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Helpful tips to enjoy the great outdoors all winter

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Winter is a beautiful time for outdoor fitness, but frigid fingers and feet can quickly ruin the fun.

The Adventure Chicks and Dayton Hikers are two local groups of outdoor enthusiasts that don't let frosty temperatures keep them indoors.

"Winter is the best time to hike in Ohio," said Vodge Held of the Dayton Hikers. "Vision is extended – no leaves – and no bugs in winter and, oh, that inner warmth when moving."

Dayton Hiker Amanda Lewis is motivated by her fellow hikers regardless of chilly temperatures.

"We show up for each other and celebrate the heck out of woody trail fellowship," she said.

Preparation can go a long way toward keeping you safe and warm, whether you're hiking, sledding or skating through the season.



A little preparation goes a long way toward enjoying the outdoors all winter. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Layer up

When dressing for cold weather, it's important to remember the three Ws of layering.

It starts with the wicking layer – the base layer.

"Choose a thin synthetic fabric like nylon," said Andy Niekamp of the Dayton Hikers. "It carries moisture away from your skin and dries easily."

Then the warmth layer.

"The warmth layer is your middle layer, choose fleece, nylon or wool," Niekamp said. "This insulating layer works by trapping air in spaces that hold body warmth."

The weather layer is the outermost layer.

"It protects you from the elements like snow, rain and wind," he said. "This layer

is typically synthetic fabric and should be waterproof and breathable."

"When winter hiking, I wear a pair of rain pants over my pants for extra protection against the elements, especially wind," Adventure Chick Sherrie Armistead said.

Sock selection is also very important.

"Avoid cotton socks," said Jennifer Suel of the Adventure Chicks. "Choose wool socks for warmth and breathability. If it's a longer hike, pack an extra pair in the event your feet get wet or damp."

The right material makes all the difference.

"Dress in lightweight layers that aren't cotton," said Adventure Chicks Michelle

Forshaw. "Wool base layers are great. All the layers need to wick moisture, and I second wool socks."

Gear up

Don't be fooled by cool temperatures and cloudy skies.

"Hydration is still important," said Justin Border of the Dayton Hikers. "Feelings of thirst may not be as prominent as during a hot summer day, but you still need to replenish water loss from sweat and keep muscles energized. Make it a point to take a drink every 10-15 minutes, even if you're not thirsty."

Sunscreen and sunglasses are also important in the winter, especially with the reflective nature of snow. Dayton

Hiker Andy Bergeron also suggests applying a thin layer of Vaseline on your cheeks to protect against wind.

Awareness is key.

"Always remember to check the weather forecast before heading outdoors," Niekamp said. "Know before you go so you will know what weather conditions to expect."

Beyond the winter wardrobe, there might be a few items you might want to bring along.

"Trekking poles for muddy, slippery conditions and Yaktrax, or other traction aids, can be really helpful," said Debbie Barry of the Adventure Chicks.

When it comes to winter weather, it's all about perspective.



Resist the temptation to bundle up like Nanook of the North. Exercise generates heat, and if you start to sweat, you'll get cold when that sweat dries. Instead, dress in layers. Start with a thin synthetic layer to wick sweat. Avoid cotton. Pull on a wool or fleece layer next, and top it off with a waterproof, breathable outer layer. If it's really cold, you might want a face mask or scarf to warm air before you breathe it in.



Layering can be the key to enjoying the great outdoors all winter.

"Reframe your perspective," said Scott Thompson of the Dayton Hikers. "Instead of dreading the cold, find the joy in it."

Winter weather adventures

Whether you're heading out on the trail or looking for a practical holiday gift idea, local outdoor enthusiasts share a few of their must-haves.

- Trekking poles
- Yaktrax or other traction aids
- Hand warmers
- Wool socks
- Wool hat and gloves, silk liners for gloves
- GPS device
- Waterproof insulated hiking boots
- Day pack
- Personal care items like lip balm, sunscreen and tissues