



Outdoor Clothing Practitioners Guide

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This Outdoor Clothing Practitioners guide has been developed by Muddy Faces to help practitioners develop an understanding of the importance of effective outdoor clothing especially in our often damp and cold climate.

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Available as separate downloads from Muddy Faces:

- **Outdoor clothing buying guide**
- **Caring for waterproof clothing**
- **Parents clothing guide - To print and distribute**

Introduction

We believe that effective outdoor clothing is the most important piece of outdoor equipment that you can have, to enable sustained play in the outdoors. The only thing that can equal it, in importance, is the **adult supervisors' and setting's attitude**, to the outdoors. Even with the smallest outdoor space, with the support of enthusiastic and supportive adults and effective clothing, children can access the outdoors for sustained periods and become involved in fascinating play and have the opportunity to connect to nature.

Clothing is as important for adults as it is for children; adults need to be comfortable to facilitate good quality outdoor play and learning. They need to be able to move easily and to regulate their temperature to remain comfortable. If this is not the case and a leader becomes cold, they can become less interactive, less alert and often cut the outdoor play short even though the children are happy and contented playing out.

In this guide we explore what layering is, what techniques can be used to make dressing your group easier, we have also created a couple of separate documents that can be added to this guide. : **Outdoor Clothing Buying Guide** and **Waterproof Clothing Care Advice**. We also have a **Dressing for the Outdoors - Parents Information Pack** that you can adapt and print and distribute to parents.

It is unlikely, that even with the best support possible, that every child will attend with suitable clothing for each session. If the majority of the groups are well equipped, and with a few central resources, those children can be kitted out and the outdoor sessions accessed by all.





Outdoor Clothing Explained

How to dress for being outdoors

People often talk about layering clothing but what does it actually mean and why is it important?

Layering clothes means that clothes can be put on and taken off, when necessary, to keep a comfortable temperature. Air is trapped in and between the different layers and helps provide insulation. Outer layers can be removed if an individual is feeling too hot, allowing the body temperature to drop to a comfortable level. By keeping a base and mid layer on, prevents the body temperature dropping too much, when outer layers are removed. A comfortable body temperature prevents sweating during physical activity, which, once the activity stops, the damp from the sweat can make you feel the cold.

Frequently children have too many or too bulky clothes on which prevents them from moving easily and detracts from their ability to participate in outdoor activities.

Getting the layers of clothing right really helps children to access sustained outdoor provision.

**Layers are base layer, mid layer, outer thermal layer and outer shell layer.
Additionally to this are the extremities head hands and feet.**

Base Layer



A base layer is the layer closest to your skin. If you are very active and get hot and sweaty, the base layer becomes very important. The base layer needs to wick moisture away from the skin to keep you dry and warm, and needs to fit snugly and retain some insulating properties.

It is not practical to expect children to have a specialist base layer. Most children will wear school shirts, cotton t-shirts or long sleeve t-shirts and maybe vests. Cotton can be an ineffective base layer if it gets wet. The group leaders,

therefore, need to be aware of children becoming too hot and sweaty so that the base layer avoids becoming wet and the individual being prone to getting cold once the activity stops. As a leader you will soon get to know your group outdoors and start to recognise the children who are more active or who sweat more easily. Cooling down before becoming too hot will avoid the base layer becoming wet.

When buying a base layer ideally avoid cotton as it retains moisture and will remain damp next to the skin. An ideal base layer is made from synthetic fabric or wool. Synthetic layers such as polyester or polypropylene, tend to be less expensive than wool and often tougher, they dry quickly and do not itch. Synthetic base layers, however, can become odorous. Wool which is now more popular as a base layer continues to insulate even when it is wet. Merino wool is particularly good and is lightweight and less itchy than traditional wools.

Quick Guide – Base layer

Who	For children	For adults
What	Close fitting T-shirt Very thin long sleeve T-shirt Vest, tights & leggings (if very cold)	Close fitting T-shirt Very thin long sleeve T-shirt Vest, tights & leggings (if very cold)
Comments	Avoid collars and hoods - any bunching and bulk around the neck and chest can be restrictive once further layers are added.	If you want to treat yourself to a great insulating base layer then we would recommend merino wool but it can be quite expensive.

