

Winter training can bring solitude and beauty to your weekly exercise routine. However, it does take some extra planning and gear to keep your runs fulfilling and enjoyable through more extreme weather.

What Should I Wear?

It's important to have the proper equipment for winter running. Everything from your head to your feet should be covered in some kind of moisture-wicking fabric. This is not the time to wear your cotton hoodie and wool gloves. You need fabrics that are going to wick away moisture from your body.

Cotton and other similar materials don't evaporate your sweat fast enough. If you wear too much cotton while running, your clothing can become cold and wet. This is a great way to get hypothermia.

Here is a comprehensive list of all the clothing you'll need to brave the weather outdoors.

1. Baselayer

Merino wool wicks moisture the best and stays the warmest.. Buy several. Look into buying at least one synthetic layer with a hood. *Synthetic baselayers are a less expensive option – try the Joe Fresh tops and bottoms at Superstore for only 12.00! - N*

2. Jacket

This should not be confused with a winter coat. Your jacket should be a wind and water resistant shell coat with a little bit of lining to keep you warm. When you're running—except in extremely cold temperatures—heavy winter coats are unnecessarily warm and bulky. Your core can generate more than enough warmth to keep you toasty with just a baselayer and shell in most weather. *I wear a mid weight layer (MEC kids Mistral top) under my jacket as I don't generate enough heat on my own to stay warm! I would rather be too warm and be able to peel off a layer than too cold.- N*

3. Running Tights

This is winter running's greatest invention. Learn to love them. Tights are the single most versatile piece of clothing in your winter running arsenal. They are thin enough to keep you cool in the fall, but tight enough to keep you warm in the winter. This is due to the magic of compression. Compression means more blood flow in the thighs. The result is warmth. *Tight ankles keep snow from getting inside your pant legs and wider pants will blow around and can cause your legs to "tangle up"!* - N

4. Wind-Resistant Pants

There are some situations where running tights alone won't cut it. When it's really cold or really windy, wearing tights can feel like you're wearing fish nets. You may want a pair of winter running pants to go over your tights. You can also wear them with long underwear. *Some ladies have bought the MEC kids Mistral pants so save some \$.* - N

5. Neck Gaiter

Even if you wear a hat and a jacket with a collar, there is a lot of uncovered real estate between those items that is pretty sensitive. Neck gaiters either cover just your neck, your neck and face, or your entire neck and head, depending on how much coverage you need. They're a great winter running investment. *MEC has kids' neck gaiter for 7.00!* - N

6. Face Mask

It may eventually get cold enough for you to want protection for your face. Many face masks are made for downhill skiing, not running. Runners breathe more than skiers, so if you buy a ski mask you'll end up with a face full of ice crystals when your breath freezes. A ski mask may also restrict your breathing as you get into your run and start breathing heavily.

Get something that has enough protection for your cheeks and lips, but is not so protected that it restricts your breathing. Even those old hats with the eye and mouth holes are better than most of the ski masks out there. *MEC sells an inexpensive balaclava (under 20.00) which you can pull down or up depending on how cold it is* - N

7. Hat

Hats and gloves are very important. Our bodies heat our extremities last. If you don't cover these areas, you'll get frostbite. My rule here is to use more than you'll think you'll need, because these are the easiest things to take off and store. If you opt for a neck gaiter with no head coverage, you'll want a few different kinds of hats. First, get a good wicking skull cap to go under your warm hat. Then get a nice thermal hat to go over it. It can even be wool. *Be prepared to spend 20-40.00 on a good one.* - N

8. Gloves

You don't need gigantic choppers to run outside, except in the worst weather conditions. Get something that is warm but not too bulky. You want to be able to do things like tie your shoe and adjust your clothes without taking off your gloves if possible. *Consider 2 layers – thermal on inside and wind resistant on the outside. I prefer mittens! Harder to tie shoes but my fingers stay toasty!! MEC sells stretch fleece glove/mitten for around 13.00 – N*

9. Goggles

Have you ever had your eyelids freeze shut? Ever gotten brain-freeze from the wind? If you run outside in the winter long enough, you may experience both of these things. You may need a pair of goggles for very cold and very windy days. *OK...I have never worn these, but a good pair of sunglasses that have some venting can keep the wind and snow out of your eyes. Consider orange lenses for higher visibility on snowy days. - N*

Don't be afraid of the weather. With this guide to winter running gear, you may find this winter to be your strongest training season yet.

Other points to consider:

Socks – Must be wicking, two thin layers can help keep feet warmer. Ankle length better than no shows to eliminate a “skin gap”.

Bra and underwear – Must be wicking! These will be soaked following a winter run.

Running shoes – Regular runners are fine. Some folks go to a trail shoe for better traction in snow. “Yak Trax” or other external gripping accessories can be put over your shoe too.

Exposed skin – Wear sunscreen and/or deep moisturizer to prevent chaffing. Lip balm is also a must!

Fuel belt – Your bottles WILL freeze in really low temps. Keep fluids at room temp prior to putting into your bottles and wear your belt under your jacket, against your body. Gels and blocks will also be affected by the cold!

Have fun out there! Niki