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## Teaching Kids How to Survive in the Forest

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Last week, we read about a [12-year old boy who lost his way in a forest](#) <sup>[1]</sup> in Utah. He survived a grueling and cold night by using survival tactics taught to him by the Boy Scouts.

A source said, "Jared did everything right during a long night alone in the woods. Once he realized he didn't know where he was, he stopped and built a shelter. As night set in, he buried himself in dirt to keep warm. He learned it all from being a Boy Scout."

Without these survival skills taught to Jared shortly before his disappearance, he might have faced hypothermia, an injury or he could still be lost. Adults and children can both use the following survival tips in they find themselves lost. The point is to teach yourself and your loved ones about basic survival skills. Without this knowledge, chances of survival diminish if you are exposed to the elements for long periods of time.

### **The following are 10 survival tips that you should follow if you find yourself lost in woods:**

- 1. Don't panic.** Panic is more dangerous than almost anything else, because it interferes with the operation of your single best, most useful and versatile survival tool: your mind. The moment you realize that you are lost, before you do anything else, stop. Take a deep breath and stay calm.
- 2. Stand still and look around carefully!** Wherever you are will become your "point zero." Find a way to mark it using a spare piece of clothing, a pile of rocks, a sheet of paper, or anything else easily visible from a distance.
- 3. Stay in one place, and you not only increase your chances of being found, you also increase your ability to survive by reducing the energy your body expends and the amount of water and food you will need.** Hunker down and stay put. Chances are that someone will be looking for you, especially if you let someone know your plans, (see above).
- 4. Signal your location to maximize the odds that someone finds you. Make noise by whistling, shouting, singing, or banging rocks together.** If you can, mark your location in such a way that it's visible from the air. If you're in a mountain meadow, make three piles of dark leaves or branches in a triangle. In sandy areas, make a large triangle in the sand. In

a forest, you might want to prepare three small fires ready to ignite at a moment's notice, with heaps of wet leaves nearby in order to make smoke. *Three of anything in the wilderness is a standard distress signal.*

**5. Start scouting your area, carefully keeping track of your location.** Be sure you can always find your way back to your "point zero" as you search for water, shelter, or your way home.

**6. Find or create shelter.** Without adequate shelter, you will be fully exposed to the elements and will risk hypothermia or heatstroke, depending on the weather. If you are not properly dressed for the conditions, finding shelter is all the more important. Luckily, the woods are filled with tools and resources to make both shelters and fires (for warmth, safety, and signaling purposes). Here are some things you can use:

- Look for a fallen or leaning tree. You can build a lean-to by stacking branches alongside a fallen tree, then over the branches with brush, palm fronds, or other plants.
- Use brush or green branches (boughs) from trees to repel water, block wind, keep out snow, or create shade. Close in your shelter on as many sides as possible.
- Caves can be great, but be sure the cave is not already occupied by bears, large cats, snakes or other unfriendly animals; they know caves are good too, and they've been looking for good shelter for longer than you have. Also make sure it's not going to collapse on you- this reduces your chances of survival considerably.

**7. Find a good source of water.** In a survival situation, you can last up to three days without water, but by the end of the second day you're not going to be in very good shape; find water before then.

- The best source of water is a spring, but the chances of finding one are slim.
- A running stream is your next best bet; the movement of the water reduces sediment. Be advised that drinking water from streams can lead to some sicknesses, but when you're in a life-or-death situation, the risk of illness is a secondary consideration.
- Or use jacket sleeves to tie around your ankles when it's morning, and walk in the grass to get dew on the sleeves, then suck the moisture out of the fabric.<sup>8</sup>Purify your water. A crude method of water purification is to take your handy pot and heat the water. For this to effectively kill bacteria, it must be at a rolling boil for at least three minutes.

**8. Build a fire.** Build a good sized fire, one with sufficient coals to stay hot for many hours, and make sure that you have plenty of extra dry wood.

- A good rule of thumb is to gather wood until you have enough to last the night, then gather three more piles of the same size, and you might have enough to get through the night.
- In the wilderness you should have access to dry wood in the understory of the forest. You can also use bark or dried dung. If you build a fire that is hot enough, you can also burn green wood, brush, or tree boughs to make a signaling fire (one that makes a lot of smoke).
- The best wood for maintaining a fire is dead wood that you pull off a standing tree. Regardless of what type of woods you are in, there will certainly be some dry wood available. Remember that a small fire is easier to keep burning than a big fire, though, because it requires less fuel. Once you have sufficient embers, keep the fire to a manageable size so you don't spend too much time looking for fuel.

**9. Find safe food.** Know that most healthy adults can survive up to three weeks without food unless it's cold. It's better to be hungry and healthy than ill. Make sure that you know food is safe before eating it. If there is anything that will lessen your ability to survive, it is being both lost and deathly ill. Starvation won't be a big problem.

**10. Don't be afraid to eat insects and other bugs.** While it may be disgusting to eat a few grasshoppers, they do provide useful nutrition. All insects should be cooked as they can harbor parasites that can kill you. Do not eat any caterpillars, brightly colored insects, or any insect that can bite or sting you. Remove the legs, head and wings of any insect before eating.

- If you are near water, fish are a good choice. Minnows can be eaten whole.
- Color test: There is no color test for berry edibility with one exception: Almost all white berries are toxic. As for other colors consider them poisonous unless you personally know the berry to be safe.
- Aggregate berries: There is the mistaken belief that aggregate berries are always safe. That is far from true with several aggregate berries being highly toxic if not fatal. The only safe berry is a berry you know personally to be safe.

[Source](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

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URLs in this post:

[1] 12-year old boy who lost his way in a forest: <http://news.yahoo.com/boy-scout-found-building-tree-branch-shelter-231903921.html>

[2] Source: <http://www.wikihow.com/Survive-in-the-Woods>

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