

## Winter Trips: Staying Safe and Comfortable

**1. STAY DRY AND KEEP YOUR THINGS DRY.** Dampness makes you cold. Use outer shell layers of clothing that shed snow so you don't get wet. Tuck clothes in and zip up parkas. Lace boots up snugly and pull snow pants over the top or use gaiters. Don't get sweaty – take layers off as you warm up. Know where things are in your pack. Take care not to let things fall in the snow. If they do, brush them off quickly. Use Ziplocks and plastic garbage bags for dry storage.

### **2. IF YOU ARE COLD, TAKE ACTION RIGHT AWAY – DON'T WAIT.**

- Put on more layers, including a hat and neck gaiter or scarf, zip up and tuck in.
- Run around for few minutes exerting as much energy as possible
- Have a high-energy snack and/or warm drink.
- If you are done for the day and you are wet or damp, change into dry clothes.

**3. EAT AND DRINK - THE MORE THE BETTER.** **Food:** High energy foods like gorp, energy bars, candy bars, cheese, salami. Whatever you like that is high in calories.. Bring all food and water into the main hut building or it will freeze. **Drink:** Staying hydrated is critical to staying warm. Fill your bottle with hot water for the trail. Keep it from freezing during the day by putting it inside your pack rather than in an outside pocket.

## **WATCH FOR SIGNS OF FROSTBITE AND HYPOTHERMIA IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS. TELL AN ADULT IF:**

- You can't feel some toes or fingers
- You see white splotches on someone's nose, cheeks or ears
- You or someone else is shivering and can't stop
- Someone is acting clumsy or is unusually quiet or is just acting weird, particularly if they are not appropriately dressed or very tired or sick
- Set up a buddy system before you go

### **TIPS ON HOW TO STAY WARM AT NIGHT:**

- Eat a big dinner and then eat a high energy snack right before bed.
- Bring an extra sleeping bag or a liner if you have a summer bag. Put one inside the other. Fluff out your bag(s) well before bedtime.
- Save a dry pair of clothes or long underwear for sleeping in. Wear your hat and scarf. Or, sleep in everything you have, including snow pants, as long as they are dry.
- Safety pin your parka to your sleeping bag over your chest.
- If you have to "go" at night, don't try to hold it – you'll sleep better and warmer if you just get up and do it.
- If all of your gloves or socks or boot liners are damp, bring at least one pair into your sleeping bag to help dry them out.
- Make sure your spare clothes and sleeping bag are protected from getting wet. Don't mix damp and dry clothes in your pack or tent.

### **TENTING**

- Be meticulous about keeping snow out of the tent.
- Get your whole bag off the tent floor. Use your foam pad and put your empty pack under your lower legs and feet.
- Leave an opening at the top of the tent door for water vapor to escape – the tent won't be so full of frost crystals in the morning.
- Keep tent contents protected from wet floor.

## **Cold Weather Camping “MUST HAVE” List:**

Always check the weather forecast when you pack and again before your leave, and always remember it can be wrong. It's most useful for deciding how warmly to dress and if there might be ANY chance of rain or wet snow. The colder or wetter, the better organized you and your pack need to be. No matter what the forecast, in winter bring everything listed below.

If your scout doesn't have something below, consider adult items you might have. Better to have too much than too little, within reason. Bring options to the pack check or ask. Need we add this isn't a fashion contest.

