

AIRGEAR

**THE SIMPLE GUIDE TO
WINTERIZING
AN AIRSTREAM**



Winterizing is a topic Airstream owners love to hate

That's because many people make it unnecessarily complicated.

This guide explains 11 straightforward winterizing steps that any Airstreamer can follow, even if they have no experience.

WHAT IS "WINTERIZING?"

"Winterizing" is an annual procedure that's necessary for Airstreamers who live in cold-weather climates. If your Airstream won't endure sub-freezing temperatures for the winter months, you don't need to winterize.

The winterizing process is straightforward:

1. Drain all water from the freshwater tank and plumbing lines, and replace it with RV antifreeze to protect the plumbing system from freezing.
2. Disconnect the negative battery cable or remove the batteries.
3. Remove all food, liquids, and trash from the Airstream.
4. Put a bit of protectant on the 7-way plug end and top off the air in the tires. (Optional but recommended.)



That's it.

And here are 11 simple steps to get you there.

BEFORE YOU PROCEED

We've made two basic assumptions in this guide:

1. **You own a late model Airstream that is equipped with a winterizing kit OR, you've purchased and installed a winterizing kit.**

A winterizing kit includes a tube and a valve that attach near the on-board water pump. It makes it easier for you to get RV antifreeze into the plumbing. Most of them look something like this:



Airstream has been installing a winterizing kit in most models for quite a few years. Here's what it looks like installed on a modern Airstream:



Notice the clear, plastic tube on the left of the photo; that's the tube that you'll use. When you move the white valve to the "winterizing" position, RV antifreeze

is taken up into and through the plumbing system, to protect it during cold weather storage.

If your Airstream did not come with a winterizing kit, no problem. They are inexpensive (\$20-\$30) and you can find various brands on Amazon or a local RV retailer.

2. You plan to winterize the plumbing using RV Antifreeze (the pink stuff).

This means you will be draining all the water from your Airstream's plumbing system, and replacing it with RV Antifreeze. The antifreeze stays in your Airstream's pipes all winter and protects them from freezing.

We recommend this method instead of the air compressor method, which uses an air compressor to blow water out of the lines prior to winterizing. Although the air compressor method is also effective, using RV Antifreeze is simpler and easier, and does not require the purchase of an air compressor or blow-out plug.

STUFF YOU NEED TO DO THE JOB

- **An installed winterization kit**, if your Airstream didn't come with one.
- **Two gallons of RV Antifreeze (the pink stuff)**. This is easy to find at RV retailers and Walmart. We do not have a recommended brand, but **NEVER use automotive antifreeze**.
- **If your water heater has a tank** (most models 2021 and earlier):
 - **A socket wrench** with an extension and a 15/16" socket (pictured below)
 - **Teflon plumbing tape**
- **Dielectric grease**, included in the [AIR GEAR Maintenance Essentials Kit](#), or from a local hardware store.
- **Your Airstream Owner's Manual**. As you follow this guide, you'll need it to locate certain things on your Airstream. For example, if you don't know where your *fresh water tank drain valve* is, you'll need to look it up in the Owner's



Manual. If you can't find your Owner's Manual, you can [search for and download a PDF on Airstream's website](#).

IMPORTANT: The location of many of the items that we discuss in this guide varies greatly from year to year and model to model. You'll see those in *italics*. You **MUST** look up the locations in your Owner's Manual because most likely even your Airstream friends won't know where to find them—unless they own the same year and model that you do.

- **Bags or boxes for carrying away things** that will be removed for winter storage.



THE 11 SIMPLE STEPS

If you need more detail than this guide includes, you'll find it in the book, [The \(Nearly\) Complete Guide to Airstream Maintenance, 2nd edition](#). This is the condensed version.

Step 1. Dump the gray and black tanks using your normal procedure

Step 2. Level the trailer

Step 3. Drain all the water from the fresh water tank

Open the fresh water *tank drain valve* and let all the water run out of the fresh water tank. If you don't know where the fresh water *tank drain valve* is located, check your Owner's Manual. Typically, you'll find it underneath the Airstream, attached to the fresh water tank. A full tank will take quite some time to drain completely, perhaps more than an hour.

While you are down there, open up the *low-point drain* valves too. If you don't know where your *low-point drains* are, check your Owner's Manual. They are typically near the fresh water tank, under the Airstream—but not always.

You will find at least one drain for the hot and one for the cold water line. In some cases, there's a valve inside the Airstream and another valve outside the Airstream for both hot and cold water, and all of them should be opened.



STOP!

Before you move to the next step, if your Airstream has an internal water filter, as some models do, **remove it or bypass it now.**

Step 4. Open (turn on) all the faucets and showers and let all the water in the plumbing lines drain out of the low-point drains

All the water that's inside your plumbing system will flow out of the system and out the low-point drain.

If you have one, don't forget to open the outdoor shower faucet as part of this step.



