



**EXCLUSIVE CONTENT**

**SAVED BY**

**MASTER THESE SURVIVAL HACKS AND GET OUT ALIVE  
WITH THE THINGS YOU CARRY**

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# A Sock

This is one emergency tool you can always count on having.

## WARM YOUR HANDS

You'd be hard-pressed to make a life-saving fire with numb fingers. Wear socks like mittens to prevent frostbite and restore critical dexterity.

## GET WATER

Can't find anything to drink? Fill a sock with mud or wet clay, or sop up dew, then wring out every drop of moisture into a cup or your mouth. You can also filter dirty water, removing sediment. (This makes the water more palatable, but doesn't remove bacteria and other microorganisms).

## MAKE A DEAD-MAN ANCHOR

In winter, it may be hard to secure a

shelter against dangerously strong winds. Fill a sock with snow, tie your guyline to it, and bury it about a foot deep. Pack snow on top to create an anchor. This technique works well with sand, too.

## DRESS A WOUND

Hopefully you have a spare clean sock for this. But if you need to control severe bleeding, you use what you have.

## IMPROVISE TRACTION

To prevent slipping on slick ice, pull a sock over the toe of your boot. The

sock fibers adhere to ice, improving traction. (Wool is stickier than nylon and polyester materials.)

## CARRY THINGS

It's a poor substitute for a backpack, true, but if you need to transport food or other essentials, a sock will do in a pinch. Tie it to your belt.

## MAKE A HUNTING WEAPON

Starving? Stuff a sock with stones to create a "nunchuk" for clubbing small game.

## PROCESS ACORNS

These wild nuts can be an easy source of calories in a survival situation, but they contain tannic acid, which tastes terrible and will make you sick to your stomach. Fill a sock with crushed acorn nuts (remove shells), tie it off, and secure it in a creek. The flowing water will remove the acid in a few days. If you have a pot and plenty of fuel or firewood, you can speed this process by soaking the nuts in hot water (change the water several times).

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# Titanium Spork

Put this all-in-one utensil to work in an emergency. By Tom Brown Jr., founder of the Tracker School.

## GET A GRIP

Lace the spork to the underside of your boot near the toe (tines out) to create "crampon" for safer travel over mud, snow, and ice. Slip a sock over your other boot (if traveling over nice), or wrap it with a knotted cord for extra grip.

## ARM YOURSELF

Sharpen the spork by using fine-grained stones to file down the edge, then hone it with a river rock. Resharpen frequently.

## BURNISH AN EDGE

Press the bottom of the spoon hard against the bone or wood object you're trying to sharpen. This will create a hard, glass-like edge suitable for slicing.

## REMOVE TICKS AND SPLINTERS

Position the tines so the space between them is directly over the tick or splinter and press downward on your skin until the offending object rises up. Stretch the skin to isolate the

object and pluck it out with your fingers.

## COLLECT PITCH

Use the spoon to scrape pitch from evergreen trees. Melt what you gather in the spoon over a flame to make survival glue. Paste it to bindings and wrappings to improve their holding strength.

## PROTECT YOUR DIGITS

Use the spoon like a thimble to press a needle through stiff

fabrics, leather, or animal hides without piercing your thumb.

## STRIP BARK

Use the spork to peel strands of fiber from the inside of dead tree bark and use it to improvise cordage.



PHOTO BY JENNY JAKUBOWSKI

# Tent pole



**The best thing you can do with your tent poles is set up your tent, but it's not the only thing. Use these five techniques when things get grim.**

By Tom Brown Jr., Tracker School

## SPLINT A FRACTURE

Use enough pole (multiple sections, if necessary) to stabilize the joints on both sides of the injury. Use the shock cord to hold the poles in place, but don't tie them so tightly they hamper circulation. Use a T-shirt or bandana to pad the tie points.

## WINTERIZE YOURSELF

Improvise a raincoat or jacket (or crush it at your backcountry toga party) by draping your body with your tent fly or canopy, then use the shock cord to snug the material in so you can hike to safety.

## HUNT WITH A BLOW GUN

Make darts from sharpened bone or fire-hardened wood. Add bird feathers or any downy material for fletching. Pull out the shock cord, then feed the dart, tip out, into shooting end of the pole. Exhale sharply to fire at small game within 8 feet. Aim for the head and be ready to deliver the *coup de grâce*.

## ACCESS WATER

Use a tent pole as a straw to slurp up water in hard-to-reach places. Loosely pack the pole with plant fibers or cloth to strain out large particles. (Note: This doesn't filter out pathogens.)

