

TROOP 21: PLANNING FOR WINTER CAMPING

Some of this information was gathered on the internet, but should help prepare for Winter Camping. We do not have a cabin with a stove to go inside and warm up whenever we want, so preparation is essential. 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.

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. 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 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. 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, especially from the skin areas exposed to the elements. A good set of gloves, hat, and scarf 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/chair 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, scarves, 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.

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OTHER CONCERNS

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. 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, cheese is a good high-calorie bedtime snack.

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.

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 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 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.

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Clothing

- Footwear.

As with other clothing, the layer system is also the answer for foot-wear. 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 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.

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 heavy thick cotton 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 Thermal Rest from most sporting goods stores 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. If you have a summer weight sleeping bag and don't want to buy a new one, try bringing two and putting one inside the other.

1. REMEMBER: The sleeping bag doesn't heat you, you heat it. So use this rule, "Thickness is warmth", to keep this heat. If you're cold, add some more insulation (blankets, clothes, more newspaper).
2. DO NOT SLEEP IN BOTTOM OF BAG: Your breath contains water. If you close your bag with your head inside, then this water sticks to the bag. Wear a hat to keep your head warm.
3. CHANGE CLOTHES: *NEVER* sleep in wet clothes. Even perspiration will chill you at night.
4. EAT A CANDY BAR: This increases your metabolism (moves your blood faster) and it helps keep you warm.
5. GO TO THE BATHROOM BEFORE BED: This saves you a middle of the night trip in the cold.
6. DO NOT DRY "WET" CLOTHES IN BAG: Moisture will travel from wet clothes to sleeping bag.
7. PUT TOMORROW'S CLOTHES UNDER BAG: This heats up clothes for tomorrow's cold morning and also provides more insulation.
8. FLUFF UP YOUR BAG: Always fluff up bag before using to create the thickness important in keeping warm.
9. MOST IMPORTANT, KEEP IT DRY: Keep all your sleeping gear dry and follow these rules, and winter camp should prove to be a rewarding experience.

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IMPORTANT STUFF TO KEEP IN MIND

1. Clothing does not make you warm; it is your body processes that keep you warm. Clothing merely provides the insulation to preserve your warmth.
2. Layered thickness is warmth.
3. Keep your torso warm so that it can send heat to the extremities.
4. Avoid sweating by ventilation.
5. Keep rain and wind out of your insulation.
6. Use your head. Keep it covered when you're cold; remove cap as you warm up to avoid sweating.
7. Strain one muscle against another to maintain metabolism.
8. Wool clothing is best but needs wind protection, synthetics are next best. Down is OK as long as it stays dry, cotton is a poor choice.
9. If your feet are cold, put a hat on.
10. Remember the word "COLD" -
 - a. Keep your clothing - Clean.
Avoid ----- Overheating
Wear clothing ----- Loose
Keep it ----- Dry

RECOMMENDED CLOTHING FOR TWO DAY WINTER CAMP

in addition or in substitution to what you would normally bring to camp, bring:

- 2 shirts (wool is best), or flannel)
- 2 pair's wool or synthetic pants (Strongly recommend against cotton pants like jeans. They absorb moisture like a sponge).
- Fishnet, thermal or polypropylene underwear
- Boots (WATERPROOFED)
- 2 pairs of heavy socks (wool recommended)
- 2 pairs lighter socks (polypropylene is best)
- Windbreaker (as is or part of heavier jacket)
- Balaclava or stocking cap (wool is best)
- Parka or heavy jacket
- Mittens, (WOOL, gloves not recommended except as extra pair)
- Extra shoes

It is always best to stay dry when camping in the snow, but you can expect to get wet and should be prepared. Boots or other shoes which are not waterproof will normally start getting the feet wet and cold after less than 15 minutes in the snow (depending on temperature, the colder it is, the longer the feet stay dry). Low top shoes will not keep the snow out of the shoes. Gaiters can be made from plastic bags and a strong tape like duck tape. Do not cover the bottom of you shoes with plastic, doing so will cause you to lose almost all of your traction (and you will fall down!).

Unless your parents are planning to buy some of the items listed above, do not run out and start spending lots of money on cloths and equipment. If all your pants are jeans, for example, bring three or four pairs and change frequently. If you are in doubt or have questions, call one of the troop leaders for advice.