- Warm 3 season mummy-style sleeping bag rated to 15 deg. minimum. Rental possible. Beefing up your mummy bag is possible: add a liner, a lightweight down summer bag, pin your parka across your chest, increase the padding under you, wear more dry clothes inside your bag, even slippers.
- 1 WARM hat that covers ears. A spare is recommended.
- 2 pr. WARM mittens or ski gloves minimum, more would be better, especially a light pair for dexterity. Gloves get wet quickly and are hard to dry out. Shelled mittens and gloves are better, but fleece is ok as second or third pair.
- 1 scarf or neck gaiter
- Long underwear top and bottom
- Insulated winter boots or high-top waterproof hiking boots worn with two pairs of warm socks (with two changes of socks). Boots with removable liners are ideal
- 3 pairs or sets of warm socks. Tip: bring a couple of plastic bags to use as liners to protect your dry change of socks if your boots are soaked. This is Craig Weeks' trick and scouts say it works.
- Insulated snow pants, or warm fleece pants with shell
- 1-2 fleece, sweater or vest layers
- Winter parka that fits over other layers
- Complete change of clothes, for sleeping or emergency. A second set of synthetic long underwear is ideal, cotton is OK.
- 100% waterproof rain jacket and pants if there even a 1:1,00 chance of rain or wet snow. Big enough to fit over several layers.
- Water bottle filled with WARM drink – tang or lemonade are good
- Snack foods – Lots! High energy = high calorie. Gorp, nuts, crackers, cheese and salami, granola bars, candy.
- Other standard personal camping equipment as listed in scout handbook, p. 224.

Note: Cotton is not recommended as a material on outdoor trips, summer or winter. When cotton is dry it's fine, but when it gets wet, it loses all of its insulating properties, and is extremely hard to dry out. No cotton sweatshirts, jeans or socks. Cotton is OK for a spare pair of clothes.

## **Recommended but Optional Winter Gear:**

- Gaiters – tubes of nylon with velcro or zippers that keep snow out of boots.
- Breathable nylon shell clothing. Trina's eternal mantra: It's impossible to keep scouts out of the snow, but it's important to keep snow off the scouts. Scouts get hot, take off their parkas, play in the snow, snow collects on their fleece, melts, and voila, there they are, all wet while winter camping, which is a big NO NO for safety and comfort. A light shell layer prevents this.
- Ski poles or hiking poles with baskets – very helpful with snowshoes when you get into one of those “awkward” situations.
- Headlamp – keeps hands free to work in the dark, or dark corners of the hut.
- Slippers or booties (luxury item)
- Earplugs for hut (adults take heed)

# Sources for Outdoor Equipment

## **BEST BETS:**

**Recreation Equipment Incorporated (REI)** 781-944-5103 [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com)

279 Salem St., Reading. Take exit 40 off 128, go ¾ around circle. REI is less than 100 yds down on the left, next to the DMV. 15-20 min. from Lexington.

REI is a large national chain that also does mail-order. More selection than EMS. If you join the co-op (not mandatory), you get notice of sales and about 8% back at year end. Check out REI OUTLET tab at website. Avoid shipping fees by picking up mail orders at the store! REI has other stores in area.

**Campmor** 1-800-CAMPMOR [www.campmor.com](http://www.campmor.com)

Mail order company out of NJ that provides a gigantic selection of camping and outdoor equipment at fair or discounted prices. Photos online are better than thumbnail sketches in newsprint catalog, but catalog is very comprehensive. Campmor brand (basic but functional) rainwear, gaiters, etc. is some of cheapest around.

**Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS)** 781-229-9797 [www.ems.com](http://www.ems.com)

91 Middlesex Turnpike (same strip mall complex as Tower Records and Staples)

The closest outdoor store, better quality than Decathlon. They have an "organization day" when everything in store is 20% off, and may be providing us with coupons occasionally. Limited clothing in youth sizes - adult small often works. EMS has other stores in the area.

**Decathlon Sports** 781-270-9200

43A Middlesex Turnpike, behind Market Basket on Lowell St.

Good prices on outdoor clothing, footwear, ski and other outdoor sports equipment. Avoid their camping equipment – cheap quality.

**BSA Scout Shops** National Sales/Catalog: 1-800-323-0732 [www.scoutstuff.org](http://www.scoutstuff.org)

Closest store: 23 Turnpike Road (Rt.9), Southborough, 508-229-2396

Good for backpacks (though full price and then some), one stop shopping

## **OTHER OPTIONS:**

**Sierra Trading Post** 1800-713-4534 [www.sierratradingpost.com](http://www.sierratradingpost.com)

Mail order company out of Wyoming that carries brand name gear at discount prices – closeouts, etc. Some good deals, particularly on synthetic long underwear.

