

Cold Weather Backpacking Personal Equipment Checklist

Pay Attention to the Weather Forecast and Use Your Judgment!

Clothing

- Avoid 100% untreated cotton clothing in cold weather. We refer to it as 'The Death Cloth'.
- Wool socks (at least three pairs; one to wear, two are spare)
- Water-resistant boots (Goretex, leather, Thinsulate or equivalent)
- Spare shoes (tennis shoes are OK only as spares, not as your primary shoes)
- Insulated Underwear (2 pairs, one for day wear, the other for sleeping & next day -thermaguard, thermax, polypropylene, blends)
- Two shirts (one to wear, the other is spare - wool preferred, blends)
- Pants (two pairs, wool or blends preferred)
- Gloves (wool preferred)
- Toboggan (wool or blend -- mesh caps are worthless)
- Coat (nylon with fleece, down, hollowfill, etc liners are great)
- Sweatshirt (for sleeping; hooded shirts are recommended)
- Sweat pants (for sleeping)
- Rain gear (poncho or nylon rain suit)

Sleeping

- Sleeping bag (mummy-style, rated for 20 degrees minimum, 10 degrees is better, Zero degrees is ideal; avoid flannel or cotton liners!)
- Extra blanket, bag liner, or sleeping bag if the forecast calls for single-digit temperatures
- Ground pad (Thermarest, Ridgerest, etc). These are not just for comfort, but for insulation from the cold ground.
- Camping pillow (optional - stuff bag for sleeping bag can be stuffed with spare clothes)

Eating & Cleanup

- Fork, knife, spoon
- Mess kit
- Insulated cup
- Brillo pad
- Detergent (very small container, biodegradable)
- Dish rag (store in a plastic bag)
- Canteen/water bottle - 1 quart minimum, always bring water - don't wait & fill it at the campsite)
- Trail food, granola snack, power bars, etc.
- Sports drink mix (drink water on trail - mix is for meals)
- Hot Chocolate

Personal Gear

- Soap (store in a plastic bag)
- Small towel and washcloth
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, floss
- Watch
- Personal first aid kit
- Comb or brush
- Flashlight (with fresh batteries)
- Toilet paper
- Pocketknife (Swiss Army - no sheath knives)

Bedding Down

- A mummy-style sleeping bag is a must. Mummy-style bags have less wasted space around the legs and feet. Less space = less air that must be heated to maintain warmth. Rectangular bags lose significant amounts of heat.
- Have more underneath than above. Most of us use a pad of some type. An extra blanket, an old sleeping bag, ground pad etc. underneath will provide a layer between you and the ground. This will provide insulation from the cold, which will seep through otherwise.
- If the ground is wet or damp a plastic ground cloth or poncho can prevent your sleeping gear from getting wet. Dampness and moisture must be avoided as much as possible.
- A sweatshirt with a hood and sweat pants make a great sleeping outfit. The hood (or a wool toboggan) will prevent the loss of body heat through your head. Wear a fresh pair of wool socks (or equivalent). If it's really cold, say below 20 degrees, insulated underwear should be worn underneath the sweat pants and sweatshirt.
- Change into dry underwear, top and bottom, before getting into your bag. Your body cannot maintain enough body heat if you have sweaty clothes on. You will wake up around 3am shivering.
- Fluff your sleeping bag before you get in. Remember, it's the air inside the bag that will keep you warm - not the stuffing.
- Hills & Trails, Sports Authority, Village Outdoor, and Great Outdoor Provision Company all carry hand warmers and bag warmers. These handy inventions are easy to use - just open them, take them out, and they begin to warm immediately. These items only cost around \$2 each. I always keep several in my backpack in the winter. Stay away from the cheaper ones at large discount stores, as you get what you pay for.

What to Wear

- Protect your feet! Wool socks or an equivalent are very important. Dress socks and cotton socks simply will not provide adequate warmth in cold weather. Bring along several spares.
- Waterproof or water-resistant boots are another must. Wet shoes are a prescription for problems.
- Tennis shoes are only good for wearing around the campsite in winter and will provide little

protection against cold temperatures.

- Insulated underwear or "long johns" are another cold weather necessity. Long johns should be made of thermaguard, polypropylene, or at least a cotton/polyester blend. 100% cotton is only truly effective in the spring and fall.
- Flannel shirts are recommended. As much as we like to wear our Scout uniforms, our uniforms should only be worn for ceremonial purposes on a cold-weather campout. Blue jeans are OK, but I would recommend something more substantial for very cold weather. A sweatshirt can be worn over the flannel shirt. Sweaters are also acceptable as long as the sweater is designed for camping -- in other words, a "dressy" sweater won't do.
- An insulated, water resistant or waterproof coat is another must. I would not recommend athletic gear such as Starter, Umbro, etc. as these items are not designed for camping. All clothing used in camping will get dirty and will smell like smoke, so I would not recommend clothing used for school or athletic events. Hunting coats are great for camping.
- Wear a hat! Most of our body heat is lost through the head. Mesh caps are worthless in cold weather. Toboggans are great because they provide protection for your ears.
- Finally, gloves round out the winter camper's outfit. Avoid gloves that are so bulky that you can't use your hands effectively.
- The Army Surplus store is a great place to shop for warm clothes but, be sure to compare prices.