

## Kids Clothes - It Takes More than Gummy Bears

Contributed by Lance Riek  
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Kids belong outside. Whether it's a lazing around on a warm, slushy spring afternoon, or sampling the single digits and howling winds of a blizzard, kids (and the rest of the family) feel better for having spent some in the open air. Just make sure you dress them right-no number of gummy bears can offset cold fingers. Here are a few pieces to help you grow comfortable, confident backcountry kids.

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Red Ledge

Youth Thunderlight Parka

\$50 MSRP, \$40 street price

XS-XL

9 oz. (M)

[redledge.com](http://redledge.com)

Kids grow like, well, kids-which explains why those pants that fit a few weeks ago are now halfway to their knees. That kind of growth rate translates to a painfully short window-of-fit for clothing. For me, that short window makes it hard to justify 150 bucks for a jacket. The Thunderlight Parka addresses this issue from two sides.

First, \$40 for a fully seam-taped, waterproof breathable shell is a steal. Second, as a shell jacket, it serves double duty: a winter wind/snow shell, and a summer rain jacket. So, it might cover three consecutive seasons of use, more if you buy oversize.

The Thunderlight features a fitted hood with visor, two zip pockets with storm flaps and mesh ventilation, adjustable Velcro cuffs, and an adjustable, elastic-corded bottom hem. My five and seven year old backcountry gear testers have subjected their Thunderlights to spring ski tours, summer backpacking trips, and fall hiking downpours. When queried about the plusses of the jacket, my seven year old answered with, "You can adjust the sleeves as tight as you want and it doesn't let the rain get in, the hood [visor] keeps the rain from dripping on my nose, it has good pockets, and it's RED!" The five year old agreed, and added, "I like the sound it makes when the rain falls on it."

Molehill Mountain Equipment

Glacier Mitts

\$24 (junior, toddler+, toddler) \$15 (infant)

molehillmtn.com

Glove designers take note: I've found your durability test chamber. Forget about snowboarding and ice climbing—those activities pale in comparison to a second-grader slowing down a rapidly-spinning saucer by scraping her mittens across a frozen playground slurry of dirt, ice, and wood chips.

My girls are only five and seven, but we've already gone through 17 pairs of winter mittens. But that was before we discovered the Glacier Mitts from Molehill Mountain Equipment. Molehill designs and manufactures a full range of summer and winter kid clothing, all of it durable and performance-oriented. We've gotten as much as two full winters out of their mittens, far exceeding the durability of any others we've tried. Better yet, Molehill has recently redesigned them for better fit and performance.

After running the new design through her testing gauntlet, my oldest daughter had this to say: "The new thumbs are way better, easier to hold onto the rings [swinging playground equipment]. See these little dots? [pointing to the raised-dot palm material] They really grip onto things. The cuff comes way up my sleeve, and closes tight, so I don't get any snow in them." Glacier Mitts are sized generously to allow separate fleece mittens underneath. With their thick, built-in fleece under a waterproof-breathable shell, our kids have found them warm enough for Montana winters without liners. As such, the Todder+ size is plenty big enough for our seven year old.

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