

The Three W's

A typical layer system consists of an inner "**W**icking" layer of thin material to remove moisture from the skin, a thicker middle "**W**armth" layer to trap air and provide insulation, and an outer "**W**eather" layer, a shell to keep off the wind and rain while allowing perspiration to pass through.

Wicking Layer

- Thin polypropylene ("poly-pro") underwear.

Warmth Layer

- Synthetic, wool, or non-cotton shirt
- Fleece or wool top
- Optional sweater to go immediately over underwear

Weather Layer

- Breathable or waterproof shell.
- Windproof shell to go over the warm wear in dry, windy conditions.
- Down or synthetic-insulation-filled garment in camp and during rest stops in cold weather.
- If the weather is wet as well as cold, another pile or fleece jacket could be substituted for the down garment under the outer shell.

A general rule is to be sure that all of your clothes are loose fitting. If the clothing is tight, the outside cold will be able to seep through as the inside heat leaks out at those points, and you will not keep warm. Remember that the layer system will only work when the clothing is loose enough to trap air between the layers.

The secret to staying warm is to wear layers of clothing, control sweating by taking off a layer before you begin to sweat, and to keep out of the wind.