

## **Winter Outside Camping Equipment List (and Discussion)**

**This list summarizes the recommended equipment necessary for a typical Winter Campout in the mid-Atlantic region, including mountain camping in the Shenandoahs or similar (where it is usually much colder than Arlington). Note that during the daytime hours, cold temperatures can be compensated for with higher personal activity levels, and/or fires. The primary concern during cold weather camping is at night, when personal activity levels are very low, and a fire (if any) won't do much good unless you're sitting right next to it and keeping it going all night long - which is certainly not likely if you're in a tent. This is why there is a greater focus on sleeping gear. That's important - pay attention.**

**Note that this list is overkill for a weekend. The primary reason why excessive gear is specified is because Arlington Scouts do not, in general, spend a lot of time outdoors in the wintertime, and therefore they are not used to the cold. Scouts who live in western Maryland, for example, would laugh at this list - so would you if you spent a lot of time outdoors and it was 20 degrees colder here all the time. Winter campouts also tend to be clothing intensive, especially if the weather conditions are less than ideal - in which case you can expect to have to change clothing multiple times through the weekend.**

**Roughly, this list would be good for Scouts camping out in tents down to 0 - 5 degrees with no wind, and down to 10 - 15 degrees with wind. For Scouts doing a survival campout (no tents, homemade shelters), this would be good down to about 15 - 20 degrees with no wind, and to 25 degrees with wind.**

**As always, Scouts should check off the items as they pack them.**

**Sleeping Gear - Listed first because it's the most important (Put Your Name On Everything!):**

\_\_\_\_\_ **A sleeping bag, rated to 20 degrees if less than 2 years old, rated to 5 degrees if older (sleeping bags lose insulating quality as they get older). If you are going on a really cold campout, put your winter sleeping bag inside your summer sleeping bag. If you don't have a second sleeping bag, use of a wool blanket as a sleeve for a sleeping bag is also a good option (use diaper pins (not safety pins) to make the blanket into a sleeve for the sleeping bag (diaper pins are much safer than large safety pins, because they can't come undone if you roll over onto them)).**

\_\_\_\_\_ A foam pad (or better, a thick Thermarest). Many winter campers use two foam pads, or a foam pad with a Thermarest. It is very important to insulate yourself from the ground.

\_\_\_\_\_ A small pillow.

\_\_\_\_\_ A "night cap" - a pullover fleece hat to wear in the sleeping bag. In extreme conditions, add a face mask or a scarf.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Night clothes" - Middle or heavyweight thermal underwear; add a fleece outfit to cover it in extreme conditions.

\_\_\_\_\_ Fresh polypro socks and either very thick (but not tight) socks or insulated "booties".

**Remember, you must remove ALL the clothing you were wearing during the day, because you sweated into them (and "sweat is wet" - even if they don't feel wet - and wet will mean very cold in the middle of the night). Note that it is not necessary or a good idea to get re-dressed in everything you have when you first go to bed. It is typical to be very warm - even too warm - when you first get into your night clothes and then into your sleeping bag, again because you are still being active. Then you will wake up hours later, very cold because you sweated into your clothes and your activity level dropped to almost nothing while you were sleeping. So it is best to dress to the point of being comfortable when you go to sleep, and have additional stuff ready (and easy to find!) to dress into or cover yourself with later, if you wake up cold.**

**Scouts are not allowed to winter-camp without formal shelter (a tent) unless they are practicing a supervised survival campout. "Supervised" means there are a minimum of two adults out there with you - not in a nearby cabin - also doing a shelterless overnight. Note that an emergency shelter does NOT qualify as a tent substitute.**

**On tents, note that a tight, low profile (height) tent is at least 10 degrees warmer than a typical A-frame or high peaked dome tent. Therefore, if you have a choice, a smaller tent is almost always a better (warmer) choice than a larger tent.**

**Regardless of what kind of tent you use, you should always crack the top vents at each end - otherwise, your breath will condense and freeze on the inside of the tent, then melt when the tent warms up (or where you're leaning against the side), and eventually everything inside will get wet from your own condensate. This is a typical mistake made by novice winter campers. You need some fresh air circulating through your tent even if it's really windy or really cold outside.**

## **Daytime Wear (Put Your Name On Everything!):**

**It is difficult to be specific about daytime wear for winter camping, because what you need is very dependent on what you are doing, and the weather conditions. The greater your activity level, the less clothing you need. For example, if you're backpacking up the side of a mountain, and you're sheltered from the wind, you may be perfectly comfortable with a long-sleeve shirt, lightweight pants, and a light headband. You may need only a little more if you're running around a Klondike Derby, hauling a sled between stations, or playing football, or sledding, or having a snowball fight. But any activity that requires a lot of standing around, you're going to feel the cold. And if it's windy outside, you'll really going to feel the cold.**