Step 5. Drain the water heater

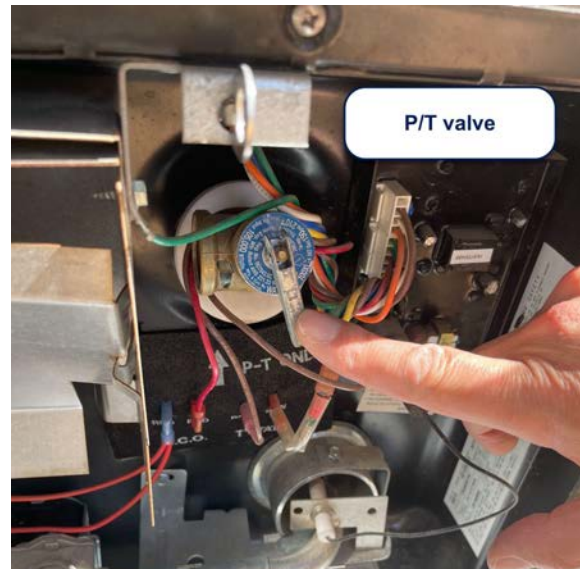
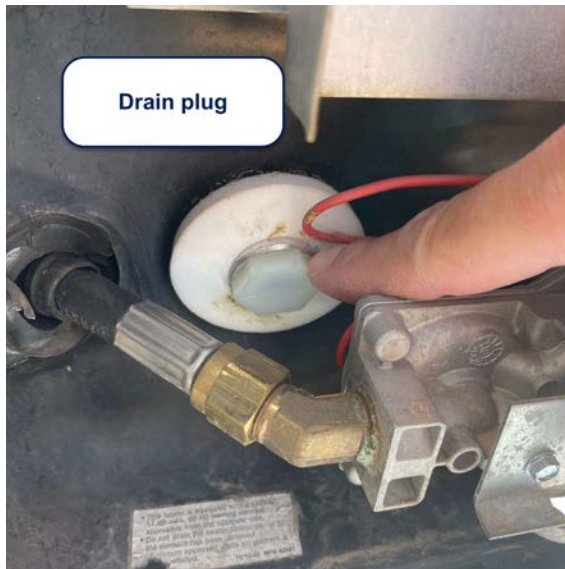
The procedure for this varies depending on whether you have a tankless water heater, or a water heater with a tank.

If your Airstream has a water heater with a tank:

Make sure it is off and you've allowed time for the hot water to cool.

On a trailer with a Dometic or Atwood water heater:

- Remove the *drain plug* using the socket wrench (water will pour out)
- Open the pressure/temperature (P/T) valve by flipping the lever up
- Turn the *water heater bypass valve or valves* to the bypassed position. If you are not sure where the *water heater bypass valve(s)* are located in your Airstream, check the Owner's Manual.



A few tips:

The drain plug is best removed with a socket wrench and 15/16" socket (not an adjustable wrench).

On a motorhome with a Suburban water heater, there's a red knob that acts as the drain plug.

If your Airstream has a tankless water heater by Alde, Truma, Timberline or Girard:

- Make sure the heater is off and the water is cool first.
- Open the *pop-off valve* (if applicable to your type of heater) to let water drain out of the heater.

Step 6. When water stops draining (which might take a long time!), close everything that you opened

- All faucets and shower fixtures
- Pop-off valve or P/T valve on the water heater
- Fresh water tank drain valve
- Low-point drains
- If you removed a drain plug from the water heater, put it back in place with Teflon tape on the threads

Step 7. Locate the winterization kit and prepare to put the RV antifreeze through the system

- Turn the winterizing valve to the “winterizing” position – usually this means pointing the winterizing valve parallel to the clear plastic tube
- Unroll the winterizing tube to its full length
- Remove the plug at the end of the winterizing tube



- Stick the open end of the winterizing tube into a gallon jug of RV antifreeze

Step 8. Turn on the water pump and let the antifreeze flow through the system

You will see the pink antifreeze get sucked into the winterizing tube, on its way to all parts of the plumbing system.

Open each faucet and shower fixture (don't forget the outside shower, if you have one) *one at a time*.

Leave each fixture open until pink stuff starts coming out on both the hot and cold settings. Then close and move on to the next fixture.

Flush the toilet until you see pink in the bowl, and also use the toilet sprayer (if you have one).



While you're doing this, keep an eye on the antifreeze

If it's getting low, shut off the pump and switch to the next gallon jug before continuing.

When you're done with every fixture:

- Turn off the pump
- Put away the antifreeze
- Put the winterizing valve and plug back the way you found them
- If your water heater has a tank, leave the bypass valves in the bypassed position until you de-winterize in spring

The plumbing system winterization procedure is complete.

Step 9. Remove all food, liquids, and things that could be damaged by freezing

Remove all food and items that might be interesting to rodents or insects. Check every drawer and cubbyhole, and every shelf. You don't want to open the Airstream next spring to find a rodent infestation.

Pack up shampoo, hand soap, dish soap, contact lens solution, toothpaste, etc. Any liquid that could be damaged or separate when temps dip below 32 degrees. If you have any electronics that might get damaged, remove them, and pack up a kitchen sink water filter if you have one, too.

As a final interior step, make sure the refrigerator and freezer are empty and completely dry, and leave the doors open.



Step 10. Disconnect the negative battery cable

It's not enough to flip the Battery Disconnect switch. [This blog explains why.](#)

Unless your Airstream can be left plugged in, it's best to disconnect the negative battery cable. Ideally, you should remove the batteries entirely, and keep them charged at home over the winter.



Step 11. Perform final maintenance tasks

- Check tire pressures and add air if needed
- Protect the brass tabs of [the 7-way plug](#) with a bit of dielectric grease. If you're not sure how to do this or why it's important, [this video explains it.](#)

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