


10

Survival tips

...that can save your life!

by mark anders • photographs by brian payne





#7 - your primary mission as a survivor is to defend 98.6

Turn the page for more great tips! ↘



You left the campsite for a quick trip down to the trout stream before sunset. Now it's getting dark – fast! And for some reason, the trail back to camp is looking different. You don't recognize any landmarks.

You're lost.

It's the kind of story you hear about all the time. Sometimes there's a happy ending. Sometimes not.

But getting lost could never happen to you, right?

Wrong. Even seasoned outdoorsmen can get lost or be forced, by bad weather or an injury, to spend a couple of unplanned nights in the backcountry.

Here's the good news, though: The good of Scout motto is the key to survival.

"Be prepared – that's the crux of it all," outdoor survival expert Peter Kummerfeldt says. "Those who are prepared very often survive, and those who aren't prepared sometimes die."

Kummerfeldt should know. For 12 years he worked as the **director of survival training for**

the U.S. Air Force Academy and before that was a top instructor at the U.S. Air Force Basic Survival School. Kummerfeldt is retired from the military, but he still teaches survival skills to outdoor professionals like park rangers and hunting guides through his company, OutdoorSafe Inc. (www.outdoorsafe.com).

Last summer, a handful of Boy Scouts from Colorado Springs, Colo., learned survival skills from the master himself at Camp Alexander, a Scout camp nestled at an elevation of 8,500 feet. Because not everyone has the opportunity to learn first-hand from Kummerfeldt, we bring you his no-nonsense, practical survival tips and advice:



Desperate times call for desperate measures. "I'm going to get a lot of flack for this," survival master Peter Kummerfeldt says, "but I say—build a fire." There's one rule you never want to break, though: Always be careful with your fire.

PLAN TO SURVIVE

#1 Tell someone where you're going.

This is survival rule No. 1. "Always leave a trip plan," Kummerfeldt says. It's not complicated.

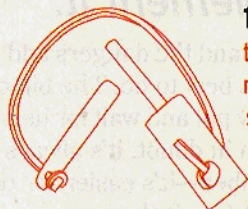
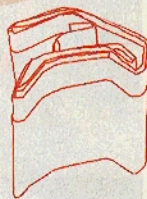
Just jot down these quick facts: where you're going, departure date and time, when you expect to return, the names of those traveling with you and a run-down of the sort of gear and outdoor experience your group has. Then give it to a responsible friend or family member. That way, if you don't return as planned, rescuers will know where to look for you—boosting your chance of survival big time.

#2 Build a survival kit.

Don't buy one of those pre-made survival kits in the store. "Most of the time they are garbage," Kummerfeldt says, "full of fluff and feathers and things you'll never use." Instead, build your own. That way you'll know exactly what's in there and how it works.



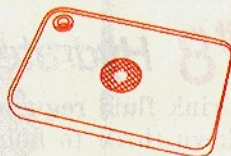
1 heavy-duty, 4mm orange plastic bag (approx. 38" x 65"). This trash bag is your shelter. Just cut a hole for your face, crawl in and hunker down for the night. It may not look pretty, but it'll stop the wind and rain. And it'll save your life. Hypothermia (loss of your body's core temperature) is one of the main causes of death in survival situations. Also, you can skip building a lean-to out of sticks and leaves. "You don't have the time," he says, "you don't have the natural resources, you probably don't have the cutting tools, and you may be injured."



1 metal match with scraper. Fire is key. It can be used to warm a cold body, ward off animals and create a signal for rescuers to find you. A metal match is the most reliable way to start a fire. "They strike in any conditions, so the match isn't affected by pressure, temperature or water," Kummerfeldt says. Want a little extra head start with your fire? Carry cotton balls soaked in petroleum jelly. Works every time!



1 plastic whistle. "There are too many circumstances in which the voice is not a good enough signal," he warns. "A whistle is a fundamental piece of outdoor gear because even when you can't yell you can still whistle." Look for a sturdy plastic whistle that produces a sound of 100 decibels or more.



1 glass signal mirror. A mirror is handy for catching the attention of rescuers by bouncing sunlight at a passing helicopter or airplane. "A signal mirror gives you both a ground-to-ground and ground-to-air signal," he says.

