

As I write this in the Beaver Valley, I have just enjoyed six November days on the Georgian Trail from Meaford to Collingwood. November is just as it is supposed to be, temperatures a little above and a little below freezing, small amounts of sunshine, some wet snow and yes, it rained. I was dry and warm as I enjoyed this special part of Ontario beside Georgian Bay. Let me tell you how I did it.



First Layer

Under it all, I switched the cotton “undies” for those made of a blend of polyester and a little lycra. This combination is our first step in keeping what is next to us dry and moving the perspiration outward. The long sleeved shirt was again synthetic and I avoid turtle necks. I know with my scrawny neck I look better in a turtle neck but they “bottle” in the heat.

If you must have a turtle neck find one with a zipper. That cotton turtle neck that you have will look great after the hike but will cause problems on the trail. The cotton fabric holds moisture like a sponge and keeps it right next to you, exactly where you do not want it.

Second Layer

The next layer provides the warmth. For years we used a wool sweater; however, a fleece pullover works better. This material continues to transport our moisture away from us, dries quickly and comes in three weights. The 100 and 200 weights work well. The 300 weight is usually too heavy for hiking. For pants I opt for synthetic tights. They kept my legs cosy warm and are much more comfortable than pants. If you do choose pants, blue jeans are probably the most uncomfortable because of their fit (they look great on young cowboys) and once they are wet they will stay that way until long after the hike is over. Rip stop nylon pants work well and many come with zip off legs - instant shorts.

Third or Top Layer

The top layer is a *water proof* and *breathable* jacket without any insulation. Gore Tex is the best known of these materials that let the perspiration out at the same time as keeping the rain from getting in. You are going to have to pay more for this type of coat and you may not wish to do so. However, I use mine year round and not just for hiking. Gore-Tex still seems to be the most breathable and waterproof, especially the newest XCR form. Note that there are similar Gore-Tex-like waterproofing techniques used in the construction of jackets that have adequate breath ability. These alternatives tend to be less costly. I would urge you to research the various techniques used to make jackets waterproof and breathable by "Googling" the topic and carefully reading the labels on such jackets.

Rain Pant

Mine are Gore Tex and they sit at the bottom of my pack most of the time. My general rule is that if it is raining at the start of a hike I put them on. If it starts to rain on the hike, I decide then. The clothing that seems best suited for outdoor activity today is synthetic and is certainly a far cry from the polyester leisure suits of another era.



Hat

Hiking hats are for protection and, for sure, not for fashion. The type of hat you take with you will be determined by the time of year (e.g. summer vs. winter). Decide what you want protection from the:

- sun - you need something with a wide brim;
- rain - something with a long “bill” to keep the rain off your specs;
- cold and/or wind – it will probably be wool or fleece and should covers your ears.

Mitts

Fleece mitts work well in the cold. I use synthetic gloves for cool days. During cold and/or cold-rainy days I often wear waterproof/windproof “shells” over my other mitts. These shells are mitts also.

Boots and Socks

Happy feet are essential for folks hiking and snow showing. I have written a separate “The Right Stuff” on Boots and Socks so check it for more information.

I know that warm weather hiking will come again and all I’ll need is a synthetic t-shirt and nylon shorts but until then the weather is not going to keep me from enjoying the sight of a deer walking on the trail ahead of me or the bright orange of the American Bittersweet.

Happy Dry and Warm Hiking,
Greg



About Greg

Greg is an experienced and certified hike leader and instructor. He has been a long time member of the Bruce Trail Association (www.bruce-trail.org), the Grand Valley Trails Association (www.gvta.on.ca) and other hiking organizations. Greg has an extensive background in aviation and air traffic control. Greg has taught introduction to hiking courses and map and compass courses for several years. Currently his website, Greg Vincent’s Hiking Site, resides at <http://home.golden.net/%7Egvincent/>

Other The Right Stuff articles are:

- “On the Up and Up” or Icy Walking
- Footwear - Boots & Socks (how to care for your feet & how to choose boots & socks)
- Packs (what kind to carry & what to put in them)
- Bugs (how to avoid them & prevent their bothering you)
- Trail Safety (how to ensure you hike without incident)
- Trekking Poles (modern ones - what are they & why use them)
- Winter Walking (all the peculiarities of hiking in cold climes)
- Medical Emergencies (how to prepare for & respond to a medical emergency while hiking)
- Warm Weather Walking (the scoop on hiking in warm weather)
- Snowshoeing (If you can walk, you can snowshoe – no ifs, ands or buts.)
- Global Positioning System or GPS (What is it and how it works.)