## CATCH A FISH

Make a Hawaiian sling: Carve a two-prong spear from fire-hardened wood and whittle the end so it fits snugly in the pole. Use cordage to tie the spear to the shaft. On the opposite side, coil shock cord (harvested from the pole) around the spear and knot it, leaving a roughly 14-inch loop on the end. To use: Stake out a spot where you can see fish without casting a shadow onto them, hold the shock cord between your thumb and fingers, and reach up toward the spear with the same hand, stretching the cord as far as it goes. Release to fire. The slingshot action improves the velocity and accuracy over thrusting or throwing.

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# Camp stove

It's not just useless weight when the fuel runs out. Scavenge off metal bits and put them to work.

BY TOM BROWN JR., TRACKER SCHOOL



## 1 SIGNAL MIRROR

Tie flat stove supports together to form a single sheet of metal and polish it to a high shine. Use this as a rudimentary signaling device to attract the attention of helicopters or search parties.

## 2 WIRE

Unweave the metal mesh covering the fuel hose and you'll harvest a few feet of wire. Use it for lashing hooks to a fishing line or sharpened points to a spear shaft.

## 3 SCRAPERS AND SAWS

Remove a stove leg and grind the longest section against a hard rock (like granite) to give it an edge. Use this to scrape bark

for good tinder. If your stove supports have teeth, sharpen them in the same method and use them to saw branches for shelter making.

## 4 SHOVEL

In desperate circumstances, thoroughly rinse the fuel bottle and use it to hold water, but anything you drink from there is going to taste like gas. Instead, use a sharp rock (save your knife) to slice out a primitive shovel from an empty fuel canister. Use it to forage for roots and insects in soft soil.

## 5 FIRESTARTER

White gas dregs won't power up your stove, but soak them up with dry, fine

tinder for a quick-ignition firestarter. Build up a blaze for warmth and cooking, or pile on green vegetation for a big, smoky signal fire.

## 6 HOOKS AND LURES

Bend springs into fishhooks. The various metal collars, couplings, and parts will help draw fish to your line.



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# This Magazine

**You already know these pages are full of survival tips. But you probably didn't know the pages themselves can help in survival. Put your mag to use in an emergency with these 9 hacks. BY TOM BROWN JR., TRACKER SCHOOL**

## STAY WARM

Stuff your jacket (first) and pants (if it's a thick issue) with shredded paper to help retain core warmth when temperatures drop. Also: Insulate your feet by cutting out two insole-shaped stacks of pages and putting them in your shoes. Swap in a new "insole" when they get wet.

## REALIGN BREAKS

A tube of rolled pages can immobilize anything from a pinky finger to a forearm to a tent or hiking pole. Wrap the cylinder tightly around the break, then bind it with tape, cordage, or DIY twine (see "Make Cord," right).

## FOSTER FIRE

Paper burns, of course, but you can improve performance in tough conditions. Shred pages finely and buff them up with your hands (like you'd do with natural fibers to make a quick-start tinder). To ignite wet wood, twist dry magazine pages until they're the size of pens and use them as kindling over the shredded tinder. The subsequent heat should be enough to coax damp wood into a campfire.

## FEED A FLAME

Roll pages into straw-like tubes and use them to blow oxygen onto coals and get a stubborn fire burning.

## SIGNAL HELP

Tear out the brightest pages (contrast with environment is key) and weight them down with sticks and stones to make an SOS sign that's easily visible in an aerial search. Alert ground searchers by leaving bright pages hanging on branches to mark your presence.

## MAKE CORD

Tear the pages into long strips, then twist and braid into cord. Note: The cord isn't as strong as other natural fibers, so only use it for light-duty applications, like lashing saplings.

## DRY BOOTS OR GLOVES

Place strips into your boots like wicks to draw out moisture.



## BLOCK BITES AND SCRAPES

Caught out in shorts? Have to bushwhack through nasty vegetation? Fasten rolled pages around the arms and lower legs to protect them against snakebites and thickets.

## CATCH A FISH

Twist the brightest pages into small ribbon shapes to make a fish lure that's about as effective as one made from bone or feather. Put the twisted lure directly on the hook (premade or DIY). These have a short lifespan of only a couple casts, but that's made up for by the ease of manufacturing.

