

KEEPING KIDS COMFORTABLE, SAFE & HAPPY OUTSIDE DURING THE WINTER



**Time outside is...Growth mindset.
Movement. Mood boosting. Whole
body health. Balance. Not a screen.**

**It's just as vital for kids in the winter
as it is in the summer. Yet kids
spend, on average, less than 10
minutes per day outside. It is our
goal that by sharing what we know
and practice, we may break down
some of those barriers to getting
kids outside in the winter.**

It comes down to three main pillars:

PREPARATION

ATTITUDE

FINDING BALANCE

1. PREPARATION

Layering - Layers work together to keep your kids warm, dry and comfortable. Avoid getting too hot or too cold by dropping or adding layers as needed. There are four layers to think about:

1. **Base Layer** - this next-to-skin layer goes on first. Its job is to wick away sweat from the skin so that you'll stay dry and warm. In the colder months, top and bottom base layers are necessary. They are usually made of merino wool or synthetic fabrics like polyester or nylon. Cotton dries slowly when wet, so this should be avoided. This layer should fit snugly.
2. **Mid Layer** - this layer is slightly thicker and warmer than the base layer and includes vests, fleece, and light-weight zip jackets. These should also fit snugly in order to layer under a warmer outer jacket.
3. **Insulation** - the next layer is a puffer jacket made of down or a synthetic down. To be used in very cold temps, this is the first layer to come off when kids are increasing their body temperature through outdoor exercise and/or hiking.
4. **Outer Layer** - this final layer protects against wind, rain, and cold. This layer is waterproof or water resistant and should be large enough to fit comfortably over the base and mid layers. Keep neck covered with a balaclava or neck gaiter. Choose mittens over gloves and always bring a backup pair, since they get wet easily.

Managing Layers

- Start out slightly chilled before physical activity. Kids will warm up quickly and can add layers as needed. This will also help avoid sweating, which can lead to wet base layers.
- As soon as kids stop moving, add a layer to keep body temperatures at a comfortable level. It's hard for them to warm back up once they get cold!
- Put on an outer layer as soon as it starts to rain or becomes windy. This will keep the under layers dry and protect your child from getting cold.
- Switch layers as often as needed. In the winter, adding or removing layers happens frequently.
- Trust kids when they tell you they are getting hot. The ultimate goal is to let them manage layers on their own. Empower them to decide what they need.
- School to outdoor clothing transitions - wear bottom base layer under sports shorts. This makes it easier to pull off shorts and put on snow pants after school.
- Stop moving = put layers on. Keep the heat.

Clothing Care

- What to invest in - quality base layer, outer layer, boots.
- Mid layers can be thrifted and/or less expensive.
- Extend the life of your outdoor clothing by following washing instructions and washing less frequently.
- Washing wool - delicate wash and air dry to extend the life of your wool layers.
- Waterproofing - Nikwax (find at [REI](#)) wash/spray at the beginning and end of the season.
- Washing down - there is a down specific wash by Nikwax. Wash down jackets at the beginning and end of winter. If they get damp, toss in the dryer with tennis balls.
- Wool socks can be worn multiple times before washing. Darn Tough socks have a lifetime warranty. Dry on low.

Winter Emergency Kit

- Space blanket
- Hand warmers
- Extra gloves
- Extra wool socks
- Headlamp
- Calories (sugar to increase body heat)
- Electrolyte tabs (sugar, calories, salt)

Food for Cold Weather

- Kids will burn more calories in the winter and will need extra snacks for extended time outdoors.
- Snack ideas: cereal bars, dried fruit, nut butters, sandwiches, hardboiled eggs, protein bars, dried cereal, cheese.
- Anything water-based may freeze, so snacks like applesauce are not good options in the winter.
- Hot beverages, like tea and hot chocolate will help to keep kids warm in the extreme cold.
- Electrolytes are equally important in the cold months as they are in the warm months. Kids will sweat in the cold, depleting sodium and minerals in the body. These are replenished with electrolyte drinks and/or tabs. Nuun tablets are great to put in water bottles.
- Carbohydrates and simple sugars will help to increase body heat.
- If energy levels are sinking and/or kids are starting to feel the cold, it is a good time for a snack.
- Low fuel levels can also affect mood. Offering regular snacks during extended time outdoors will keep kids energized, happy, and willing to stay out longer.

