

WINTER CAMPING

Myths – True or False

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.
- Over-boots 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, Gor-Tex, and polypropylene garments work nice in the cold.
- Always wear insulated, (no-cotton!) 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.
- It is very important to *"Be Prepared"* and even over prepared. 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 to be more aware of what you 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 scarf can help best to cover exposed areas.

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. Try not to sit directly on the ground. A campstool is a must on a winter camping trip. Also, this is why a decent sleeping pad is required for cold weather camping to sleep on. The same goes for wearing gloves.

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

OTHER THING TO CONSIDER...

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, heat rises. 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 in, 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*. Things 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. For example, cheese and crackers are a good high-calorie bedtime snack.

WINTER CAMPING INFORMATION

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

Make a checklist of everything you need before you start to pack. Then, using the checklist, 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.

- **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 footwear 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.

WINTER CAMPING INFORMATION

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 over-boots 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 over-mitt. 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 can be an invaluable item to have.

- PARKA AND/OR OVERCOAT

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

SLEEPING TIP #1

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.

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 fleece, (synthetic) socks on as well. No cotton.

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 Thermal Rest 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.

FOOD

You need extra calories to keep your body warm, so leave your low-fat diet at home. Make sure you have lots of carb's.

- Oatmeal for breakfast and pasta for supper works well. Eggs and pancakes lose heat quickly and they taste pretty bad cold, but bacon can be eaten cold. If you don't cook it too crispy then any leftovers (yeah right - leftovers of bacon?) can be snacked on during the day.
- Lunches could be pepperoni and cheese on crackers. Peanut butter on Syrian bread.
- Have plenty of snacks available. Granola bars, chocolate, and trail mix are great. Apples and oranges will turn into rocks, no matter what you keep them in.
- Melting butter in a pan and toasting bagels or english muffins in the butter. There's a lot of energy there.
- Have plenty of hot chocolate. This can be consumed any time someone is in camp. If you've got to have coffee, use decaf. Caffeine is a diuretic and you'll need all the water you can get.
- Make sure everyone has plenty of water. Dehydration leads to hypothermia. But leave your pump/filters at home. They are pretty much useless when frozen and you could crack the filter element. Melt snow or boil water when you need to refill the bottles.
- Cooking meat doesn't seem to work very well. It's hard to keep a big frying pan hot enough to effectively brown any hamburger. If you've got to have meat in the spaghetti sauce, bring pepperoni and throw it in the sauce when heating that up.
- Instant soups will go like crazy. Use your insulated mug to eat this, and you won't need the hot chocolate for this meal/snack.

OTHER TIPS AND TRICKS

- To keep boots from freezing up overnight, lay them on their sides beneath your sleeping bag under your butt with the soles sticking out. Put one on each side of you and tie the laces together with a simple knot. There should be enough heat escaping there to keep the frost out, plus the placement will help keep you from rolling off your mat.
- Keep gloves, socks, and any of tomorrow's clothes as will comfortably fit inside the sleeping bag. Any other clothes, jacket, sweater, whatever doesn't fit, should be put under the bag. It's much more comfortable to dress in pre-heated clothes and the added insulation doesn't hurt.
- Keep at least one water bottle in the sleeping bag, if it will fit and not leak. If you can't, put it under your bag at the knees. All other water bottles that don't fit under your knees could be put in some of your extra wool socks. Also, heat the water up at night before you go to bed and put the filled bottles in your sleeping bag as you fulfill your nightly duties. Then when you get to bed, your bag will actually be warm.
- Don't forget the nightly duties. A full bladder requires more heat than an empty one, plus getting up at 2:00 AM in sub-zero weather is absolutely no fun.
- Carry and store water bottles upside down. Ice forms on the tops of bodies of water first, so this helps keep ice from forming around the mouth. If you're not carrying a water bottle, stick it in a spare sock or shove it in a snow bank, upside down, of course. Snow will insulate better than nothing.
- If you've got a self-inflating mattress don't roll it up with the valves closed. A frozen mattress valve is real hard to open.
- When standing around eating, cooking, or whatever, stand on your mattress pad. When sitting, sit on your pad. All to conserve body heat.
- Keep active as much as possible.
- Go for a night hike or play an active game just before you crawl in the bag. After you get in the bag, take a mouthful of water and eat something fatty like cookies. This gets the furnace started and helps keep it going throughout the night.
- The standard 3-tub method of doing the dishes just doesn't work in the extreme cold. Heat up some water and pour this in individual bowls to melt the leftover bits and pieces of food. Soak your utensils in this. Then use a paper towel or even a snowball to scrub. Any cloth dishrag will freeze.
- Bring extra everything. Stoves and lanterns will fail. Water bottles will freeze and crack. Things, like boys, just behave differently in the cold.
- **Everyone on the trip should know the signs and treatment of hypothermia!!!**

