

# Winter Camping for Scouts

## Program Ideas, Ideals, and Experiences

First, this isn't a complete document, nor has it ever been.

This is a collection of ideas, almost 98% "borrowed" from other Scouters, the web, and our own personal experiences.

So, if you like any of it, then claim it as your own, and lead your troops!

If you have good ideas or feedback, or even questions, fire emails back and tell us what we did wrong. ☺

It's how we all get better, together.

And, much of this is guaranteed program for the entire month of January, leading up to the camp... dead simple.

Jumping right in... any place you can introduce an idea through hands-on experiences, games, activities, or "getting dirty", so much the better.

Avoid lectures at all costs, unless you have no choice... and then keep them short and split apart into topics, with other activities between them. (no more than 5 minutes to an idea)

Let older Scouts lead the discussions and activities, when you have them available. Even if their wisdom is limited, back them up with facts and support, and their peers will learn 10x more than if you are lecturing them. ☺

Some of this will be point-form. (much of it actually, taken from training notes)

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## Proper Footwear

- Waterproof on the bottom, but breathable out the top. (no rubber boots, no kodiaks, Kamiks/snowmobile-boots and similar work best)
- Removable boot liners good, even nicer if you have spare liners.
- If your feet are cold, put on a hat, and change your wet socks.
- Where do boots go when you sleep? Under your legs, under the sleeping bag or the foam pad. (be sensible, if boots have wet exterior put under foam pad so you don't get the bag wet) This keeps them from freezing solid.
- Another option is to remove liners and hang to dry outside, if dry night.
- Thin synthetic socks (dress socks) next to skin, with heavy woolly socks over them.
- Multiple layers good.
- Change socks if wet.
- Wool dries fast.
- If your feet are cold, change your socks.
- Cotton is rotten, and should be forgotten. ;-)

If you show up in running shoes, we will send you home. (don't laugh, some have) The Scout Shop and Mark's Work Wearhouse, carry nice 100% wool (or close to it) socks, WigWam brand I think is the name. And if you check their "super-fancy-ultra-quick-dry synthetic thin socks", they're pretty close to nylon dress socks, but you're welcome to get some of those too.

Raid Dad's sock drawers.

### ***Demo Idea***

Bring clothes basket full of all kinds of footwear, from all seasons and purposes. (don't forget some silly ones, to keep interest) Let them sort into useful, not useful, identify for what purpose. Everything has a purpose, even silly ones... but we want to make the correct choices.

### ***Game Idea***

Dump basket out at one end, have Scouts each remove their shoes/boots and add to pile. Mix it up.

Multiple patrol relay race, where they have to one by one, run to other end, find both shoes, tie up properly, and run back. Silliness will ensue, to be sure. Particularly if you have some silly shoes in there...

## Layers layers layers.

Multiple layers allow one to adjust insulation level easily, and also trap thin layers of air between each layer, and that is what keeps you warm.

Plus you can remove the lower sweaty layers, and still use the outer ones again.

(contrary to having one huge thick parka, that once wet is just wet, and that you can't adjust -- the all your eggs in one basket theory)

Air easier to warm, than water, even if the air was -20 a few seconds ago -- ie: when changing.

If your feet are cold, change your socks. ;-)

