situation can also be reduced by keeping bare skin covered with hats, face mask, and gloves. It is important to keep exposure to a minimum, ESPECIALLY in a windy situation. Convection heat loss can reduce body heat the fastest. Wet clothing will accelerate this process, making staying dry even more important.

OTHER CONCERNS

Tent Placement

Whenever possible, place your tent in a location that will catch the sunrise in the morning. This will aid in melting off any ice and evaporating any frost or dew that may have formed

during the night. This will also warm your tent as you awaken in the morning. Cold air sinks. Try to place your campsite on slightly higher ground than the rest of your surroundings. Try to choose a protected site if it is snowing or the wind is blowing.

Water Consumption In Cold Weather

Dehydration can seriously impair the body's ability to produce heat. Drink fluids as often as possible during the day and keep a water bottle or canteen with you at night.

Cooking In Cold Weather

Cooking in cold weather will take about twice as long as normal. Always use a lid on any pots that you are cooking in. This will help to hold in the heat and decrease the overall heating time. Make sure you start hot cleaning water before you

start cooking. The pots and utensils must still be cleaned. Try to keep your menu to good one-pot meals. Dishes like stews, chili, and hot beans stick to your ribs, lessen the cleaning time, and provide good sources of energy and fuel for your internal furnace. A good high-calorie snack before bedtime will also keep you warm all night. Stay away from an overabundance of sugar. Cheese is a good high-calorie bedtime snack.

Sleeping Tip

Do not sleep with your mouth and nose in your sleeping bag. The moisture of your breath will condense in the bag and cause it to become wet and ineffective as an insulator.

Buddy System

Buddies can help each other pack for a trek, look after one another in the woods, and watch for symptoms of frostbite, hypothermia, and exhaustion.

Checklist

Use the Permission Slip Equipment Check-Off List to find everything you need before you start to pack. Then check each item off as you pack it. This way you will not forget anything.

Keeping Warm

Keeping warm is the most important part of cold weather camping.

Use the **C-O-L-D** method to assure staying warm.

C - Clean

Since insulation is only effective when heat is trapped by dead air spaces, keep your insulating layers clean and fluffy. Dirt, grime, and perspiration can mat down those air spaces and reduce the warmth of a garment. Launder that dirty sleeping bag and your jacket before winter camping!

O - Overheating

Avoid overheating by adjusting the layers of your clothing to meet the outside temperature and the exertions of your activities. Excessive sweating can dampen your garments and cause chilling later on.

L - Loose Layers

A steady flow of warm blood is essential to keep all parts of your body heated. Wear several loosely fitting layers of clothing and footgear that will allow maximum insulation without impeding your circulation.

D - Dry

Damp clothing and skin can cause your body to cool quickly, possibly leading to frostbite and hypothermia. Keep dry by avoiding cotton clothes that absorb moisture. Always brush away snow that is on your clothes before you enter a heated area. Keep the clothing around your neck loosened so that body heat and moisture can escape instead of soaking several layers of clothing.

Footwear

As with other clothing, the layer system is also the answer for footwear. Start with a pair of silk, nylon, or thin wool socks next to your skin. Then layer on several pairs of heavier wool socks. When and if your feet become damp, change into another pair of dry socks at the first opportunity. Rubber overboots will protect the feet from water and will allow more comfortable shoes to be worn within.

Mittens and Gloves

Mittens allow your fingers to be in direct contact with each other. They will keep your hands warmer than regular gloves that cover each finger. Select mittens that are filled with foam insulation, or pull on wool gloves and cover them with a nylon overmitt. Long cuffs will keep wind and snow from getting in.

Headgear

The stocking hat is the warmest thing you can cover your head with in cold weather. Get one that is large enough to pull down over your ears. Also ski masks are great in the winter and can help in keeping your neck and face warm as well. Noses and ears can be very easily frostbitten, so a scarf or face mask can be an invaluable item to have.

Parka and/or Overcoat

Winter Camping

Your coat or parka is the most important piece of your winter clothing. It needs to be large enough to fit over extra clothing without cutting off blood flow, and allowing ventilation to keep moisture away from your body. A large permanently attached hood will prevent heat loss around your head and neck.

Sleepwear

Never should you sleep in the same clothes that you have worn all day. They are damp and will cause you to chill. This could cause frostbite and hypothermia. It is advised that you bring a thick pair of sweats and thermal underwear to sleep in. Keep the thermals and sweats for sleeping in only. Do not wear them during the day, this will keep them the driest. Also be sure to have a couple of layers of wool or thick fleece socks on as well.

Always sleep with a stocking hat on your head. Your sleeping bag needs to be a winter rated bag. Typically rated down to 15 degrees and stuffed with 5 pounds of HoloFil, Fiberfil, or other polyester ticking. It is also a very good idea to have some kind of sleeping mat to use in the winter. The mat can be a Therma Rest from Dicks or a piece of high density rubber foam at least one inch thick. In cold weather camping you never want to sleep on an air mattress or off the ground in a cot. The air under you will cool you off in no time and this would create a threatening situation. If you don't have a sleeping mat, bring a spare wool or natural fiber blanket to use as a ground pad under your sleeping bag. The sleeping mat is worth its weight in gold.