

The Layered Look

KEEP WARM—BE AN ONION.

BY BUCK TILTON • PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN R. FULLTON JR.

My first Scout trip into the icy heart of winter began with a visit to the Army-Navy surplus store. I bought cotton long Johns—one piece from neck to ankles—to cover me underneath. Then came an old Army wool shirt and pants. For outerwear, I bought a Navy sailor's coat, a thick wool garment that weighed almost as much as I did. I could not have made poorer choices.

At the trailhead, I was warm as an English muffin right out of the toaster. A half-hour later, I felt like a steamed clam.

Then Things Got Worse

Slugging along, overheated and drenched in sweat, I could barely move in all my heavy clothing. Yet when I removed the coat, the first Arctic blast of wind turned me into an ice cube. Back on with the coat.

I kept tugging up the trail, growing slimmer and slimmer with sweat. It soaked into my cotton underclothes, making the long Johns heavier and heavier. By the end of the day I decided cold-weather trips were for the birds—the birds that flew south every year before snow started to fall.

Of course, the real problem was I didn't know how to dress for cold weather. I didn't know that to stay warm and comfortable in the frozen outdoors means, more than anything else, to stay dry.

Cold air sucks out body heat from wet skin the way a vacuum cleaner sucks up dirt—fast. So, you should dress like an onion, with lots of thin layers. When you start to sweat, take off a layer. If you're still too hot, take off another layer. When you start to

cool off, add layers. You can stay dry and cozy simply by adjusting your layers of clothing to the temperature and your level of exercise. †



Base Layer

This is the layer next to your skin, the layer that you feel and also the most important layer.

This is the clothing that traps body heat, where layering is most important. A great insulation layering system for your top includes a synthetic (fleece or pile) vest, a tight synthetic jacket or sweater, and a heavy synthetic jacket or sweater. Wool works well for insulation, but it is heavier than synthetic materials. Some pile garments are also water-resistant, a bonus when cold air blasts across the snow. You need to make sure that your outer layers of insulation are **loose-fitted** than your inner layers so your clothing stays loose, **loose-fitting** clothes are not only more comfortable but don't provide as much warmth, either. Insulation-layer garments also should have a **full zipper** from top to bottom, so you can open them for ventilation.

Wear comfortable long underwear tops and bottoms made from a synthetic material that wicks away your sweat. Some new wool underwear also works well and feels soft on your skin. Wear thin synthetic gloves and socks, too. Stay away from cotton. It absorbs sweat and holds it uncomfortably close to your skin.

Insulation Layer

Since you can lose more than half your body heat through your head, cover it up with a thick stocking cap or insulated hat.

This is a final outer layer of weatherproof (windproof and waterproof) material. Goretex and similar synthetic materials are the best choice, because they keep wind and snow out while allowing some of your body moisture to escape. They also are relatively expensive. You can stay comfy in lower-cost windbreakers and rain jackets made of nylon. A shell layer needs to be roomy enough to fit easily over all your other layers.

Insulation for below the waist should include a pair of heavy **fleece or pile** pants or heavy wool pants. For extremely cold conditions, you may want to wear a pair of light synthetic or wool pants under the heavy ones. If you're carrying a light pair of pants in your pack, you can change into them if it gets too warm.

Winter boots should be insulated for maximum warmth. Remember to try on boots with the heavy winter socks you'll be wearing before you buy. A tight boot means your feet will not be getting as much warm blood circulating through them.

Shell Layer

The parka should have a full zipper and a big hood that will cover your head and wrap around far enough to break the wind from your face.

If it's really going to be cold, carry steel mitts for your hands.

Look for pants with zippers down the legs. These allow you to ventilate your legs, and they make it easier to pull your pants on or off. Full zippers down the leg are best, but half zippers will do.

MAKE IT YOURSELF
A good way to save money on outdoor clothing is to make it yourself. For instructions on how to make a range of garments from vests to wind pants, call the BSA Supply Division at 601-323-0732. Ask for publication No. 340410. "Onion: Cold-Weather Camping." Cost: \$9.95.

THE COST TO YOU

Sound like dressing right could cost a chunk of change? You're right. On the high end, a Gore-Tex shell can run you more than \$500; a fleece jacket more than \$150; a synthetic underwear top more than \$40.