WINTER CAMPING INFORMATION

- _____ SNOW PANTS (preferred) to wear to campout, or "Zip-Off" Pants with **non-cotton** "Polar Fleece" Sweat Pants under.
- _____ BACKPACK (and/or large Sports Equipment Bag, and/or Duffel Bag) Line your Pack with a plastic lawn bag first, to keep contents dry. Or, you can pack cloths in large zip lock plastic bags.
- _____ 100% POLYPROPYLENE LONG UNDERWEAR (wear to campout): Tops (wear directly against skin), and Bottoms.
- _____ 2 pair BRIEFS or BOXERS (if desired) **No Cotton!**
- _____ 2 LONG SLEEVE SHIRTS - (Wool or synthetic fiber for good insulating quality and quick drying) No Cotton!
- _____ 2 HEAVY WOOL SWEATERS, or POLAR FLEECE SWEATSHIRTS - **No Cotton!**
- _____ 1 extra pair SNOW PANTS - Nylon Cargo Pants or Nylon Shell Pants **No Cotton!**
- _____ 2-3 pair POLYPRO INNER SOCK LINERS, No Cotton! (Prevent blisters and keep your feet cool in the summer)
- _____ 3 pair HEAVY-DUTY SYNTHETIC or WOOL HIKING SOCKS, **No Cotton!** (For year-around use. Make sure boots are NOT TIGHT!)
- _____ STURDY, INSULATED, NON-LEATHER WINTER BOOTS (Rubber is much better than leather. Leather will likely freeze at night)
- _____ PLASTIC BAGS (to go under socks in case of wet boots - newspaper "rain" wrappers, bread wrappers, or regular plastic grocery bags)
- _____ WINTER GLOVES or MITTENS (As many as you own and can borrow!)
- _____ PLASTIC or RUBBER GLOVES (food handling, examination, or dish washing gloves - to go under regular gloves if they all get wet).
- _____ WARM JACKET, SCARF - **No Cotton!**
- _____ 2 WARM HATS (One for Sleeping) Sleeping hat should be designed to stay on at night. **No Cotton!**
- _____ SNEAKERS, SHOES, MOCCASINS, for cabin use only!
- _____ WINTER SLEEPING BAG (or 2 Summer Sleeping Bags stuffed one inside the other; or Summer Sleeping Bag AND three (3) extra Blankets
- _____ ADDITIONAL SWEAT PANTS & SWEAT SHIRT (for sleeping only! Change all your clothes inside your sleeping bag when you go to bed)
- _____ TWO CLOSED-CELL FOAM SLEEPING PADS ("Camp Pad," Not air mattresses)
- _____ A few additional LARGE heavy-duty Clear plastic LAWN BAGS (Important! To keep your stuff dry in Emergencies!)
- _____ BOY SCOUT HANDBOOK - in a Zip-Lock bag.
- _____ GOOD QUALITY WHISTLE on neck chain (Do NOT buy a cheap Whistle)
- _____ A good Quality POCKETKNIFE (a SMALL Swiss Army Knife)
- _____ MESS-KIT (BOWL, CUP, FORK, SPOON, PLATE -- heavy-duty plastic or metal)
- _____ 2 ONE-QUART WATER BOTTLES, filled (Wide-Mouth "Nalgene" Bottles can be filled with hot water for inside sleeping bag at night)
- _____ FLASHLIGHT, & EXTRA BATTERIES (Can be any style, but a headlamp is best. Headlamps enable use of both hands)
- _____ PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT (All scouts are required to make their own: See BSA Handbook).
- _____ SCOUT ESSENTIALS (See BSA handbook)
- _____ PEN, PENCIL & PAPER, SMALL NOTEBOOK
- _____ 50 FEET NYLON PARACHUTE CORD
- _____ COMPASS with a BASE PLATE, in a Zip-Lock bag (with map of the area you will be camping in, if you have one)
- _____ MATCHES, LIGHTERS, in a Zip-Lock bag. (and/or "HOT SPARK" -- at Scout Shop)
- _____ PERSONAL CLEAN-UP KIT (Small Hand Soap, Small Toothpaste, Toothbrush, Comb, Floss, Fast-Drying Camp Towel)
- _____ TOILET PAPER (Half a roll in a Zip-Lock bag).
- _____ PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES – Let leader know what you have.
- _____ Good Attitude to have fun!

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OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

- ___ SMALL DOME TENT (Caution: outer Rain Cover should come all the way down to the ground—about \$50)
- ___ SIX (6) or more 2-GALLON HEAVY-DUTY ZIP-LOCK BAGS (To keep your clothes and gear organized and dry.)
- ___ REPAIR KIT (Small Duct Tape, Needle & Thread, Safety Pins, Batteries, Extra Buckles & Straps, Parts for your Equipment.)
- ___ SUN GLASSES (UV-Proof required for winter camping -- prevents snow blindness).
- ___ OLD WORK GLOVES (For working with trees & tools, and hot pots & pans)
- ___ OPTIONAL EXTRA SET OF DRY CLOTHES TO LEAVE IN CAR (In an extra bag)
- ___ CAMERA – film and batteries
- ___ BANDANNAS (A million uses)
- ___ COMPRESSION STUFF SACKS (Reduces size of sleeping bag or other bulky things -- Can be home-made)
- ___ FISHING OR BACKPACKING VEST (Best way to be sure that you always have your 10 Essentials and Survival Gear with you.)
- ___ EXTRA BAG FOR HEAVY ACCESSORIES (May be left in car) Camera & Film, Magnifying Glass, Nature Identification Books, Binoculars, Duct Tape, Prayer Book or Bible, More Extra Batteries, etc.
- ___ GAMES - Cards, small travel games (chess, checkers, cribbage, etc)
- ___ WATERPROOF "BLUE" TARP -- 5'X7' (For Ground Sheet)
- ___ BINOCULARS
- ___ BIRD and PLANT Identifying booklets
- ___ SMALL LIGHTWEIGHT GAS STOVE (Gasoline, not propane, not butane—see BSA Handbook, page 253)