



## 2012 Snowshoe Course Outline and Equipment List

February 9 (lecture) & 25 (field trip)  
Or  
March 29 (lecture) & April (7 field trip)

Welcome to Tacoma Mountaineers' Snowshoe Course! This is a relaxed, informative introduction to a beautiful winter sport. This is a beginner level class; we want you to learn a lot and have fun doing it. If you have any questions or concerns - please email both the Snowshoe Chair and the Snowshoe Secretary; one will get back to you soon.

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**Thursday evening Workshop:** The course opens with an evening workshop, approximately two hours.. Casual street clothes are fine; you don't need to bring any equipment or clothing. Bring a writing pad and a couple pens so you can take notes. Workshop discussion includes food and clothing for the winter environment, physical conditioning for cold-weather activity, snowshoeing equipment and technique, and basic safety considerations for winter mountain travel.

**Workshop Location**  
4011 Alameda Avenue  
University Place

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**Saturday Field Trip:** Due to changing snow and weather conditions the field trip location will be determined, and announced, at the evening workshop. If you're driving: make sure your car has anti-freeze and a full tank of gas, carry chains and jumper cables. Snow-park permits may be required. Weather may change dramatically during a field trip: a dry, sunny morning drive in may be followed by a snowy, messy drive out. Provisions for car-pooling will be discussed at the end of the workshop. If you ride with a driver you're expected to help pay for gas and parking.

**Field Trip Equipment:** You'll need some basic equipment for the Field Trip: a daypack with Ten Essentials; appropriate clothing, snowshoes and poles - all discussed below.

**Pack:** You'll want to bring and carry a daypack, large enough to at least carry a bulky rolled-up jacket. Too small a pack may tempt you to cut corners or omit something very important. Food, clothing, and small items like most Ten Essentials carry well in zip-lock quart or gallon freezer bags. When looking for something it's a lot easier, drier and cleaner to dump four waterproof bags out of your pack, instead of having twenty items fall into the snow - plus the bags keep their contents dry when you put a wet sweater, etc. in your pack.

**Ten Essentials:** In the 1930s The Mountaineers pioneered the "Ten Essentials" list - basic survival gear every backcountry traveler should carry. The list has evolved over time; it now may be remembered by the acronym **SHINN FFIRE** (which you can get hiking downhill...). The essentials are:

**Sun Protection** (sun glasses, sun screen, lip balm): sunglasses protect your eyes from both glare and wind. If you have both dark green and yellow you might bring both to use in different lighting conditions.

**Hydration** (extra water, water purification): Two quarts of water, in either water bottles or hydration packs, is a recommended minimum.

**Insulation** (extra clothing): Bring and carry an extra pair of heavy sox, extra gloves, and an extra sweater or vest.

**Nutrition:** high-carb trail snacks for energy (cookies, pastries and breads; candy; dried fruit; whatever suits your fancy). Bring some extra in case the trip runs long or, bad weather forces an overnight bivouac. If you don't mind a little extra weight it's nice to carry a small thermos full of a piping hot drink.

**Navigation (map & compass):** you should have a compass and a map of the area we'll be hiking. A tip regarding maps: instead of bringing your \$10 map on a trip, seeing it get dirty, folded and ruined - take it to a photocopy shop, make a couple \$1 color copies of the area you need (this paper usually is waterproof); carry the copies, leave the original at home for future copying.

**First-Aid Supplies (gauze, tape, etc.):** A modest first-aid kit goes a long way.

**Fire (fire starter, matches, lighter):** A couple Bic lighters, wooden matches in a waterproof container (pill or film canister, snack-size plastic bag), a couple small candles or commercial fire starter - all this in a zip-lock bag.

**Illumination (flashlight or headlamp, spare bulb & batteries):** Make sure it works before you leave home; carry a set of spare batteries.

**Repair Kit (knife, duct tape, tools, spare parts):** bring what you think you might need. A pocketknife, a little duct tape and wire, and a few wire-ties can go a long way.

**Emergency Shelter (tarp, garbage bag):** can be anything from a professional bivy bag to a space blanket, or a couple large garbage bags.

All the above, packed in a few zip-lock freezer bags, can save your life. It's also very helpful to carry your fully charged cell phone; many snowshoe areas have cell service if you have an emergency. Before the Field Trip: get out your day pack, lay out all your Ten Essentials (buying some if necessary), make sure everything works, bag'em up!

**Proper clothing:** Appropriate clothing in the mountains (especially in winter) will help you enjoy a pleasant, comfortable outing. Inappropriate clothing in the mountains (especially in winter) at least will cause a miserable struggle to stay warm; it may lead to hypothermia, serious injury or death. The Mountaineers err on the side of caution - PLEASE show up for the field trip appropriately dressed.

If you don't have any snowshoeing, skiing or other "winter play" clothing - you don't need to spend a fortune to get the latest, best, most expensive clothes. Military surplus and hunting/fishing stores often carry relatively inexpensive wool pants, shirts and hats. Charity stores such as Goodwill and St. Vincent De Paul may carry such items, priced at pennies on the dollar. Avoid light-wool men's summer dress trousers; you're looking for lumberjack-heavy pants and shirts. There are several good military surplus stores in the Tacoma - Fort Lewis area; look them up on the web, call and ask if they carry "winter outerwear" and "heavy duty wool shirts and pants". If they do go down, find what you like. Two Seattle stores are Surplus Too (excellent selection of wool clothing) and Federal Army & Navy Surplus.

