breaking hard is to have a couple people drop packs and break for 15 to 30 minutes. Then ski back to their packs and some others take over the trail-breaking. This way everyone takes a turn at breaking trail and everyone gets a break. The trail-breaking goes faster because the breakers are unencumbered, and it’s easy to catch up with a well-packed trail.

**SWITCHBACKS**

Breaking trail up steeper hills often requires the use of switchbacks, especially if you are using wax. I like to wax if the hills are short but will put in a skin track if it promises to be a long climb. Typically when people do a skin track, they try to avoid kick turns because they are slower than just making a smooth round turn while stepping your skis forward. Also, if you are pulling a sled it is easier to do an uphill step turn than a kick turn.

There are two ways of doing kick turns on a hill, uphill and downhill. The advantage to turning uphill is that you don’t lose any elevation executing the turn and it is faster once you get the hang of it. However, it is easier to get your skis hung up in the snow if the hill, and if you happen to fall over luring the tum, Murphy’s law says that you will fall off the hill. A downhill kick turn is definitely the way to go on a steep hill and if you are carrying a heavy pack, but it is impossible with a sled.

One last thing on breaking trail is you should always break to your weakest group member in terms of skins, wax, or ability. Otherwise the person wins up having to break his or her own trail. A waste of effort on both parts.

---

**CAMPING IN THE SNOW**

If you want to go camping at a time when the hordes of people and bugs are at their absolute minimum, winter is the time to go. Of course this is not the only advantage. It is also a wonderful time to be out. Travel over the snow is easy, elaborate camps can be built with little impact on the land and the beauty of being out on a dear moonlight night can’t be beat. All this, plus the fact that by going just a few miles into the mountains, you’ll discover gigantic areas of untracked snow waiting for you to ski.

**SNOW KITCHENS**

One of the best things about winter camping is what you can do with your shovel, some effort and vision. You can build very comfortable camps out of snow. In the following chapter,
we will talk about snow shelters but even if you are out with a tent a snow kitchen can be an object of beauty and function.

By piling snow up and digging down, you can make counters, tables, and seats. I have even made alcoves and half-open snow caves to cook in during nasty weather. It is important to remember that if you want a covered kitchen it needs to be well ventilated. Carbon monoxide fumes from stoves or lanterns are impossible to detect and safely.

When building with snow, work hardening is imperative. Packing down the snow with shovels, skis or boots makes it denser and harder. You have probably experienced this before making snowballs or shoveling snow that has been plowed. So if your snow is too soft for counters or seats, stomp on it for awhile and give it some time to set up before shaving things into the shape you want them. Experiment, experiment, experiment to figure out what works and what you like the best. Shoveling is a part of the winter experience, and I like to think of it as another way to get in shape.

I try to find an east-facing spot for my kitchen whenever possible. Mornings are typically the coldest part of the day, and this helps ensure the sun will arrive at the earliest possible moment. Once you have your kitchen area picked out, it is important not to contaminate the snow around it. This is where you will be getting your snow for melting into water. It is a good idea to designate other areas for urination.

One of the drawbacks of winter camping is the sudden onset of darkness in the early evening. This is easily overcome by bringing along a few candles and maybe even a lantern. Candles placed in a clear plastic bag or well protected from the wind in a kitchen alcove will provide sufficient light for cooking and other such activities. A small lantern will provide an amazing amount of light off the highly reflective snow and is a definite plus for those luscious winter trips.

THE WHYS AND HOWS OF COOKING AND MELTING SNOW

Besides the three Ss of winter camping (skiing, shoveling and sleeping) cooking and melting snow will be the next most time-consuming activities. Eating is important for maintaining your energy and staying warm. You can think of it as the fuel for your engine. Water is the oil, and you need plenty of it in the cold and dry winter air. Drinking four quarts of water a day wouldn’t be overdoing it.

MAKING WATER

Melting snow for water can be a time- and fuel-consuming process. But unless you happen to be camped near open water it is necessary. Be aware that you can scorch the snow. I know this sounds ridiculous to the uninitiated, but it is entirely possible to have your water taste like burnt rice. Believe it or not I first experienced this phenomenon in the high deserts of Utah. There we were camped in the snow with no water in sight. So we threw some snow in our pot and stuck it on the stove and wha-la, lousy-tasting burnt water is what we got.

