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[Home](#)
[Life](#)
[Running](#)
[Photos](#)
[Musings](#)
[Home](#) > [Running](#) > [Articles](#)
More articles:

- [20K wisdom](#)
- [A fitting stage for heroism](#)
- [Cheers to you](#)
- [Durian Power](#)
- [Gear for Cold Weather Running](#)
- [Happily ever after](#)
- [Harvest of hope](#)
- [Hill training](#)
- [Marathon muse](#)
- [The other side of the fence](#)
- [Penang revisited](#)
- [Performance review](#)
- [Running again](#)
- [Running resolutions](#)
- [Running in the movies](#)
- [State of road running in Malaysia](#)
- [Sunscreen](#)
- [To marathon or not to marathon?](#)
- [Stride Length](#)
- [3 Phases of The Marathon](#)
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- [2005: Year In Review](#)
- [My Bookcase](#)

GEAR FOR COLD WEATHER RUNNING by [Kwok-Foo Lai](#)

This informative article was written by Kwok-Foo Lai's personal experience and will be handy tips for those planning to run in colder climates.

Foreword

I thank Jamie Pang for giving me the opportunity to write and also a great appreciation knowing the [Pacemaker Group](#) of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I also thank my friends whom I ran with in [Twin Cities](#), [Minnesota](#), USA. Running around [Lake Harriet](#), [Lake Como](#), [Lake Calhoun](#) and [Saint Paul](#) trails in winter was great fun.

Running in the Cold and Your Clothing

Running in the cold has been always perceived by new runners to be harmful. I won't consider myself an experienced runner in cold weather, but I have to say my winter running in 2000/2001 in [Twin Cities](#), Minnesota had given me some great experiences and some wonderful winter running time with friends. At the end of the day what counts are a cup of hot chocolate, fresh warm bagel and croissants! Though living in Switzerland now, I still face some challenges and in the process, learn lots of new tricks and tips.

Running in cold is not so bad for your body. Unless the temperature is so low that you seriously risk a [frostbite](#), it is always warm enough to run. You might run into frostbite-threatening low temperature, so carefully chosen clothing is a smart place to start. Always keep your body warm.

Our body always does a great job of heating the air that we breathe and around us. There is no danger at all of freezing your lungs. You may at times feel a bit of burning sensation in your throat or chest if the air is super cold. If this is the case you will feel uncomfortable. Please cover your mouth with a scarf or ski mask. This will help warm up the air a bit more.

Please be aware that cold air can cause infection in your chest or throat. If you have a chest cold or sore throat, my best advice is to take a break from your running and also stop running outside during winter. I had that experience in the winter of 2004 and that actually caused me to miss more than a month of my [Stockholm Marathon](#) training.

The feeling of running on a track and field in a winter night might give you some satisfaction and fun where it is snowing out and you alone on the track training. The payback of this could be lot more harmful than you could imagine. As always, please use good judgement. If you are very sick, you have no business to run. Take care of yourself and get some crucial rest before heading back out on the roads.

When it's cold, there is ice. Be careful and watch your steps. I remember training in winter time when I actually slipped over a few times and fell on my butt. It was not a pleasant thing to happen when you are in midst of training season and peaking. This may cause you to miss at least two weeks' of training. Remember when you watch on TV programs like "America's Funniest Home Video" which you had a great laugh of others' misfortune? Those are not fun. Plan your running route carefully and look for trails where the snow is well ploughed and ice has melted. Run slow and always run against the traffic. Running against traffic will give the on-coming vehicle a warning and slow down. Also be warned that it is difficult for cars to stop quickly.

Again, plan your running route well. I prefer a start off running into the wind and come back with wind behind me. Otherwise you will sweat alot in the first half, and the wind will freeze you on the way back. As soon as you get home, get out of the sweaty clothes immediately and take a hot shower. Drinking lots of water is always the best suggestion cause you can get dehydrated fast. So....drink up.

Below are some tips and tricks which I think you could apply if running in the cold. The advices below and more could also be found on any running web sites, such as [RRCA](#), [eHow](#) and [Dr Pribut's site](#).



The key to cold weather running is dressing in layers. This will help trap warm air near your body for the best possible insulation. Cotton will hold moisture and will eventually start to chill you. Recommended items are Dri-FIT long sleeve T, wind breaker jacket, breathable fabrics, water and wind resistance materials. Cottons are not your best friend in winter running.

Your Inner Layer

Always have a tight layer which is closest to your body. Tight pants and tight long sleeved shirts are all recommended. Lightweight fabrics and Dri-FIT products will keep you from getting too wet. It should be long sleeved and skin-tight. Avoid cotton as your inner layer. Here I recommend you to check out on products like [ODLO](#) and [NIKE](#) whom I think make good lightweight materials.

Your Outer Layer

This should be a looser layer. Choose one that has a zipper at the neck which give you temperature control. Fleece pants will also do the trick where it keep your legs warm.

Shell

You have the choice to have the final shell. If the weather is very cold or windy, a good jacket is highly recommended. The jacket should be both resistant to water and wind. It should have space (eg. meshed areas, slits) to allow moisture to escape from your body. Always choose one with zipper. Normally the store offers you the whole suit which I think is very good. But it's a little bit expensive.

Hat

When you're out running in the cold, you tend to lose tons of heat from your head, and it is important to get your head covered. Cotton is OK for this part of your body. Fabrics that cover your face from the top is also good to have. Make sure that there is hole for your face. (Like [those used by the S.W.A.T.](#) team). A breathable and Dri-FIT fabric is always the recommended one.

Gloves

There are no fancy fabric for this part. A cheap pair of glove from your local hardware store will do the tricks. I have a few pair of gloves from Marathon Expos which they normally give out for free. So...freebies are good!

Last but not least. We all have different preferences about running but the main important things are: keeping yourself warm, keep dry and pay attention to your body. Run light, run tight, run warm, run with style and most important run with your brain and **NOT** brainless !!!

What do you do next? Plan your Saturday shopping accordingly and get ready for the winter running.