

# Turning Clothing into Gear

By David Brinker, Sitka Gear



## EDITOR'S NOTE

In January 2007, SITKA GEAR started advertising with *The Huntin' Fool* magazine and rightfully so. They set out on a new path that would revolutionize the industry by focusing on solutions for the hardcore mountain hunter... *The Huntin' Fool*. By bridging the gap between the climbing and mountaineering world, SITKA has been turning clothing into gear for 6 years now for hard core hunters.

—Garth

Ten years ago if you asked the most discerning hunter what they believed to be the most effective clothing combination for outdoor pursuits, there is a very good chance that answers would range from: wool, polar fleece, denim, flannel, etc. In the past chapters of our hunting heritage it was very uncommon to place the same importance into clothing, in comparison (for example) to your bow and/or optics. The mantra typically was: "It's just clothing...right?" Wherein today clothing is debated to be the most quintessential "gear" in your arsenal. That's right, "gear not clothing."

When looking up the definition of gear this is what you will find: "Equipment or paraphernalia, especially that used for an athletic endeavor." (Wikipedia) In our case, hunting is the "athletic endeavor."

Just as quality optics enhance your odds of spotting that big buck in the brush or how a well tuned bow maximizes your confidence for that moment of truth, quality clothing enables the entire experience to come together.

Now that we have established that "clothing" is gear, what is next? So you invest in top notch "clothing" and you're set? Not necessarily. Even if you own the finest jacket in the world but wear it in conditions the jacket wasn't designed for and/or you wear a base layer underneath it that fails, the jacket and the whole experience has failed too. So you don't need to just own quality "clothing," you have to "use" it correctly. That is why you should layer.

Why layer? It's simple, so you can add and subtract garments to compliment the current conditions you are experiencing while hunting. By using a base layer that pulls moisture away from your skin to keep you dry, an insulation layer to regulate your much needed core temp, and an outer layer to provide breathable protection against the elements, you have the freedom to combine and create "clothing" systems that keep you out longer and more comfortable during any weather conditions you might face.

At Sitka Gear, there is not one single hunting environment from Alaska to the plains of Africa or back to the hardwoods of the Midwest where we cannot offer a layering system solution. If you're a backpack hunter counting ounces, using

Sitka Gear will lighten your load while maintaining optimal durability. If your priority is extended stays in an ice coated tree, look no further for unparalleled warmth with minimal bulk and maximum mobility.

Let's dig a little deeper into each layer and the key products behind them, which make the Sitka brand stand out above all others, beginning with the next to skin layer.

The base layer's primary function is to pull the sweat off your skin and dry quickly; this makes it your most important layer. If you are not dry from the inside out, who cares if you are dry from the outside in? Whether you are using our Merino Core Zip T or our synthetic Core Zip T, they will both provide great moisture management. This layer will keep you warm when it is cold and cool when it is hot.

The biggest mistake hunters can make from a layering standpoint is wearing cotton as their next to skin layer. Most synthetic fabric pulls moisture from your skin, pushes it to the outside of the fabric, and allows the moisture to evaporate. Cotton absorbs the moisture in very large amounts but retains it instead of allowing quick and efficient evaporation. This often results in an uncomfortable chaffing



feel. Not only is this about your comfort, it's also about your safety. Having moisture retained against your skin can cause fluctuations in your body temperature, which in some cases can be deadly.

Besides keeping you dry, a quality hunting base layer should provide some level of scent control. That is why we use silver technology in our synthetic Core Series, and also offer the naturally odor resistant qualities of Merino Wool. The ATB-100 silver is actually encapsulated into the threads of each of the Core Series synthetic products. Silver kills the bacteria that causes odor on contact, but it must be against your skin to work. This is why you will only find it in our base layer products. It should be noted that silver will not kill all of your body odor, but we built it into our Core Series products to enable you to wear a base layer multiple times on the same trip before it starts stinking. You still have to hunt the wind.



MERINO CORE SERIES BASE LAYER

If you are not a fan of synthetics, you have to check out our New Merino Core Series base layers. The benefits of Merino Wool have long been appreciated in high performance athletic wear designed for running, hiking, skiing, and mountain climbing. Merino is a perfect fit for hunting, especially since it is naturally odor resistant. More importantly, Merino is excellent at regulating body temperature. It provides warmth without overheating the wearer. Like cotton, Merino also absorbs water, but unlike cotton it generates some warmth when wet.

Our Merino is of the highest quality in the outdoor industry. The source supplier of our Merino Wool program, also supplies big names in the mountaineering industry like Patagonia, Mountain Hardwear, REI, and The North Face. The Merino fibers (wool hair) measure just below 19 microns in diameter, ensuring less abrasion on the fabric face and better pilling performance. Our Merino fabrics are also circular knit for great stretch and recovery properties.

Keeping your core dry is always important but is especially true in cold weather. This could mean hiking into a treestand in single digits or hunting late season Mule deer in the snow. Once your base is dry and core temperature is regulated well, there has to be a layer that allows heat to stay in and water vapor to escape. This brings us to our insulation layer.