The easiest way to avoid this undesirable result is to place some water in the pot with the snow. This keeps the pot from scorching the snow. If you have hot water then starting with a small amount of snow in the pot and stirring rapidly until you get some water is the next best solution. If you don’t believe me about scorching the water then give it a try with some dry snow. Bon appeti.

If you happen to be camping near open water, you’re in luck. You won’t need to spend as much time around the roar of the stove. Two things to keep in mind are access to the water and its purification. Make sure you can get to the water source without falling in. The only thing worse then getting your feet wet is going for a swim. Thirst need to treat water for giardia and other waterborne illnesses is the same as it is in the summer. It will take about twice as long for chemicals purifiers, such as iodine, to work but they won’t freeze like a water filter will. I like to use Potable Aqua as it is light and small. Bringing the water to a boil also works just fine.

STORING WATER

You decide to make a pot of water the night before so you can get an early jump on the stinging in the morning, but when you get up, you discover that what you have in the morning is a pot of ice. Bummer. You can avoid this troubling scenario by actually burying your water in the snow!
Snow is an excellent insulator. This is one of the reasons animals dig into the snow to sleep. We can use this insulation to our advantage. By placing a pot of water down a hole in the snow and then covering it with a block of snow or some bags, you can keep it from freezing into a solid block of ice. Then in the morning you have water to start the day with and won't have to spend those precious daylight hours melting snow.

I like to go to bed with at least 2 quarts of water per person already made. What you want ideally is to have enough water made so that when you get up you can have one or two hot drinks, breakfast and fall water bottles for the day's activities without having to melt a whole bunch of snow.

EATING

Food is a good thing. Anyone who spends a great deal of time winter camping is sure to agree. In the winter, where we are the main source of heat, we need lots of calories to stay warm and active. A good mark to shoot for is 3,700 to 4,500 calories per day. This equates to about 2 to 2.5 pounds of dry food per person per day. The NOLS Cookery is an excellent source of information and recipes for those about to embark on any wilderness adventure. Whatever you do, don't short yourself on food in the winter because it is a very unpleasant time to be hungry and cold.

Foods high in fats, such as cheese and nuts, will supply about twice the calories per gram as other types of food. Whereas carbohydrates provide about 4 calories per gram, fat provides over 8. It also takes longer for our bodies to digest fats. What does this mean for us in the winter environment? If we eat a dinner of macaroni and cheese versus just macaroni then we get more calories that will last longer; therefore we will stay warmer as we sleep the night away. On the other side of the coin, eating cheese or nuts to give us some energy for that long climb just ahead won't really work. By the time we actually metabolize and start getting energy from these types of food, the hill climb will be long over. Thus our trail snacks it is better to eat more simple carbs like crackers, dried fruit and chocolate. In the end it is wise to eat some fats and lots of carbs throughout the day. This will give us the short- and long-term energy we need to keep ourselves going.

TIPS

**TIPS**

Some people like to drink their pasta water as a hot drink to save time and fuel for melting water. Proper spicing is essential to make it palatable.

To speed up the process of turning snow into water, think about bringing a second stove—especially if you are in a group of three or more.

**SEARCHING for some running WATER**

**TIPS FOR LIGHTING A STOVE IN COLD WEATHER**

In cold weather stove fuel (both butane and white gas) can be hard to light initially, especially after a night of extremely cold temperatures. You can keep the fuel in the tent or snow shelter to keep it warmer or warm it under your parka before using.

With white gas, you can hold a lighter or match flame to the gas in the spirit cup until it heats up enough to ignite. Also try preheating the spirit cup with a lighter before adding the gas to it.

**Candy and other such wrappers are hard to deal with in the wintertime as they tend to blow away or get lost. Just try to unwrap one with mittens on and not litter the world. Unwrapping and bulk bagging food before you go is an easier way to deal with it in the winter.**

Get rid of food boxes and excess packaging, i.e., crackers and cookies, by rebagging these items as well. A dish with a screw-on lid for butter or margarine works well and protects your pack from a grease attack.

Frozen oil or liquid in plastic jars can be thawed by placing it in hot water.

