

# SURVIVAL SKILLS PRIMER

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**SURVIVAL TIPS** – What to do if you suddenly find yourself in that situation.

**STEP ONE:** Stop! ...Now take a deep breath, and resign yourself to your current circumstances. Do not panic, and do not feel ashamed at being in your predicament. Some of the best woodsmen in the world have become lost or disoriented, so set your mind to come through this with your honor intact. People have died of a combination of stupidity and panic. They run frantically, in big circles, through the woods at night trying to find their way out. The best thing to do is often to find some shelter for the night and find your way out come morning. Once you are calm, check yourself over. Your health and welfare are paramount. Address any immediate needs (injuries) as best you can, and then read on.

**STEP TWO:** Take stock of what you have, and what your immediate needs are. If you are reading this, you have quite a lot to work with, as this kit contains an extensive amount of gear to help in any situation. Be creative. Most of the items can have multiple uses, and are limited only by your imagination. As for your immediate needs, here are a few simple rules. A healthy human can survive for several weeks without food, and several days without water, but in many cases only several hours without proper shelter from the elements. Evaluate the weather for where you are, and to what extremes it may go. Shelter from the elements or a fire may well be your first priority. There are multiple items in the kit to help you build a fire. As for shelter, the clear plastic painter's tarp and the survival blanket can help. The survival blanket can also help to reflect the warmth from a fire. Be careful not to damage them or any other piece of gear. You will most likely need them later. Example: instead of poking holes in the tarp to tie it off, push a small pebble up from under the tarp, and tie off around it. Try using rocks instead of stakes to hold down corners, etc etc. Once you have some shelter from the elements, you can take a little time to plan for your other needs.

**STEP THREE:** Step three is water. You must drink plenty of water even if you do not feel thirsty. An adult should drink at least a couple of liters per day (more in hot climates). If you spent the night on high ground, then plan on moving camp. In most areas, just continue to walk downhill and you will eventually find water. Watch animals or follow their tracks. They will usually lead to water. Birds also tend to congregate near water. In dry areas, you may have to consider other means, such as a solar still. If you are getting water from streams or ponds, boil before drinking, or use water purification tablets or straw.

**STEP FOUR:** Signal. Some of the signaling items you have are the whistle, the mirror, the blanket, and of course, fire! Signaling is best accomplished by making yourself as big as possible. Smoke signals work well as does anything that can be seen or heard from a long ways off.

**STEP FIVE:** Food, as mentioned above is probably not something you need to consider unless you are reasonably sure that rescue is a good many days or weeks off. As a general rule, avoid plant life unless you know for a fact that something is edible. The easiest rule to remember is that if it walks, swims, crawls, or slithers... thump it, and muck it on down! Use the knife, hooks and line, make a spear, make snares with the 80lb test cord. Use your imagination! The facts are, ALL fur bearing animals are edible. ALL birds are edible with no exceptions. Grubs found in rotten logs are edible, as are almost all insects (6 legs).

## **THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND**

- The kit was packed tightly in its container, but once unpacked, figure out where and how you want to carry everything. Keep the items you will use frequently close at hand (in your pockets if they are free of holes). You can wrap cords, fishing lines, etc around the sheath to keep them tangle free and ready to use. Use slip knots or those you can undo easily, and therefore get the most use out of every piece of gear.

- Getting a good night's sleep will make everything easier on you. Try to build as good a shelter and bed as you can. The extra time and effort will pay off. Use everything you can think of for insulation. Crawling inside a big pile of leaves or pine needles is actually pretty warm and comfortable (do not attempt this near a fire). A large pile of fresh pine sprigs is not only a springy mattress, but is good insulation from the ground.

- Fire: When starting a fire find dry wood. Look for the dead branches at the very bottom of evergreen trees. Good tinder will greatly enhance your chance for success. Take small branches and shred them with a knife or your fingers. You can use dead grass, dried moss or fern, or a strip of cloth from the tail of your shirt. Use anything that will ignite quickly. Place this in the center. Around this, build a teepee of small dry twigs. Once this is burning, slowly feed your fire with larger and larger pieces of wood. Always making sure the fire is burning freely before you progress to a larger piece of wood. Once this fire is burning DO NOT let it go out. A fire is mans best friend in the wild. It provides heat, protection, a good signal, etc etc.

- Shelter: Do not make the mistake of trying to construct a large shelter. Make it just large enough to accommodate you and not much else. This is important, especially in cold climates, because your body heat may well have to heat it. Be extremely careful if you are going to use fire to heat the shelter, as most natural shelter materials are flammable! Plan ahead, and use common sense.

- Food: Do not even think about looking for food until you have a good (and plentiful) water source, and your signals are set up. Once you have these, and are ready to go in search of food, small animals, fish and insect life are always your best bet (remember, do not eat spiders or anything else with more than 6 legs). Setting multiple snares and fishing lines in ways that you do not have to baby-sit them is a good idea. Check them from time to time for a catch. This allows you to "hunt" without expending much energy. If you must eat plant life, stay away from mushrooms and any plant that has a milky sap. Common edible plants include cattail roots, acorns, clover, dandelions, almost all

grasses that are seed bearing and the inner bark of trees such as Poplar, Willows, Birches and Conifers.