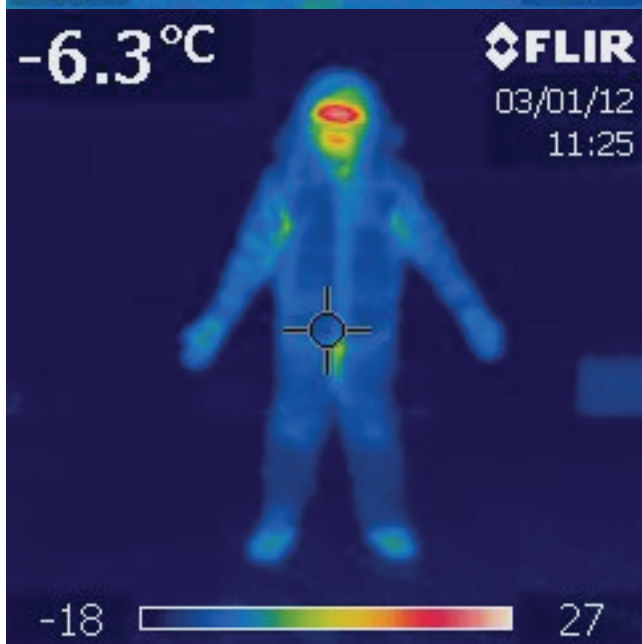
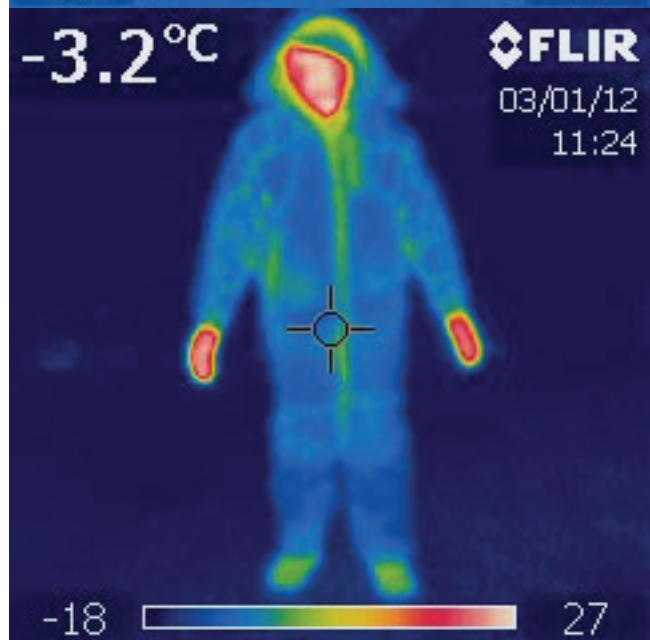
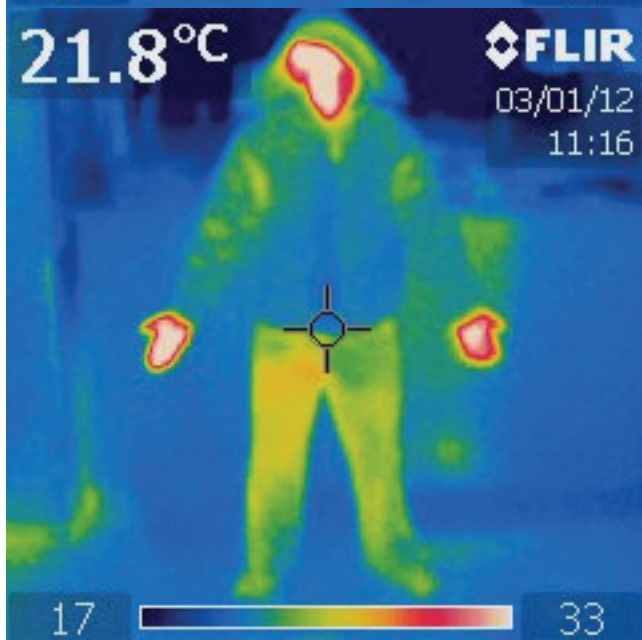
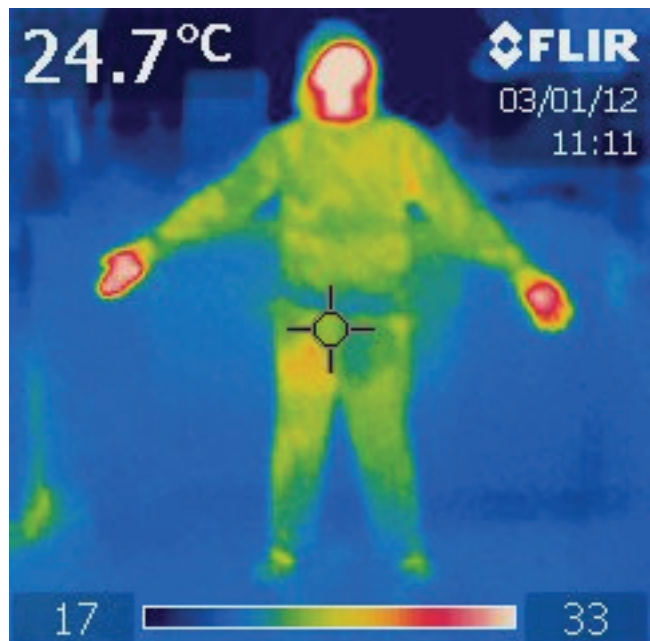
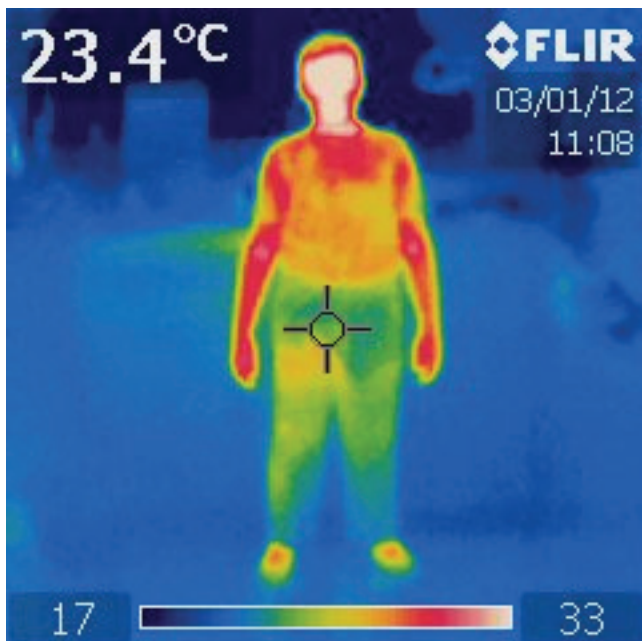
Not sure?