**No cotton clothes** (no cotton shirts, blue jeans, long underwear, etc.) are allowed on Mountaineer snowshoe trips and many other Mountaineer outings. You've probably heard this before - yes, "cotton kills". Why is this?

A major element of safe backcountry travel, especially in winter, is avoiding "hypothermia". Hypothermia is a lowering of your body core temperature to the point where judgment becomes impaired, walking becomes difficult or impossible; extreme hypothermia results in death. At best hypothermia is both dangerous to you and a serious problem for your teammates, who may either have to carry you out or build an emergency shelter to keep you alive. At worst finding yourself a few miles from your car with night approaching, unable to walk in below-freezing temperatures, can be fatal.

Improper clothing often leads to hypothermia. Cotton, unlike almost any other clothing fabric, holds water like a sponge. If you wear cotton on a winter outing it sooner or later will get soaked; wet cotton + winter conditions = hypothermia, especially if the weather turns bad. If you don't believe this - try putting on a pair of jeans first thing on a cold morning, step in the shower and soak them in cold water, then go for a walk around your neighborhood. You'll probably suffer some discomfort, might get a little chilled; add in below-freezing temperatures, altitude, falling/sitting in snow, fatigue and bad weather and you have a recipe for tragedy. You wouldn't climb Mt. Rainer in your bare feet - please don't snowshoe in cotton clothes!

So - what is appropriate snowshoe clothing?

**Hats:** in winter wool or fleece/poly ski hats, watch caps, etc. are perfect. As weather warms up in spring ball caps or similar may be fine, as long as your wool hat is in your pack.

**Uppers:** several light layers better regulate body temperature than one thick layer. Poly turtlenecks or long underwear, covered with poly or wool shirts, sweaters or vests work great. The top layer should be a waterproof parka, wind shell or ski jacket. It's nice if all your upper layers can be unzipped or unbuttoned; raising or lowering several zippers can dramatically alter their heat-retaining properties, allow you to adjust for warmer or cooler weather, more or less strenuous exercise.

**Lowere:** a poly/fleece layer of long underwear, covered by heavy poly or wool pants, will keep you warm even when wet. Include a waterproof layer such as rain pants or ski pants. Gaiters are used to keep snow out of your boots. As you look to build your outdoor gear, pants with zippers along the sides of the legs are beneficial to allow ventilation and ease of changing over boots and other clothing.

**Feet:** a thin pair of artificial fiber or wool socks, covered with a thick pair of wool socks, works great. Cotton socks may lead to cold or frozen toes. Boots can be synthetic or leather hiking boots (heavier is better for winter) or plastic snow boots. Make sure your boots fit in your snowshoe bindings before you leave home! If you're renting snowshoes take your boots with you when you rent; have the store check fit and show you how to put your snowshoes on.

**Snowshoes:** Yes, you'll need snowshoes and poles. If you have them already you're good to go. If you don't you can rent them as a set. Tacoma-area rentals may be found at:

REI Tacoma  
3825 S Steele St  
Tacoma, WA 98409  
(253) 671-1938  
M-F 10 - 9  
Sat 10 - 8  
Sun 10 - 6

REI Southcenter  
240 Andover Park W  
Tukwila, WA 98188  
(206) 248-1938  
M-F 10 - 9  
Sat 10 - 8  
Sun 11 - 7

Sports Authority Tacoma  
1905 S 72nd St, Ste B  
Tacoma, WA 98408  
(253) 572-9900  
M - Sat 9 - 9:30  
Sun 9 - 9

Sports Authority Puyallup  
4423 South Meridian  
Puyallup, WA 98373  
(253) 841-1510  
M - Sat 9 - 9:30  
Sun 9 - 9

Other branches of the stores listed above, in the Seattle - Tacoma - Olympia area, may also rent snowshoes. If you learn of other places that rent snowshoes - please email the Snowshoe Chair and Secretary, let them know.

Snowshoe rental periods usually are for one day (Saturday) plus a "bookend" at each end, for example Friday afternoon and evening, Sunday morning. You may want to rent Friday morning, or even Thursday night, to be sure you get a pair. Be sure to take your boots with you when you rent! Ski or trekking poles are highly recommended to keep your balance and reduce fatigue while snowshoeing!!

**Field Trip's end:** No one may leave the Field Trip (unless you have both a really good reason and the Leader's permission) until we're all gathered back at the cars; leaving early means no credit for the Field Trip. This practice is followed to ensure that everyone is accounted for at the end of the day, and to have the full resources of the group if a search or evacuation is necessary. Bring a couple plastic grocery bags to store your wet boots after the field trip, a garbage bag for your wet clothes at field trip's end. Bringing a little duffel bag with a complete change of clothes (sweat suits are fine), dry socks and footwear can make the drive home much more pleasant. It's also nice to have a thermos or two of hot drinks waiting in your car!

**Conclusion:** We hope you enjoy our Snowshoe classes. We want you to be safe, have fun, and learn a lot. If you have any questions or comments before or during the course, or feedback after the course, please email both the Snowshoe Chair and the Snowshoe Secretary. Enjoy!

2012 Snowshoe Chair: Catherine "Katie" Keys; [valkate@comcast.net](mailto:valkate@comcast.net)

2012 Snowshoe Secretary: Jim "Mr. Goofy" Harvey; [jim5car@yahoo.com](mailto:jim5car@yahoo.com)