

# IS THIS HIKE RIGHT FOR MY DOG TODAY?

## *a cold-weather decision guide*

*a simple way to decide whether today's wintery conditions match your dog's needs*

**Directions:** Check all the boxes that apply to today's conditions, your dog, and your planned route. Then take a moment to look at where most of your checks land in the "Final Check" section. *There are no right answers.* The goal is to match your confidence level and your dog's needs with the right adventure.


### 1 What does it feel like outside?

- Cold, but sunny and calm
- Windy
- Damp, snowy, or icy

 *If it's windy or wet, conditions may feel much colder than the temperature suggests.*


### 2 How old is your dog?

- Young (high energy, still growing)
- Adult (adaptable)
- Senior (stiff joints, harder to regulate body temps)

 *If hiking with multiple dogs, prioritize the needs of the most the most limited dog.*


### 3 What kind of hike is this?

- Long or high elevation
- Short & familiar
- Technical terrain (rocks, scrambles)
- Shaded or wind-exposed trails

 *Winter hikes should generally be shorter and less technical than summer outings.*

### 4 How is your dog acting today?

- Energetic and focused
- Distracted or over-excited
- Slow to warm up
- Already stiff and sore

 *A dog having an "off" day may struggle more in cold weather.*

### 5 Do you have the right gear?

- Jacket (if needed)
- Water + bowl
- Paw protection
- Leash you can grip with gloves

### Final Check

- Mostly green lights:** go enjoy your hike, just stay observant
- Several hesitations:** consider shortening your hike or choosing a gentler trail
- Red flags:** proceed with caution; today might be a better day for a neighborhood walk or enrichment at home, depending on your dog

