

Clothing for Outdoor Activities

Layers: The following is the basic three-layer clothing system that is critical in managing body heat, especially in cold or wet weather. Provide this information to participants and their parents/guardians as part of the kit list for outdoor activities.

1. **Base layer:** Next to the skin (does not carry water) to insulate. Ideally this is thermal underwear (common name polypro).
2. **Middle layer:** Can be several layers of light or medium thickness, wool or fleece material, number of layers depends upon weather and individual tolerances, time of year, trip location, elevation, etc.
3. **Outer layer:** This layer protects against the elements, wind, rain, snow, plus providing protection from heavy bush. Anorak-style pullover jackets are preferable to zipper jackets (no zipper failure)

Head Protection: The major area of heat loss (50% or more) is from the head, especially in rainy or windy conditions. In addition, hats are required for protection from the sun.

1. It is prudent for participants to carry a toque made from fleece or wool at all times on outdoor activities. This piece of clothing is the most useful in preventing heat loss. The group leader must carry extra toques for the group and check frequently to make sure that each participant has their toque in hand.
2. Have all participants wear a hat with a wide brim for protection from sun-up to sun-down. Sun-visors are not acceptable. Hats can be a hazard while cooking or attending a fire.

Socks: Wool socks are preferable to cotton in any weather. Socks are very important pieces of clothing and provide a great deal of comfort to participants, protecting their feet, an area of key importance – which becomes very clear if they become covered with blisters.

Sweater: It is a good idea for each participant to carry a wool sweater or fleece of medium thickness on every outdoor trip as the basic middle layer of clothing.

Rain Gear: Should include tops and bottoms for each participant. Bright colours (red, yellow) provide maximum visibility in poor conditions, making supervision and rescue more efficient. Jackets with hoods attached are superior, as the hood will not get lost. You will get wet and sweaty in the bush, but if you wear layers and no cotton clothing you can be soaking wet and still warm even in winter conditions although you may not feel comfortable.

Quality: Try to obtain the best but each trip is unique and will require judgment as to what is an essential regarding clothing requirement.

Summary: The basic objective is to protect your group and maintain body temperatures and comfort levels. Heads, feet, necks and hands are key areas to consider. Pay attention to the type and the amount of clothing required to help your group stay warm and dry.