



Survival Kit Components

“Chance favors only the prepared mind.” – Louis Pasteur

A survival kit is anything that will help you meet your body’s seven basic requirements wherever you happen to be. In urban areas this could be a hotel, credit card, and Dominos’ delivery. Beyond city limits, gear can be intended for everyday use (as in backpacking, where you *plan* to meet your needs every day) or as part of an emergency kit (for those unexpected nights in the boonies). While many items listed on the next page would be overkill for a small “bare essentials” kit that you *always* keep on your person, they may be appropriate for a pack, car trunk, boat’s dry-bag, or plane. Whatever the situation, keep it handy. You can’t use it if you can’t reach it! Consider for each item the following characteristics. Above all, *Caveat Emptor!*

Versatility - does it have multiple uses? The more it does, the better it is ... sometimes; see below.

Effectiveness - does it do all of its jobs *well*? If not, find something that will. Cheap crap will let you down!

Reliability - would you entrust your life to it? Read gear-reviews, ask around, test it under controlled conditions!

Durability - will it withstand lots of hard use, being dropped, etc.? Usually, you get that for which you pay.

Redundancy - without getting too overloaded, can you take ≥ 2 sources of water, fire, light, etc.?

Training - does the item require specialized training? If you don’t know how to use it, don’t take it!

Simplicity - can you operate it if you’re stressed, tired, cold, blind, or have only one hand available?

Integrity - is it waterproof and dustproof? If not, can it be treated or packaged to become so?

Sensitivity - will it work in both very hot and very cold weather? If electronic, can it operate on lithium batteries?

- How susceptible is it to corrosion, especially if you’ll be operating near marine environments?

Standardization - is it the same item (or does it use the same parts) as what your partner carries?

- does it use the same size of batteries as other pieces of your (and your partner’s) gear?

Maintainability - can you repair it in the field with minimal (or zero) tools and / or spare parts?

Cost - can you afford to buy it? *Can you afford to be without it?* What is your life worth to you?

Safety - is it potentially hazardous to you or others? Be *very* careful with blades, pyro, and firearms! Children?

Size - will it fit in pockets or a small pack so that you won’t be tempted to leave it behind?

Shape - will it ride comfortably in those pockets or packs? For clothing, does it fit well; is it broken-in?

Weight - can you carry it all day without becoming too fatigued? Is total weight a concern for flying?

Noise - does it make sounds that could compromise your tactical operations, scare animals, or become annoying?

Odor - is it smelly enough to compromise your tactical operations or attract animals such as bears?

Color - camo for tactical ops vs. bright (or marked with orange / yellow tape) for locating at night & signaling?

Reflectivity - dull for tactical ops vs. shiny (or marked with reflective tape) for locating it at night & signaling?

Luminescence - none vs. glow-in-the-dark (or marked with luminescent tape) for locating it at night?

Lanyards - can you attach a piece of cord or a Gear-Keeper to retain it at night and in water / snow?

Legality - will you be able to carry it across borders, on commercial airlines, or on agency / contract aircraft?

- **TAILOR YOUR KIT CONSTANTLY:** fit it to the mission, location, season, predicted weather, group size & experience, your skills & knowledge, and desired level of comfort. In general, the more knowledge and skills you possess, the less gear you need to carry. **Provide for MY ESSENTIALS at a minimum** (see next page).
- **PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT.** Keep everything together so that it doesn’t get left behind or scattered and lost; try Pelican cases, dry-bags, Ziplock bags, vacuum-sealing, Altoids tins, Nalgene bottles, nylon pouches, ammo cans, stuff sacks, load-bearing vest, backpack, duffle bags, and lumbar packs. Don’t dip into your bare essentials kit for camping trips or other everyday uses. It should always be intact and ready for use in emergencies. On the trail, practice good ruck discipline; if you’re not using something, it should be in your pack. Losing a piece of gear could be disastrous.
- **WHAT YOU HAVE ON YOU MAY BE ALL THAT YOU HAVE.** Maintain 3 or more levels of defense: some *always* on you (put a butane lighter in the pocket of *every* coat), vital items in a belt pouch or extra handcuff case, larger items in a pack, extra gear in the car. Think about it; what if your pack is swept away in a river, an avalanche takes the tent, your snowmobile falls through the ice, you lose your camp after wandering off to pee, your horse runs away, your car catches fire, or you simply have to chase the bad guy farther into the woods than you expected?
- **CHECK YOUR KIT OFTEN:** ensure familiarity with the contents. When doing so, see if you need to replace old matches (they don’t “strike anywhere” forever), expired food, medicines, iodine tablets, cyalume sticks, or batteries.
- **NEVER LEAVE YOUR HOME OR VEHICLE WITHOUT THE BASICS.** Emergencies happen when we *don’t* expect them. If you find yourself saying, **“We’re just going...”** you’re probably under-estimating the potential dangers. Remember, Gilligan was *just going* on a 3-hour tour. Even on commercial flights, take a kit (beware prohibited items.)

Do not rely on your agency to adequately train or equip you!

Everyone is responsible for his or her *own* survival and comfort; pack accordingly.

MY ESSENTIALS

Many of these items could be listed under multiple categories; those that could be obviously more valuable than those that could not. Remember, though, that your store of knowledge and ability to improvise may prove more important than what is in your kit. Ultimately, it's not what you have but how you use it that matters.

(Underlined items are required / recommended gear for participation in BMOG.)

