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Proper Layering

By: Lauren Casavant

Cold Weather Running!!

Whether you want to weather the cold weather for training or for pleasure it's important to know "how to dress" for winter temperatures. Please keep in mind no two people are the same and it does take trial and error to learn what works best for you, here's what an expert says....

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How to properly "layer up" for that chilly winter activity. Each layer has a specific function you must follow a certain guide line to achieve a warm, dry experience. Starting with a trusty **base layer** (against your skin) it helps regulate your body temperature by moving perspiration away from your skin. Most active base layers are synthetic fabrics that 'wick' moisture away from your skin. You would then use an **insulating layer** to protect you from becoming cold as your base layer works to keep you dry. Your insulating layer should be mid-weight, made of a synthetic fabric or fleece, that doesn't restrict movement.

Ideally having a full zip or a pullover, gives you more options when it comes to venting and maintaining a comfortable body temperature. In inclement weather you may choose to use a **shell layer** (outer layer) to shield you from wind and rain. Pick a waterproof or water resistant breathable shells to keep rain or snow from soaking your insulating layer. Depending on the conditions you have to deal with you simply add or subtract layers as needed.

When getting ready for a winter run, remember the old saying: "If your feet are cold, put on a hat." Your winter running ensemble should be topped off with a stretchy headband or hat to retain heat lost through your head and to protect your ears, as well as stretchy gloves to avoid discomfort in your fingers and hands

Runners World 10 Tips for Running in the Cold:

1. Get Motivated

"Make a date to meet someone for a run," says Jean M., a reader in Colorado. "There's no wimping out when someone is waiting." John Stanton, the founder of the Running Room in Edmonton, Alberta, says the club's Wednesday and Sunday group runs are popular in winter, when the average high is 17°F. In January and February, the Running Room hosts the [Hypothermic Half-Marathon](#), which attracts 3,500 runners in 14 cities across Canada—even at temps as low as -40°F. "There's a big, free brunch afterward," Stanton says. "People will do anything for omelets and pancakes." Solo? "Tell yourself that you can go back inside after five minutes if it's really bad," says Patti Finke, a coach in Portland, Oregon. "Usually you stay out there." Of course, not everyone objects to winter weather. "A night run during a light snowfall is one of the most peaceful things you can experience," says Justin Lord of Kenmore, New York.

2. Arm Your Feet

To keep warmth in and slush out, run in shoes that have the least amount of mesh. If you have shoes with Gore-Tex uppers, all the better, says Mark Grandonico, president of the [Maine Track Club](#) in Portland. Wear socks that wick away wetness but keep your feet warm. Runner Joe McNulty of Philadelphia swears by nonitchy [SmartWool socks](#).

3. Get Dressed

You want to be warm without sweating so much you get a chill. "The rule of thumb is to dress as if it is 20 degrees warmer," says Maine Track Club president Mark Grandonico. "You should be slightly cool when you start." Think layers of technical fabrics, to wick sweat, with zippers at the neck and underarm area to vent air as you heat up. You'll learn your own preferences, but readers Darrell Arribas, of Cumberland, Rhode Island, and Eric Maniloff, of Stittsville, Ontario, both helped create these general guidelines. Assume you always wear gloves or mittens and a hat.

30 degrees: 2 tops, 1 bottom. Long-sleeve base layer and a vest keep your core warm. Tights (or shorts, for polar bears).

10 to 20 degrees: 2 tops, 2 bottoms. A jacket over your base layer, and wind pants over the tights.

0 to 10 degrees: 3 tops, 2 bottoms. Two tops (fleece for the cold-prone) and a jacket. Windbrief for the fellas.

Minus 10 to 0 degrees: 3 tops, 2 bottoms, extra pair of mittens, 1 scarf wrapped around mouth or a balaclava.

Minus 20 degrees: 3 tops, 3 bottoms, 2 extra pairs of mittens, 1 balaclava, sunglasses. Or, says Arribas, "Stay inside."