Mid-Layer

The purpose of the mid-layer is to capture warmth through trapped air. Typically a mid-layer is a fleece or wool layer. A mid-layer usually has some loft to it to help trap the warm air, but is also breathable so it does not retain sweat.

Quick Guide – Mid layer

Who	For children	For adults /leaders
What	Close fitting thin fleece Sweatshirt (school sweatshirt) Jumper	Close fitting thin fleece Sweatshirt Jumper
Comments	Avoid hoods as they can add bulk around the neck and chest and make clothing tight and less restrictive.	Try a zip-neck or a full zip mid-layer to make it easy to regulate heat. Alternatively a sweatshirt will do just fine.

Insulation Layer

The insulation layer, whether natural, synthetic or down, provides extra loft and, therefore warmth, that is essential on very cold days. Ideally the insulated layer needs to fit snuggly over the mid layer allowing for movement. When the weather is dry but cold, the insulated layer can be worn without a waterproof outer layer. Material that is more breathable such as wool or fleece also allows the wind through so it is important to have an outer windproof layer either built in or added as the outer shell layer. Most waterproofs will provide this wind protection.

Quick Guide – Insulation layer

Who	For children	For adults /leaders
What	Coat Thick Fleece Jumper	Down jacket or synthetic down Thick fleece Thick hooded Sweat shirt
Comments	Most children's winter coats are a jacket system that combines an insulation layer with a shell. It is worth checking that coats are actually waterproof as they may not be.	Down has higher insulating properties but it malfunctions when wet. It also doesn't like to be washed often. Leaders often are wearing jackets in dirty and often damp conditions so washable, synthetic fabrics are normally the insulating layer of choice.

Outer Shell Layer

This item is the singularly most important layer to get right. If this is correct, then as long as you have some warm clothing underneath, irrespective of number of layers or material type, you are more likely to remain protected from the damp and cold.

Many children do not have waterproof trousers and if they do they are often thin and not very robust. It is often necessary for settings to provide waterproofs for individuals or all of their groups.

Waterproof trousers are often worn on forest school projects in all conditions just to keep out the mud and damp. Waterproof coats are often only worn when it's raining. Investment in decent waterproof trousers, by settings, is recommended.



Outer Shell- Waterproof Layer

Who	For children	For adults /leaders
What	Waterproof coat Waterproof jacket Waterproof trousers Waterproof dungarees	Waterproof shell jacket Water proof trousers or high-waisted salopette style trousers
Comments	Lots of children's coats are not waterproof, they may resist rain for a short period but over time become wet through.	Many three-in-one coats offer different layers in a single jacket that separates out. You can wear just the insulating layer, or the outer layer or wear both zipped together.

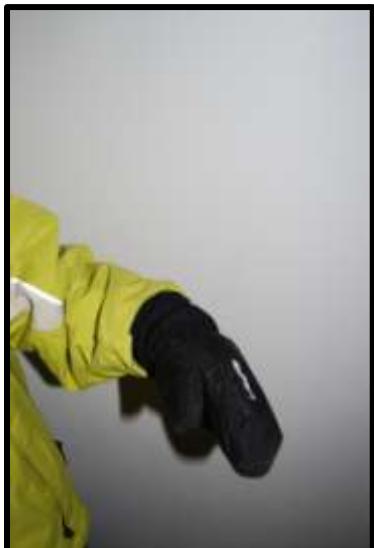
Extremities

Head

People often say that you lose most of your body heat through your head. In fact, if all parts of your body were exposed, your chest and neck would lose a lot of heat as well. The fact is, your head contains your brain and your body will try to keep it protected. As your head is often the only exposed part of your body, you will lose significant amounts of heat through it.



Hats and balaclavas are effective ways to help you stay warm and can be easily removed and stored when a person becomes too hot. Most children will have their own hats, however you need to watch out for poor insulating hats, particularly if a child may be prone to feeling cold.



