

14 Things for Scouters to Pack on Winter Adventures

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Be Prepared is the Scout motto. This isn't just a mentality that Scouters to instill in youth through packing lists and risk assessments (though these are both excellent practices!). Being prepared is something that Scouters need to model. One way Scouters can set a positive example of being prepared for an adventure is by having the right gear in their backpacks.

There's a great [Safety Tip on the gear youth should carry in their daypacks](#) — but it's a good idea for Scouters to carry some extras, just in case. While there's something to be said for not getting carried away and packing the kitchen sink, Scouters should think carefully about every adventure and consider what might come in handy.

Here are a few things you might want to pack for your adventures this winter:

1. **Hand warmers:** Youth should be encouraged to pack hand warmers themselves, but it doesn't hurt to have extras for those who might need them. Note that hand warmers expire—check the date on the package, and throw away any with an expiry of 2019 or earlier.
2. **Emergency blanket:** A lightweight foil blanket won't work miracles, but a couple of degrees can make a big difference in a winter emergency!
3. **Camping quilt:** For emergencies or just for some added insulation on an overnight adventure, consider a down camping quilt (which is lighter and smaller than a sleeping bag).
4. **Kneeling pad:** A closed-cell foam pad (you know, the inexpensive blue ones) can be cut into thirds or quarters to create a pad that offers excellent insulation from the snow—perfect for a trailside lunch or for roasting wieners by the campfire!
5. **Pack cover:** A pack cover's a judgement call in the winter. If conditions are forecast to stay well below freezing, snow should be shed from your pack easily enough. If there's a chance of wet snow or rain, however, you'll be glad you're set to keep your gear dry.
6. **Fire Lighters:** Getting a campfire going in the winter is more challenging than in other seasons. While every Scout and Scouters should know how to make a campfire in winter conditions, be prepared to get one started quickly if necessary—have some [Fire Lighters \(available from the Scout Shop\) handy in your pack.](#)
7. **Hand sanitizer:** Washing hands isn't as easy in the winter as at other times of year. Be as hygienic as possible and pack hand sanitizer for yourself and the group. (Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can also help get a fire started in a pinch.)
8. **Spare socks:** While everyone should carry spare socks in the winter, it's a good idea for Scouters to carry more than one spare pair. In an emergency, dry wool socks can be worn as mittens. A sock can also serve as a water bottle insulator if needed.

- 9. Water bottle insulator:** It's important to stay hydrated on any adventure, but keep in mind that the contents of your water bottle will turn to ice in winter. A water bottle insulator will give you more time to drink up.
- 10. Chocolate:** Many snacks will freeze in winter, but chocolate is a tasty, calorie-dense food that Scouts and Scouters are always happy to bite into. More calories are needed on winter adventures to keep warm—chocolate takes no preparation, and we can feel its effects quickly.
- 11. Soup packets:** Just add hot water to a packet of soup emptied in a cup for a quick and easy meal. You might plan on cups of soup for a lunch, appetizer or even a breakfast, but keep some extra packets in your backpack for emergencies.
- 12. Jetboil:** While canister stoves don't work well in very cold temperatures, a Jetboil can be an excellent way to boil up water quickly for hot chocolate, soup, tea or coffee on a winter outing. Keep the fuel canister inside your jacket on colder days.
- 13. Fly:** It's tempting to leave a camping fly behind on winter adventures, but remember that a fly does more than offer shelter from rain. Use a fly for a windbreak when winter camping. A brightly coloured fly can also be used as a signalling device in an emergency.
- 14. Headlamp:** Even if you're only planning to be out in daylight, remember that winter days are short. Be prepared to light your way if you get caught out after dark—and consider bringing more than one headlamp, so that you have one to share.