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## Prepare for a sledding adventure



Sledding is a fun-filled activity, but it can be made an even better time, and a little safer, if revelers learn a little more about it.

Dashing through the snow in a one-horse open sleigh ...

Winter holidays are made all the more merry with the addition of some outdoor recreation. Sleights and sleds are par for the Christmas course, especially when a bounty of snow is in the forecast.

Sledding has been part of snowy celebrations for ages. Sledding is a fun-filled activity, but it can be made an even better time, and a little safer, if revelers learn a little more about it.

### Sled styles

Sleds come in many different styles, each with its own advantages. Sleds with metal blades will work like ice skates, balancing riders' weight on two metal runners. These sleds can work well during icy conditions or with hard-packed snow. Toboggans can fit multiple people, which can increase the fun factor and downhill speeds. Saucer-style sleds are good for one or two people. Foam liners on some saucers

can absorb shock for riders, making those downhill bumps a little easier on the backside. Keep in mind that sleds with steering mechanisms are easier to control, which can equate to safer sledding.

### Layer up

It is best to dress in layers when going sledding. Even if it seems warm at home, it may be colder and windier at the top of hills. Sweating when it's cold out can increase a person's risk for hypothermia. According to experts at Timberline Trails, a person who works up a sweat and comes in contact with ambient air when taking a break will feel an immediate chill. This is called evaporative danger, and can be remedied by dressing in layers and trying to stay dry.

### Invest in a helmet

Sledding requires the use of a helmet. At high speeds, a blow to the head can cause a concussion or worse.

### Let others go first

Wait until some sledders have already gone downhill, allowing them to compact the snow, which should make for a smooth ride.

Choose safe hills, such as those that are free of bare spots, holes, trees, and obstructions, and do not end abruptly at a road. Hills with a long, flat areas at the end make for easy, safe stopping.

### Safety first

Put safety first when sledding. Sled during the daytime so visibility is better. Keep arms and legs on the sled, and only sled feet-first, advises the National Safety Council.

By keeping these guidelines in mind, sledders can make sure this popular winter activity is as safe as it is fun.

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## Spending holidays away from home



Traveling during the holidays can mean being away from home for celebrations. Learn ways to reduce feelings of isolation.

The holiday season is as an opportunity for families to come together, celebrate and catch up. But thanks to work, military service, school, or other commitments, plenty of individuals won't be home to celebrate the holidays with their families. It's natural for people in such situations to feel homesick, but there are many ways to stay upbeat when spending the holidays away from home.

- Make plenty of contact with loved ones. Use devices to your advantage to stay in touch this holiday season. Schedule frequent video chats and share

photos so you feel like you are right in the holiday mix. When possible, people spending the holidays away from home should schedule calls or video conferences when family has gathered so they can chat with as many loved ones as possible.

- Connect with people in similar situations. Connect with others who also cannot be with their loved ones for the holidays. Plan your own celebrations and commit to new traditions this year.

- Dine with a religious group. Many churches or other places of worship open

their doors during the holiday season to people who may have nowhere else to go. Take advantage of such chances to share and spread some holiday joy.

- Adapt family traditions. It may be challenging to find an evergreen tree to decorate while stationed in a tropical climate or a fireplace by which to hang stockings, but you can adapt traditions to your current situation. Better yet, see what the locals do and experience a few new holiday treats that you may want to revisit in the future.

- Volunteer. Volunteering is a great way to reduce depression, help others and see some smiling faces. Focus on helping others if you are feeling blue about not being at home.

- Find out if family can visit. Just because you can't make it home for the holidays doesn't mean the festivities can't come to you. Play host or hostess this year to family and friends who want to visit.

Celebrating the holidays away from home presents opportunities to embrace new traditions, make new friends and help others.