



LAYERS of WINTER

by Sherry Ballou Hanson



L.L. Bean's Ascent Primaloft Hooded Jacket keeps out the winter chill.

stop. But you don't want to start out chilled and have your body cooling down instead of maintaining core temperature either. Start by wearing two layers. But bring along a third layer for the end of your outing to protect against frostbite and hypothermia.

For less active pursuits, such as hunting and ice fishing, you need a warm hat and mittens or gloves, in addition to an insulated coat and pants, with good layering underneath to maintain body heat.

Pay attention to fit. A jacket that is too tight may not allow the insulation to move as much as needed to keep you warm. If a garment is too baggy, its breathability may be lost.

Plan ahead and be prepared. You never know what Old Man Winter has in store. ❄️

Don't stop enjoying the outdoor life when winter wraps its cold hands around you. The latest technology in outdoor garments will keep you toasty and dry. Remember to dress in three layers for ultimate comfort in the field.

Layer 1: Basis of warmth

Most people over dress for active outdoor winter activities like running, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing and end up sweating, chilling rapidly when they stop. The purpose of a base layer is to wick chill-inducing moisture away from the skin.

Cotton has long been a staple for base layers, but it absorbs moisture. Once you begin to perspire, you won't be able to wick the moisture away, resulting in rapid chilling once you stop moving.

Brent Vanni, an L.L. Bean developer, suggests wearing synthetics such as polypropylene or polyester, silk or wool. Yes, wool! This old favorite is popular once again, especially in base layers.

"It is naturally odor resistant, so it doesn't need the anti-microbial treatment like the polyesters," said Vanni, "and it provides superior warmth."

If you remember wool as the scratchy sweater you wore in grade school or the hat that made your head itch and sweat, you might want to give this natural product another shot. L.L. Bean has introduced the Cresta Wool Base Layer, offered in mid- and lightweights.

Layer 2: Middle management

It's the insulating peanut butter in your outdoor garment sandwich. The middle layer goes over your base and provides insulation while still allowing moisture to escape. A technique called zoning is popular in middle layer clothing, according to Vanni.

"It's basically using thicker and/or warmer insulations and sometimes different fabrics in specific places in the jacket, such as throughout the core, under the arms and down the sleeves," he said. The zoning technique also is used with stretchy materials or highly breathable fabrics, which are common for clothes for more vigorous sports like cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. But garments that combine stretch across the back and shoulders with a breathable material under the arms are highly versatile and adapt to most active outdoor activities.

Polartec offers a high-pile fleece that is warm, yet packs down small, something not available in the earlier generations of fleece products, which were warm but took up a lot of space in a daypack.

Layer 3: Gimme shell-ter

Come rain, sleet or snow, you need a lightweight jacket to protect you from the elements. Look for a windproof and waterproof shell that breathes, often vented under the arms.

Gore-Tex is still a leader in outdoor wear and has incorporated stretch into their Proshell fabrics. They're durable, waterproof and breathable, yet stretch to accommodate movement. Polartec's new Power Shield Pro fabric also combines weather resistance and breathability with stretch.

If you heat up too much, take it off. Layering also gives you flexibility and variety when weather and conditions change during your outings.



"I always have a hooded PrimaLoft jacket with me to put on when I stop my activity," said Vanni. PrimaLoft is synthetic insulation engineered for warmth, dryness and compressibility. It's also soft. You'll find it in

outerwear by popular brands such as L.L. Bean, Cabela's and The North Face.

Dress for success

There is more than one way to dress for success in the wintry outdoors.

Understanding how layering works and a little preparation will allow you to run, ski, snowboard or snowshoe in relative comfort. Ditto for slower-paced activities like ice-fishing or still-hunting.

"Look for clothing that meets the needs for your end use," said Vanni. "If you are headed out in a snowstorm, a waterproof yet breathable outer layer is a must; for an afternoon of Nordic skiing, wear something lightweight that breathes well."

Dressing for cold-weather outdoors activities is easy as 1-2-3 (layers).

For more physically demanding activities like a cross-country skiing or snowshoeing, where you create more body heat, layering is critical. You don't want to pour sweat during the activity and end up freezing when you

Five ways to play it safe

1. Fingers, toes, ears and face are especially vulnerable to cold weather. The American College of Sports Medicine warns that if the temperature is below freezing, ice crystals can form on your skin or the tissue underneath. Intense shivering is a warning sign and will be followed by a drop in body temperature, inability to perform complex tasks, slurred speech and confusion.
2. Wear light-colored outer garments and a reflective bib or vest if you are on the road running or snowshoeing along the shoulder.
3. Don't go so far out in the backcountry that you are too fatigued to make it back.
4. The body cannot regulate hydration as well in cold weather, according to the ACSM. Close to 95 percent of hypothermia cases result when people are not sufficiently hydrated before going out for their activity. Fluid consumption during exercise is important not only to replenish fluid lost from perspiring, but also fluid lost from the air you exhale. So start out well hydrated and carry water if you will be gone for an extended period.
5. And remember, you can always take off a layer, but you can't put one on if you don't have it. Be prepared.

