



Winter Hiking Do's and Don'ts.

Here are several do's and don'ts and why it's important for everyone to learn before venturing out into Mother Nature's frozen wonderland. Respect her and she'll respect you back.

- Always tell someone where you are going and be specific. Share the name of the trail head, the area of the mountain, the name of the shelter. If you're tech savvy, share the GPS coordinates of your intended location, and the numbers for the park services of where you'll be.
- Give them a detailed list of your supplies. The importance of this goes up tenfold if you're going into remote locations. If you're reported as missing or lost, they'll know how long you may be able to hold out with your current supplies.
- When venturing on winter hikes the name of the game is layers! Layers trap warm pockets of air in between which in turn keeps you warm. Layers can also be removed and added as needed so you don't over heat. Sweating in cold weather can be a death sentence.
- Stay hydrated – your body can't maintain thermoregulation if you are dehydrated.
- Acquire and learn to use a two-way radio. In areas where cell service drops out, two-way radios are your life line. You can also pick up the NOAA ban which will keep you updated on approaching weather fronts. Don't get caught off guard.
- Wear traction devices on your boots.
- Very important! Give a reliable person the time that you'll be returning – if you haven't returned at the appointed time, a call to search and rescue can be made to alert them to your situation.
- When you find yourself in a survival situation the first thing you should do is actually what not to do - that is, DO NOT panic. Slow down your breath. Panic may affect you in a worse way than what caused the current situation that you're in. Running off thinking that you'll find the trail or the road or the parking lot where you left your car usually ends in an injury. A twisted ankle, a branch to the face or a fall causing a head or spinal injury, all making your situation that much worse.



- If you find yourself in a survival situation, one should admit it, I'd even say it out loud, "I'm in a survival situation" get that part of the ordeal over with and you can begin the process of handling your immediate needs.
- Sit down and assess your situation – where was the last point you knew your location in perspective to the trail you were on, shelter or campsite you were at.
- Take stock of the supplies in your pack, see what can be used. As for thinking outside the box, I prefer "there is NO box" and do whatever you must.
- Find anything that can become a natural shelter - an area of cover from the cold elements.
- Pack and learn to use a fire kit.
- Carry sunglasses to avoid becoming snow blind.
- Get yourself a survival kit. Learn how to use it (before heading out). Time to prep your shelter – source fire wood and water and get yourself ready for a night in the woods. When you think you have enough fire wood, get FIVE TIMES more - you don't want to run out on a cold night.
- Keep any food away from your camp a minimum of fifty yards and downwind, animals don't know and don't care whether you're leisurely camping or in a survival situation. If they smell food you might have a visit from the local wildlife.
- Find an open area to keep a stack of fire wood. Keep some green pine branches nearby. If you hear an aircraft, get fire wood lit and add green pine on top which will create white smoke – easily visible against the green back drop of the forest from the aircraft.
- Tons of fun and laughs to be had with friends and many memories to be made. Just strengthen and sharpen your mind first.

– "If you fail to plan, then you're planning to fail."

Marlon Smith
Urban and Outdoor Survival