



Ten Winter Running Tips

Tip 1: Safety First

Since there are many more hours of darkness during the winter, reflective apparel and safety lights will help drivers identify anyone running on or crossing the streets. Most winter running jackets and some tights already incorporate reflective material as part of their design. Supplement reflective apparel with blinking armbands or small reflective lights that clip on to the back of a hat or waistband.

Tip 2: Get Technical

The number one rule to remember when purchasing running apparel is that "cotton kills." Winter running apparel should be made of technical materials. Every apparel vendor has their own name for these fabrics, but they are all "moisture wicking" products. They will draw the moisture away from your skin as you sweat to help keep you warm and dry. These fabrics also dry much more quickly than cotton so that you have less of a chance of getting cold and chilled from wearing damp layers.

Tip 3: Layering - Top Heavy

Layering your exercise apparel is key, especially if you are going to be outdoors for an hour or more. In the winter months, weather can change quickly, which causes your body temperature to change dramatically. It is a good idea to start out with at least a base layer and a vest. As you warm up, you can unzip the vest to let some heat escape. As the temperature drops, you can change to heavier base layers or a jacket. There are moisture wicking pieces in many different weights and thicknesses that can make winter running comfortable and fun.

Tip 4: Layering - Bottoms Up

What to wear on your legs? That is a commonly asked question. There are many choices, and how sensitive to the cold you are determines when the shorts come off and the pants/tights go on. There are many different weights of moisture wicking pants, and you have a choice between tights and loose fitting pants. It is ideal to also wear moisture-wicking undergarments. Wind pants are also a good addition to the winter running wardrobe if you are working out in adverse conditions.

Tip 5: Head, Fingers, Hands & Toes

Don't forget the extremities! They are the most vulnerable area on the body. Be sure to cover your head! Over 20% of the body's heat escapes through the head. Technical pieces complete with face and neck coverings are available from many apparel vendors. If it isn't that cold but you find your ears get cold fast, try an earband. Also, most other extremities tend to get cold quickly - a good pair of gloves and socks are a must for winter running. Gloves, socks and hats made of technical fabrics can really make a winter run great!

Tip 6: The Right Shoes Can Make the Run

There are some water resistant running shoes on the market that are good, but materials that keep moisture out will also trap heat and moisture in. For longer runs, and most of the winter, your regular training shoes will be the best choice. A waterproof pair of shoes may make a good choice for the worst of days and/or shorter workouts. Be sure to have your local running specialty store work with you on your biomechanical fit. Socks can be a little thicker or taller than your summer running socks, but be sure they're moisture wicking: no cotton, please!

Tip 7: Running on Ice and Snow

It is a good idea to shorten your stride when running on ice, as smaller steps will help prevent those nasty falls. This is also a good time of year to change your training program to cover time instead of distance. For example, instead of going out for a 6-mile run, go out for an hour (if you are a 10-minute miler). During that hour, you will be running less distance but exerting as much, if not more, energy. There are also devices such as Yaktrax that you can attach to your shoes to add traction and help prevent a fall while running.

Tip 8: Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate

It may be cold but your body still needs to be hydrated. On Chicago's lakefront paths, the water fountains are turned off in the winter, so we have to find alternate watering holes. It is important during this time of year to carry your own water or sports nutrition drink. Bathrooms are also a bit of challenge to find during the winter - so plan your route accordingly. Rather than a long out and back run, a shorter route done multiple times makes it easier to have access to water, your car and/or facilities.

Tip 9: Love the Sun, But Gotta Wear Those Shades

In keeping with fighting the sun's potential damaging effects while exercising outdoors, always make sure to wear the proper eye protection. You need a good pair of running sunglasses to fight off the double hammy you'll get with the sun's rays reflecting off snow on the ground. In addition, good eye protection is a must when there is blowing or drifting snow, sleet, or rain. Some glasses come in differing tints, and are also available with lighter colored lenses, just to offer protection from wind and the elements when it is dark outside.

Tip 10: Be Prepared!

Often it's the little things that will make or break your winter run (think tissues and lip balm). Also, you never know when the weather is going to take a turn for the worst or if it might take its toll on you midway through a run. Consider bringing your ID, cell phone, bus card or money to get you back home safely in case something comes up.

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Winter Running

What to wear when it's cold, colder and coldest, PLUS ten winter running tips.

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What to Wear.

Wind, Snow, Ice?

Bring It On!

COLD

feet

wicking socks

legs

thin tights or pants

undergarments

wicking underwear

baselayer

baselayer long sleeve crew

upper body

wind vest

hands

technical gloves

head * neck * face

headband or earband

accessories

handheld water bottle

COLDER

feet

wicking socks & traction device (ice/snow)

legs

midweight tights or pants

undergarments

wind brief

baselayer

half-zip long sleeve top

upper body

wind jacket

hands

lined technical gloves

head * neck * face

wicking hat & neck gaiter

accessories

hydration waist pack

COLDEST

feet

heavy wicking socks & waterproof shoes

legs

wind pants (over tights)

undergarments

wind brief & wicking undershirt

baselayer

middle insulating top layer

upper body

lined or waterproof jacket

hands

convertible gloves or mittens

head * neck * face

fleece hat & balaclava

accessories

insulated water bottle

Still not sure what to wear? Think layers. Fleet Feet Sports can help you build a winter running wardrobe that will keep you comfortable in all conditions.