Your menu can also include frozen vegetables and meats. Your fridge at home could be warmer than your campsite!
CLEANLINESS
An important part of saying healthy and of camping in good style is the degree to which you clean. There is nothing more disgusting in my mind than cooking meal after meal in the same dirty pot. I mean it really doesn’t take much effort or time to clean a pot with some warm water or snow. Then you have a nice clean pot for the next meal. In addition, you lessen the risk of contracting some foodborne illness. Dry scrape the pot first with a spoon or spatula to get out all the big food scraps and put them in your garbage. With the rest it is best to sump it in one spot as this avoids contaminating the snow/water source. Also keep your hands clean for cooking. If you have a special pair of thin gloves for cooking with, you lessen the chance of passing on germs and it helps keep your hands warmer. It is also a good idea to wash your hands (before cooking and after pooping) with some warm water if they are really dirty.

Variety is the spice of life so don’t limit yourself to just power bars, which can be dangerous to your dental work anyway if you don’t warm them up.

When cooking remember to pick up food scraps as you go along. I like to keep a small bag for garbage handy just to make it easier. Leaving food behind makes for sloppy camps and encourages animals to think of us as soup kitchens. I personally hate it when the wildlife starts demanding that I feed it, especially when it is bigger than me, so I appreciate it when we clean up after ourselves.
SLEEPING WARM

SLEEPING WARM

Eating and drinking enough is critical to sleeping warm. A big dinner with lots of calories can really get your metabolism going. If you find that you wake up cold during the late hours of the night, take a little food or bed to help replenish lost calories and get your metabolism going again. The same goes for water. Being dehydrated is the cause for so many ailments, it is surpisingly we don’t hear more about it in everyday life. The flip side however, is being over hydrated. It is no fun having to get up ten times during the right to pee. One to three time a night is plenty. Voicing our ladders is import for staying warm, though. If you are holding it in, your body will be wasting energy keeping that water at 98.6 degrees. By peeing we have more energy to spare for ourselves and we will be more comfortable. I often use a pee bottle in the winter, but unfortunately this option does not work for us all. In any case, getting up during the night affords us the opportunity to check out the weather and is beneficial to our sleep in the long run.

The first thing you should do before climbing in your sleeping bag at night to get nice and warm. Go for a ski or post hole your way around camp once or twice. I prefer to do a bunch of last minute shovel work on the kitchen. Whatever you do, your goal is to get toasty warm. A sleeping bag can be thought of like a Thermos: if you put something warm in it, it keeps it warm. If you put something cold in, it stays cold. So go to bed warm.

I also like to sleep in most of my insulating layers. No matter how well you've slept with your boots on, the way you don’t have to take all that time getting dressed and undressed. Plus it’s easier to get out of bed if you are already dressed in warm clothes. All this hype about sleeping bare naked just sounds cold to me. Of course if you wear clothes that are so tight as to be constrictive, then perhaps you should take them off – or go buy some larger clothes. A hat is also a wonderful thing to wear to bed. People always underestimate the importance of keeping your head warm. If you find that you are sleeping too warm then take the hat off and/or try unzipping the bag before taking off layers.

My friend Tom always had trouble with cold feet during the night. Much like how many loose socks or booties he slept with: his feet were always cold. I suggested that instead of wrapping his feet up separately at night, he try wrapping them together in a pile jacket with just a single pair of socks on. I theorized that then his feet would be able to share heat instead of being isolated. Luckily for the two of us it worked! He had warm feet and I had credibility.

Sleeping pads are important for a warm night’s sleep. The two coldest nights I ever had were when I didn’t even own a pad, and one night when I rolled off my pad. I couldn’t figure out why I was so cold until I woke up in the morning to find that I had rolled about 10 feet from where my ensolite was. We lose an incredible amount of heat to the snow via conduction so the more we can protect against this the cosier we will be. I personally like to have a least two full length ensolite pads or a thermarest and an ensolite. If you have a synthetic parka and pants, you can also place these between your bag and the pads for more insulation.

If after all this you find that you are still cold, you have two options left. One is to try snuggling close to your campmate. 
Even if you don't zip together, just spooning allows you to suck thermals from the tent and possibly tip the balance between cold and warm. I personally highly recommend thermals. The other option, not quite as friendly, is to take a hot water bottle to bed. The heat from this can be strategically placed at any cold spots until they are warmed up. You will also then have warm water to sip on during the night. Warning for those with pee bottles! Don't get the two mixed up unless you like rude awakenings.

