

Outerwear Headquarters™

Kids' Layering 101

Since most of us grew up with the "bulkier is better" theory of winter dressing (remember tottering around like stuffed sausages?), it's important to realize that in the last two decades, innovations have made their way into the world of outerwear. Fabrics and insulations are now more streamlined and efficient. So kids don't have to feel restricted or bogged down to stay warm.

We're often asked, "Which is your warmest jacket?" A difficult question because there is more than one right answer if you take into account that comfort is dependent on these variables:

- 1) Environment:** where you live and what the weather is
- 2) Metabolism:** a person's ability to generate heat
- 3) Activity level:** stationary, moderate or brisk
- 4) Length of exposure:** amount of time your child is outdoors

And, as any parent will attest, your child's current MOOD might just be the biggest variable. A jacket might be perfect in one situation, too hot or cold in another. The solution? Without a doubt, layering.

Most valuable layers.

Layering traps warm air between garments. And it helps the body maintain a comfortable balance between heat generated and heat lost. Best yet, it allows kids to fine-tune for comfort as the temperature changes, or as their activity produces more changes in body heat. In other words, a child waiting for the bus is not moving or generating body heat. A down jacket might be perfect, as the child's metabolism is slower than if he/she were running up and down a sledding hill and sweating. By wearing layers, an active child can add or subtract depending on the situation.

Base Layer: Traps air close to the skin and wicks away moisture.

Moisture is the enemy of thermal balance, which is why wet people get cold fast. Keeping skin dry is important. Cotton absorbs moisture and keeps it there, so it is not the best fabric for a base layer — especially if kids will be sweating. So, for outdoor action such as skiing and sledding, a synthetic long underwear like Thermaskins® is the essential first layer. Body heat will be efficiently contained and they'll stay warmer.

Insulation Layer: Prevents heat loss.

Polyester fleece fabrics are ideal — they have an excellent warmth-to-weight ratio, won't absorb water, dry quickly, and are highly breathable. Fleece creates air pockets that trap body heat and hold it there. Insulation layers are also good because they are flexible – put them on or take them off when needed.

because they are flexible – put them on or take them off when needed.

Outer Layer: Keeps the elements out.

A shell must stop the wind, rain and snow that want to steal away warmth. Also, it should breathe so moisture can escape and kids will stay dry from the inside, too. Plus, insulated shells trap body heat among the fibers and prevent cold from getting in.

A few other helpful pointers to maximize kids' warmth:

● **Want warm hands? Wear a hat.** Up to 20% of body heat can be lost by an exposed head. Here's what happens:

The body has an "autopilot" response for survival and knows it must keep the brain alive for the rest of it to function. So if the head is exposed (which lets body heat escape), the body naturally works to send heat to that area, where it continues to escape. This stealing of heat takes away warmth from the extremities, which is usually why fingers and toes get cold first. (The correct socks and gloves can help, too.) **So Mom was right: when heads are insulated, the body can focus on warming up extremities.**

● **Staying dry is especially important.**

We already discussed how moisture is the enemy of thermal balance because the body sends more heat to dry off wet skin. So it doesn't necessarily have to be bitterly cold out for a wet kid to start shivering.

Again, for next-to-skin layers, choose wicking fabrics or quick-drying synthetics instead of cotton, which will absorb moisture and dry slowly. **And for feet, steer clear of cotton socks when you know they'll be stomping in slush or exposed for long periods of time. Try wool or synthetic materials.**

For gloves, Polartec® is always comfortable but not particularly wind-resistant. **In wet conditions, turn to a water-resistant nylon type like Squall® or Snow Sport® gloves.**

● **A rule of thumb for babies.**

Dress your baby as you would yourself in cold weather, keeping in mind that as you walk behind a stroller, you're generating body heat while your baby isn't. Also, always use a hat to keep baby's warmth contained and his or her tiny ears protected.

[Top](#)

No Thanks 

Get Live Help

Lands' End: May I help you with sizing/fit information or answer any questions?

Chat now with a shopping assistant.

[Chat Online](#)

[Call Me](#)