



Katahdin Gear Library Snowshoe Guide and FAQ

Please also review instructional videos at www.millinocketmemoriallibrary.org/KGLwinter

What to wear: Footwear

You should match your snowshoeing style, whether it's walking, backpacking, climbing or running. For most of us:

- Insulated, waterproof boots are best. They have thick soles, rubber/leather uppers and insulation.
- Leather hiking boots work well, too, especially if they are waterproof.
- Wool or synthetic socks with wicking liners promote warm, dry feet.
- Gaiters keep snow out of your boots. For deep powder, consider a knee-high style with waterproof/breathable lowers.

One exception to the above: Trail-running snowshoes should be worn with lightweight running shoes or cross-trainers.

Clothing

Layer your clothing so it can be adjusted to your activity level and the weather. Avoid cotton.

- Base layer: Synthetics and wool retain warmth even when wet. Wear long underwear that wicks away moisture, insulates well and dries quickly. Choose from microlight, lightweight or midweight versions based on the temperature and your activity level. A zippered top lets you adjust body heat as you stop and go.
- Insulating layer: Polyester fleece makes a good insulating mid-layer since it retains heat when wet and breathes as you exercise.
- Outer layer: A waterproof, breathable shell jacket and pants keep you dry and fend off wind.

Hat, Gloves and Accessories

Keep your head and hands covered to prevent loss of body heat and to protect from sunburn.

- A wool or synthetic **hat, headband or balaclava** retains heat; a wide-brimmed hat or a ball cap can shade your eyes on sunny days.
- Waterproof ski **gloves or mittens** are a must to keep your hands dry and warm. On cold days, combine shells with fleece mittens or gloves. In milder conditions, glove liners may be all you need.
- **Sunglasses and sunscreen** will protect you from burning UV rays which are especially intense when reflected off of snow.



Using Poles

While optional on flat terrain, poles come in handy on many snowshoeing outings. They not only provide you better balance, they also help give your upper body a workout.

- Adjustable poles are best. They can be shortened for uphill travel, lengthened for descending. And when crossing slopes, one can be extended for the downhill side and the other shortened for the uphill side.
- Pole length should be adjusted so your arm is bent at a right angle. Flip your pole upside-down and grab the pole just under the basket. Adjust the length until your elbow is at a right angle.
- Pole straps are used properly when you put your hand up through the strap from below. This allows you to rely on the straps alone at times to give your hands a brief rest.

Safety Tips

For safe snowshoeing, stay within the limits set by your physical abilities, the environment and your gear. Stick to established trails at first. Many ski areas have cross-country ski trails that snowshoers can share. (Just be sure to follow trail etiquette and stay off the ski tracks.) That way, you're never too far from other people, and you're not likely to encounter avalanche hazards. Do not snowshoe alone.

Staying Warm and Dry

Be sure to carry extra layers for warmth, particularly an extra base layer (long underwear) top in case the one you're wearing gets wet from exertion or the weather. Know the signs of hypothermia so you can recognize them in members of your party.

Staying Hydrated

It's as important to drink during cold-weather exercise as it is in summer. Not only does water keep your muscles functioning, it also helps your body fend off hypothermia. Keep your water from freezing by using an insulating cover for your water bottle. A vacuum bottle with hot drinks will keep you hydrated and warm. (And you'll make friends if you share.)