

# Dressing for winter hikes

Yes, you CAN stay warm and comfy in the winter!

👣 **Get your body ready** for crisp winter temps by walking outdoors before class starts. While out, try different clothing to see what's warmest and most comfy.

👣 **It's all about layers!** Rather than wearing one heavy coat, consider dressing in layers.

- Layers are warmer because air in between the layers acts as insulation.
- Layers allow you to shed clothes as you exert. (You'll be amazed how warm you'll get hiking through snow and up hills!)
- Example, you might wear wicking silk long underwear or thermals against your skin, then layer with a comfy turtleneck, a lightweight fleece, and a heavier fleece or windbreaker.

👣 **Hats** are one of the easiest, most effective body-temp regulators. Add warm headbands/ear muffs underneath for extra warmth on really cold days.

👣 **Wicking material.** Wicking or "quick-dry" clothes are made from material that "wicks" sweat and moisture from your skin and into the fabric before you get chilled.

- We often sweat as we exert in heavy clothes - which then really chills us. "Wickers" carry sweat away from skin.
- Wickers also carry away moisture from snow that gets inside your clothes.
- Get double-duty from short-sleeved summer wicking tops by wearing them as your base layer in winter.



👣 **Dress for comfort.** We hike for fun, not style. Don't think twice about wearing the same comfy, warm clothes every week - or whether they match.

👣 **Feet.** Feet & hands usually get cold first. Here's how to keep feet toasty.

- You'll want comfy, waterproof, warm boots with good tread. Your regular ankle-high waterproof hiking boots work great.
- For deep snow, wear snow pants that fit over your boots or wear gaiters (which hook onto boots and cover the space between pants and boots).
- Wiggle room inside boots allows warm blood to circulate and keep toes warm.
- Wicking sock liners underneath wool socks keep feet warm. Also, if snow gets inside boots, liners will wick moisture away from feet and into the sock.
- Chemical warming packs (one-time-use) between sock liners and socks are great! Warmers designed for feet have handy adhesive tape that keep warmth where you need it.
- For ice, I highly recommend no-slip devices that slide on over boots to help on ice. One brand is Yaktrax Pro Traction with coil grips; choose its "Pro" version with the Velcro band to keep them on.

### Gloves/mittens.

- Mittens are warmer than gloves.
- Thin silk glove liners are great to wear under your gloves/mittens - to add that layer of air insulation. They're ultra-thin, so you can take pictures, blow your nose, etc., without exposing hands to the air. Inexpensive at Campmor.
- Chemical warming packs are great to put between your silk liner and glove/mitten.
- Loosen up 😊. Keep liners, mittens, and gloves loose enough for air insulation.

### Head. A couple tips in addition to bringing a hat...

- Earrings. On very cold days, metal earrings transmit chill through ear lobe.
- Face. Scarves are great. Also, a thin layer of Vaseline protects sensitive facial skin on particularly cold days.

### Clothes to avoid:


- Jeans. Jeans transmit cold - especially if they get wet. They also don't dry well, so you'll stay cold if you sweat or get them wet in the snow. You can make jeans more winter-friendly by layering wicking long underwear or "cuddle duds" under them or wearing wind pants or rain pants over them.
- Tight clothes, gloves, and boots do NOT allow that great layer of insulating air to keep you warm. They also constrict blood flow.
- Cotton, or sweat pants/shirts. Because they absorb moisture, you'll stay cold if they get wet from sweat or snow.

### Other clothing tips:

- You don't need to bulk up. Outdoor stores now carry coats that are big on cutting wind and small on bulk.
- Merino wool is a wonderful base layer. It's pricey, but you'll love it. (And it's not itchy.) Check out the selection at Erehwon or Campmor.
- Check out silk Cuddle Duds for no-bulk, loss-cost wicking warmth under clothes.
- Fleece. We love fleece, especially thin micro-fleece, but it doesn't cut wind when worn as the outer layer. Something to keep in mind on windy days...
- Snow pants. We play in the snow, so it's nice to have snow pants or rain pants layered over other pants. (Discount brands are fine.) On extra-cold days, they'll keep you toasty. Plus, they're easy to take off after our hike and before lunch.

 Hiking poles help tremendously on slippery surfaces and let you determine snow depth.

 Eat breakfast. Just like mom told us, our bodies need fuel to burn to keep us warm.

 Hint: Remember you'll warm up as you exert. So, it helps to be a bit chilly when you start out so you won't be overdressed and sweating 10 minutes into the hike.

**Forget something?** We all do; that's why we carry an emergency bin of supplies. So don't turn around and go home if you forget your hat.

**Where to get winter gear:** Most items are available at Erehwon and other good outdoor shops. I like Erehwon's knowledgeable, helpful staff (and our group discount). But you can pick up a lot of great, warm things (and wicking clothing) at Target's good prices. Also check out [www.Campmor](http://www.Campmor) for convenient online savings.