Mental Health: adequate skills, knowledge, and preparation; family photos; religious book / talisman; deck of cards; survival guide; harmonica; stuffed animal / doll; any item that makes you (or your patient) happy

You: hiking partner(s); filing a trip plan; communications / support system (dispatch, family, ranger station, etc.)

Extra Clothing: base layer (synthetic / wool / silk); more warm layers than you expect to need (wool / synthetic); down coat; extra wool socks; water-proof pants & jacket; brimmed hat; rain hat; hood; Buff; gaiters; cap / balaclava (fleece / wool); mittens; gloves; over-mitts; boots; bandanas; rigger's belt; Nomex clothes; immersion / dry suit

Shelter & Protection: heavy garbage / contractor plastic bags; space blanket; tarp; poncho; body bag; bivy bag; tent; Tyvek / Visqueen sheet; foam pad; sleeping bag; 7-strand 550 cord; leather gloves; helmet; clear glasses; sun glasses / goggles; ear plugs; SPF lip balm; sunscreen; snow saw; snow shovel; entrenching tool; bungee cords; cable-ties; jungle hammock; insect head-net / sheet; insect spray; body armor; OC spray, shotgun slugs; fire shelter

Sharp Knives & Tools: Swiss army knife; lock-blade knife; fixed-blade knife; multi-tool; razor; card-tool; machete; cable saw; pocket-chain saw; folding saw; hatchet; axe; whet stone; flat file; gear-specific tools & instructions

Eats: more than you expect to need; granola / energy bars; hard candy; candy bars; GORP; peanut butter; bouillon; pemmican; jerky; freeze-dried meals; dehydrated meals; MREs; dry soup; dehydrated fruit; salt packets; compressed gas / liquid fuel / Esbit stove; stove fuel; metal cup; pot; spoon; heavy duty foil; can opener; snare wire; spectra / monofilament line; speed hook; small hooks; treble hooks; split-shot sinkers; flies; lures; swivels; gill / cast net; spear tip; firearm; ammo (bird / buck shot); mousetrap; edible plants ID book; snare diagrams; bear bag / BRFC

Navigation & Travel: waterproofed topographic map; settable declination compass; button compass; GPS receiver; UTM grid template; altimeter; clinometer; binoculars / scope; watch; weather radio; waterproof paper; pencil; pen; pacing beads; clothes-pin markers; pack; hiking poles; snowshoes; x-country skis; crampons; ice axe; climbing harness; rope; Prusik loops; tubular webbing; carabiners; snow pickets / flukes / ice screws; ice spikes; snow wands; avalanche probe; waterproof stuff-sacks; inflatable raft; extra paddles; PFD; spare tires / belts / etc.; extra gas / fluids; jumper cables / starter kit; tow strap / chain; tire chains; winch / come-along; Fix-a-Flat

Tinder & Firestarters: metal match; strike-anywhere / Lifeboat matches in a waterproof case; sandpaper / striking strip; Zippo lighter; butane lighter; butane kitchen torch; road flare; Fusee; magnifying glass; Fresnel lens; prepared tinder (e.g., cotton & Vaseline); inner tube squares; commercial fuel tablet; large candles; novelty candles

Illumination: headlamp; flashlight; coin-cell LED light; extra bulbs; extra batteries; cyalume sticks; candle lantern; parachute flares; night vision goggles / scope; thermal imager. *Consider red / blue / IR bulbs or filters.*

Aid Kit: treatment report forms; latex / nitrile gloves; shears; moleskin; waterproof tape; gauze pads; Q-tips; iodine / alcohol swabs; triangular bandages; roll bandages; Band-aids; tweezers; CPR mask; Sam splint; QuikClot / Combat Gauze / Celox; 2nd Skin; thermometer; reusable hot packs; cold packs; Ace bandage; large irrigation syringe; steri-strips; tincture of benzoin; intubation kit; suture kit; tongue depressor; Sawyer Extractor; hand sanitizer; soap; prescription medications; oral / IV analgesics; destination-specific medications; Epinephrine; Benadryl; hydrocortisone cream; oral antibiotics; Imodium; skin lotion; antibiotic ointment; potassium permanganate; vitamins; Gold Bond powder; extra prescription eyeglasses; biohazard bags; tampons; sanitary pads; TP; EMS book; duct tape; safety pins; large & small needles; awl; dental floss; thread; glue stick; SeamGrip; superglue; gear-specific repair kits; spare parts; Medic Alert tag; laminate your name & medical history, contact & drugs info

Liquids: wide-mouth plastic / metal bottles; water bladder / hydration system; quart / gallon Ziploc freezer bags; unlubricated condoms; bleach; chlorine dioxide tablets; iodine tablets / tincture; water filter; clear plastic sheet; surgical tubing; straw; metal cup; Kleen Kanteen / Thermos bottle; sports drink mix / Gookinaid; herbal tea; ice chisel; pre-fabricated solar still

Signaling: glass signal mirror; pea-less plastic whistle; laser flare; mini air horn; aerial / shotgun / hand flares; strobe light; dye marker; smoke grenade; tracer ammo; flash-bang; satellite / cell phone; phone calling card; agency / CB / FRS / VHF radio; extra battery packs; clamshell AA pack; Personal Locator Beacon; SPOT device; avalanche beacon; RECCO chips; Sharpie marker; retro-reflective tape; orange plastic surveyors' tape; orange safety vest; clothespin markers; laminated card of ground-to-air signals & radio instructions / frequencies