4. Be Seen

With limited daylight, chances are you'll be running in the dark (Alaskans, sadly, get only a few hours of dim light per day). Tall snowbanks on plowed streets make you even harder to see. Wear reflective, fluorescent gear, and don't be shy about lighting yourself up like a Christmas tree, says RW's own Ed Eyestone, who runs in snowy Utah. Says Adam Feerst, a coach and trail-race director in Denver, "I use a headlamp or carry a flashlight, less so I can see where I'm going and more so people can see me."

5. Warm up Prerun

Move around inside enough to get the blood flowing without breaking a sweat. Run up and down your stairs, use a jump rope, or do a few yoga sun salutations. A speedy house-cleaning works, too, says D. A. Reng from Kentucky. "The cold doesn't feel so cold when you're warm," says Laura Salmon of Akron, Ohio. If you're meeting a group of running buddies, don't stand around in the cold chatting before you run. "We sit in our cars," says Denver's Feerst, "waiting for one person to get out before we all get out."

6. Deal with Wind

Start your run into the wind and finish with it at your back, so the breeze doesn't blast you after you've broken a sweat. To avoid a long, biting slog, you can break this into segments, running into the wind for about 10 minutes, turning around to run with the wind at your back for five minutes, and repeating. You can also seek man-made wind protection. "When we get wind here, it can be like a hurricane," says Chuck Bartlett, the team director of Seattle's Club Northwest. "The buildings downtown block it." Protect exposed skin. "I use BodyGlide on my nose and on my cheeks to prevent frostbite," says the Canadian Stanton. Other options include Vaseline (a bit messy) and Kiehl's All-Sport Non-Freeze Face Protector.

7. Forget Speed

"Winter running is more about maintenance miles than speedwork," says Feerst. In very cold weather, look for "inversions," places that are elevated and where the air will be warmer. "Even 300 feet up, the air can be 20 degrees warmer, which makes a big difference," says Steve Bainbridge, the trails liaison for the Fairbanks, [Alaska-based Running Club North](#), the northernmost running club in the United States. Bainbridge's coldest run took place in minus 50 degree weather. "My eyelashes were freezing together," he says. If you can't run in the middle of the day when the temperatures are warmest, run twice a day, says Stanton, three miles in the morning and three miles in the evening: "That's better than doing one long six-mile run where you might get very cold toward the end."

8. Change Quickly Postrun

Your core body temperature drops as soon as you stop running. To avoid a lingering case of the chills, change your clothes—head to toe—as soon as you can. Women need to get out of damp sports bras quickly. Put a dry hat on wet hair. And drink something hot. "We go to a coffee shop after our runs, and take turns using the bathroom to change," says Grandonico. "Then we all relax with coffee and bagels." Driving to a run? Bring a thermos of green tea or hot chocolate in your car.

9. Deal with Rain

Runners in Mobile, Alabama, the wettest city in the United States, are always prepared for rain—67 inches per year, in fact. "In my car, at all times, I have a spare pair of sneakers, a running outfit, and three beach towels," says Allyson Lamey, a member of the [Port City Pacers club](#). "When it's raining, I slip my stocking feet into plastic baggies, then put on my running shoes," says Darryl Dalcerra of Lompoc, California. "The baggies keep my feet dry even when I run through puddles." Most Port City Pacers rotate pairs of shoes. If you have to dry shoes overnight, crumple up newspaper and cram it tightly into your shoes, with the insoles removed. The newspaper soaks up the moisture.

10. Go Somewhere Warm

For runners in the South who want to race close to home, winter is the only time when temperatures are moderate enough to go after a personal record, which is why Florida alone offers seven marathons in February. Not up for 26.2 miles? Other popular races include the [Los Angeles Chinatown Firecracker 5-K/10-K](#), the [Hilton Head Half-Marathon and 10-K](#), and the [MyoMed Ragnar Relay Del Sol](#) in Arizona. Or go to the [Race Finder](#) to choose your own distance and destination. What more motivation do you need?