

# COLD WEATHER CAMPING TIPS -

(As collected and experienced by Drew Russell – One man's opinion. Results may vary. Modify to fit your own needs.)

<http://www.boyscouttrail.com/library/wintercampingt看tips.asp>

<http://www.princeton.edu/~oa/winter/wintcamp.shtml>

<http://www.backpacking.net/wintertips.html>

## GENERAL CLOTHING TIPS:

- Remember **C O L D**:
  - C** Clean - dirty clothes lose their loft and get you cold.
  - O** Overheat - never get sweaty, strip off layers to stay warm but no too hot.
  - L** Layers - Dress in synthetic layers for easy temperature control.
  - D** Dry - wet clothes (and sleeping bags) also lose their insulation.
- Fail to Plan = Plan to Fail. Always bring a bit more than what you think you'll need – water, food, clothes.
- **COTTON** is not your friend! If at all possible - Do Not Bring Cotton. Staying dry is the key to staying warm. Air is an excellent insulator and by wearing several loose layers of clothes you will keep warm. Don't wear layers so tight that circulation is restricted.
- Remember the 3 W's of layering - Wicking inside layer, Warmth middle layer(s) and Wind/Water outer layer. Wicking should be a polypropylene material. Warmth layer(s) should be fleece or wool. If possible the Wind/Water layer should be Gore-Tex or at least 60/40 nylon. A nylon snow/ski suit can also be used, especially if camping in snow.
- Bring extra hand covering - mittens are warmer than gloves. Keep your hands and feet warm. Your body will always protect the core, so if your hands and feet are warm, your core will also likely be warm. If your hands or feet are cold, put on more layers. Always wear a hat, even while sleeping.

## FEET:

- For feet, wear a thin sock liner of wool, silk, polypropylene or synthetic wicking material, plus heavy outer socks of wool. In the alternative (or if sufficient room in your boots is an issue) get a thick **Smart-Wool® sock**. These new blended socks are designed to wick moisture away while it is still a vapor and before it has a chance to condense, and should be worn without a sock liner. Typically they will contain 75% - 80% Merino wool plus synthetic blends of Nylon, Spandex, and Lycra.
- Do not wear too many pairs of socks at the same time. If the blood flow to your feet becomes constricted, your feet will get cold regardless of how many socks you are wearing. Bring at least 2 changes of socks per day.
- Boots should be waterproof, large enough to allow proper circulation while wearing thick socks. Duck boots or felt-lined rubber boots are fairly inexpensive and work well. Tennis shoes should be avoided.

## SLEEPING:

- Dress right while sleeping. If your bag is sufficiently rated – less sleeping clothes may allow your body heat to warm the bag quicker. Change into clean, dry clothes before bed. Your body makes moisture and your clothes hold it in - by changing into dry clothes you will stay warmer and it will help keep the inside of your sleeping bag dry. Wearing wool socks and long underwear (tops and bottoms) in the sleeping bag is okay, but they should NOT be the same pair you wore all day.

- Put on tomorrow's t- shirt and underwear at bedtime. That way you won't be starting with everything cold next to your skin in the morning.
  - Your body loses a lot of its heat through your head. Keep it covered at all times – even when sleeping. Wear a stocking cap to bed, even if you have a mummy bag.
  - Put tomorrow's clothes in your bag with you. This is especially important if you're small of stature. It can be pretty hard to warm up a big bag with a little body, the clothes cut down on that work.
  - Chemical hand warmers can also be placed in the bottom of the bag to help keep it warm. Also put one in each boot to help dry them out and to keep them warm for the morning.
  - Don't burrow into your bag - keep your mouth and nose outside. Moisture from your breath collects in your bag and is a quick way to get real cold. Keep the inside of the bag dry.
- Use a sleeping bag that is appropriate for the conditions. Two +20°F sleeping bags, one inside the other will work to lower the rating of both bags.
  - Use a bivvy sack to wrap around your sleeping bag. You can make a cheap version of this by getting an inexpensive fleece sleeping bag. It isn't much more than a blanket with a zipper but it helps lower the rating by as much as 10 degrees.
  - Use a sleeping bag liner. There are silk and fleece liners that go inside the sleeping bag. They will lower your sleeping bag's rating by up to 10 degrees. Or buy an inexpensive fleece throw or blanket and wrap yourself in it inside the sleeping bag.
  - Most cold weather bags are designed to trap heat. The proper way to do this is to pull the drawstrings until the sleeping bag is around your face, not around your neck. If the bag also has a draft harness make sure to use it above the shoulders and it snug's up to your neck to keep cold air from coming in and warm air from going out.
  - Put a trash bag over the bottom half of your sleeping bag to help hold in the heat. A zipped up coat pulled over the foot of a sleeping bag makes an extra layer of insulation.
  - Don't sleep directly on the ground. Get a closed cell foam pad to provide insulation between your sleeping bag and the ground. A foam pad, cushions and insulates. Use more than one insulating layer below you – it's easy to slide off the first one.
  - In an emergency, cardboard makes a great insulator. Old newspapers are also good insulation. Clothes can even be laid out to form a barrier from the ground.
  - Bring a piece of cardboard to stand on when changing clothes. This will keep any snow on your clothes off your sleeping bag, and help keep your feet warmer than standing on the cold ground.
  - A space blanket or silver lined tarp on the floor of the tent or under your sleeping bag will reflect your heat back to you.
  - No cots or air mattresses! Better to lie on 30° earth instead of –10° air.

### **GENERAL CAMPING TIPS:**

- Make sure that you have a good knowledge of the signs of frostbite and hypothermia. You should be able to recognize it yourself and in others. Tell someone right away if you or another scout is showing signs of cold-related problems.

- Stay hydrated. It's easy to get dehydrated in the winter. Bring extra WATER. You aren't visibly sweating, so you don't think to drink water, but since the air is so dry, you lose a LOT of water through breathing. Drink plenty of water!
- Eat and drink plenty of carbs.
- Keep out of the wind if you can. A rain fly for a tent can be pitched to serve as a wind break. The wind chill factor can often be considerable and can result in effective temperatures being much lower than nominal.
- Bring extra food that doesn't need to be heated or cooked. Granola bars, trail mix, etc.
- Keep a pot of hot water available for cocoa or Cup-a-Soup – these warm from the inside.
- Always eat hot meals (breakfast, lunch, & dinner.). Dutch ovens are the best – they keep the food hot longer. It doesn't need to be fancy cooking. Meals should be 1-pot meals to keep cleanup to a minimum. Don't get too fancy with the meals - it's hard to chop onions & carrots at -10°F with gloves on. Prep all meals at home in the warmth of the kitchen.
- Shelter the cooking area from wind (walls of tarps, etc.)
- Fill coffee/cook pots with water before bed. It's hard to pour frozen water, but easy to thaw it if it's already in the pot.
- Eat a high-energy snack before bed, and then brush your teeth. The extra fuel will help your body stay warm. Take a Snickers bar to bed and eat it if you wake up chilly in the night.
- If in tents, leave the tent flaps/zippers vented a bit, it cuts down on interior frost and moisture.
- Drain your bladder before you go to bed. Having to go in the middle of the night when it is 5 degrees out chills your entire body. Drink all day, but stop one hour before bed.