

Safety Tips



It starts with Scouts.

February 2015

Tobogganing Safety

Tobogganing is a fun activity for groups of all ages, and it's something Canadians have been doing to make winter bearable for as long as people have been here. Of course, pointing a toboggan down a hill and sliding down over the snow and ice has some inherent risk (really, it's part of what makes it fun)—but there's a big difference between risking a spill and putting yourself in serious danger. There are a few precautions any group should consider as part of planning, doing, and reviewing a tobogganing outing.



- **Avoid exposed skin.** On very cold days, cover up any exposed skin to avoid frostbite. Use the buddy system to make sure that both you and your friend have your faces appropriately covered; check in with each other from time to time. Check any exposed skin for white patches that can indicate frostnip.
- **Don't be reckless.** Building jumps, playing "chicken" with oncoming toboggans, and seeing how many people can fit on a toboggan at one time are all foolish ways of taking a fun activity and making it unnecessarily risky.
- **Dress appropriately.** Dress in layers (base, mid, outer) so that you can stay warm or let off a little heat if you get too hot. Wear a hat, mittens, warm socks, winter boots, snowpants, and a winter jacket.

Your outer layers should be water resistant, and your clothing and accessories should be made of wool or a synthetic material like polyester. Remember: cotton is made from a plant, so it will naturally absorb moisture. Cotton clothing will make you wet and cold.



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- **Inspect the hill.** Choose a hill that's not too steep, and make sure it has a safe landing area. Inspect the hill for rocks, ice, and other hazards before tobogganing. Even a thick covering of snow can shift around over a single outing to reveal hazards, so keep an eye on the conditions before, during, and after every run.
- **Watch for other tobogganers.** Share the hill. Wait until the way is clear before setting off, and watch up the hill for anyone headed your way once you've reached the bottom. Walk up the hill on the side, out of the way of tobogganers headed down.
- **Wear a helmet.** You've only got one brain, so there's no use taking chances with it. Any helmet is beneficial, so use what you have: a hockey helmet, a cycling helmet or a ski helmet.
- **Wear sunglasses.** A sunny day in the winter can be extremely bright, as the sunlight reflects off the snow. Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.
- **Wear sunscreen.** Exposed skin can burn even in the winter. Remember to put on sunscreen before heading out tobogganing.

And Scouters, don't forget to complete an [Outdoor Activity Form](#) before going tobogganing with your Section!

Happy sliding!