

# Winter Camping Do's and Don't

## WINTER CLOTHING

To enjoy winter camping, you must keep warm. The clothing you wear will not *make* you warm. Clothing can only **keep** you warm. The clothes that you wear act only to hold the heat that is generated by your body.

The secrets of keeping warm are:

1. **Wear layers of loose-fitting clothing.**
2. **Control perspiration by letting excess body moisture to evaporate.**
3. **Keep the body protected from the wind.**

It is the trapped air space between layers of clothing which act as insulation, and keeps heat in. This space also lets perspiration to move away from the body. A number of thinner layers are better than one thick one, as it allows you to better control your temperature.

The smart winter camper is always taking off layers and putting them on again to stay warm and dry. While you are working, it is important not to sweat. By wearing layers of clothing, you can simply remove them when you begin to get hot. When you begin to cool down, simply put a layer at a time back on. If your clothes get damp from sweating, their insulation value is lost and the clothes are made basically useless for keeping warm in.

Clean clothing must always be worn for both sanitation and comfort. Dirt and grease will mat clothing and fill air pockets. This allows your body heat to escape more quickly. Underclothes require the closest attention and need the most changing because of perspiration.

To keep your clothes dry, beware of moisture from the outside as well. Frost or snow that sticks on your clothing will melt from your own body heat. The same will also happen when you enter areas of higher temperatures in shelters (washrooms, leantoos) or areas (campsites). Be sure to brush or shake off all snow and frost before entering these areas.

Seal off openings around the neck, wrists and ankles to prevent wind from blowing in and warm air from escaping. The feet, hands, face and head are the most vulnerable to the cold. If these spots are kept warm, the rest of the body will remain comfortable.

## SLEEPING IN THE WINTER

As said before, airspace is the secret to good insulation. Your sleeping bag insulation should therefore be fluffed up to provide air pockets just before going to bed.

**Clean clothes from the skin out that are used only for sleeping must be changed into before going to bed.** Do not wear **any** articles of clothing to bed that had been worn during the day, as they will be damp from perspiration. Wear to bed a clean set of thermal underwear and/or a tracksuit, wool socks, and a toque. These items should be for sleeping in **only**.

It is important that your **head be kept out of the sleeping bag**. Otherwise, the moisture from your breath will condense and form a layer of frost in and out of your sleeping bag! If your nose gets cold, a piece of gauze may be taped across the nose and stuck to either cheek.

It is also important that you air-out your sleeping bag every morning. During the night, your body gives off a great deal of moisture which is absorbed by the sleeping bag. If the bedding is not aired, it will stay damp, and your sleep will be a cold one the next night. Also air-dry your night clothes in preparation for your next night.

Undress and dress inside your sleeping bag, after having warmed up your clean clothes for the day inside the bag for 5-10 minutes in the morning. Do not keep these clothes inside your bag overnight as they will become damp from your body moisture. **You must change into a complete set of fresh and dry clothes for the next day.**

Do not use an air mattress that you must blow into as the moisture from your breath will freeze inside the mattress. Bring a foam pad to sleep on, which will be in addition to the inch of cardboard and four inches of straw that we will be sleeping upon. 75% of heat loss is downward. This means that to sleep warmly, you need three layers under you for every layer on top.

Remember to visit the kybo before going to bed, to save you a cold trip in the middle of the night!

## **BEHAVIOUR IN THE WINTER OUT-OF-DOORS**

**The key to a successful winter camping experience is to keep yourself busy.** This will prevent chilling. If you find yourself unoccupied, do something! Collect some firewood, fetch water, visit a campsite, clean your leantoo, or see your friendly Scouter for other suggestions. **Walking produces four times more body heat than sitting, so keep moving!** Whatever activity you do, make sure that you don't start to sweat.

The worst thing that you can do is sit around the fire all weekend. All this does, besides making you smelly, is make you colder than you otherwise would be when you finally do move away from the source of heat. **A good winter camper needs a fire for only three things: cooking, drying wet clothing and gear, and fellowship.** Do not hold your feet too close to the fire. Not only do you risk burning or melting your footwear, but your feet will sweat, get wet, and therefore become cold!

Eating snow causes dehydration and heat loss. The body must generate even more heat to melt the snow and raise it to a usable body temperature, which means to expend more water than you took in with the snow.

**The best advice for winter camping is to be sensible.** I know that Scouts just want to be Scouts and have fun. Just try to remember a few common sense tips, and you will have an entire weekend to enjoy at camp, rather than a shortened cold and miserable one.

- Don't roll around in the snow and get soaking wet.
- Don't touch cold metal with moist or damp skin (includes tongue).
- Always wear a toque.
- Keep active.
- Don't sweat.

