

DRESSING FOR COLD WEATHER

Cool or even cold weather is no reason not to ride, assuming one is properly dressed. Cycling in cold weather usually involves dressing in layers. A base layer of high-quality wicking fabric is a must. Cotton should be avoided as it tends to hold moisture against the skin, aggravating the chill that one feels. Base layers should fit snugly so that the material lays smoothly against the skin. Wrinkles will affect the ability of the base layer to move moisture away from the skin.

The thickness of the intermediate layer(s) is chosen based on the temperature. Take it easy here as you will quickly build heat internally. If its 40 Degrees F and you feel nice and cozy when you leave the house, you will very soon be overheated, sweating, and creating a tough-to-manage situation. Leaving the house with a bit of a shiver and warming into your pace may be a better alternative, although this approach is tough to accept, at least initially.

An outer windbreak layer will be required in colder settings. Again, take care to avoid the sealed "Hefty Bag" approach as this can create more moisture control problems. Some bike wear has front wind protection with a breathable back. Windgear that works for skiing or casual use may not work. In dire situations, a sheet of newspaper inserted between clothing layers across ones chest can be a life saver. I have, on occasions where I was unsure about my layering, left the house with a sheet of newspaper neatly folded in my jersey pocket, just in case. The newspaper system works well in more mountainous settings where one builds much sweat climbing slowly, then descends sweaty and fast. Elegantly crude. Wool or polypro tights, knickers or leg-warmers are also a must.

Extremities are critical and should be kept cozy, as chilled hands, feet, foreheads or ears can ruin an otherwise invigorating experience. Most of this stuff needs to be bike-specific in order to work properly. Gloves, for instance, need to be designed not to impede brake or shifting control.

During very cold weather, treat your lungs with respect: keep your mouth shut, breathe through your nose and limit your maximum effort.