

Topic:

## Paddling Clothing

QC-0512

Resource:

[Clothing Guide](#)

**Basics:** It is possible to paddle year round, as long as the water is not frozen. Cold water paddling adds additional risks. A capsize or even just getting too wet can quickly lead to cold shock or hypothermia. To paddle in the cold weather demands good skills and proper protective clothing. Heat loss is greatest if the body is in direct contact with cold water. The body can lose 25 to 30 times more heat when in contact with cold, wet materials than in dry conditions or with dry clothing. Generally, conductive heat loss accounts for only about 2% of body heat loss, however, with wet clothes the loss is increased 5 times.

**Question:** *So, what do I wear, when?*

**Answer:** Dress for the water temperature. In cold water, wear a warm head covering, layered clothing, and protect your feet and hands. Also drink plenty of fluids and pace yourself.

**Question:** *What time of year do I need to start wearing protective gear?*

**Answer:** Be prepared to mix and match your layers for the conditions you choose to paddle in. Always carry extra clothing. It is better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it. ACA recommends the 60/120 rule. When the water temperature is below 60-F or if the water and air temperature together add up to less than 120-F protective clothing should be worn.

**Advanced Concepts:** You may want to get more information on the following:

- What are signs of, and first aid for hypothermia? (See QC-0503)
- When are wetsuits and dry suits used in paddling?
- How does one properly care for a wetsuit or dry suit?
- How can you be sure your wetsuit or dry suit is fitted properly?
- What are layering techniques and why are they important?

*For more information contact*

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