UNDER THE STARS
From time to time I enjoy sleeping out under the stars. It's great to wake up at night and see the sky overhead. It also makes for a lot of elbow room getting up and going to bed, and if you have smelly tent mates, well... However, it is definitely a lot colder sleeping out because you radiate heat into space instead of trapping it in the walls around you.

Using a bivy bag can help add another 10 degrees of comfort to your sleeping bag. Sleeping underneath a tree, while blocking your view of the stars, saves a significant amount of heat loss through radiation as well. I have even weathered out storms by sleeping under the thick canopy of spruce trees. Although sleeping out in the winter isn't for everyone, some folks find it very enjoyable and not all of them are claustrophobic.

FIRES FOR EMERGENCIES
In the winter it is not easy to find wood lying around. This is one reason why fires are generally not appropriate for winter. Another reason is the difficulty of building a fire on top of the snow. There are times, however, when some type of emergency may dictate a fire to keep folks warm or to rework a hypothermic patient. At these times, it is important to know how to start one going in the snow.

First, you need to know where to gather wood. Using live trees is a poor option as green wood does not burn readily. I look for dead trees that have fallen over and have branches sticking up above the snow. These can be easily collected along with other dead branches from still living trees. A good place to find small branches for kindling is low down on the dead branches of spruce trees, since these are dry and burn well.

Once you have gathered the wood take the largest pieces and lay them on the snow. These will form the platform on which to build the fire. Now using the kindling and any fire starter you have, pile it on your platform and light it. If you have no fire starter then make wood shavings with a knife. You can use a stove or the gas from a stove to get things going as well but be careful since gas is a very volatile substance. If you lack these things then using the absolute smallest pieces of kindling you can find should work. If you don't have a lighter or matches, you're out of luck and you should think about what it means to be prepared.

The platform you build should keep the fire up off the snow, so it doesn't go out. If you have ever read anything by Jack London, you know to be wary of lighting the fire underneath a tree loaded with snow as well. When it is going strong you can use a space blanket to reflect the heat behind you. If you brought a tin can or pots then you can also make hot water. Be careful about setting all these nylon clothes on fire.
KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Winter camping is a fun and challenging way to experience the winter. But not everything will work the same for every person, and for this reason it is a good idea to start out slow. Start off close to the road so that you will have an easy bail out if things aren't going right. Experiment with different techniques and find out what works for you. Make things as simple as possible; it will increase efficiency and reduce frustration. An example of making things simple is using zipper pulls on everything so you can zip with mittens on.

I'm not a fan of lots of little storage pockets. I can never remember where I put something, and it is far easier for me to search in one big place then in a bunch of small pockets or stuff sacks. Trying to pack everything into its own little sack also makes packing up a long drawn out affair. Nothing ever fits as easily as it did in town, and the act of stuffing nylon sleeping bags, bivy bags, sleeping pads, tents, extra clothes and so on in their own little bags just makes my hands cold. Instead I like to have a lightweight medium-sized duffel bag for my extra clothes and stuff I don't need while on the trail. (Mike uses a huge nylon laundry bag.) This bag, and other things like my sleeping bag, gets shoved into the bottomless pit of my pack. I keep my extra layers, food and water for the trail on top of all this. Then when I stop, all I have to do is open up the top of my pack and everything that I need for a break is there. In the very top pouch of my pack is where I keep all the little stuff like sunglasses, sunscreen, waxes and skins. If I am using side pockets, I will put miscellaneous stuff like repair kits, fuel bottles, probes snow saves, etc., in them.

When I use a sled, I have my pack filled with all the stuff I need for the day, and the sled is packed with all the stuff I need in camp. This way I can ski around without the sled and not worry about having left anything behind.

DRESSING FOR THE WINTER

Nothing is more important to your comfort and health than dressing properly for the winter environment. I once experienced a -40 degrees day in February only to have it warm up to just below freezing later in the day. In the morning I was wearing everything I had to stay warm while cooking breakfast.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Have your mom or dad help you cut out the skier and his clothes, then you can dress him up for a bitchin' powder day!
and in the afternoon I was breaking trail in nothing but lightweight poly pro. For this reason, the use of multiple layers in the winter is the way to go. This gives you the option of wearing enough clothes to stay warm, but not so many that you will sweat to death while performing physical activities.