A great example of an insulation layer that will keep you warm, breathe, and combines a lightweight solution with very little bulk is our Kelvin Series. This jacket, vest, and pant combo utilizes Primaloft® synthetic insulation.

Primaloft® is a microfiber blend that is engineered to retain maximum warmth even when wet. Its ultra fine fibers are designed to insulate the body while being thermally efficient, water resistant, fast drying, and breathable.



KELVIN SERIES JACKET



Outer protection can be looked at in several ways. One way is from a weather perspective. Especially hunting in high elevation settings, the weather can turn on you very quickly. Even on less severe occasions, we all experience changes in the weather every time we go out. If we want to maximize our odds and stay out longer, we should be prepared to face variable weather conditions. However weather is not the only reason we wear an outer layer. What about protection from cactus thorns in the desert, scrub alders in the Northwest, or scree at the base of a crag? We all have ripped our favorite pants at some point or have been soaked to the core by a surprise rain storm. So why not look at your outer shell as a protective layer from all of the elements from weather to thorns? Thus we need durability and weather protection.



TIMBERLINE SERIES PANT

A common inquiry we receive is, "I need pants that are durable, unbinding, lightweight, and water resistant....I can't find them anywhere." That is why we take the upmost pride in our stretch woven line of products. This includes our Ascent, Mountain, and our New Timberline Series Pants. Highly durable, with dynamic stretch, and inherent water resistant characteristics, our stretch woven products protect you from the sharp things in nature, moisture, and move freely with you. The water resistance spawns from a DWR coating on the outside of the garments that bead water on contact, which can save the day on everything from dewy mornings to heavy fog.



something that is completely waterproof from the outside but does not let the heat you are producing from physical exertion escape. This will just cause you to get wet from the inside instead. You're still wet.

The hard shell you're carrying depends mostly on the type of hunting you are doing and can vary for each hunter. If you are backpack hunting in the alpine for Mule deer, you need something that does not take up much room, is light, but can hold its own durability wise; you would want a product like our Stormfront Lite Series. This product utilizes a GORE-TEX® Paclite® Shell, which is the lightest and most compressible (yet still extremely durable) laminate in the GORE-TEX® brand family. Though GORE-TEX® Paclite® Shell is durable, it is not the most durable GORE-TEX® laminate.

Another popular extension to our outer layer program, are soft shell materials we use in garments such as our Jetstream series. Soft shell fabrics are suited perfectly for aerobic activities in cool conditions. This could mean just a slightly chilly morning in September elk country or a blistering cold morning in a treestand in the Midwest. The combination of tightly woven, stretchy, and Durable Water Repellent coated yarns make soft shells extremely breathable, water resistant, windproof, and abrasion resistant. Add a touch of fleece insulation, included in all of our soft shell products, and you have an effective combination. But even the power of soft shell is not enough for the wrath nature can sometimes bring-this is where a hard shell comes into play.



STORMFRONT LITE SERIES SHELL



There are certain hunting scenarios where it is okay to sacrifice a tiny bit of weight to beef up durability. A great example of this would be sheep hunting. When you are in Alaska or Canada sheep hunting you could literally live in your rain gear for days or weeks. You must be prepared for your whole trip in unstable conditions and severe, steep, rocky country. In this case you would want to step up to our Stormfront Series. Comprised of GORE-TEX® Performance Shell, the 3-Layer laminate (unlike its 2-Layer cousin, GORE-TEX® Paclite® Shell), Stormfront takes it to the next level in terms of durability, while maintaining breathability and adding minimal weight.



JETSTREAM SERIES JACKET



Now that you have your moisture wicking base layer, your insulating layer, and your different types of outer layers, you can comfortably hunt in a variety of different terrain and weather scenarios by adding and subtracting layers to fit the needs of the conditions you are hunting. We are all looking for more ways to increase our success ratio, and the best way to do that is to go farther, hunt longer, and get closer while optimizing your comfort level. The key lies within utilizing a layering concept and thinking of your "clothing" as gear.

We choose to use GORE-TEX® fabrics in all of our hard shell products. GORE-TEX® fabrics are the most breathable, durable, and waterproof fabrics on the market today. The easiest way to think of a GORE-TEX® membrane is its pores are too small for a water molecule to pass through but plenty large for a water vapor molecule to escape. Here's an analogy: picture a water molecule as roughly the size of earth and a water vapor molecule or sweat that is about the size of a soccer ball. The pores in GORE-TEX® membranes are big enough for the sweat (soccer ball) but obviously cannot fit the rain drop (earth). This goes back to staying dry from the inside out. It does not make sense to wear

If you are unsure of what system is right for you, check out our "System Builder" at [www.sitkagear.com](http://www.sitkagear.com). You can build your own Sitka system by filtering gear based on species, terrain, and time of year. Or always feel free to call us at 877-SITKAGR. Anyone you reach at our office is a hunter and can help you find the perfect system for you.