

FREE PRINTABLE RESOURCE

SEVEN SKILLS FIELD CARD

The beginner survival skills that matter, in the order they can hurt you. Shelter before water, water before food.

1 AIR 3 minutes **2** SHELTER 3 hours **3** REST 30 hours **4** WATER 3 days **5** FOOD 30 days

Priority order as published in the FAA's Basic Survival Skills for Aviation manual, under the name the Rule of Three's. Our advice: use the ordering, not the timers, since the numbers are a memory aid and not a deadline.

1. STOP BEFORE YOU MOVE

- ☐ **Retrace your steps if it is safe**
NPS step 1: stop and breathe, find your location, get back on your planned route
- ☐ **If you cannot retrace: call 911, then stay put**
Changing location makes it difficult for authorities to find you. Move only for an immediate threat to life
- ☐ **Sit, Think, Observe, Plan**
Sit and drink water, think it through, inventory gear and injuries, then plan
- ☐ **Write it down**
What you know, what you have, what you do next

2. SHELTER AND STAY DRY

- ☐ **Get out of wind and rain first**
Hypothermia can occur above 40°F if you are chilled by rain, sweat or cold water
- ☐ **Get off the cold ground**
Foam pad, boughs, pack. Ground steals heat faster than air
- ☐ **Dry socks are equipment**
Wet feet lose heat about 25x faster than dry feet (OSHA, citing CDC/NIOSH)

HYPOTHERMIA WARNING SIGNS: shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, drowsiness. Infants: bright red cold skin, very low energy. **Below 95°F is a medical emergency. Get help immediately.** Low body temperature stops the brain from thinking clearly, so the person often cannot recognise it themselves. Watch your partners, not just yourself. **TREAT:** seek medical help, get them into a warm room or shelter, remove wet clothing, warm them under dry blankets and clothing. With frostbite, do not use a fireplace, heat lamp, radiator or stove, and do not rub the area.

3. MAKE WATER SAFE

- ☐ **Cloudy water: filter or settle first**
Clean cloth, paper towel or coffee filter, then draw off the clear water
- ☐ **Rolling boil 1 minute**
Above 6,500 ft elevation, boil 3 minutes
- ☐ **Bleach backup, 5–9% sodium hypochlorite**
1 gal: 8 drops. 5 gal: 40 drops. Double if cloudy or very cold. Stand 30 min
- ☐ **Tablets: carry chlorine dioxide**
CDC: iodine and plain chlorine tablets will not kill Cryptosporidium. Chlorine dioxide will
- ☐ **Boiling does not fix chemistry**
Fuel, toxic chemicals and radioactive material cannot be boiled or disinfected out
- ☐ **Filter limits**
Filters remove no viruses. 0.3 micron or smaller for bacteria, 1 micron or smaller for parasites

4. FIRE, BUILT AND KILLED

- ☐ **Clear 15 feet, upwind**
Tent, gear and anything flammable at least 15 ft away and upwind of the pit
- ☐ **Never leave it unattended**
Keep water beside the fire the whole time. Only lighter fluid as an accelerant, never onto embers or flame, and check the park allows it
- ☐ **Do not build one in high fire danger**
NPS: it could start a wildfire and put you and others at great risk
- ☐ **Spread coals, then drown or stir**
Gray coals hold heat for hours. With water, douse thoroughly. With no water, spread coals then keep stirring dirt and sand among them. Do not just kick dirt on top, that banks them

5. SIGNAL

- ☐ **Whistle: three blasts, pause, three**
Save your energy, do not yell
- ☐ **Light SOS after dark**
Three quick, three slow, three quick
- ☐ **Mirror in daylight**
FAA: flashes have been spotted from over 25 miles
- ☐ **406 MHz beacon leaves the valley**
GNSS models locate to ~100 m, 24 hr minimum battery. Registration required by federal rule. 121.5 MHz has not been satellite-detected since 2009, so it depends on an aircraft in range monitoring it

6. NAVIGATE WITHOUT A SCREEN

- ☐ **Carry a paper map as backup**
NPS Ten Essentials lists navigation first. Know how to use it before you go
- ☐ **Orient the map to the ground**
Find two features you can actually see. Keep a running sense of where you are
- ☐ **Look up your local declination**
The needle follows the local field, not the pole. NOAA: anomalies over 10° exist but are rare, 3–4° anomalies occur in limited areas
- ☐ **My local declination:**
_____ date checked: _____

7. STOP SEVERE BLEEDING

- ☐ **Recognise it: volume and flow**
Red Cross: about half a soda can of blood, less in a child, or blood flowing continuously or spurting
- ☐ **Call 911, then direct pressure**
Check the scene is safe, call 911, then give care. Tourniquet on a limb if trained, or wound packing if trained
- ☐ **Original gauze stays on**
Do not remove it and do not build a stack. Add one pad on top and replace that top pad as it soaks
- ☐ **Embedded object stays in**
Removing it can make bleeding much worse. Press around it

Practice one skill per weekend. Kit that covers all seven: tarp, 50 ft cord, foam pad, dry layer, pot, filter, ferro rod and lighter, whistle, mirror, headlamp, map and compass, trauma dressing and tourniquet, and a 406 MHz beacon if the budget stretches.
tacticalbox.com/pages/subscribe

Sources: FAA CAMI Basic Survival Skills for Aviation; NPS Outdoor Emergency Plan, Campfires, Ten Essentials; CDC winter weather and emergency water; OSHA cold stress; NOAA SARSAT and NCEI geomagnetism; American Red Cross. Informational only, not a substitute for hands-on training. Call 911 when you have coverage.