Change your socks at each meal time, and before bed.

Bring examples of t-shirt, long-sleeve, sweatshirt hoodie, and coat. Have Scouts try it.

If you're worried that they won't change before bed, bring an old sleeping bag (that might get dusty) and let them take turns changing out of and into an oversize pair of swim trunks, INSIDE the sleeping bag.

Here are photos of progressive layers being added:



## Demo Idea

Have two freezer-quality ziplocks made up, sort of half-filled.

One with cold air (leave it outside), and one with just cold water.

Before you start discussion, have two volunteers put them each under their shirt next to skin.

At end of discussion, they can discuss who now has a warm bag of air, and who is shivering. ☺

## Mitts and Gloves

Gloves are cool. (literally cold, see photo of thermal difference)

Mitts are better. Put gloved hands inside large mitts, or just skip the gloves.

Gloves are nice to have to have access to your fingers, but if what you are going to do will need bare hands anyhow, you might as well just stick with mitts.

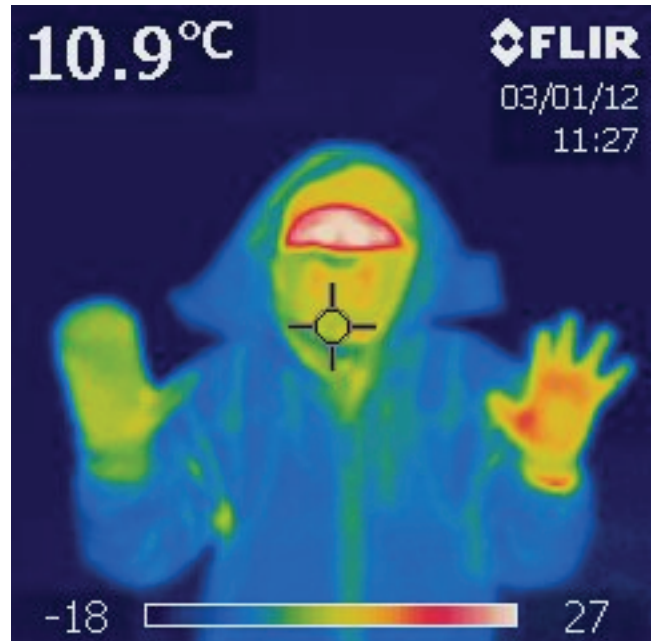
Mitts keep fingers close to each other, that's why they are warmer.