Hands

Putting gloves on small children's hands can be very time consuming. Mittens are often a lot easier to put on. Mittens tend to be warmer than gloves made of the same material because fingers maintain their heat better when they are in contact with each other. Gloves increase the surface area of material in contact with outside air that leads to increased heat loss. Wool gloves and mittens can quickly become wet and cold. If possible source fleece-lined waterproof ones that aren't too bulky. e.g. TOGZ mittens

Feet - Socks

To keep feet warm wear wool, man-made fibre or fleece socks. Cotton socks will hold moisture and once damp or wet, retain the cold. If you are wearing thick socks or 2 pairs of socks, make sure your boots are not too tight. Pressure, particularly to the top of the foot, can reduce the blood supply and allow feet to feel cold. Socks need to be pulled up and not bunched inside the boot as it will make them uncomfortable. To help prevent socks riding down into your boots, make sure they are long enough to tuck trousers into. This will also prevent the bottom of your trousers getting wet and helps hold up socks.



Feet - Boots

It is important that feet do not get wet.



To help prevent feet getting wet in the snow consider gaiters or snow baffles on your trousers.

Feet can get wet by:-

Shoes or boots leaking water through to the foot.

Water or snow coming over the top of a welly or boot

Strenuous exercise causing sweating inside a non breathable boot

Getting ready

Tips to get your group ready efficiently

For many, putting outdoor clothing on, particularly with young groups can be quite an arduous task. Hopefully this section may offer some suggestions on how to get the group organised and out more speedily.

Create good communication with parents and discuss the project clothing with them. It will help to make sure that the children have the correct clothing and have practised dressing themselves for the outdoors at home. See the Muddy Faces "Dressing for the Outdoors - A Parents Information Pack" that can be printed off and given to parents.

Visual Aid - Get the children involved and ask them to create a poster (if appropriate) showing the process of getting ready for the outdoors. By discussing and drawing out the different stages it can help their understanding of what they need to do. Alternatively create a photo board or flip chart of each stage to make sure each child knows what to do at each point.

Make the process fun for you as well as them. This whole process will need to happen each time you go outdoors. Creating a song or reward system for each stage can be helpful.

Set realistic times for getting the group ready. Remember every group is different even if they are the same age. Offer rewards to encourage the children to help each other, particularly those children who are struggling. Carry out checks along the way so you know that each child is dressed appropriately for the weather.

Sequence of events – Getting a group ready to go outdoors.

1. **GO TO THE TOILET** before starting to put any outdoor gear on. This applies to both children and adults. I have, on numerous occasions, got everyone changed and realised they have not been to the toilet.

2. **Base layer** - Tuck base layers neatly into the trouser waist band (this stops any external drafts reaching the skin). Tuck trousers into socks. This helps socks stay up and stops cold air reaching the skin.
Tip: make the trousers as flat as possible by folding around the leg before you tuck them in the sock. When tucking trousers in socks, only tuck the bottom of the trouser in as when you come to bend your knee the clothing may restrict movement as it stuck down your sock.

3. **Mid layer** - for example thin fleece or school jumper.

4. **Waterproof trousers or dungarees** - if there is enough room, tuck the mid layer into the waterproof trouser or dungarees - this stops drafts.

5. **Boots or Wellies** - Ideally let all children get to this stage, before putting on the outer layer. This will prevent anyone getting too hot whilst waiting for everyone to get dressed. It gives you an opportunity to check children have the correct layers on.

6. **Outer Layer** - Once you are happy everybody has all the correct clothing on, put on your coats.

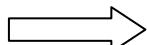
7. **Extremities** - if necessary put on hats and gloves before you go out. Sometimes it is better to put gloves on before putting on the outer layer as you can pull the glove cuffs up over the mid layer so that the end of the glove is then secured inside the outer layers sleeve.

8. **Rucksack** with a water bottle and space to put hats and gloves if they are removed during the session.

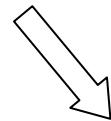
Getting ready for



Go to Toilet



**Tuck t- shirts
into trousers
and trousers
into socks**

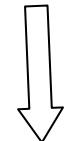


**Put on your
jumper and tuck
into your
waterproof
trousers**

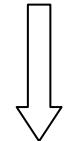
**Collect your
rucksack with
your water
bottle**



Off we go



**Put on your
boots.**



**Only put your jacket
on when you are
about to leave**



**Put your clothes
in your bag on
your peg**



For a forest school tried and tested range of waterproofs,
outdoor play, learning equipment,
free downloads to help you and your groups get outdoors.

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