

# Clothing Basics

Dressing for safety and comfort.

While numerous lengthy magazine articles and blogs have been written about what one should and shouldn't wear while hiking, there's no need to overcomplicate things when it comes to dressing for a comfortable and safe hike.

Regardless of whether one is hiking in warm weather or cold weather, it is always best to dress in layers. This allows a hiker to add or remove clothing to a point where they are comfortable and where perspiration is able to evaporate readily, helping them to stay dry.

## Fabric Types

**Cotton** -- This is the most commonly found fabric in your closet. It is soft, comfortable, and practical for everyday situations. However, it is not suitable for hiking. Cotton readily absorbs and retains water leaving the hiker wet, which is a dangerous situation in both cold and hot weather. Wearing cotton socks is a particularly quick way to get blisters on the trail.

**Wool** -- Some may remember with horror the days of wearing an itchy wool sweater. Wool used in outdoor clothing today is much softer to the touch, while still retaining the fabric's many benefits. One of the nice properties of wool is that it wicks moisture away from the skin, making it an ideal fabric for socks and base layers. Even when wet, wool does an exceptional job retaining heat. This makes it particularly suitable for cooler weather. Another benefit of wool is that it does not tend to retain odors as much as synthetics do.

**Synthetics** -- Today, the majority of sports clothing is made from synthetic fabrics. Synthetics encompass a wide array of slightly different materials that are specific to a brand. These materials are good at pulling moisture away from the skin and through itself where it can evaporate in the air.

**Fleece** – Fleece can be tightly woven to provide greater wind protection or knitted loftier for additional warmth. Many environmentally-conscious hikers enjoy fleece since companies frequently recycle old plastic bottles to create this fabric.

See the next page for a checklist of what clothing to consider wearing/bringing on a hike.



## Basic Clothing Checklist

Note: none of the clothing, but especially the base layers, should be cotton.

### Warm weather

- Wicking underwear, bottoms
- Wicking shirt/t-shirt
- Quick-drying, breathable shorts or pants
- Socks
- Trail shoes or hiking boots
- Light weight, wind-blocking jacket
- Breathable rain jacket and pants
- Hat
- Extra pair of socks (in pack)
- Fleece jacket (in pack)
- Extra wicking shirt (in pack)
- Long underwear (in pack)

### Cold weather

- Wicking long underwear, bottoms
- Wicking t-shirt
- Wicking long-sleeved shirt
- Quick-drying, breathable pants
- Socks
- Trail shoes or hiking boots
- Mid-weight wool sweater or fleece
- Breathable rain jacket and pants
- Heavy-duty insulating layer such a down jacket or a waterproof/breathable shell depending on expected temperatures
- Breathable gloves or mittens
- Warm hat that covers the ears
- Extra pair of socks (in pack)
- Extra long underwear (in pack)
- Extra dry shirt (in pack)



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