**Always remember this simple code word for the entire camp weekend, and any other cold weather activity, and you will be fine!**

**C**lean clothes  
avoid **O**verheating  
**L**oose and layered clothing  
Keep **D**ry

## **OTHER WINTER CAMPING TIDBITS**

**CLEANLINESS:** Please help keep the campsite as neat as neat as possible, as the campsite is a small area. This means pitching in at the kitchen area, around the campfire, and inside the leantoos. Regular washing when you get up, before meals, after camp jobs, and after kybo visits is essential. It is most important that you **wash thoroughly before helping with any cooking**. Kybos must be used at winter camp, as evidence of those not doing so is very noticeable in the snow covered environment, which is being shared with many close-by neighbours.

**FROSTBITE:** Frostbite usually comes on slowly and may not be noticed. The first sign is a white and waxy appearance of the skin. Use the buddy system to keep watch on each other. To keep the blood circulating around your face to prevent frostbite, keep "making faces" or chew gum. Treat minor frostbite by applying pressure of a warm hand and by blowing on it. **Never rub frostbite with the hand or snow**. Keep your boots loose to prevent cutting off the circulation of blood to your toes.

**SNOWBLINDNESS:** The first sign of "pink eye" is the feeling of grit in your eyes. They become hot and sticky, then begin to blur. Next comes sharp pain. Wear sunglasses at all times to prevent this. The sun doesn't have to be shining to cause snowblindness. It is more common on days when the sky is slightly overcast.

**HYPOTHERMIA:** Hypothermia is a dangerous lowering of the body temperature that could be fatal. In winter, a slight chill can turn into a real problem. When preparing for winter camp, remember that **wind, wet, cold, hunger, and exhaustion** are factors that lead to hypothermia. To combat the effect of wind on a cold day, you need to take windproof clothing that will cover your whole body, including hands, head and face. Your own common sense will prevent the other four factors from happening.

## WHAT TO BRING

- 3-4 pairs long underwear    Normal underwear with track pants over top are an o.k. substitute.
- 4-5 **wool** socks    Perhaps the most important article of winter clothing, as wool socks are the warmest, they stay relatively warm if wet, and they wick away moisture from the body. **Normal white cotton socks are unacceptable and dangerous, as they retain moisture and freeze.**
- 1 pair warm boots    Remember to waterproof your seams and nylon outers. Single piece extra liners boots are bad for winter camping as they easily get wet and have little insulation. Sorels, or any type of boot that has removable liners are the best. They should be big enough for a felt insole and loose woolen socks, so that circulation is not cut off.
- 1-2 flannel or wool shirts with long sleeves 2-
- 3 undershirts or turtlenecks
- 2 pairs pants    Make sure that the pants are loose fitting so that long underwear can be put on underneath. Goretex is best, however wool or cotton are acceptable for pants. Blue jeans soak up water and are useless for winter camping. Insulated ski pants are great too.
- windpants    Big enough to wear over top of your longjohns and pants to keep moisture and wind away from your body.
- warm, heavy sweater    Wool or fleece/pile materials are best.
- 3-4 pairs mitts/gloves    The type that have removable liners that can be dried out are best. Mittens are better than gloves as fingers are kept together so that they are warmer. Just like in Kindergarten, put your mitts on a string through the arms so that they won't get lost or wet on the ground when you take them off temporarily to do work with your bare hands.
- sunglasses    Snowblindness can occur even when it is cloudy from the glare of the sun off the snow.
- scarf    Keeps your neck warm, and stops air from escaping out of your jacket.
- extra emergency socks    Wool of course!
- sleeping pad warm
- sleeping bag

2 toques	Always wear a hat on your head. Don't try to be cool by not wearing one, or like someone in aerobics class by only wearing a thermal headband, as you will be unnecessarily cold. Ear muffs simply just look silly! Up to 80% of your body heat is lost through the top of your head. Have one toque for wearing to sleep, and the other for during the day.
K.F.S.	Knife, fork, spoon.
plate, bowl, and mug	You may consider packing paper plates (no styrofoam allowed) so you don't have to wash them - simply dispose of them in the fire.
toilet kit	Cleanliness is another secret to warmth, as grime takes away from the insulating properties of clothes.
handkerchiefs	Noses tend to run in the cold.
personal first aid kit	Include small bandaids and chapstick.
matches flashlight	Put them in a waterproof container so they won't get wet.
bed clothes	A track suit works. Remember: <b>no clothing that has been worn during the day is to be worn to bed.</b>
parka pocket	A parka with a hood to keep out the wind, long enough to cover your rear end, and a draw string around the waist to keep warm air in is the ideal winter jacket.
knife	A pocket knife is more handy than an unnecessary sheath knife.