



## **DRESSING AND PACKING FOR FIELD TRAINING EXERCISES**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Preamble.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DRESSING FOR COLD WEATHER.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>FIRST – NEXT TO SKIN (AKA BASE LAYER).....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SECOND – INSULATION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>THIRD – SHELL .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>FOOTWEAR AND FOOTWEAR ACCESSORIES.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>FIRST LAYER – THE LINER SOCK.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SECOND LAYER – THE INSULATOR SOCK .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>THIRD LAYER – THE ACTUAL BOOT .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>OTHER ACCESSORIES .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PACKING FOR AN FTX .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>RULE NUMBER 1 – WEIGHT IS THE ENEMY.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>RULE NUMBER 2 – DO NOT USE A SUITCASE.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>RULE NUMBER 3 – PACK ACCORDING TO YOUR NEEDS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>RULE NUMBER 4 – YOUR DUFFLE NEED NOT BE YOUR ONLY BAG .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>OTHER ITEMS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>SLEEPING BAGS, PADS AND PILLOWS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>KNIVES AND MULTITOOLS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ELECTRONICS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>MEDICATIONS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>MONEY .....</b>	<b>10</b>

## Preamble

This guide is by no means definitive or absolute. It is merely a guide to set cadets and parents on the right course so that the cadet may get the best experience they can out of an FTX. Whether the FTX is hot and sunny or cold and wet, these next few pages will cover what you need to consider.

As this is the first iteration of this guide, suggestions will be welcomed, as it will help future FTXs.

## Dressing for any FTX

Field Training Exercises (FTXs) expose our cadets to a variety of great challenges. While weather conditions every so often are quite favourable, they are rarely consistently ideal, which can push the limits of some cadets. 330 squadron has some FTXs where cadets experienced several seasons worth of weather within the 48 hours encompassing while in the field. We have seen Winter turn to Spring-like and vice-versa.

“A few years ago, we had one Cold Weather Indoctrination Course (CWIC) at Blackdown CTC in late February where there was a few centimeters of snow when we arrived on Friday. By Sunday afternoon, all of that had melted away.” – CI Laflamme

While we train cadets how to handle survival situations, that training is ineffective if a cadet is not dressed appropriately. The best way to “survive” changing conditions is to be prepared for it. This doesn’t just mean checking the weather before an FTX, but choosing clothing carefully.

## DRESSING FOR COLD WEATHER

Everyone knows to bring a winter jacket for the cold, but few are aware that a winter coat is a last-line of defence against lower temperatures.

The way to guard against the cold is to layer. The best way to guard against the cold is to do it smartly.

### FIRST – NEXT TO SKIN (AKA BASE LAYER)

The most important and most neglected layer, with regards to dressing for cool and cold weather. This layer is more important because of its function, which is to keep a cadet warm and dry. It manages both by pulling moisture/sweat away from the skin, but it can only do this if it fits properly (snug, but not tight). A common misconception is that one does not sweat in colder temps, but that is simply not true. Due to the inherent difficulty of working in the cold, people tend to sweat more. They simply just don't notice it.

A base layer should never be cotton, as cotton does not dry quickly. Instead of cotton, you want your base layer to be either synthetic (nylon/polyester) or wool.

With synthetics, you get excellent wicking with quick-drying. However, synthetics can smell really bad if not washed properly. Wool has good wicking but doesn't dry as quickly. Despite it's slower-drying, wool does maintain its thermal properties quite well and doesn't take up a smell as easily as synthetics. The downside to wool is that, for some wearers, it can be itchy. Merino has become very popular in recent years and many manufacturers have figured out how to spin it into soft, non-scratchy fabrics.

### SECOND – INSULATION

This is where we bring fleece, wool and down into the equation. Each of these has their pros and cons, and ultimately those matter less than the wearing of a good base layer. Fleece and Down are lightweight and wear easy, but fleece is not windproof and down isn't always durable. Down does make up for a lack of durability with packability (the ability to be removed, compressed into a ball and pushed into a pocket or backpack).