2. ATTITUDE

- You set the tone. If you remain calm, confident and positive, your kids are more likely to follow suit.
- When looking at weather, it's really important to look at wind chill. Build up endurance over time, starting with 30 minutes and gradually increase the time. If it's under 10 degrees, staying out for a maximum of 30 minutes is enough. This is when you'd want to have a balaclava and all of the extra layers of clothing. If kids are moving and fueling adequately, they can last hours outdoors.
- Before setting out, go over the layering that happened (section 1) and ensure the kids that they are ready. This can be casual, but it should be upbeat and instill confidence in the kids and in yourself.
- Internal vs. external rewards - try to move away from bribery and move towards goals. Ex. "When we reach treeline, we will have a hot chocolate break". An easy external reward is inviting your kids' friends along. The ultimate goal is for your child to be internally motivated to stay outdoors (they start to make the connection between outdoor time and feeling good) and to recognize what their external motivators are (time with friends, etc). Kids will learn that time outside is something they look forward to!

- Life is not supposed to always be easy. Overcoming challenges is beneficial for self confidence, personal growth, and learning how to persevere.
- Inevitably, there will be more challenges to keep kids outdoors in the winter. When these arise, validate their feeling and use redirection to keep them going. Ex. “This is hard right now, but I know that you will get through it. Can you help me pick out the best sled on this hill?”
- Redirecting - if a child is focused on a challenge and struggling to move through it, acknowledge the challenge and then redirect as a way to encourage them to move past it. Offer kids a leadership role, a preferred activity, or ask for their help with something. This will shift their cyclical thoughts to something new.
- Celebrate victories when kids work through challenges outdoors. Stay process driven, working through a hard moment, then reminding them of that of success during a future difficult moment. Acknowledge the outing and reflect on what your child did and how well they managed a tough situation.
- Ways to make hikes more appealing - tracking animals, climbing rocks, scavenger hunts, trail challenges.

3. BALANCE

- Screen time - we can help to provide balance and have honest conversations around moderating screen time use.
- Car rides - make the trip part of the adventure. Audiobooks and podcasts are great for car rides. The Cloud Library app offers free audiobooks as long as you have a library card. Public transportation is another great option, which kids love!
- If you know that you have a busy schedule with no capacity to plan outdoor adventures with your kids, finding outdoor programming is a great option.
- Schedule regular outdoor time into a child's day. Kids will quickly understand the routine and expectation.
- Seek out outdoor challenges or make your own. Use guidebooks, maps, trail challenges offered by local organizations.
- Build a community. Most kids are more excited about time outdoors if it involves other kids. Schedule outdoor time with other families or host play dates.
- Teach healthy coping strategies that don't involve a screen. "Downtime" can be: reading, drawing, music.

RESOURCES

- [GearJunkie](#) - outdoor gear reviews and news
- [Nuun tablets](#) - electrolyte tablets
- [Oaki rain suits](#)
- [Patagonia capaline base layers \(for non wool\)](#)
- [Oaki rain bibs](#)
- [Bogs winter boots](#) (REI member)
- Muck boots at Land's End
- [REI wool baselayers](#)
- [Hestra waterproof gloves](#)
- [Burton vent gloves](#)
- Book Recommendation: Outdoor School
- Trivia Game: Guess in 10
- Outdoor adventure programs for Maine youth - [Maine Outdoor Kids](#)
- Local trail guide and trail challenge - [Southern Maine Trails](#)

**Thanks for joining us!
For questions and more
information about our
programs, visit:**

www.maineoutdoorkids.com

www.outdoormovementproject.com