**Bob Smith's Wilderness House** (formerly Wilderness House) 1-617-277-5858

1048 Commonwealth Ave (In BU area off Storrow Drive)

Best selection of top-line (and pricey) outdoor equipment.

**Old Navy** [oldnavy.com](http://oldnavy.com)

43 Middlesex Turnpike, in same strip mall as Market Basket

Convenient, cheap source for fleeces, and often for nylon pants, etc. Avoid cotton linings though.

**Costco** Costco has 3 packs of wool hiking socks for \$10. Size Medium and Large.

**Play it Again Sports** 781-438-2399

62E Montvale Avenue, Stoneham; ½ mile or so after passing under I93 in Plaza on right.

Used sports equipment, including cross country ski, downhill ski and snowboard equipment. Shop pre-season for best selection.

**Wal-Mart** Good prices on car camping equipment such as Coleman stoves.

## **Buying a Backpack**

### **External vs. internal frame backpacks:**

When you start to do backpacking trips, even into a hut, it's time to find a backpack with a hipbelt. If you aren't ready to buy one, the troop has several backpacks to lend out, and packs can be rented from EMS and REI. If you are ready to buy, read on:

Backpacks have either an "external frame" (where the frame, usually aluminum, is visible) or an "internal frame" (where the frame is built into the pack). External frame packs are increasingly being supplanted by internal frame packs. While we used to recommend external frame packs for scouts, now it's a toss-up.

External frame packs are somewhat easier to adjust to a growing body, large in capacity, and easy to access due to outside pockets. Their main disadvantage is they are not always comfortable, and the frame can get in the way when scootching over boulders or down steep trails. In the past, internal frame packs have tended to be more expensive, had less volume, and have been less accessible and less adjustable for growing bodies.

At the store load up the pack with weight (25-30 lb. - they will have bags of sand or similar), and fit the pack with store help. Make sure the weight of the pack can rest entirely on the hips with just a t-shirt on by cinching up the hip belt strap, and that the frame is big enough for several years of growth (distance between hip belt and shoulder strap must be expandable). Buy as large a size pack as you can that fits in the hips.

When you buy a pack also buy 1- 2 pairs of 1" nylon straps with fastex buckles (36-48" length). These straps make it easy to securely attach pads, tents, snowshoes, and other bulky gear. About \$2-3 each.

Kelty is one reasonably priced, reputable brand in both external and internal frame backpacks. While some of Kelty's design features are not well thought out, in general they represent a good value and an appropriate choice for a scout. Make SURE the hipbelt can be snugged down tight tight tight. In external frames avoid Outdoor Products brand. In internal frames look at the Kelty Coyote or the Red Cloud 5000 or 5600. Campmor often has good prices but check with REI, EMS or the Scout Store for

## **Buying a Sleeping Bag**

As Gini writes in the introduction to gear, a sleeping bag is something to invest in – you'll have it for a long time. Buy a warmer adult-sized 3-season mummy bag with quality synthetic insulation (Delta, Polarguard, Holofil or similar. Not down!) and one rated to 15 deg. F or less. The insulation will lose its loft (and thus warmth) over time. You can always unzip the bag in summer if it's hot. A draft tube along the zipper, and a way of making a hood at the top with a drawstring are must-haves. A baffle ringing the neck/shoulder area is a nice extra. The bag should weigh between 3.5 - 4.5 pounds and should compress down to backpacking dimensions. A stuff bag with compression straps helps. Some mummies are tighter widthwise than others, but for most scouts this isn't a problem. The scout should be comfortable in the bag with a full set of winter clothes on. Expect to pay \$110-120 for a good one on sale.