Remember what we said about wool? Wool is tried and true, providing great thermal properties regardless of it being wet or dry. The caveat is that wool can be heavy and bulky.

Now the great thing about insulation is, you can incorporate two different kinds at the same time, sometimes at the expense of mobility. A medium weight fleece can be worn

under a down-filled coat. Because the down layer is packable, it can be removed and shoved into a small backpack (sometimes called a daybag or daypack).

### THIRD – SHELL

Shells are great to have to keep either wind or water out. While there are shells that do one or the other, the better option is often to get one that does both. Wind shells are lighterweight than rain shells, but lack the same kind of water resistance. In either case, you want to have something with some kind of DWR coating.

When it comes to waterproof shells, the big thing is GoreTex. GoreTex is great, but it's only great when the temperatures drop below 10°C. This has to do with GoreTex requiring a temperature difference between your body and the external environment for it to do what it does. Most other waterproof breathables work at 20-25°C with no issue, but this is not necessarily a guarantee. Each piece has its own limits.

Examples of other kinds of waterproof fabrics include Pertex, eVent, Neoshell and HyVent.

In most cases when buying apparel for outdoor activities, it is best to seek the advice of a staff member at an outdoor activity retailer. Do NOT rush through this, as the wrong clothing can have a severe impact on the learning and enjoyment of your cadet.

### DRESSING FOR WARM, BUT WET WEATHER

Follow everything just said above, but with lighter weight pieces. Have a good system of base layer, mid-layer and waterproof shell. Make sure that each piece is easily removed and can be equally easily stowed in a backpack.

## FOOTWEAR AND FOOTWEAR ACCESSORIES

Similar to the way we covered the different layers, covering your feet can be done in a similar fashion.

### FIRST LAYER – THE LINER SOCK

This is the base layer for your foot. This is the layer that directly absorbs sweat. Liner socks can be made from a variety of materials, but the best kinds are typically made from synthetics or merino wool, just like body base layers. Their job is to wick sweat away and keep feet dry.

### SECOND LAYER – THE INSULATOR SOCK

This is where you wear the thicker wool sock. For all intents and purposes it generally does not matter whether this layer is merino or rag wool. What is important is the loft of the sock as this is what provides both cushioning and insulation. The socks issued with a cadet's uniform are an excellent choice for this function.

*Note: this second layer sock isn't necessary in warmer months. Though, a second layer may help to reduce any possibility of blistering.*

### THIRD LAYER – THE ACTUAL BOOT

Outside of size and feel, choosing a boot requires consideration of three important factors when buying a boot. These factors are waterproofing, insulation and cut. Effectively, you can never go wrong with getting a waterproof boot. Whether or not it is insulated depends on the time of year you are going to be using it for. In the case of field training exercises and expeditions in the winter, your cadet will want insulation on their feet, but they won't need it as much in early fall and late spring.

There are various styles and types of boots. The difference between them is far too complex to go over in such a simple guide. All you need to know is if it meets the requirements of the FTX's conditions.

Remember what I said about GoreTex? It applies to boots too, only it is rendered useless if it gets dirty in any way. *And boots are meant to get dirty!*

*AND!! Always break a pair of boots in before going on an FTX with them. Wearing a brand new pair without breaking them in is definitely going to result in blisters! Ouch!*

## OTHER ACCESSORIES

You can never go wrong with a scarf, neck gaiter or bandana. More popular these days are neck gaiters as some types allow for a variety of methods in wearing them. They go by a number of names – Buff, Chaos Tube, Echo tube, etc – and they can be worn throughout the year.

Same deal for gloves. Everyone knows to bring an appropriate pair for winter conditions, but few think about bringing them for warmer months. Gloves protect your hand when hiking and navigating through the bush.

However... CADETS SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE A HAT. And their hat should be suitable for the expected conditions. (i.e. warm for cold weather, lightweight/breathable for warm weather). Toques are recommended for overnight protection when sleeping outdoors.

## PACKING FOR AN FTX

The days (or hours) before any trip can be hectic and daunting. The best thing you can do to prepare, is to use a packing list as a checklist. Fortunately, the squadron provides that every time!

