

Dressing for Cross-Country Skiing

How to stay warm and enjoy being outside in the winter!

The secret to staying warm cross-country skiing is to layer so you can stay warm and wick away your sweat (or mild perspiration ladies!). Most often people get cold from wearing too many layers, working up a sweat and then having a wet layer of clothing next to your skin.

The best way is to dress in layers that can be added or removed as the temperature, wind and your activity dictate. You shouldn't need to buy many extra clothes and you likely have all the layers in your current wardrobe! Clothes for jogging, cycling and winter walking work great!

Base Layer: The layers closest to your skin need to be soft, comfortable and should wick perspiration away from your skin. The inner most layer needs to draw dampness away so your core can stay warm. Synthetics such as polypropylene and polyester are great, and the new merino wool is wonderful. There are a few weights of long underwear. You can determine what you need by deciding what your bottom line temperature is! I have a light set for 0 to -10, medium for -10 – 22ish, then the warmest for -25 and lower.

Mid-Layer: The mid layer is insulation and should continue to wick away the moisture from your base layer. These should also be quick drying and lightweight. Wool and synthetics such as fleece are great insulators and keep you warm even when wet. This layer should also have zippers in the front and pits for extra ventilation.

Again by having various densities of fabrics you can extend the range of temperatures. For example some polar fleece comes in 100, 200 or 300 weight. This layer should fit close to keep you warmer.

Outer Layer: The outer layer should be lightweight and wind and water resistant. Most shells are synthetic and the new soft shells also wick moisture away. The conditions will determine whether you wear something more water resistant (think wet snow at +1) or more wind resistant (-27). Materials such as Gore-tex allow some water vapour to escape but offer wind and water resistance.

IMPORTANT ESSENTIALS!

Hats! Toques! Gloves! Mitts! Neck warmers!

Remember to wear a toque – it is a great way to help regulate heat. If your hands are cold putting on a toque warms them!

Mittens are warmer than gloves!!! If it is below -15 I wear mittens and colder than -25 I wear light mitts with a shell mitt. Mitts let your fingers stay together and share warmth!

A neck warmer that can cover your chin and nose is more functional than a scarf. If it is windy or below -20 this is necessary!

Warm socks! A couple of layers if it is cold, but always room to wiggle your toes! If you can't wiggle – take off a layer!

All this is determined by how your body reacts to cold and how active you are. I generally have several layers that I can alternate to stay warm in a variety of conditions. I also try to decide if I am going to do a recreational ski or a workout ski.

Here's a general guide:

Sunny +3 to 0 : Cross country ski pants, base layer and vest!

0 to -10: Lighter underwear top and bottom , wind pants, light to medium fleece on top, and a light wind proof jacket. Gloves and toque/headband.

-10 to -20: Heavier underwear top and bottom, heavier wind proof pants, medium fleece, wind jacket or goretex, a fanny pack with a variety of mitts and gloves, toque and neck warmer.

-20 to -30: Heaviest long underwear top and bottom, goretex pants, heavy fleece, windjacket or goretex, MITTS, sometimes toque and headband!

Below -30 : Your choice! It gets more difficult to stay warm but not sweat! It can be done but a neck warmer to cover your face is essential.

The most important thing is to have layers that you can mix and match and don and doff as the temperature outside and your temperature changes!

There is good information on layering on the Mountain Equipment Coop Website- under the "Learn" heading.

www.mec.ca