Waterproof is better.

If you can, Mark's Work Wearhouse has some nice WindRiver brand waterproof mitts and gloves. Better one expensive dry pair, than multiple cheapie wet pairs...

Multiple pairs still good.

Don't get them wet to start with, if you can avoid it. (Mom isn't here with the hair dryer to dry them out, **so stop playing in the snow!** use tools to dig or move snow)



Don't put wet bare hands in your mitts if you have been washing.

Shake them around, dry them off first.

Tolerate 30 seconds of bare-skin drying time in freezing cold air, for the benefit of dry interiors in your mitts.

## Demo Idea/Game

Get some cheapie hats, neckwarmers, and those thin dollar store gloves. (good to have troop spares in the leader's pack anyhow, right?)

Get some pails.

Fill them with snow. Packed.

Relay race, from one end of the indoor hall to the other, patrol vs. patrol.

Each member must put on the neckwarmer, the hat, and then the gloves, and then move a handful of snow from one bucket to the other.

Then give the next person all the stuff, and they repeat.

By the end, all gloves are usually soaking wet, and miserably cold... ☺

## Hats

Hoods are NOT a substitute for a hat.

No baseball caps, we're talking wool/knit touques.

Hats are a layer of air trapped next to your head.

Hoods are good over a hat, to keep winds from cutting through.

Bring many, they may get wet.

Always keep one dry one in your gear for sleeping in.

If snowing, pull up coat hood to keep snow off hat.

70% of your body heat, is lost through your head. It's like a giant radiator.

If you feel cold, put your hat on. If you're too hot, take your hat off for a few minutes, before you start sweating.

Your body is pretty good at regulating it's own temperature, but you can mess with it. ☺

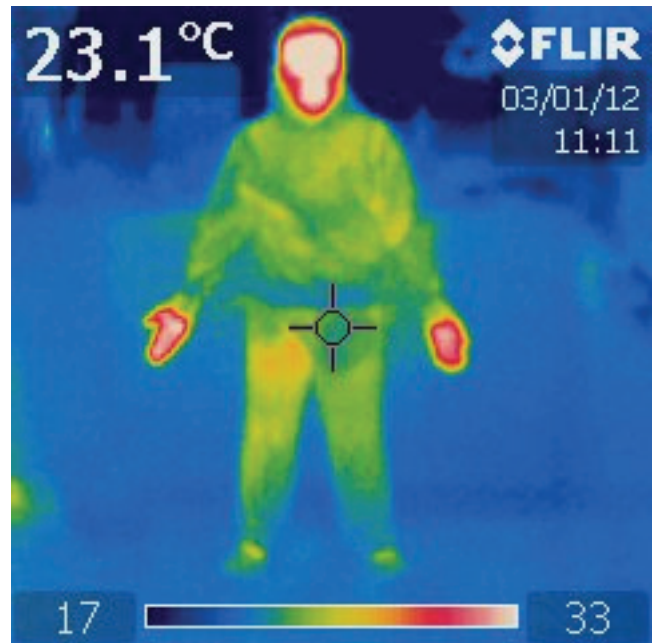


Image to the right, shows how much heat it still lost through the exposed skull, with a hoodie, but no hat. (nor mitts)

## Sleeping attire and getting up

Before bed, strip to the skin, and then put on **ALL fresh dry layers**.

Sleep dressed. Socks, long-johns or PJs, long sleeve shirt, tuque, maybe even neck-warmer.

Everything, underwear included. Ladies AND gentlemen. (that always makes them giggle for some reason...)

Go to the bathroom a few times before bed. It's harder for your body to keep all that pee warm all night. ☺

(and it's too darn cold to have to get out in the night)

Go twice, no, three times. (more for the older leaders)

You can also try the sleeping bag changing game here too. One bag per patrol, and an oversize pair of shorts to change in and out of. (take off red pair, come back out with blue pair on, that sort of thing)

## Tents

Keep screened vents wide open, unless windy, and then only partially closed.

