

## What to Wear With a Drysuit

Just as you can't enjoy your kayak, canoe or SUP without a paddle, you can't use a drysuit without some "accessories." Although drysuits provide an essential layer of protection for paddlers in cold water, they're not complete. Here's what else you need to wear.

**PFD.** Every. Single. Time. No discussions, judgment calls or deciding whether you need it *today*. Wear it. End of story. (Disclosure and *mea culpa*: we've been catching hell on Facebook for using a staged shot that includes a recreational kayaker wearing a drysuit without a PFD. We won't do that again in future photo shoots.)

**Undergarments.** Drysuits will keep you dry, but not warm. Beneath it, wear a thin "base" layer that covers you from ankles to neck, to wick sweat from your skin. This can be polypropylene, polyester or silk. Over that comes another full-length layer of insulation, most likely synthetic fleece or pile (e.g., Polartec or similar). If your suit has drysocks, wear warm wool or synthetic socks inside them, and pull them up over the cuffs of your fleece pants.



*What the Well-Dressed Paddler  
Wears With a Drysuit*

**Shoes.** Lots of choices, some of them dependent upon the type of paddling you do and how much walking is involved. Options include: wetsuit booties, sports sandals, water shoes, portage boots, muck boots, athletic shoes (i.e., sneakers).

**On the Hands.** When the water's cold, you need something to keep your fingers working. Neoprene gloves will keep them warm but feel clumsy. Pogies are basically mittens with holes that your paddle shaft passes through. They allow a completely natural grip on the paddle, but kind of lock you into it, creating their own brand of awkwardness.

**On the head.** A neoprene helmet or hood is the most effective way to prevent heat loss through your head, whether you're in the water or not. Wear a hardshell helmet if you're paddling whitewater or surf, with either a neoprene or fleece liner for warmth. A broad-brimmed hat provides protection from the sun on bright days, but provides no warmth if you're in the drink.

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There's plenty of opinion in all of this (except the PFD part, which is non-negotiable). We'd love to have your take on what's needed, what works, and what's best.

[More information](#) on why you need to wear a drysuit when paddling on cold water.