**How can you handle different conditions and different activity levels? By layering, wearing proper footwear, headwear, and gloves, and using windproof shells when needed. Layering means you take stuff off when you overheat, and put it on when you get cold. Carrying a small daypack is very helpful if you know you're going to be varying your activity level all day long, so you'll have a place to put stuff. Proper footwear means insulated boots. Very few Scouts (or leaders) own insulated boots, because they are very expensive. So, they try to compensate with hiking boots and socks. This can work OK, but requires proper layering (polypro, cotton, thick insulated), but it is difficult to have adequate bulk and still fit easily into your boots - and if your feet are tight in the boots, your blood flow will be constricted, and your feet will get very cold. So you are better off with oversize boots if you can't buy or borrow insulated boots. Proper headwear means appropriate for the conditions. In some cases, that can be just a headband, in others a pullover hat, then add a facemask or a scarf, then add a hood or balaclava, and in the worst cases add a pair of goggles. Gloves are another critical item, equal to boots - if your hands and feet are cold, you will be miserable even if the rest of you is warm. There are two common mistakes here: Wearing gloves that are too tight, or wearing gloves that are wet. No matter how good your gloves, if they're too tight or if they're wet, your hands will get very cold. So you should always buy gloves that are larger than your hand, and if you are doing activities where you can expect to get your gloves wet, either cover them with waterproof gloves (like Playtex) or bring additional pairs in your daypack. On warmth, wearing thin liner gloves inside your regular gloves is the best "regular" combination - usually much better than just wearing thicker gloves. Use of liner gloves inside mittens is the best combination, but doesn't work well if you need to use your hands for any work. Finally, stopping the wind is the second most important factor in staying warm (staying dry is the most important factor). There are several "windstopper" fabrics used to create winter wear, but they tend to be expensive. Most winter coats and pants are at least wind resistant. Use of an oversize nylon shell (top and bottom) over your clothes is a very effective and**

**inexpensive means for stopping the wind. In worse-case scenarios, use of an oversize rubber rainsuit (for example, those big yellow rainsuits) will completely stop the wind - and if you have proper layers underneath, can protect you to well below zero temperatures even when your activity level is low.**

**The list below INCLUDES what you need to wear when we leave. You should be wearing (or have in your daypack) a full set of winter clothing and be wearing BOOTS (not sneakers) when we leave. You need to avoid sweating while travelling (so dress appropriately), but you also need to be prepared to step from your warm vehicle straight into winter conditions.**

**In many cases, 2 - 3 of each item is specified. The number should correspond to the number of days you will stay in the elements. As noted above, it is important to stay dry. While it is possible to dry sweaty clothes during a winter campout (if the weather is cooperative), it is safer when possible to just have fresh, dry clothes for each day.**

**Remember, this list is overkill, and is specifically designed for the most extreme conditions. You can make rational deductions - but make sure they ARE rational. Remember, you can always go get something you need if it's in your backpack or duffel bag - but not if it's back home in your closet.**

**Also remember, everything with your name or initials on it.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ **A small, lightweight daypack**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Insulated boots, or good quality, oversize hiking boots - if you know you will be in wet, muddy conditions, a second pair of boots or rubber overboots are needed. If your boots get wet, your feet will get very cold, and frostbite becomes a real danger.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2 - 3 sets of light to medium weight synthetic thermal underwear.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2 - 3 pairs of polypro socks**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2 - 3 pairs of cotton or cotton blend socks**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2 - 3 pairs of thick wool or wool blend socks**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **1 pair of insulated snowpants, or 2 pair of thick pants (like German Army wool pants). Avoid cotton pants (like blue jeans).**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2 - 3 synthetic T-Shirts, preferably long sleeve**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2 - 3 long-sleeve cotton T-Shirts**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2 - 3 pair of underwear (preferably synthetic)**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **A medium weight fleece**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **A heavy weight fleece**

- \_\_\_\_\_ A good winter coat, slightly oversize preferred, preferably wind and rain resistant (should not be too thick).
- \_\_\_\_\_ A lightweight headband
- \_\_\_\_\_ A heavyweight or windstopper headband
- \_\_\_\_\_ A pullover hat, preferably thick fleece
- \_\_\_\_\_ If your winter coat doesn't have a hood, a balaclava (preferably synthetic)
- \_\_\_\_\_ A facemask or scarf (preferably synthetic)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Goggles or "wraparound" sunglasses with clear or lightly tinted lenses
- \_\_\_\_\_ An oversize nylon shell or rubber rainsuit. If wet weather is expected, a rainsuit is mandatory.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2 pair of liner gloves
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2 pair of oversize, insulated gloves or mittens
- \_\_\_\_\_ A pair of waterproof shell gloves/mittens, or an oversize pair of latex gloves
- \_\_\_\_\_ A belt
- \_\_\_\_\_ A small towel
- \_\_\_\_\_ A large "dirty clothes" bag, preferably cloth.

#### **Eating Gear (Put Your Name On Everything!):**

- \_\_\_\_\_ A medium sized, insulated (double wall if possible) bowl, preferably plastic, with name plainly marked.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A plastic knife, fork and spoon kit (avoid metal - it steals heat).
- \_\_\_\_\_ A medium sized, insulated (double wall if possible) cup.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A 1 liter canteen, filled with water (winter weather is extremely dehydrating; Note that you need to keep your water bottle in an inside pocket to prevent it from freezing during the day, and inside your sleeping bag or buried in a nearby snowbank at night). If doing strenuous activities far from a water supply, bring two or even three canteens, as warranted. Note that it is **ROUTINE** for the sipping hoses on Camelbaks and similar devices to freeze on winter campouts; for this reason, they are **NOT RECOMMENDED**.

#### **Ancillary Clothing and Equipment (Put Your Name On Everything!):**

- \_\_\_\_\_ A flashlight (2 C-cell or 2 D-cell) with fresh batteries
- \_\_\_\_\_ A toothbrush
- \_\_\_\_\_ A pair of UV-opaque Sunglasses (especially if you're camping in snow)

**Optional Equipment (Put Your Name On Everything!):**

\_\_\_\_\_ **If the Troop is cabin-camping nearby, a pair of sneakers for use inside the cabin**

\_\_\_\_\_ **A small folding lock-blade knife**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Chemical Handwarmer Packs (4 for each day) - Good if you easily get cold hands**

**Dr. Bob, SM-111 (11/9/04)**