We **must** get the moisture out of tents from your breathing. (if you wake up with tops of sleeping bags all wet or frosty, or inside of tent COVERED in thick frost, you didn't do this right)

Level the ground, clear away the BULK of the snow.

Sometimes put hay under, or dry leaves, adding a layer between you and the frozen ground.

Ground that WAS under heavy snow, can actually be close to thawed, and not as cold as on top of ice or snow.

Where pegs don't work, freestanding tents are great.

Fly bungies/ropes, can be tied to rocks or sticks or logs buried in the snow. (pics in the scout field book)

Something to keep them out and away from the inner tent walls.

Use a stave to hold two fly ropes.

We set a tent up in the gym and tried this.

Gear can stay in vestibule, if you need to. Don't leave boots there to freeze, deal with them.

Tents are warmer, the more bodies you can put in one. (don't be a cold loner)

Try setting one up on the side lawn where you meet, if they have mitts and hats.

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## Other Shelters

If you can, build them on a day hike, to get a chance to try them when you can afford to maybe get wet crawling around, or have daylight to support you.

Lean-tos and tarp shelters are very popular in the winter, sometimes allowing you to setup a larger "communal" arrangement, with a fire pit or drum in the centre. (good for morale, and if it encloses most sides, it's good for wind protection).

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## Sleeping bags and Layers

Rule of 3: Three layers under you, for each layer above you.

Layers under, can be foam pad, thermorest, reflective ground sheets, extra blanket (camp blanket). (they make a pad with a built-in reflective foil layer glued to one side now too)

Why 3 to 1?

Because it's that same old trapped air that's keeping you warm.

And the stuff you're lying on, is compressed and not trapping much air.

Sleeping bags can be natural or synthetic fill.

Natural (goose down) is warmer per pound, but harder to care for. (needs more care, and doesn't dry as fast if you get it wet, doesn't insulate well if wet, and more expensive)

Synthetic a bit more durable, dries faster, and can still insulate when moist.

Mummy or barrel shape is best. (less air/space for you to warm up)

Show examples if you can.

If not winter weight or winter rated (show tags), then put TWO inside each other, with zippers facing opposite is just as good. (I used just that from age 11 to 23)

Demonstrate and tried by most Scouts. Use the same two from the race.

None of this needs to be expensive.

Dense (blue) foam pads are cheap. Some even have that reflective foil (groundsheet) layer on them now too for added heat retention. (2 in 1, scout house carries them)

Your breathing holes (mouth and nose) **MUST** remain OUTSIDE the sleeping bag. (or you fill it with wetness)

Don't hide your head in your bag.

## Water

We must have water.

Snow can be melted, but must be boiled to be clean and usable.

Storing water jugs in the winter, can be tricky, as it tends to freeze.

Trick – put jugs nozzle down into snowbanks, where insulation from snow keeps temperatures close to freezing, and the nozzle may not freeze at all.

Drink lots. Drink lots. Drink lots.

Dehydration is a VERY VERY common Scout problem. Starts with a headache.

But, contributes to frostbite, and windburn, as tissues have reduced function. Also a contributing factor to hypothermia.

They don't think about it in the winter as much, as they're not running around in the heat – but the dry air draws out more moisture.

## Ice Rescues

These are fun to practice, the field book has some excellent ideas on this.

Bring some standard camp items, to show how they can help. (empty water jug on the end of a rope, scout staves, etc)

Run a relay using human ladder to see which patrol can get the furthest across the floor without losing connection.

## Ice Types/Thickness

Hard to demo, without being on ice, or having access to a hole driller.

Handbook has some nice specs to quote/discuss.

Hiking with ropes between you, not in groups, etc.

## Frostbite

Keep an eye on each other, look for waxy white. (bring a white candle, it really does look like that)

Handbook.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frostbite>

## Hypothermia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypothermia>

Handbook.

## Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon\\_monoxide\\_poisoning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_monoxide_poisoning)

We discuss it because people think about taking gas-powered heating devices into shelters in the winter, and it can be deadly.

Still a helpful discussion around the home and community.

We've also talked about this list as part of the Winter Scouting badge, and there are many online resources to refresh your memory.

- wet clothing
- hypothermia
- frostbite
- snow blindness
- windburn
- dehydration
- carbon monoxide poisoning
- wind-chill factors

We discuss not because they are scary topics, but more as things that can be easily avoided if we are aware of them. Also, how to notice, sense, and deal with them, as they can just as easily happen in and around your own home/school at times outside of camp.

**Set some EXPECTATION on PLs to keep an eye on patrol and each other.**

## Food

Winter camping food, and menu preparation by the Scouts, is very hands-on. They can eat what they like, but must prepare and clean up afterwards.

Advice to give them is plenty of liquids, preferably warmed. (like Hot-OJ, warmed Tang is the best first thing in the morning!)

Hot consistent items that go into a bowl, are great. Stews, chilli, soups, oatmeal. Items like a hamburger, are cold before you get them near your lips.

Make some food at a meeting, let one patrol feed the other. (they love to eat)

Say grace before you cook, and eat things while they are hot. ☺  
Sitting down is nice, but less practical in the winter.

Let each patrol plan one meal, and then bring it together as a group.

Pre-cooking some items ahead of time at home, is perfectly acceptable.  
Having an insulated juice cooler filled with a hot drink all weekend, is a great thing to encourage hydration.

Foods should be protein and fat rich, as the human body will consume them to keep warm. Normally, at least twice normal caloric intake.  
Items that will freeze, can be kept in a cooler to slow that process. But, eggs, milk, and items like that, don't fair so well.

A favourite breakfast of our Scouts is the ScMuffin.  
Pre-cooked sausage patties that need only be warmed up, a few slices of cheese from a block of cheddar, on a toasted English muffin. (folding toaster on the stove, or fire)  
Hot, quick, energy filled, little cleanup.

## Cooking

Pre-cook, make re-boilable things in ziplocks.  
Dirty dishes, need to be washed.

Keep it simple, but good.

## **Washing**

Hygiene is just as important in the winter.

Spare hot water, to wash hands, face, and brush teeth. It doesn't take much, and you can brush teeth from a mug of hot water.

Volunteers to do dishes in the winter, are easy to find... who doesn't want to have their hands in nice hot soapy water... ☺

## **Playing**

Don't play in the snow.

Once wet, hard to dry out.

But, dry winter air, will dry clothing when hung properly.

Ziplocks around dry socks on dry feet, back into wet boots, are better than nothing.

## **Site Selection**

Sites should be selected based on the weather expected, wind directions, etc.

Tarps may still be required to keep snow off gear and cooking areas, and may need to be pitched at a steeper angle, to get snow to slide off.

Use natural shelter and trees to block cold winds.

Build snow walls, if there are excesses of snow, and you want a wind break.

## **Moving Gear, Sleds, Toboggans**

Sleds can be of any type or design.

Whether "Klondike" dogsled types, or toboggans. Cheaper plastic ones that haven't been "cold-tested", should be. (or fear cracking and breaking when needed)

Pelican boats, make some great 6' plastic sleds that are cheap, and have side tie-down ropes. Home Hardware had or could order them in 2011.

To load a sled properly, one method is to lay a tarp on it first, place gear, wrap with tarp, and then tie up as one large package, to the sled where you can.

Then it has the advantage of staying wrapped as one bundle, even if it rolls over.

Sounds crazy, but it works.

## ***Demo/Game Idea***

Drag out the gear you need for each patrol, give them a sled, and have them pack it as best they think they can.

Then send them out to race around the perimeter of your meeting place.

See what makes it back... ☺

This also lets you discuss after how to properly pack it, plus how not to get sweaty and wet, as they stand there panting and dripping, because invariably they run fast and hard, and come back inside covered in snow.

If you have large snowbanks in the city, it's even better, as that challenges them to get the sleds up and over obstacles.

