

Being prepared for Cold-Weather Camping



AARON ON SCOUTING

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[Camping, Health and Safety](#)



Photo by W. Garth Dowling

Staying inside all winter shouldn't be an option for Scout units.

Sure, it might be cold. But as long as it's safe to go outside, you should make every effort to get out there. Check our list below to Be Prepared for cold-weather outings.

- Make sure everyone stays loose, both in clothing and in state of mind. Loose clothing is critical in maintaining good circulation, which, in turn, is critical in keeping you warm. Patience and a good sense of humor will also go far in making your cold-weather adventures successful.
- It's not necessary to get the most expensive cold-weather clothing. It's only necessary to get the right materials. No cotton! Make sure your Scouts dress in layers of fleece, wool and other materials that can insulate even when wet.
- Check your head! Heat loss from an uncovered head can be enormous. Stocking hats made of wool or fleece work great. Combine that with a scarf or other neck warmer, and your Scouts will be good to go.



Photo by W. Garth Dowling

- Make sure everyone has good shoes. Again, they don't have to be the most expensive pieces of footwear. A decent pair of hiking boots — when paired with winter-weight socks — will likely be fine. Just keep everyone's feet dry and insulated, and make sure the shoes aren't so tight that they restrict blood circulation.

- Mittens vs. gloves: Either can work. Most people find that mittens keep their hands warmer, because their fingers share warmth through direct contact. However, gloves are better for manipulating gear. Whatever your Scouts go with, make sure they have extra pairs — mittens and gloves are the clothing item mostly like to get wet.



Photo by Michael Hanson

- Drink up! Drinking fluids is just as important in winter as it is in hot weather. Remind all Scouts to take a sip of water on a regular basis.
- Eat up! Your body is a furnace, and food is the fuel that feeds it. Hot foods — think soups and stews — are easy to make and will help keep everyone warm.



Photo by W. Garth Dowling

- Plan, plan, plan. Remind Scouts about having the correct gear months in advance. Then remind them again as you get closer to your winter outing. In the days before the trip, check the forecast regularly. There's no reason to tough out a winter campout in extreme conditions. On the other hand, if the weather outlook looks about normal for your area, go for it!
- Check out the BSA's [Safety Moments](#) on [Winter Activities](#), [Winter Sports](#), [Hypothermia](#) and [Frostbite](#), and incorporate them into all your cold-weather outings.