

The MacScouter -- Scouting Resources Online

Winter Camping & Hypothermia

Some Snow Camping Rules

SHIRTS

The outer shirt or jacket should be of a material that will stop wind and shed snow. Some slick synthetics work well.

PANTS

As with shirts, the outer pair of pants should shed snow and block wind. Some types of ski-pants do both well.

Problem with wind-resistant synthetic outer layers (save the most expensive, such as Gore-Tex) is that if they keep moisture out, then they'll keep it *in*, too. So perspiration, wicked away from the skin by the polypro/wool inner layers, cannot escape. At the outer layer, where it's coldest, that moisture comes close to freezing (if it doesn't in fact), and (either way) progressively blocks subsequent perspiration from escaping. Result: Damp clear through. If one cannot afford the \$80-400 per garment for Gore-Tex, next best is to go with a blend of synthetics and natural fibers that'll cut the wind and let moisture pass in both directions. I prefer 60-synthetic- to-40-natural blend, but 65-35 has proponents. If one is properly layered, it's perfectly feasible to be comfy while the outer surface is at or below freezing. Vapor pressure will force perspiration to the outer surface of the outer garment, where it freezes and can be brushed off. Snow from the outside won't melt, and it too can (and must) be brushed away. When this is so, it doesn't really matter what the material is, so long as snow doesn't adhere when brushed, and moisture passes through. I have been perfectly happy in outer shells of 50-50.

The problem with ski-pants is that they are cut fashionably tight, whereas baggy is warmer. Again, treated "wetlock" fabrics popular for insulated skiing overpants won't let moisture escape. I go with \$35 army surplus baggy wool pants, and wear home-made 65-35 overpants (straight cut leg, draw-string waist, ankle ties (usually left untied and just tucked into Sorrels (or gaiters when the snow is deep))).

GROUND CLOTHS AND PADS

Standing all day long is uncomfortable, but sitting on snow just gets your highly vascular (big muscle) bottom wet, making you cold in a hurry. Rock may be dry, but it sucks heat even faster. I paid \$6 for the cheapest closed-cell foam pad that I could find, and cut it into 2 by 2 foot squares. Everybody carries a square on the outside of the pack, so we can flop down anywhere and sit dry and insulated during breaks on the trail. "Don't leave home without it."



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