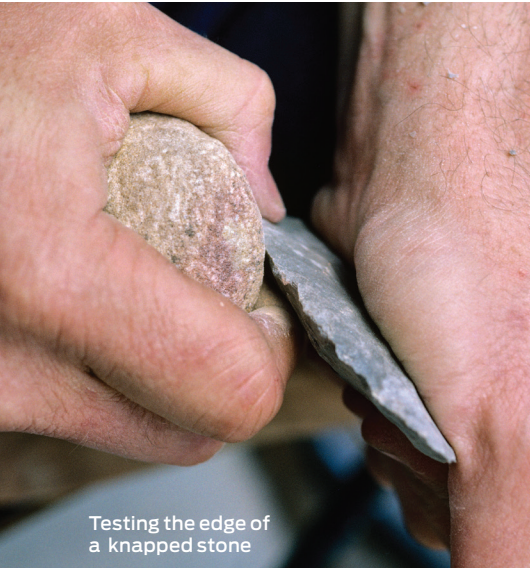


PHOTOS BY BEN FULLERTON

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# Rocks

In a bind? Turn to humankind's oldest tool. BY TOM BROWN JR., TRACKER SCHOOL



Testing the edge of a knapped stone

**First, bang two similar stones together. What sound did it make?**

**Thud.** Soft stone.  
Best for: sanding, abrading, and filing

**Sharp crack.** Hard rock.  
Best for: hammering, digging

**Crisp ring.** Very hard rock.  
Best for: cutting, slicing, weaponry

## MAKE CRUDE TOOLS

Soft or hard, any rock can be used to file sticks sharp. The simplest way to manufacture tools is to take a hard stone and throw it against a rock face or boulder (shield your eyes). Search the debris for anything with a good edge.

## MAKE BETTER TOOLS

Practiced campers can knap very hard stones (like flint) into effective blades and scrapers. Start with a crude edge (see above). Hold the edge parallel to the ground and hit a hard, rounded stone straight-down against it. Follow through. Tiny chips of rock will fall off the bottom of the edge, honing it.

## SHARPEN YOUR KNIFE

Collect a palm-size river stone, spit on it, and drag your knife blade against it in a smooth, arcing motion away from you. Hold the blade at a 20-degree angle for maximum sharpness.

## SPLIT WOOD

Use a hardwood club to drive a large, wedge-shaped rock into a log.

## NAVIGATE

Pile stones into cairns to help ground crews positively identify your track.

## STAY WARM

Place larger rocks (softball- to football-size) in your fire and let them heat through (at least 30 minutes). Transport them (by rolling or holding with two sticks) into your floorless shelter for a space heater. Two cautions: Never use river stones—they might explode if heated—and don't let the rocks superheat or they may accidentally ignite any woody materials around them.

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# A Knife

**Where there's a blade, there's a way. Use these techniques to carve, chop, scrape, and signal your way out of trouble.**

BY TOM BROWN JR., TRACKER SCHOOL

### CARVE A FUZZ STICK

Increasing a stick's surface area helps it grow a small flame. Snap a dead, thumb-thick branch off a downed tree. Listen for a cracking sound, which signals the branch is dry (touch the broken end to your lips to confirm). Starting from the bottom, carve in at 30 to 35 degrees to peel back shavings of wood, creating an umbrella effect. Continue until the entire stick is fuzzed.

### MAKE A WEAPON

To fashion a spear, use your knife to split an inch-thick stick about 6 inches at one end, then tie your knife into place with cordage. Style points: Fasten the knife perpendicular to the stick to make a tomahawk.

### MAKE A BOW

To make a primitive bow strong, you must follow a single growth ring for the entire length. (Crossing the wood grain weakens the bow.) For that you need a planing technique. Try this: Hammer a plug of wood onto the point of a fixed-blade knife. Using both hands, draw the knife toward you carefully at a 90-degree angle to the wood to refine imperfect branches into bows, arrows, or snowshoes.

### SCRAPE OUT A BOWL

Use hot coals to burn a bowl out of a log. Hold your blade at 90 degrees to the work surface and scrape out the char to finish your vessel.

### PROCESS FIREWOOD

Use a full-tang fixed blade—one where the metal extends through the handle—to chop logs into firewood. Place the knife atop a log and, using a softwood mallet, hammer the knife's spine near the tip to bisect the wood. Avoid pitch-hardened knots, which can chip your blade.

### SIGNAL HELP

Spit-shine your blade as clean as you can and buff it until it gleams. To aim, create a V with the fingers of your outstretched, non-dominant hand and center your target (aircraft, ground searchers) in the V. Hold the knife close to your chest, playing with angles until you catch the sun. Now, flash the target in the V of your fingers (the V gives you visual confirmation that your effort is working).





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# Snowshoes

**Traditional or modern, snowshoes can do a lot more than help you float on powder.**

BY TOM BROWN JR., TRACKERSCHOOL

## SNOW SHOVEL

Tunnel into snowdrifts for shelter or dig out an avalanche victim. Improve your grip by holding the center of the binding port or the side of the snowshoe frame and the back side of the frame.

## WINDBREAK

Once you've dug out a snow cave or (pro option) built an igloo, lash the snowshoes together and fit them with evergreen boughs to form a solid doorway that buffers against wind and driving snow.

## INSULATED SEAT

Place the 'shoes up in a tree between two stout, low branches and tie them securely to make a temporary platform above the snow. Add some pine boughs for insulation.

## FISHING

Use a sharp stone to cut aluminum-alloy crampons from the frame, then shape them into fishing lures. The bright colors found in many modern snowshoe frames will also attract a wide variety of fish.

