



Inde Nature School & Independence Academy

Gear Guide

Sustained outside exposure gets uncomfortable really fast if children are not dressed properly. Please check weather reports daily to properly dress and prepare children for forest play. While some temperatures might not seem concerning, it's important to remember that children are not efficient at regulating their body temperature. Students should arrive in the morning appropriately dressed and prepared for sustained outdoor play in that day's weather. In our explorations, we will be climbing, sliding, scooting, crawling, running, sometimes through mud, water, and bushes. Pants will add the extra protective layer from getting scratches, and close toed shoes keep little piggies safe!

* Please note: Students should arrive at school in their weather appropriate gear. If they are not in their gear, parents are responsible for dressing their child in the weather appropriate gear prior to leaving. If a student does not have or is not dressed in the weather appropriate gear, they may not be eligible to stay for the school day.

Weather is very unpredictable and can change easily throughout the day, so including the items they wear, waterproof and cold weather gear is a necessary component in preparation. Rain pants and rain boots are required on arrival (even if it's not raining). These can be stored in the classroom and left each day, or you can bring them each morning and take them home at the end of the day. Your student's clothing needs to keep them warm and dry all day. Again, extended outside exposure gets uncomfortable really fast if children are not dressed properly. It can be challenging for some to know what staying outside for long periods of time feels like. Being outside for 20 minutes and being outside for 3 hours feels very different. Once your body gets cold, it's very difficult to regain that comfortable body heat layer. Ideal layers are made of outdoor gear (wool, fleece, quick-dry fabrics, down, water-proof shells, water-proof snow gear). There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes! Please note that Inde Nature School, Inde Elementary and Inde Explores Sparrows & Starlings, will be using Fire Pits as part of their curriculum, specifically in the colder months.

Winter Weather: How to Properly Layer Children for Extended Outdoor Play

When properly dressed, even the harshest weather conditions become comfortable, magical experiences. Layers are the key to keeping your students happy and prepared for the day because layers can be added or shed according to the unpredictable weather! Please see the summary below, and for additional information about layering, check out <https://hikeitbaby.com/blog/layering-your-kiddos-based-on-temperature/>

1. Base Layer (aka Long Johns)

The purpose of this layer is to wick sweat off the skin to keep you dry. The most common mistake made for this layer is using cotton. **DO NOT USE COTTON!** Yes cotton is super comfy, but it is not made for the elements; cotton holds in moisture, which will make your skin wet and cold. Both shirt and pants are needed in order to insulate the body with a breathable layer. Please note that cotton leggings, t-shirts, socks, sweatshirts, etc. are not a good option as a base layer. If the base layer is cotton and it gets wet, all body heat is no longer insulated and the material will stay wet for the rest of the day. Please note that wool will not dry when wet, but it keeps its layer insulated.

Preferred materials: wool, polyester, nylon, silk

*** The exception to cotton is on hot summer days. A thin shirt will still get wet from sweat, but dry quickly in the hot air. It also works as a natural sunscreen!

2. Middle Layer (aka Second Layer)

The purpose of this layer is to provide a warm insulated space between the skin and the outdoor weather. This layer should be thicker than the base layer; the thicker the layer, the more insulated air being held there. Please remember this layer should be created on top and bottom. The most common mistake made for this layer is using jeans and cotton sweatshirts. Most are trusting the outer layer to keep all water out, however water (and cold air) will always find a way through to the middle layer. Though jeans are durable, once the elements reach jeans and sweatshirts, this layer gets wet and heavy, and stays wet all day. Please note this layer doesn't touch the skin, so not as soft materials such as synthetic fleece is a good alternative to holding that warm air in! This layer can also be a dual layer with two separate jackets or pants layered on top of each other!

Preferred materials: knit wool, polyester fleece, down insulated, synthetic insulated, synthetic fleece

3. Outer Layer (aka Turtle Shell)

The purpose of this layer is to protect all other layers from cold, wind, and water. If you're looking for a layer to heavily invest in, this is your pick! This layer **MUST BE WATERPROOF**. Windproof, breathable layers are best for keeping warm and dry, and are designed not to hinder movement or comfort. Plastic materials keep water out, but tend to be harder to bend and move in. Please note that top and bottom are needed for this layer as well. They can be separate pieces for easier potty breaks, or single suspender style to ensure there are no breaks in the waterproof layer. Snowsuits work wonders for chilly students!

Preferred materials: waterproof

4. Footwear

Socks: Once again, Cotton is bad! Even if there is no rain in the forecast, water will be found and stomped in. When cotton gets wet, it holds in the moisture and will not dry fast, leaving feet wet and getting cold faster! Some prefer two layers of socks, while others prefer just one. If you choose to have a liner sock, thin wool or polyester work best. These materials are breathable but add insulation. Your outer sock layer, or only sock layer if you choose to have a single layer, should be a thick hiker's sock, usually made from wool. This creates the insulated barrier of warm air close to the skin.

