

Cold Weather Camping Tips

The most important thing to remember about cold weather camping is to **KEEP DRY**. Moisture will reduce the insulating properties of almost everything. Cold weather camping, as defined by BSA, is "***camping in weather where the average daily temperature is below 50-degrees Fahrenheit and conditions are cold, wet, or windy.***"

To keep warm, remember the word **COLD**:

- C** - Keep body and clothes **Clean**.
- O** - Avoid **Overheating**.
- L** - Wear clothes **Loose** and in **Layers**.
- D** - Keep **Dry**.

Clothing

1. Layer clothing. Wear several layers of lighter clothing instead of one heavy layer. By regulating the amount of insulation, control of temperature can be accomplished. If warm, take some clothing off; and if cold, add more clothing.
2. Keep dry, both from the weather and perspiration.
3. Wear loose-fitting clothing to optimize insulation.
4. Remember that rain gear is waterproof and will not allow perspiration to exit. During rainy weather, change clothing several times a day.
5. Athletic shoes and nylon hiking boots do not provide enough insulation. Wear either leather hiking boots or rubberized boots. Boots made of Gore-Tex®, though more expensive, are very good.
6. When wearing rubberized boots, remember they do not allow for ventilation; therefore, it will be necessary to change socks several times a day.
7. Wear mittens instead of fingered gloves when independent use of fingers is not needed. This will allow the fingers to help keep each other warm.
8. Wear a stocking cap. Most heat loss is through the head.
9. Remember, when buying clothes for cold weather, wool retains most of its insulative properties while cotton loses most of its insulative properties when wet.
10. There are manmade fibers that retain their insulative properties better than wool. Ask a salesperson to explain the advantages and disadvantages of these materials.
11. Waterproof leather hiking boots with a commercial treatment after each outing.
12. Wear a pair of cotton and a pair of wool socks to increase insulation and take the perspiration away from feet.
13. Wear a scarf to reduce heat loss around the neck. Use a scarf over face for protection from the cold and wind.
14. If dressed properly, a fire is not needed to keep warm. If heat can get in, so can the cold.
15. Use a pair of socks to cover hands if mittens get wet.
16. Paper is a good insulator and can be wrapped around the body (under clothes) to add insulation.
17. Use a neckerchief to cover ears, nose, or mouth.

Bedding Down

1. Natural-fiber sleeping bags do not maintain their insulation properties when damp, down bags are also applicable to this statement. A 3-to-4 pound synthetic bag will take care of most cold weather needs.
2. Remember to air out sleeping bags and tents, when weather permits. Perspiration and breath condense in the tent at night and the water will reduce insulating properties of a sleeping bag.
3. A mummy-style bag is warmer than a rectangular bag, as there is less space to heat. Also, most mummy bags have a hood to help protect heads.
4. If a rectangular sleeping bag is what is owned, bring an extra blanket to pack around shoulders at the opening of the bag to keep air from getting in.
5. Wear a stocking cap to bed in order to reduce heat loss.
6. Wear a loose fitting, hooded pullover-type sweatshirt to sleep in.
7. Make a loose-fitting bag from an old blanket to put both feet in when in sleeping bag.

- 8. Breathing inside of a sleeping bag will increase the humidity and reduce the insulation properties of the bag.**
9. Insulate the sleeping bag from the ground as much as possible to avoid cold spots at the shoulders and hips. Try to have two to three times more insulation below as above a sleeping bag. This will provide padding and keep the cold from seeping up from the ground.
10. Use a sleeping pad of closed-cell foam instead of an air mattress.
11. Cold air will be above and below the person while sleeping on a cot, so plan to keep warm accordingly.
12. Build a windbreak outside of tent by piling up snow or leaves to a height sufficient to protect the bodies of persons who are lying down inside the tent.
- 13. Remove all clothes that were worn before bedding down; they are damp with perspiration. Put on dry clothing or pajamas.**
14. Exercise before bedding down to increase body heat. Be careful not to start perspiring.
15. Use a ground cloth to keep ground moisture from sleeping bag. A body can warm frozen ground to a point where moisture can become important.
16. Hang sleeping bags up or just lay them out, between trips, so the filling will not compress and lose its insulating properties. An old pillowcase works well as a storage bag.
17. In very cold situations, it is best to triple up in a tent to provide more body heat in the tent.
18. Take small bottles (1 pound) of propane into the leader's tent at night. This will keep the bottles of propane warmer and make it easier to light stoves for breakfast. Large bottles of propane are not affected by the cold as much, therefore, do not need such protection.
19. Before getting out of bed, bring the clothing for the day inside the sleeping bag to warm them before beginning to dress.
20. Fill a canteen with hot water (not boiling) and place at foot of sleeping bag to help warm it. Be careful with plastic canteens. Make sure to remove canteen before going to bed. As it cools, so will the bag.

Odds And Ends

1. Stress to the Scouts that if at night a Scout gets cold, let the adult leadership know so action can be taken before injury from cold-weather health problems occur.
2. Drink 2 quarts of fluids (water) per day besides what is consumed at meals.
3. Keep off ice on streams, lakes, and ponds.
4. Learn to recognize and treat cold-weather health problems. These include frostbite, hypothermia, dehydration, chilblains, trench foot, snow blindness, and carbon monoxide poisoning.
5. Use the buddy system to check each other for cold-weather health problems. Notify the adult leadership if symptoms do occur.
6. No open flames (candles, matches, etc.) inside of tents.
7. Wiggling toes inside of boots will help keep feet warm.
8. If feet keep getting cold put a stocking cap on head.
9. It takes longer to cook food in cold weather, so plan accordingly.
10. Before going to bed, pour enough water into a pot for breakfast. It is easier to heat a metal pot than a frozen plastic water container. Remember to cover the pot to keep out debris.
11. Take and wear dark sunglasses if snow is in the forecast. The glare of the sun from the snow could lead to snow blindness. The sunglasses will therefore reduce the glare.
12. A good rule of thumb for Scouts is to gather twice as much wood as they think will be needed for a fire.
13. Carry tinder from home. It may be difficult to find in snow or wet conditions.
- 14. Eating ice or snow can reduce body temperature; besides, it is not pure.**
15. Snow and ice can be used for drinking water, but only after boiling for ten minutes at a rolling boil.
16. If a person is cold, gather some wood or do some other type of work. Working will raise body temperature.
17. Gather enough wood in the evening for the morning fire. This way the fire can be started first thing in the morning.
18. Carry extra plastic bags in cold weather. They can be used as personal windshields and/or ponchos by slitting a hole in the top for the head.
19. Carry extra matches; because the more a fire is needed for warmth, the harder it will be to start one easily.
20. Flashlight batteries are affected by cold. Warming them up in your pocket can revive them.