

MIDJOURNEY MEN

Winter Hike Checklist

A calm, capable plan before the trail

Use this low-ink checklist to prepare for a winter day hike. Confirm local forecasts, trail notices, daylight, and land-manager guidance before you leave. A checklist supports judgment. It does not replace changing conditions or a decision to turn around.

1. CONDITIONS

I checked weather, wind, and local trail information.

2. ROUTE

I know the route, daylight window, and turnaround point.

3. PEOPLE

Someone knows my plan and expected return time.

1 Plan the day, not just the destination

Before you leave

- ☐ Check the weather, wind, temperature change, and daylight for the full outing.
- ☐ Read current trail, road, closure, and hazard information from the land manager.
- ☐ Choose a route that matches the group's experience, available daylight, and conditions.
- ☐ Share the route, vehicle location, expected return time, and who to contact if plans change.
- ☐ Name a simple turnaround time before the hike begins.

A useful check-in

My route or area:

My expected return time:

My planned turnaround trigger:

NOTES: What could change my plan today?

Keep the decision simple

If conditions, time, visibility, footing, energy, or the group's comfort level no longer support the plan, turn around early. The trail will still be there.

2 Dress and pack for the pauses

Winter preparation is often less about moving fast and more about staying comfortable when you slow down, stop to navigate, or need to change the plan. Pack for the conditions you may meet, not only the conditions at the trailhead.

Layers and warmth

- ☐ Base layer and insulating layer chosen for the forecast.
- ☐ Windproof or waterproof outer layer packed.
- ☐ Warm hat, gloves or mittens, and a dry spare layer packed.
- ☐ Footwear, socks, and traction match the route and expected surface.
- ☐ Food and water planned for a longer, colder day than expected.

Navigation and essentials

- ☐ Map and navigation plan are available offline or on paper.
- ☐ Headlamp or light source is packed and checked.
- ☐ Phone is charged and protected from cold, with a backup power option if needed.
- ☐ Basic first-aid and emergency items are packed for the route and group.
- ☐ Traction, poles, or other route-specific tools are checked before leaving.

NOTES: What stays easy to reach in my pack?

2.1 Make the starting point easy

WEAR

The layer, footwear, and traction I will start in.

CARRY

The warmth, water, food, light, and navigation I will carry.

TELL

The person, route, and return time I will share before leaving.

A good pack is not a performance. It is a way to make better choices easier when the weather changes, the day runs long, or the group needs more margin.

3 At the trailhead, choose the next right step

Pause before you begin

- ☐ Compare the actual weather, wind, visibility, and footing with the plan.
- ☐ Confirm every person has the warmth, water, food, and traction they need.
- ☐ Reconfirm the route, turnaround time, and how the group will stay together.
- ☐ Choose the safer variation when conditions are different from what you expected.

On the trail

- ☐ Check time, weather, energy, and trail conditions at natural pauses.
- ☐ Add or remove layers before you become very cold or overheated.
- ☐ Use steady communication and make room for the slowest comfortable pace.
- ☐ Turn around when the plan no longer has enough margin.

3.1 Close the loop after the hike

What worked well today?

What will I adjust before the next winter outing?

NOTES: Conditions, route adjustments, or gear to remember

Source note

This checklist is an educational planning companion. Use current land-manager, weather, avalanche, and emergency guidance for your specific route. Core planning prompts draw on National Park Service winter hiking and Hike Smart guidance, plus American Hiking Society cold-weather hiking resources.

NOTES: What will help me recover well after this hike?

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Build a life with more capability, perspective, and room to return.