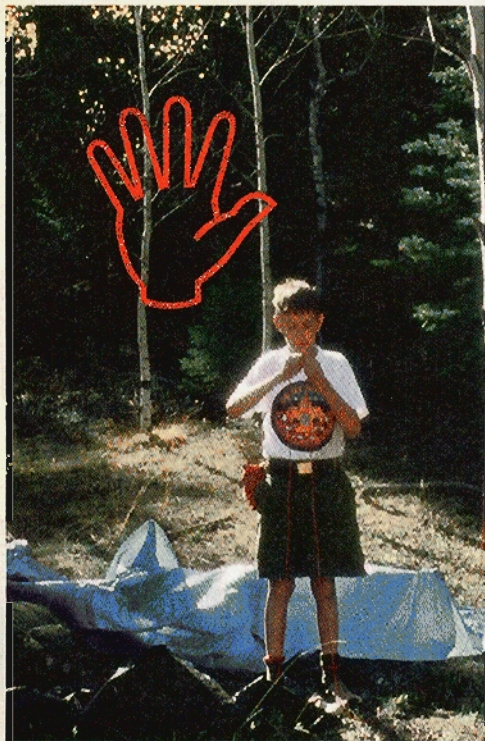


MORE 

YOU'RE LOST. YES, YOU

O.K., now assume you're lost.

"The moment you realize that you're in trouble—be it because you're lost or because something catastrophic has happened, like your plane has crashed or the boat sank—you have to sit tight and get your wits about you before you do anything serious," he says. An easy way to remember this is Kummerfeldt's acronym, **S.T.O.P.** >>>>>



Knowing he needs to stay right where he is to enhance his chances of being found, David Pierce prepares to settle in for the night.

YOUR ONLY JOB: STAY ALIVE

Once you've come to grips with the fact that you'll be spending at least a night or two alone in the backcountry, it's time to pay attention to your **four main survival duties:**

#7 Stay warm.

"Your primary mission as a survivor is to defend 98.6," says Kummerfeldt, referring to your optimum body temperature of 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Get too cold (or hot) and your body and brain stop working properly. So avoid the wind and rain. Or if it's hot, get into the shade. You need to stay warm (or cool) for as long

as possible to give the rescuers the opportunity to come in and find you—alive.

#8 Hydrate or die.

Drink fluid regularly. Aim to down three to four quarts of water a day. In many cases, clean drinking water may not be available, so Kummerfeldt

#3 Stop moving around.

Try not to panic. Just sit down for at least 30 minutes to let your adrenaline slow down. "Have a drink of water and flush the taste of fear from your mouth," he says.

#4 Think about what needs to be done.

Once the adrenaline begins to flush out of your system and your brain starts functioning again, you can better evaluate your situation.

#5 Observe your surroundings.

Take a look around. "Think: What are my hazards? What's out here that's likely to harm me?" he says. "And what are my assets? What resources does the environment provide, and what resources do I have in my pack or my pocket?"

#6 Plan a course of action and implement it.

Tally up all your assets and the dangers and start making decisions on what's best to do. The big question is always: Should you stay put and wait for help? Or try to rescue yourself? When in doubt, it's always best to sit tight and wait. Remember—it's easier for rescuers to find a stationary object (you!) than a moving one.



Far left: Squirrel away some petroleum jelly and cotton balls in your pack. The combination makes a foolproof fire starter.

Left: Matt Vanbenschoten and Austin Haller practice using their signal mirrors. The best signal mirrors will have a center hole with a mesh aimer around it.

recommends drinking from any available water source, even if that means getting giardia or some other infection. "Doctors can cure giardia, but they can't fix dead!" he says.

#9 Start a fire.

"I'm going to get a lot of flack for this, but I say—build a fire," Kummerfeldt says. Sure, open fires can be dangerous, but extreme circumstances require extreme measures. Besides keeping you warm, helping you purify water and providing protection

from predators, having a fire can also keep your spirits high. "Fire is a tremendous companion," he says. Just be careful with it.

#10 Make yourself BIG.

The best way to ensure you'll be seen—and rescued—is to make yourself visible. Try to scrape a

huge "X" in a clearing nearby that can be seen by search planes. Use your signal mirror. Get green tree limbs ready for a smoky signal fire. Nothing fancy, just a big column of smoke is enough. "Once the search starts, any smoke, any glint of light, any soil turned over, anything different in the environment will all be investigated," Kummerfeldt says.



WHO'S IN CHARGE? YOU

So you've got the survival know-how, now it's time to go out and build your emergency survival kit. While you're at it, practice building a fire in the rain or snow. Work on your signal-mirror techniques.

"I tell everybody: You're the master of your destiny," Kummerfeldt says. "Don't count on anyone else being there to help you. You've got to be self-sufficient. You've got to carry your own survival kit. You've got to develop your own skills and knowledge.

"If you've sat and thought about it and gone out and practiced it, embedded in your brain will be a format or blueprint for surviving. It's there. You just call upon it and—lo and behold—you'll know what to do and how to do it."♦

Peter Kummerfeldt: GPS units are fine, but don't solely rely on them in an emergency. Use your own smarts and skills—no batteries required.

