Layering for Bushcraft

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Why layer?

Layering is the idea that you dress with multiple layers for your outdoor adventure. Add a layer if you are cold, take off a layer if you are too hot. As tempting as it may be to use a big heavy puffer jacket this is not a recipe for manging cold in the outdoors. What happens if you start to sweat and you only have the one layer… you get wet as you cannot take off a layer and cool down. and then you chilly as you stop sweating.

There are two main reasons to layer:

1. Versatility
2. Extra warmth

Versatility

Multiple layers allow you to take off and put on a layer to manage your core body temperature and sweating. In cold conditions, if you are working hard, you want to try and minimize sweating and the post sweat chills and the easiest way to do this to take off a layer as you start to work harder. When you stop, you put the layer back on again.

Extra warmth

Did you know that by wearing multiple layers you trap extra air between each layer, and this acts as an insulator. This makes multiple layers warmer than one bulky layer. The level of warmth, and trapped air can be managed by taking on or off a layer.

What are the different layers?

The Base Layer

One can argue that the base layer is the most important layer as your skin is your largest organ, and a lot of how you feel is a direct result of the base layer. If the base layer is uncomfortable, and you get wet and cold, you really notice it, and your comfort decreases. The correct base layer can make your outdoor experience much more enjoyable.

The base layer has two main functions:

1. Move moisture off your skin
2. Regulate your body temperature

Moisture management is one of the keys to success in the outdoors. Your base layer must move your sweat away from your skin as efficiently as possible leaving you feeling dry and comfortable. This will help to regulate your body temperature as any moisture build up can draw warmth away from your body.

Base layers can be made of merino wool, which we recommend as Armadillo Merino®, synthetic fabrics (polyester and the most well known are Polartec Power Dry® or Patagonia Capilene®), and silk. Not cotton….

There is a saying the cotton kills. This comes from people wearing cotton t-shirts as base layer. When you sweat, cotton soaks up the sweat, and then as it dry, it pulls warmth and heat from you. This is why you feel cold when your cotton t-shirt gets wet.

Armadillo Merino Falcon
Long Sleeve Top

Patagonia Capilene
Thermal

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The Mid Layer

The function of the mid layer is to provide insulation. A mid traps heat and air and stops the cold air from reaching your base layer and skin.

A good mid layer will be breathable and also help to move any moisture away from the body so any moisture trapped by the base layer is transported out to be evaporated.

Micro-fleeces, merino wool tops, soft shells and thin insulated jackets are popular mid layers. A thin fleece or merino wool top could be worn during milder conditions. Thicker fleece or soft shell jackets would be suitable for colder weather and if the weather is really poor, then warmer insulated jacket may be a better option. In some cases, if the weather is fair, a base layer and mid layer might be all you need.

Pinewood Fleece Jacket

Sasta Women's Varpu Fleece

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The Outer Layer

The outer layer provides protection from the wind and rain. The outer layer should be waterproof and breathable to help to manage moisture from the base layer and mid-layer. It also needs to be durable and hard waring as crashing through bush is very hard on gear! Outer layers come as hard or soft shell jackets. Hard shell jackets are more durable, more waterproof but do not tend to move moisture as well. Soft shell jackets are more breathable, but are not as waterproof or as warm as a hard shell.

Sasta Mehto Pro 2.0 jacket   Pinewood Tromso Jacket

Layering is one of the keys to enjoying the outdoors. By layering you are able to regulate your body temperature, taking layers off as you get hot and putting layers on as you cool. This makes for a much more enjoyable outdoor experience, as no one likes to get cold!

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