SOME IDEAS ABOUT LAYERING

Cotton clothing is not a good idea in the winter. The problem with cotton is that when it gets wet from sweating or falling down in the snow, it has no insulating value and takes forever to dry. Wearing a wet cotton shirt next to your body is not only uncomfortable but potentially dangerous to your health as well. So nix the cotton.

Clothes made of wool or synthetic materials, such as polypropylene, capilene, Dacron, etc., are the way to go in the winter. Not only do they retain insulating properties when wet, but many of the synthetics help to wick moisture away from the body keeping you dry. Synthetic materials will dry quicker and easier than wool and are usually lighter, although they are less eco-friendly.

A distinction is made between wicking and insulating layers. In general wicking layers are meant to be worn close to the skin, as the material in them is designed to help draw water away from your skin. Polypropylene is a good example of this. Insulating layers may also dry quickly depending on the material used, but are mainly designed to trap dead air space and slow the loss of body heat. Pile, wool, Qualofil and down are examples of some of the materials used for insulation.

Wind/snow shedding layers are also important. These slick outer layers of nylon help block the wind from stealing your heat and keep you from looking like the abominable snowman. Your layers should strip off easily or vent well since nothing is worse than climbing a hill with too many layers on.

A TOURING OUTFIT

Here are some ideas on what to bring for a day of touring in the backcountry. These same layers will also form the basic layers for overnight trips into the mountains. The best way to figure out what works is to experiment on your various trips. Eventually you will come up with a system you like. It is important to be prepared for any eventuality however. So if you never have experienced any really cold weather, you shouldn’t assume you won’t. You need to carry enough to deal with possible situations such as colder than normal temperatures or an unplanned bivouac. I always carry an extra layer in my pack for that one eventuality when I need it.

Most of my experience is in the intermountain west and my suggestions reflect this. If I was doing a trip in the Pacific Northwest or the Northeast, I might do some things differently. Having a rain coat in my pack is one example. Typically I don’t bring a rain coat winter camping in Wyoming. But if I went to
For the head, hands and feet I like to wear a hat, mittens and socks. Seriously though, you shouldn't underestimate the value of a warm hat. The head contains bts of blood vessels and can be a huge source of heat loss, so insulating it from the elements does far more than just keep the forehead warm. Some people like baladavas, others ski hats and neck gaiters and still others a combination of the two. As long as its functional and warm, it doesn't matter. I like a warm hat that is covered with nylon to keep the snow off. For warmer days I bring a wool headband to keep my ears warm when I'm not wearing my hat.

I prefer mittens to gloves as they keep my fingers warmer. They should fit comfortably over a pair of thin liner gloves for doing those things you just can't do with mitts. I like these knitted nylon gloves from Well Lamont, which cost a little over a dollar at most grocery stores. But any wool or synthetic gloves will do. With any mittens, you should also get some mitten shell to keep the snow off. An advantage to the mitten shell combo is you can just wear the shell with thin gloves on those really warm days.

As for socks I'm a firm believer in wearing two heavy pairs with your boots for warmth. I'm not a fan of vapor barrier liners since they make my feet wet and cold, but there are plenty of people who like them. They do keep your socks and boots dry from sweat on mud or day trips. Remember that you need to be careful and diligent about getting out of those soggy VBLs and changing into your booties system when you get into camp at the end of the day.

**CAMP CLOTHES**

When going out on an extended trip more clothes become necessary for those tasks such as standing around at night melting snow for water. At least if you want to be comfortable enough to enjoy sitting out doing things like making dinner, reading stories, etc. It is possible to go lighter, but this requires more activity to stay warm and earlier nights to bed. I will cover clothing options that err toward the comfortable side and you can eliminate what you want, but be careful, it can get cold out there.

A big warm parka, especially one with a hood, is key to staying warm. Synthetic or down is a question that gets asked. I think it depends on where you live and ski—and on your pocketbook. I have
times I fall into the snow while skiing and by wearing clothes that will shed snow. If I am doing lots of downhill skiing and find my clothes starting to get soaked from falling, then I call it a good day and head back to camp for some hot drinks. I also get damp from sweat when breaking trail on warm days. To limit how much I sweat and how many layers get wet, I strip off unneeded clothes. If it is really cold and I can't afford to be taking off layers, I go at a slower speed and pace myself so I don't sweat.

