

Winter Camping/Hiking/Outings 101

(1-ohhhhhhhh that's what the Scouter said-1)

Not a complete list, nor a textbook.

Roughly made notes, that I thought would be useful to share with anyone who is looking for ideas, or wants to understand, or wants to share with their youth.

Proper footwear

Waterproof on the bottom, but breathable out the top. (no rubber boots, no kodiaks, Kamiks/snowmobile-boots and similar work best)

Removable boot liners good, even nicer if you have spare liners.

If your feet are cold, change your wet socks.

Where do boots go when you sleep?

Under your legs, under the sleeping bag or the foam pad. (be sensible, if boots have wet exterior put under foam pad so you don't get the bag wet)

This keeps them from freezing solid.

Another option is to remove liners and hang to dry outside, if dry night.

Thin synthetic socks (dress socks) next to skin, with heavy wooly socks over them.

Multiple layers good.

Change socks if wet.

Wool dries fast.

If your feet are cold, change your socks.

Cotton is rotten, and should be forgotten. ;-)

If you show up in running shoes, we will send you home. (don't laugh, some have)

The Scout Shop and Mark's Work Wearhouse, carry nice 100% wool (or close to it) socks, WigWam brand I think is the name. And if you check their "super-fancy-ultra-quick-dry synthetic thin socks", they're pretty close to nylon dress socks, but you're welcome to get some of those too.

Layers layers layers.

Multiple layers allow one to adjust insulation level easily, and also trap thin layers of air between each layer, and that is what keeps you warm.

Plus you can remove the lower sweaty layers, and still use the outer ones again.

(contrary to having one huge thick parka, that once wet is just wet, and that you can't adjust -- the all your eggs in one basket theory)

If your feet are cold, change your socks. ;-)

Not sure?

Change your socks at each meal time, and before bed.

Mitts and Hats

Gloves are cool. (literally cold)

Mitts are better. Put gloved hands inside large mitts, or just skip the gloves.

Gloves are nice to have to have access to your fingers, but if what you are going to do will need bare hands anyhow, you might as well just stick with mitts.

Mitts keep fingers close to each other, that's why they are warmer.

Waterproof is better.

Richard showed us some nice WindRiver brand mitts and gloves.

Multiple pairs.

Don't get them wet to start with, if you can avoid it. (Mom isn't here with the hair dryer to dry them out, **so stop playing in the snow!** use tools to dig or move snow)

Don't put wet hands in your mitts.

Shake them around, dry them off first.

Tolerate 30 seconds of bare-skin drying time in freezing cold air, for the benefit of dry interiors in your mitts.

Hats

Hoods are NOT a substitute for a hat.

No baseball caps, we're talking wool/knit touques.

Hats are a layer of air trapped next to your head.

Hoods are good over a hat, to keep winds from cutting through.

Bring many, they may get wet.

Always keep one dry one in your gear for sleeping in.

If snowing, pull up hood to keep snow off hat.

70% of your body heat, is lost through your head. It's like a giant radiator.

If you feel cold, put your hat on. If you're too hot, take your hat off for a few minutes, before you start sweating.

Your body is pretty good at regulating it's own temperature, but you can mess with it. ☺

Sleeping attire and getting up

Strip to the skin, and then put on ALL fresh dry layers.

Sleep dressed. Socks, long-johns or PJs, long sleeve shirt, tuque, maybe even neck-warmer.

Everything, underwear included. Ladies AND gentlemen. (that always makes them giggle for some reason...)

We did a demo of air vs. water, and keeping them warm, and how hard it is for your body to do that. (ziplock filled with cold air, vs. ziplock filled with cold water)

Go to the bathroom a few times before bed. It's harder for your body to keep all that pee warm all night. :-)

(and it's too darn cold to have to get out in the night)

Go three times.

Tents

Keep screened vents wide open, unless windy, and then only partially closed.

We must get the moisture out of tents from your breathing. (if you wake up with tops of sleeping bags all wet or frosty, or inside of tent COVERED in thick frost, you didn't do this right) Level the ground, clear away the BULK of the snow.

Sometimes put hay under, or dry leaves, adding a layer between you and the frozen ground.

Ground that WAS under heavy snow, can actually be close to thawed, and not as cold as on top of ice or snow.

Where pegs don't work, freestanding tents are great.

Fly bungies/ropes, can be tied to rocks or sticks or logs buried in the snow.

Something to keep them out and away from the inner tent walls.

Use a stave to hold two fly ropes.

We set a tent up in the gym and tried this.

Gear can stay in vestibule, if you need to. Don't leave boots there to freeze, deal with them.

Tents are warmer, the more bodies you can put in one. (don't be a cold loner)

Sleeping bags and Layers

Rule of 3: Three layers under you, for each layer above you.

Layers under, can be foam pad, thermorest, reflective ground sheets, extra blanket (camp blanket). (they make a pad with a built-in reflective foil layer glued to one side now too)

Why 3 to 1?

Because it's that trapped air that's keeping you warm.

And the stuff you're lying on, is compressed and not trapping much air.

Sleeping bags can be natural or synthetic fill.

Natural (goose down) is warmer per pound, but harder to care for. (needs more care, and doesn't dry as fast if you get it wet, and more expensive)

Synthetic a bit more durable, dries faster.

Mummy or barrel shape is best. (less air/space for you to warm up)

If not winter weight or winter rated (show tags), then TWO inside each other, with zippers facing opposite is just as good. (I used just that from age 11 to 23)

Demonstrated and tried by most Scouts.

None of this needs to be expensive.

Dense (blue) foam pads are cheap. Some even have that reflective foil (groundsheet) layer on them now too for added heat retention. (2 in 1, scout house carries them)

Your breathing holes (mouth and nose) **MUST** remain OUTSIDE the sleeping bag. (or you fill it with wetness) Don't hide your head in your bag.

More to come....

(We'll do food, outer clothing, other gear, how to transport, food, cooking, shelters.... another week)

We've also talked about...

- ice rescues
- ice types, colours, thickness, safety
- wet clothing
- hypothermia
- frostbite
- snow blindness
- windburn
- dehydration
- carbon monoxide poisoning

not because they are scary topics, but more as things that can be easily avoided if we are aware of them. Also, how to notice, sense, and deal with them, as they can happen in and around your own home/school at times outside of camp.