

# Top 5 Dos & Don'ts of Dressing for Winter Fun

**DO** dress in layers

**DO** focus on staying dry, both from the outside (snow and rain) and the inside (sweat, pee).

**DO** base the amount of insulation on temperature AND the amount of physical activity you expect.

**DO** pay special attention to hands and feet: wear warm, waterproof mittens, thick socks, warm boots. Make sure boots start out dry inside!

**DO** wear a comfortable, warm hat with good coverage. Soft fleece tends to get better compliance than rough wool. Consider scarf/neck

**DON'T** wear cotton—it absorbs moisture and conducts heat away from the body!

**DON'T** wear mittens or boots that allow snow in

**DON'T** wear fleece or flannel on the outside where they can be “snow velcro”.

**DON'T** wear plastic or rubber boots that have no insulation—they aren't warm enough and they trap moisture inside.

**DON'T** wear cotton socks! Please!

	Base Layer (Next to Skin)	Mid or Insulating Layer	Shell/Weather-Proof Layer
			
Items	<b>Top:</b> vest or long sleeved underwear <b>Legs:</b> leggings or long underwear <b>Head:</b> thin balaclava <b>Feet:</b> liner socks	<b>Top:</b> long sleeved top <b>Legs:</b> pants <b>Head:</b> hat <b>Feet:</b> heavy weight socks <b>Hands:</b> mittens <b>Neck:</b> scarf/neck gaiter	<b>Top:</b> jacket <b>Legs:</b> pants, bibs, or one-piece suits <b>Head:</b> hood <b>Feet:</b> insulated boots <b>Hands:</b> mittens with a shell
Purpose	<b>Wicking, Comfort &amp; Thin Insulation</b>	<b>Insulation, Wicking</b>	<b>Keeping wind, snow and rain out</b>
Good Fabrics	Polyester Stretch Knits Silk Polypropylene Lightweight Wool	Fleece Puffy Synthetic Insulation Heavier Weight Wool Down	Nylons Fur Neoprene <sup>1</sup> Waterproof/Breathable Shells Leather or Shearling Leather <sup>2</sup>
What to Look for	<b>Snug fitting</b> (to allow for layering) – should fit as close, or even closer than pajamas <b>Knit fabrics with lots of stretch in them</b> – allows greater freedom & range of movement	Loose fit/slide over base layer easily Turtle or polar necks Hats that really cover the ears The “puffier” this layer, the greater its insulative properties If outer shell has insulation, drop mid-layer or use a non-puffy mid-layer	<b>Rain gear:</b> taped or sealed seams Snow-shedding fabrics <b>Jackets:</b> snow skirts/elasticized waists Extra large to fit over layers Slippery linings <b>Boots:</b> mid-calf height w/closable tops <b>Mittens:</b> gauntlets – avoid cold spots and keep snow and rain out <b>Pant cuffs:</b> come well down over boots
What to Avoid	<b>Avoid Fleece as base layer:</b> it is not very comfortable next to skin, and hard to put layers over <b>Avoid Cotton</b>	<b>Avoid Poor construction that creates “cold spots”</b> (i.e., where insulation too thin) <b>Avoid Cotton Batting</b> (cheap insulation)	<b>Avoid Gloves:</b> mittens are much warmer <b>Avoid Fleece mittens:</b> they get soaked <b>Avoid Hard plastic boots:</b> impede proper movement and not warm enough <b>Avoid Fleece or Cotton faces to shells</b>

1. Neoprene is not breathable, for extended time outdoors, feet may sweat & feel damp &, possibly, cold 2. Plain leather provides almost no insulation itself, but if properly treated can provide good wind and water resistance

## When dressing for outdoor fun, minimize or prevent heat loss in the following ways:

**Conduction:** slow by insulating from anything that's cooler than your body, including the ground. Insulated boot soles and insulated mittens help.

Wet clothing conducts heat away from the body, so staying dry in winter is essential.

**Radiation:** reduce by wearing insulating clothing (clothing that traps pockets of air).

**Convection:** avoid with a windproof outer layer.

**Evaporation:** prevent by staying dry and blocking air movement.

**Respiration:** capture warm breath with a scarf, neck gaiter, or balaclava.

**Remember: Clothing itself doesn't produce heat—our bodies do, by burning the food and water that fuel us and by being physically active.** Heat can also come from another person (e.g. placing cold bare hands on a warm, bare neck or belly) or from heat packs (not recommended due to burn risk).

**Dressing in layers makes any outfit more adjustable for when activity level or temperature changes. Plus, air trapped between the clothing layers adds insulating value.**

**Think in terms of three main types of layers:** the next-to-skin wicking layer, one or more insulating layers, & an outer weatherproof layer.

**For specifics on layering, see winter dressing table inside.**



A Primitive Pursuits program in partnership with



**Cooperative  
Extension**  
Tompkins County



**4-H Youth  
Development**

This handout was prepared by  
Melissa Blake, Susan Mann, & Walter Mann



## Dressing Young CHILDREN for WINTER FUN

**WINTER IS A MAGICAL TIME** to be outdoors. Who doesn't love sledding, sliding, and snowman-building? We want our kids to get out and stay out—but how long a child wants to stay outside depends on how warm and comfortable s/he is. If it's very cold or your child will be out for an extended period, their safety also depends on them being well-dressed.

**Remember the saying:**

**"There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing!"**