FIELD GUIDE · NO. 29

# Sleeping System

*A sleeping bag does not generate heat. The bag, the pad, dry clothing, and the shelter work together.*




## FROM THE BOOK

1. A sleeping bag does not generate heat. Your body produces the heat; the bag slows how quickly that heat escapes. Climbing into a bag already chilled often means a long wait to feel comfortable.
2. The ground matters as much as the bag. Insulation compressed under your body loses much of its ability to trap warm air. A sleeping pad — foam, air, or both — creates a barrier between you and the soil, rock, or snow.
3. Temperature ratings are a starting point, not a guarantee of comfort. Age, body size, fatigue, hydration, and what you have eaten all affect how warm you feel. Choose a bag with a reasonable margin for changing weather rather than the lightest bag available.
4. Wear dry clothing inside the bag, ideally a clean, dry base layer. A warm hat helps because heat is lost through any part of the body left exposed. Avoid clothing so bulky that it compresses the bag's loft — compressed insulation cannot trap air efficiently.
5. Eat a warm meal before bed. A short walk can warm you; strenuous exercise that leaves you sweaty does not help. Ventilate the shelter when you can to reduce condensation. Keep the bag in a waterproof stuff sack or heavy-duty liner during the day.
6. At home in a winter outage, the same ideas apply: gather in one room, use bags or extra blankets, and add insulation under sleeping areas.

### PRACTICE IT

At camp or even on the living-room floor, lay out pad, bag, and a dry base layer, and notice how much colder the floor feels without the pad.