Packing for an FTX requires at the bare minimum the following four items.

- The checklist
- A pen / marker
- An appropriate bag\*
- Plastic bags (Ziploc or grocery store bags)

The checklist and marker are pretty self explanatory, so we won't go too much into detail over that. Be sure to use the checklist, not only to pick out the items you need, but also to stage /double check them before you pack.

The best way to manage all the different pieces you need, is to gather them into outfits. Because FTXs are two days, two nights, a cadet can plan and pack around that parameter fairly easily.

Using plastic bags or ziplocs, gather the items for each day – shirt, underwear, socks, etc – and put them inside the bags. If using Ziploc, seal the bag, otherwise tie off the bag. This is to prevent any mishaps, including inclement weather soaking the items.

Now that you have your items together, you can now pack your bag.

### RULE NUMBER 1 – WEIGHT IS THE ENEMY

Do not pack anything that is not on the list. If it's not on the list, then it's not required for a cadet to bring. Items like sleeping bags are not necessary as they are supplied. Further to this, it just adds unnecessary weight to the bag you're packing.

### RULE NUMBER 2 – DO NOT USE A SUITCASE.

Why no suitcase? Because an FTX is a **field** training exercise and suitcases take up a lot of space. As we're going to be travelling by bus and camping in tents, we want to be fair to our fellow cadets by using appropriate bags. Duffles and Rucksacks are the best option for managing gear to and from the FTX.

What's more, cadets often need to hike a few hundred meters from the bus drop-off with their bags, and suitcase/luggage makes this difficult to manage as it forces cadets to carry/drag suitcases in an awkward manner.

### RULE NUMBER 3 – PACK ACCORDING TO YOUR NEEDS

Typically, this means putting the items more likely to be needed last or at least, in side pockets if the duffle/ruck has them.

### RULE NUMBER 4 – YOUR DUFFLE NEED NOT BE YOUR ONLY BAG

If you have a small backpack, it's a great idea to take it with you. In it, you can stow a rain jacket and other items you might have on you.

### RULE NUMBER 5 – PROTECT WHAT YOU HAVE

Wet weather can happen without warning. Protect your gear by compartmentalizing your items with plastic bags. Place a change of clothes in a plastic bag so it stays dry. But don't forget to protect your entire bag. Some bags come with rain covers and you can get rain covers, but you can use a simple garbage bag to do that. Just use a clear bag so everyone can see that yours is not garbage.

## OTHER ITEMS

### SLEEPING BAGS, PADS AND PILLOWS

Sleeping bags and pads are not required on cadet exercises, as they are issued supplies. While pillows are not supplied, they are not encouraged either as they introduce unnecessary bulk to kit. An old backpacker/camper trick is to bring a pillow case and stuff one's jacket/sweater inside to create a pillow.

### KNIVES AND MULTITOOLS

330 Squadron allows some cadets to carry knives and multi-tools, so long as they meet certain requirements.

1. Cadet must be either level 4 and higher
2. Blade cannot be longer than 10cm.
3. Knife cannot open by centrifugal force, gravity, flick, push button or automatically.
4. Knife must require two-handed operation to open.
5. Inspected by an officer before use.

Multi-tools for the most part, meet requirements 2-4 automatically, but are still subject to inspection by an officer.

### ELECTRONICS

Under no circumstance are cadets to bring electronic devices beyond cellular phones. The squadron staff understands that parents will want to be able to contact their cadets whenever necessary, however these devices have no place in the training weekend and should be properly stowed in their backpacks or duffle.

### MEDICATIONS

For sake of ease, it is recommended that any cadets requiring medication, provide it to the Medical Officer (MedO), contained within an appropriately sized re-sealable bag. Said bag should be clearly labelled with the cadet's name, and while it is not required adding the dosage and interval information *is extremely helpful*.

### MONEY

*As per our standard Kit List, we specify that no more than \$10 should be carried by a cadet. There is absolutely no need for a cadet to have money on them during an FTX, unless it is for bus fare to return home Sunday Night. In such a case, the cadet should only have enough for what they need.*