

Winter Hike Layering Chart

FREE PRINTABLE

What to wear by temperature, plus a pack checklist with the Ten Essentials

Step 1: pick your row

Use the forecast feels-like temperature for the highest, most exposed point of your route. Windy or wet? Drop one row colder. Start slightly cold: if you feel cozy at the car, you are overdressed for the climb. No cotton on any layer that touches skin.

Feels like	Base layer	Mid and shell	Legs	Head and hands	Feet
45 to 55 F	Lightweight top	Light fleece or wind shirt (carry)	Hiking pants or leggings	Headband, thin gloves	Trail runners, wool socks
30 to 45 F	Lightweight top	Grid fleece; shell carried	Fleece-lined leggings or softshell	Beanie, liner gloves	Waterproof boots
15 to 30 F	Midweight top and bottoms	Fleece, windproof shell, puffy for stops	Softshell pants	Beanie, neck gaiter, liner plus insulated gloves	Insulated boots, microspikes if icy
0 to 15 F	Heavyweight top and bottoms	Fleece, insulated jacket, big puffy for stops	Insulated pants	Balaclava, mittens over liners	Cold-rated boots, gaiters
Below 0 F	Short, sheltered route only, or reschedule				

Snow on the trail at any temperature: add waterproof pants or softshells, knee-high gaiters and insulated waterproof boots.

Step 2: on-the-move routine

- ☐ 10 minutes in: stop 60 seconds and shed what makes you damp
- ☐ Before each climb: open zips, pull off the hat
- ☐ Every stop: puffy on within a minute, off before you walk
- ☐ Every hour: eat and drink something
- ☐ Keep breaks to 5 to 10 minutes in deep cold
- ☐ At the top: swap to the dry hat and dry liner gloves

Step 3: trip plan

Trail and trailhead	_____	Date	_____
Feels-like at top	_____	Wind forecast	_____
Sunset time	_____	Back at car by	_____
Turnaround time	_____	Who knows my plan	_____

After the hike: what to change next time

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The Ten Essentials (winter version)

Based on the National Park Service Ten Essentials list ([nps.gov](https://www.nps.gov/ten-essentials/)). In winter, none of these are optional.

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| ☐ Navigation: downloaded map, paper map, compass | ☐ Fire: lighter and fire starter in a zip bag |
| ☐ Sun protection: sunglasses, sunscreen, lip balm, hat | ☐ Repair kit: duct tape, knife or multi-tool |
| ☐ Extra clothing: puffy, shell, spare gloves, spare socks, dry hat | ☐ Nutrition: extra food you can eat with gloves on |
| ☐ Illumination: headlamp with fresh batteries | ☐ Hydration: insulated bottle (lid down), warm drink in a thermos |
| ☐ First aid: kit, blister care, hand warmers | ☐ Emergency shelter: space blanket or bivy |

Winter extras

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| ☐ Microspikes for packed snow and ice | ☐ Spare phone battery and cable |
| ☐ Snowshoes for deep, unpacked snow | ☐ Sit pad for lunch stops |
| ☐ Gaiters | ☐ Trekking poles with snow baskets |
| ☐ Phone in an inside pocket, fully charged | ☐ Puffy packed on top of the pack |

Wearing at the trailhead

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| ☐ Base layer top and bottoms (no cotton) | ☐ Beanie or headband |
| ☐ Mid layer for the temperature row | ☐ Liner gloves |
| ☐ Wool or synthetic socks | ☐ Boots laced, gaiters on if snowy |

Waiting in the car

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| ☐ Full change of dry clothes | ☐ Warm drink or extra snacks |
| ☐ Dry socks and shoes | ☐ Ice scraper and blanket |
| ☐ Towel | ☐ Bag for wet gear |

Hypothermia warning signs (CDC): shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, drowsiness. If you see them, turn around, get the person warm and dry, and call for help if they do not improve.