

The Winter Survival Committee's Guide to Surviving Winter Survival

Here are some handy hints from those that have walked (and survived) it before!



Look after your feet!

Everyone is different, but in general it is a good idea to try to keep your feet dry as much as possible. So pack spare pairs of socks and change them regularly. Using talcum powder each time may also help. There's a good chance that some of you will get blisters. Two pairs of socks inside your boots will help, use a thin liner sock with a thicker sock for cushioning over the top. If you're feeling like there's a blister coming on, don't ignore it, sort it out at the next checkpoint! Use tape (KT tape or similar works well), plasters or blister plasters to stop a rub from getting worse. Don't take your boots off unless you are changing your socks or attending to blisters (especially when you get to the night stop) – your feet will swell up and it will be very painful when you do eventually put your boots back on.



Eat and drink!

Remember to eat regularly and drink plenty of water (checkpoints will be able to top up your supply so you won't need to carry gallons). Chocolate, cereal bars, dried fruits and sweets are great for topping up energy levels but you will also need to eat **SOMETHING SUBSTANTIAL** (e.g. Pasta or noodles – something with lots of carbohydrate) when you have time to stop (e.g. at Night stop and at checkpoints during the day on Saturday). Super Noodles and the like are good; cheap and lightweight. Purpose made meals for hiking, such as those made by Wayfarer are ideal (and tastier) but pricier. Avoid tins and jars! They are very heavy and take up space, even when empty.

The night stop will give you a bacon roll (veggie option available!) when you book out and some checkpoints will offer hot drinks, soup etc – you may not want it, but you will need the energy. Also, **don't forget to have dinner** before you arrive on Friday.



The Weather

It's England in February – it will rain (or maybe even snow) and it'll probably be cold. Make sure you use your waterproofs when it rains to stay as dry as you can and use your hat and gloves to keep warm. Being wet and cold = being miserable!



Stay Warm

You will get warm whilst walking but soon get chilly when you stop (especially at the night stop) – you just need to be sensible and keep warm. Have extra warm clothes in your bag (in a waterproof bag so if your rucksack leaks they don't get wet!). It's a good idea to have some insulation from the ground at night stop, too!



Stay safe on roads

Whilst we plan routes to minimise it, some road crossings and sections of road walking are inevitable. Roads are dangerous! Make sure your hi-vis is visible, front and back, all the time. At night, every team member must use a torch to the front and a red light on the back of their rucksack whenever crossing or walking on roads. Cross or walk together as a team.



Respect the countryside

Remember your country code. Leave gates as you find them and don't litter. Keep noise to a minimum when passing houses at night and don't shine your torches in the windows.



Be a team!

Probably **the most important thing** is to look after each other. Survival is a mentally tough event and you'll all probably have low points at different times, so keep an eye on your team mates. Don't leave all the navigation to one person and then chastise them if they make a mistake! Make decisions together, have a laugh together, patch up each other's feet and take care of anyone struggling. Make sure everyone is eating and drinking enough. Don't march ahead and leave team members behind. Singing and humour are fabulous for morale – so if you're feeling a bit low, exchange your corniest jokes or give your favourite tune a quick blast!



Practise your navigation

If you can't navigate at night, you'll be spending a lot of time getting lost, so make sure that you have brushed up on your navigation skills in the dark. For most teams, map reading seems to be the biggest challenge and constant navigation errors are not good for morale.

If you are map reading and you are not 100% sure about your decisions, check with the rest of your team – you'll look a lot less silly asking for help than if you make everyone walk 2 miles in the wrong direction! If you have plotted your next checkpoint and are not sure it's right, or whether your planned route to reach it is sensible, ask the checkpoint staff. They won't tell you what to do, but they might help you make a decision. If you're not sure which direction you should be heading, use your compass – especially across big fields when it's dark and you can't see what you are aiming for!

If you get lost, don't panic. Stop, work out where you think you might be on the map. How long is it since you last knew where you were and how far might you have travelled since you were there? Use your compass to orientate the map and compare it to features around you. You may need to walk a short distance to find some features if you haven't got much to go on.



Meeting 'The Opposition'

The Opposition are part of the storyline and best avoided because they will slow you down. Your best bet to avoid getting caught is to stay off the roads, but it's not a guarantee that they won't be lying in wait somewhere else! Remember that when dealing with The Opposition, having a really good/funny/believable cover story WILL mean you get treated better! Your cover story is not that you are taking part in Winter Survival or anything to do with the storyline. Put some effort into it and your team will be rewarded by being delayed less.



When things get tough...

Remember that you signed up for the most challenging event in the Scouting calendar. You came for a challenge and that's what you're going to get! That means that there will be times when you just feel like giving up, especially if you're cold, wet, tired and hungry and in the dark! If you keep going, that feeling often passes, particularly if you remember the above advice on keeping warm, dry, well fed and looking after your team mates. Survival is a challenge and not everyone will finish, but if you look after yourselves and each other you will have a good time and want to come back next year (although you probably won't be saying that at the time!).

ABOVE ALL, HAVE FUN AND ENJOY YOURSELVES

Good Luck!

The Winter Survival Committee