Now what do I do to dry out? First, when I get into camp I put on a bunch of layers while I am still warm. This is a good idea whenever you stop because it's better to trap the heat you have then to let it escape. If you let yourself get cold before layering up, you have to regenerate the warmth you lost. You worked hard to create all that body heat; don't waste it. By staying warm, your body starts to act like a clothes dryer. Your warmth pushes the moisture away from your body into successively outer layers of clothing and eventually the air. How fast this happens depends on how warm a person you are and how much heat you push. To help this process along you need to be active, as activity creates heat. As always, being well fed and hydrated helps too.

Once in camp with some layers on, I do the work that needs to get done. This usually involves some form of moving snow; digging shelters, building stoves or making improvements. By staying busy and keeping warm I usually dry out my clothes by the time bedtime rolls around.

If smaller items, such as gloves and socks, have not dried out by the time I am ready for bed, I sleep with them in my bag to dry them out.

Since wet or damp wool socks freeze in the winter, you need to be active to dry them out. Once you take them off, put them on your shoulders next to your wicking layer. This helps them warm up and they will dry out. Since it takes time for wool to dry, you may need to sleep with your socks. I usually keep a pair on my shoulders and put the other pairs on my stomach or along the inside of my thighs. I can dry four socks a night. Be careful though, and don't try and dry too much stuff in your bag at night. This can rob you of heat and make your night unpleasant. Another option is to put wet socks over a hot water bottle and keep them warm. This works for dry socks although it stretches them out a bit.

The same is true for boots. As boots get wet from sweaty feet, they start to freeze when they are off your feet. This makes it a real drag to put them back in your feet. You need to find a way to keep them warm. At night it is easy enough to sleep with them...
in your bag; other times, tie the laces together and suspend them around your neck underneath your parka. A small whisk brush is invaluable for clearing the snow out of those hard to reach places on your boots. This keeps the snow from melting in your bag. An advantage to double boots, besides being warmer, is that you can sleep with just the inner boot and leave the bullier shells out. If you wear glasses, you may find that your boots also make a great place to put your enses at night.

Gaiters and anything nylon like wind shells) dry quickly in the winter. For this reason I don’t go to great lengths to dry this stuff at night. If I want to keep it from freezing I stick it under or between my sleeping pads.

Finally, whenever the sun is shining you can dry wet stuff. If you are not wearing your boots, put them in the sun, with the insoles pulled out. If you have glue-on skins, hang them off your ski to dry. Put those frozen water bottles out. Use those sunny days to your advantage but be careful not to let things blow away if the wind comes up. As you become skilled at winter camping, you will find it easier and easier to keep stuff dry and to dry it out when it does get wet.

**TIP FOR SLEEPING BAGS**

Sleeping bags absorb moisture from our bodies at night, especially when we are drying out damp clothes. To keep them dry, hang them on your skis in the morning as soon as you get up. The warm moisture will evaporate out of your bag in the cold dry air. This works especially well in the wind. Even if it is snowing you can do this as long as it is not a warm wet snowfall. Dry snow easily brushes off without making the bag wet.

**SNOW SHELTERS**

Perhaps nothing about winter camping is as distinctive as the ability to build with snow. The presence of this amazing stuff gives us the opportunity to build truly comfy winter shelters. A snow shelter is warmer and quieter than a tent, a big advantage on windy nights. They can be small enough for one person or big enough to accommodate 20 people. Once you have gained the know-how and have some experience under your belt, they become relatively easy to build.

There are many different types of snow shelters and each has its advantages and disadvantages. Some work only in certain given snow conditions, while others are more adaptable. The only things you really need to build a shelter are snow, a shovel and the willingness to work hard for a couple of hours.

There are two basic principles involved with snow shelters. One is work hardening of the snow and the other is shape. In work hardening the snow we are compressing it via mechanical action, thereby making it denser and strengthening the bonds between the grains of snow. This allows us to dig in the snow without having it fall down on us and gives us the ability to cut blocks out of it. The amount of work hardening that needs to be done depends on the snow.

**WORK HARDENING SNOW!**

Hot and sweaty? Strip some layers before you soak yourself! also a good way to warm up...

**TROMP HARD WITH YOUR SKIS AND BEAT MERCILESSLY WITH YER POLES!**