Sleds can be pre-packed before a camp, where vehicles/trailers allow. They're then slid out, and ready to hit the trail.

# Winter Camp Suggested Kit List

## 1. **First Rule: PLEASE PACK YOUR OWN GEAR!**

This way YOU will know what has been packed, and maybe even where it is located.

Mom/Dad are encouraged to help, but **may NOT do it for you.**

2. Please keep in mind we will be spending most of our time outside.
3. A good habit we can learn, is to pack clothing in the large Ziploc (or similar type) bags. Things will always stay dry, and this also helps keep clothes sorted, dirty from clean. It also doesn't hurt to toss in an extra bag or two, just in case particular items become moist or dirty. You can also sit on the Ziplocs as you are closing them, and get all of the air out of the clothes.
4. Please label everything, with your name or initials. For those hard to label items, like cutlery, or cups/bowls/plates, use an etching tool. (I have one you can borrow)
5. We will be hiking in, so arriving self-contained and ready to go (ie: backpack/bag with everything on or in it) is necessary. No loose objects, **no garbage bags.** Patrol gear, will be hauled by us as well, on toboggans.
6. If you don't have a backpack, we have some Troop loaners you are most welcome to borrow, just ask. Same goes for extra sleeping bags, or a ground foam pad.  
**OR** – use a duffle/hockey bag with EVERYTHING in it, strapped down to a sturdy plastic sled you can drag is equally practical, as long as you help carry group gear as well.

As we go through the rest of the kit list, we try to **Be Prepared** for any circumstances. Some items may look odd, or seem redundant, but better to bring home some extra clean socks, than to have wet cold feet. (sweat-laden socks, are the #1 cause of cold feet – IF YOUR FEET ARE COLD, put on a hat and CHANGE YOUR SOCKS.

The clothing listed below, is in **ADDITION** to appropriate layers of clothing worn for arrival on Friday night.

As previously discussed, multiple thin layers, is the way to stay warm, and allow for adjustments in temperature. Further, changing the layers closest to the skin, to remove things like wet (sweaty) socks, is the best way to stay warm!

Take them OFF, put DRY ones on, and hang the WET ones up to dry. (things will still dry, in the winter)

**Value Village or Good-Will stores, can be an excellent and CHEAP source of camp clothes.**

CLOTHES: 2 pairs of underwear  
2 pairs long underwear (or tight pyjamas will work too, right next to the skin)  
6 (or more) pairs of thin nylon/synthetic socks (dress socks) to wear next to the skin  
4 (or more) pairs heavy woollen socks for over the dress socks  
Extra socks (you can never have too many)  
3 t-shirts, or undershirts  
3 pairs of long normal or fleece pants (no jeans or 100% cotton, they don't wick sweat)  
3 Long Sleeved Shirts (turtle necks are best if you have)  
2 Sweat shirts/sweaters

OUTER WEAR: Water repellent long winter coat (preferably with hood)  
Cheapie rain poncho that folds up small (just in case!!) or bring a garbage bag  
Water repellent outer pants (snow pants are ok, but not best, and only if water shedding)

Gators are best (nylon x-country skiing outers that cover boots up to knees, and have drawstrings to keep snow out of boots)  
Kamik-style winter boots (waterproof outers, with a warm separate inner liner)  
Spare boot liners (if you already have them)  
2 Warm winter hats (or balaclavas) (one kept dry for sleeping in)

- 2 Scarves or neck warmers (ideal)
- 3 pairs of warm mitts, with water repellent exterior.
- 2 pairs of thin gloves to wear UNDER mitts
- 1 pair insulated leather work gloves (*these seem to be useful, working in the bush when we don't want to wreck up a nice pair of winter gloves*)

TOILET ITEMS: Toothbrush and paste

EATING UTENSILS: Unbreakable –plate, bowl, cup, knife, fork, and spoon. (see labelling note above)

Please put in a Mesh laundry Bag  
Dishes will be hung to dry in the bags

BEDROLL: Winter Sleeping bag (or two placed one inside the other)  
Dense Foam ground mattress (the sturdier blue or yellow ones)  
Heat reflective ground sheet (optional but good to have, another blanket under you, is an alternative)

