

Dressing for our winter hikes

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

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

- Layers are warmer because air in between the layers acts as insulation.
- Layers allow you to shed clothes as you exert while hiking through snow and up hills! For example, you might wear silk or woolen long underwear against your skin (because they "wick"), then layer with a comfy turtleneck, a lightweight fleece, and jacket.
- Rain pants double well as snow pants when layered over your regular pants.

 **Face/head.**

- Hats that cover your ears are one of the easiest, most effective body-temp regulators. Add warm headbands/ear muffs under your hat for extra warmth on really cold days.
- Earrings. On very cold days, metal earrings transmit chill through ear lobes.
- Face. Scarves are great. A thin Vaseline layer protects sensitive facial skin on very cold days.
- Nose. If your nose "runs" in the cold air, **it's doing a great job**, so bring tissue/hanky and blow proudly! **Inhaling:** One of our nose's main jobs is to warm and humidify cold air that we inhale so it doesn't hurt our lungs. To do this, the nose produces fluid to moisturize that air (because cold air doesn't hold as much moisture as warm air). Excess moisture drips. **Exhaling:** When we exhale, that warm air hits the cold air at the tip of your nose, it condenses and loses moisture, and that causes fluid to form at the tip of our nose.
- Glasses. I've heard *Cat Crap Anti-Fog Lens Cleaner* works well as a winter defogger for glasses (no kidding on the name).

 **Wicking material.** Wicking or "quick-dry" clothes are made from material that takes moisture* away from your skin and to the fabric before you get chilled (*sweat as we exert and snow that gets inside clothes/boots). Short-sleeved wicking tops serve double duty as your base layer in winter.



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

- You'll want comfy, waterproof, warm boots with good tread. We've found that our ankle-high waterproof hiking boots are usually toasty enough for day hikes around here. Make sure the boots are roomy enough so your toes can wiggle, even with thick socks. If you want warmer, higher boots, one of the best brands is *Sorel Caribou* boots with removable liners.
- For deep snow, keep feet dry by wearing snow pants that fit over your boots. Or wear gaiters, which hook onto or under your boots and cover the space between pants and boots.
- For ice... **Because they are so vital to safe winter fun, we require** winter hikers to have traction devices that slip onto boots.. My favorite is MICROspikes by Kahtoola, which provide excellent grip on ice and are easy to take on and off. Another trusted, less-expensive brand is Yaktrax Pro Traction with coil grips; **choose the "Pro" version with the Velcro band** so they won't pull off in snow. Try them on with your boots for size. (Take non-slip devices off before driving, to avoid accelerator entanglements.) **Practice putting these on in the warmth of your home.**
- 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 keeps warmth where you need it. **Put them on before our hike.**

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. Best deals are through www.Campmor.com.
- Chemical warming packs are great between your silk liner and glove/mitten. **Open the packets 15 minutes before our hike so they're warm when we start.**
- Loosen up. Keep liners, mittens, and gloves loose enough for air insulation and not constrict circulation.

 **Dress for comfort.** We hike for fun, not style. Don't worry about re-wearing comfy, warm clothes – or if they match.

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.
- Clothes, gloves, and boots that are TIGHT 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:

- No need to bulk up. Outdoor stores carry coats that are big on cutting wind - 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 silk Cuddle Duds for no-bulk, low-cost wicking warmth under clothes.
- Fleece. We love fleece under our coats, especially thin micro-fleece. Remember fleece DOESN'T CUT WIND when worn as the outer layer.
- Snow pants. We'll be in snow, so it's nice to have snow pants, ski pants, or rain pants layered over other pants. (Discount brands are fine.)
- Camera batteries often die quickly in cold weather. Use disposable hand warmers to keep them warm, too.

 **Hiking poles** help tremendously on slippery surfaces and let you determine snow depth. You can find them inexpensively at *Target* or *Walmart*.

 **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.

Where to get winter gear:

- Check out *Uncle Dan's* (formerly *Erehwon*), *REI*, *LL Bean*, *Dick's* and other good outdoor shops.
- You can pick up a lot of great, warm things (and wicking clothing) at *Target* and similar stores' good prices.
- I'm a fan of www.Campmor.com for best deals and convenient online buying.