

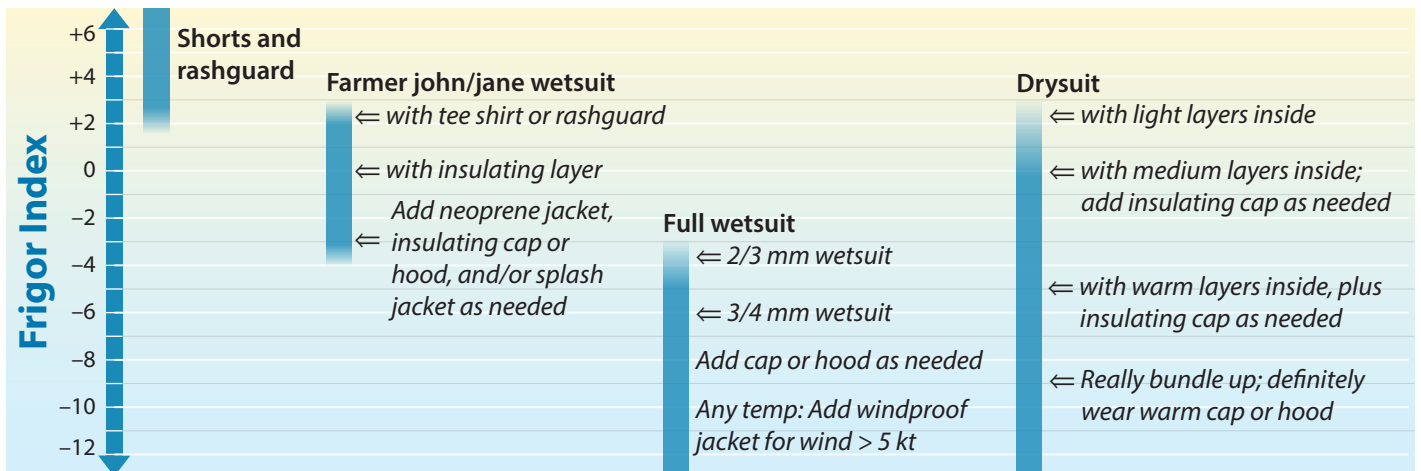
# How to dress for your paddle

## 1 Compute the FRIGOR INDEX for your paddle

This index is totally something I made up. It has no scientific basis. However, these are the key factors to consider, and these values are realistic for Bay Area paddles— so, it should offer rough guidance.

Body type	score	Weather*	score	Water temp	score	Type of kayaking**	score	
Very large	+2	Hot (≥80s)	+1	Warm (80s)	0	Protected waterways; shore nearby	+2	total score = Frigor Index
Large	+1	Clement (70s)	0	Cool (70s)	-1	Calm open water; wet head unlikely	+1	
						Spray likely; rolls or rescues possible	0	
Medium (or tall but lean)	0	Cool (60s)	-1	Chilly (60s)	-2	Planning to be good and wet, but upright in boat most of the time	-1	
Small	-1					In the water quite a bit (e.g., assisted rescue practice)	-2	
Very small	-2	Chilly (50s)	-2	Cold (50s)	-3	In the water a great deal (e.g., self-rescue or rolling practice, surfing)	-4	
scores:		<input type="text"/>	* If windy, subtract 1 If rainy, subtract 2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	** If mostly active paddling, add 1 If lots of sitting around, subtract 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

## 2 Use the FRIGOR INDEX to decide what to wear



**Some takeaways:** A farmer john/jane is not really able to keep you warm for rescue practice, unless you're exceptionally large-bodied. A full wetsuit can keep you warm in the cold, but it can be too warm in mild conditions. Drysuits are the most adaptable ... which is why people gravitate to them.

## Why we dress for immersion

This infographic was made in a spirit of fun and with a focus on comfort — nobody likes to be too cold, and nobody wants to feel like a steamed prawn. However, when we say "Dress for immersion," we mean, "Dress to buy yourself time in case you fall out of your boat and do not get back in quickly." Our waters are dangerously cold even in summer. In the Bay Area, hypothermia is at the root of most kayaking deaths.

# Let's get practical

## Some basic information about clothing options

### Farmer John/Jane wetsuit

This is where most kayakers start, after they move up from strictly protected paddling.



You can wear an insulating top under the suit (lightweight neoprene or other fabric), and a neoprene jacket and/or splash jacket over it.



Splash jackets are also used with full wetsuits.

← Wetsuits of either type should fit snugly! In the water, neoprene only keeps you warm if water can't flow under it. Wetsuits tend to stretch over time. →

### Full wetsuit

A full wetsuit (or separate bottom & top) is great if you're going to be seriously wet, and it's robust.



Surfer wetsuits offer good mobility and can take abuse that a drysuit can't.

The fabric panels that make surfer suits tough also cause wind chill, so you'll want a splash jacket or dry top.

Wetsuits come in different weights of neoprene—e.g., 2 mm/3 mm and 4 mm/5 mm. Thicker is warmer.

You can wear an insulating layer under a wetsuit.

### Drysuit

A drysuit is a big purchase, so you'll do the homework on what type to get. Good ones do show up on Craigslist!



Big leaks almost always result from not fully closing a zipper. (We all do it!) Carry spare clothes in a drybag.

### Insulating layers

Insulating layers for kayaking must offer warmth even when wet. Wool works, as do many synthetic fleeces and microfibers. Thin neoprene-type layers are good under Farmer John/Jane suits.

You can get wonderful layers from paddling specialists (e.g., Kokatat, NRS, Immersion Research). You can also get good ones for less money elsewhere.

The most flexible approach is to have several tops and bottoms in different weights, which you can layer as needed.

A onsie (union suit) can be wonderful but is more limiting; talk to people before you buy.



If you're male -- check whether bottom layers have a fly.

### Caps and hoods

An insulating cap makes a huge difference in cold water. Make sure that what you get works under your helmet.



← The warming power of a balaclava-style hood has to be felt to be believed.

### Earplugs

Chronic cold water exposure can cause surfer's ear -- bony growths in the ear canal. A cap or hood can help, but earplugs are better. Earplugs for this purpose can be simple and inexpensive or fancier and pricer.