Other Items: Camp uniform is our group Necker.  
A flash light, with extras batteries (and KNOW where it is)  
Your personal survival kit (details below)  
Wide-mouth canteen or water bottle  
Camp knife if you own one  
Sunglasses or Skiing goggles  
Some Heavy-Duty ziplocks that would fit over your feet (large freezer ones work)

Each patrol will need a decent length wood or aluminum toboggan, to haul their patrol gear in on... so please check your garages and locate one for your patrol. It should have ropes around the edge, as well as a tow rope on the front. (we can add a braking rope on the back)

**ANY MEDICATIONS: ARE TO BE PUT IN A ZIPLOC BAG AND CLEARLY LABELED WITH INSTRUCTIONS. PLEASE GIVE TO SCOUTER UPON ARRIVAL TO CAMP.**  
**Similarly, any special needs, sleeping habits, or other concerns, can be jotted down and handed in at arrival time.**

**Equipment Sources:** Both the Scout Shop, and Canadian Tire or Wal-Mart's camping sections, have good options, for anything you don't already have. Feel free to call the Scout Shop before driving down, and ask questions... they are very helpful there, and carry everything you could ever need.  
(905) 528-4662 (*they're also generally cheaper, and the profits benefit Scouting*)

Value Village, and similar stores, as mentioned above for extra clothing at cheaper prices.

***Questions? –Ask!***  
***There are no stupid questions.***

# Emergency/Survival Kit

It is a **requirement of this camp**, that each Scout have their kit with them, so please finish and bring them. Make sure you have it present, at the meeting prior to the camp, with the rest of your gear. The size of the box, is dependant of course on the size of the items, but could be something as simple as a small sandwich size Tupperware. (with your name on it of course, and labelled for what it is; ie: "EMERG KIT - JOHNNY SMITH)

Here is a fairly standard list of suggested items, which you may of course enhance if you wish: (it's an all-season list)

Emergency food (bouillon cubes, soup packets, or the like)  
Energy snack (sealed granola bar, or the like)  
Matches (waterproofed, or in container)  
Compass  
Insect repellent (you may want to remove this item in the winter)  
Small folding knife  
Fishing line  
Fish hooks/lures  
Thin wire (3m, snare wire)  
First aid adhesive tape  
Sealed Gauze Pad  
Pencil/Paper  
Aluminum foil (3 sheets square - or more, folded up small and flat)  
Water purification tablets  
Whistle  
Good fabric adhesive bandages  
Mirror (or other reflective signal device, like an old CD)  
Fire-starter material or candle  
Reminder notes, on what to do when lost. (below)

Questions? -Ask



## I am Lost... What do I do?

- \* Stay calm and relax. Someone will come to find you.
- \* Do not climb a tree or hide under logs, STAY IN ONE PLACE
- \* If you are with a friend or pet, stay together
- \* Keep warm and dry. Cover your head and zip up your jacket  
You can use a garbage bag to make a poncho  
Do not lie on bare ground. It will make you colder
- \* Protect yourself from wind and rain by finding a sheltered place near a clearing
- \* If night comes, make a survival shelter or bed to keep you off the ground and keep you dry
- \* Make a small fire if it is a cold night
- \* Put out something bright for searchers to see such as a bandana or coloured garbage bag
- \* Make 3 signals - fires, whistles or yells - to alert searchers to your location
- \* Wild animals don't like to be near people. If they sense you are near they will run away.
- \* If you hear a noise, make a noise back. If it is an animal it will run away. If it is someone searching for you then they will find you.
- \* Remember, Mom and Dad won't be made because you are lost, they will be very happy to see you again.
- \* Sing, whistle or tell yourself a story if it helps to make you feel better.
- \*\*\* Always S.T.O.P. - Stop, Think, Observe and Plan. Decide on a plan and stick to it. If the last know location is within a reasonable distance, try to go back to it but if you can't find any recognizable landmarks then stay put.