Preferred materials: wool, polyester, nylon

Boots: WATERPROOF IS A MUST! Rain boots (& rain jackets) are required to be brought to school each day. These boots can be left at school each day, to be ready for use when a rainstorm visits for the day. During the colder seasons, snow boots and muck boots (with no heel) are the best option for keeping little piggies warm in the wet seasons. Though they are bulky and hard to maneuver at times, warm feet = happy times! Once the feet get cold, it's hard to enjoy the exploration. When sizing waterproof boots for students, size up one or two sizes. Tight boots do not keep the cold out, and are very uncomfortable. On top of them growing out of their current size soon, adding one or two sizes will allow for more protection of insulated sock layers. Be sure not to size up too many sizes, as shoes too large can become a blister and tripping hazard.

Preferred materials: waterproof

5. Headgear

Protection against cold weather for the ears is required! Things to cover the neck, ears, face, and head are recommended. Beanies, headbands, scarfs, and hoods from jackets are good options to have on hand for students to choose which they want based on their body's warmth. Please try to stay away from materials that could get wet from rain or sweat and not dry quickly.

Preferred materials: cashmere, synthetic fleece, dry fit

6. Gloves

Liner gloves/mittens are a must! These gloves are the soft warm, knit material. These will be worn under the outer waterproof layer, so when that layer gets taken off, there is still one layer on bare skin. It is always a good idea to have multiple pairs of liner gloves left at the school for times when the material gets wet and needs to be changed out. If using mittens as a liner glove, please have waterproof mittens as an outer layer. This waterproof outer layer should be loose fitting, but not falling off. You want to have enough space between the layers to create insulated air. There is always the option of DIY by using old wool socks as

your base layer under the waterproof mittens. Please note that young children love choices. One day they may love their mittens, and the next they can't wear them without screaming. Having options of gloves and mittens to choose from will help children develop their decision making skills, while also keeping them warm and dry in colder weather!

Summer Weather: How to Dress Children for Sustained Outdoor Exploration

Playing outside is where children can freely practice their motor skills by being athletic, inquisitive, and exploring their surroundings however they choose. Most of the time, the choice will result in dirt on clothes, scratches on legs, and wonder in their eyes. Hot days require a very different set of gear compared to the cold winter months. Please note that while the below speaks about hot summer days, there will be chilly mornings and rainy days. Please review the weather each day to ensure your students will be comfortable, happy, and ready to explore beyond four walls!

1. Shirts & Pants

Warm summer weather is when cotton is one of the best options! Lightweight thin t-shirts, long sleeves, and sweaters help with layering on chilly mornings while also allowing for breathable and moveable materials during hot afternoons. When cotton gets wet, it will hold in moisture. In hot summer air, that moisture will dry in a decent amount of time, cooling off your student before it dries. Good alternatives to cotton are dry fit shirts made to wick away moisture and keep the skin cool. While thin long sleeve shirts are recommended for protecting the skin from scratches due to exploring in the woods, it is not required. Short sleeves, tank tops, long sleeves, and jackets are all permitted. Pants and shorts can be almost any material you can find them in! While full length pants, like jeans, are recommended for their durability and protecting the skin from scratches due to exploring in the woods, it is not required. Pants, shorts, and leggings are all permitted. Skirts and dresses are not permitted.

2. Footwear

Socks: During warm weather, cotton is a good material to have. When it gets wet from sweat or water, it will dry in a decent amount of time in the warm weather. Who doesn't love a wet, cool item on a hot summer day!

Shoes: CLOSE TOED SHOES ARE REQUIRED! Open toed shoes, including flip flops and sandals, are not permitted. Only close toed shoes (tennis shoes, flat tops, hiking boots, etc.) are able to keep everyone safe while exploring through the native woods. Please note that shoes should have a flat heel to help prevent tripping and stumbling over rocks and vines.

3. Headgear

Shielding skin from the sun helps reduce the risk of sunburn. Extended outdoor play will result in students running back and forth from sun to shade. Sun screen is required and will be applied multiple times a day. To help further, having sun hats, baseball caps, and other headgear shading the face and top of the head is recommended.

4. Rainy Day Gear

Boots: WATERPROOF IS A MUST! Rain boots (& rain jackets) are required to be brought to school each day. These boots can be left at school each day, to be ready for use when a rainstorm visits for the day. Changing into rain boots for water and mud play protect the socks and feet from getting wet so students have a dry pair of shoes to change back into once water play is done.

Jacket: WATERPROOF IS A MUST! Thin rain jackets are a great alternative to the bulky waterproof jackets used during winter weather. These thin jackets are breathable, allowing the students normal range of movement without overheating. This material will also help in keeping water off of their clothes, which could become chilly if soaked by rain.

Pants: The main concern is a waterproof rain jacket for rainy days. Waterproof pants are recommended, but not required. If you choose not to have waterproof pants, please be sure to provide us with enough changes of clothes that your students can change into dry clothes if they get too wet.

Gloves: WATERPROOF IS A MUST! Sometimes students will choose to wear gloves when playing in the rain so their hands do not become cold. A liner glove is not required during warm seasons.

Shopping Recommendations

There are so many options available, we wish we could list them all. A quick Google search of kids outdoor winter gear will bring up endless possibilities to browse through!

<https://mountainbaby.com>

<https://www.rei.com/h/kids>

<https://www.smartwool.com/Kids.html>

<https://www.backcountry.com/kids?fl=true>

<https://www.amazon.com>

<https://www.biddleandbop.com>

<https://www.weewoollies.com>

<https://ellaswool.com>

<https://shreddog.com>