## FIRST AID

**1.** Use newer bindings to fasten splints for anything from a tent pole to a broken bone. **2.** Two snowshoes lashed together and placed on long, stout branches will make a good base for a travois or stretcher (attach strips of bark to the bottoms of the snowshoes, if you're going to drag it). **3.** Support a sprained back by lashing the frame to them. Pad the back area and tie the 'shoes in place with the bindings or other cordage.

## PROTECTION

The snowshoe itself can also make a defensive weapon. The whooshing sound it makes when you swing it is often enough to deter many animals from coming closer. If they do approach, give them the business on the nose.

## ANCHOR

In high winds, use the snowshoe as a deadman to anchor a tarp or tent. **1.** Dig a hole on the windward side of your tent that's deep enough to insert most of the snowshoe. **2.** Using cordage or guylines, tie your shelter to the snowshoe, then bury it up to its belly. (Tip: Use a slip knot so it doesn't freeze tied.) **3.** Stomp the ground around your anchor for extra security.

## FIRE STARTER

Traditional snowshoes are typically made from ash, which is hard enough to make an excellent fire drill, if you've got the technique (backpacker.com/fire-drill).

## SAW

For models with long, shallow crampons that run the length of the snowshoe, remove or break off the metal piece. If it's still attached to the frame, you're good to go. Otherwise, carve a groove in a stick, place the blade in there and tie it securely with cordage. Use this to saw logs or ice blocks for shelter making, or to cut firewood.



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# Raingear

Think your rainwear is only useful in bad weather? Not so. Use this expert advice to convert your shell into anything from a water carrier to a sling. BY TOM BROWN JR., TRACKER SCHOOL



② The rainshell traps and condenses water vapor.

① Boil dirty water.

③ Catch pure water.

## DISTILL WATER

If the water near you is salty, brackish, or just plain funky and you don't have a filter, boil it, prop your jacket over the top, and place a light rock on top to create a low point. Position your cup or vessel under that spot. As the non-potable water boils, the steam will rise and condense on your jacket then flow downhill and into your cup.

## STAY AFLOAT

Trap air in your jacket to create a simple flotation device. Knot the sleeves and neck using overhand knots. Holding the bottom of your jacket in both hands, scoop downward, bringing the bottom hem underwater and holding it there. Twist the bottom like a trash bag to keep your air bubble from escaping.

## CATCH WATER

If rain is on the way, dig a wide, shallow depression and line it with your rain shell or poncho (size your ditch to the largest panel on the jacket; you don't want any leaks).

## CARRY WATER

Knot the sleeves of your jacket (or tie them off with cordage) and use them like canteens. Sling both sleeves over your neck to carry it yoke style.

## MAKE SHADE

Spread your shell over low vegetation or atop a simple frame made of sticks to escape the worst of the day's heat.

## KEEP YOUR FEET DRY

Cut wide squares from your poncho, put it under your foot, and step into your boots to create waterproof liners or vapor barriers.

## IMPROVISE FIRST AID

1. Dress wounds with strips of your raingear to keep them dry and dirt-free. 2. Strips of durable fabric also make good slings or bindings to splint broken bones. 3. Grab a handful of snow or carefully fill a section of your jacket with warm water to create an ice pack or a hot compress for bone, joint, or muscle pains.

## HARNESS WIND POWER

Use your poncho or jacket as a sail on a raft or canoe by tying it to a makeshift boom and mast, or simply holding it to catch the wind.

# A Bandana

In the right hands, this little square of cloth is so much more.

## START A FIRE (TWO WAYS)

1. Soak a few strands of your bandana in hand sanitizer to make a fire starter that will take a match easily and burn for a minute or more.
2. Survivalists know that semi-burnt cotton (char cloth) can light with just a spark. To make some, ignite a stamp-size piece of bandana, then snuff it out after a few seconds. Note: Making char cloth is pretty simple, getting it to take a spark is harder.



## SIGNAL FOR HELP

If your bandana contrasts with the landscape, hang it over a tree branch in an open area so it's level and as visible as possible from the sky (and helicopter rescuers).

## MAKE A HAT

Tie an overhand knot in each corner to create a crude container. Wet it and wear it on your head to block the sun if it's hot. Stuff it with dry leaves or other dry, fluffy material for an insulating cap if it's cold.

## COLLECT WATER

Dip your bandana in a puddle or rub it against dew-soaked vegetation, then wring it into a vessel. For a hard-to-reach seep in a rock, use a stick to poke part of your bandana into the source, then hang the bandana so the lower end

is downhill from the water level. Gravity will slowly draw that water toward you.

## FILTER WATER

Remove big chunks and muck from a water source. Make a cloth container (see "Make a hat," left), fill it with the murky water, and let it drip into your drinking vessel. This will get out the yucky-looking stuff, but microorganisms will persist. Boil the strained water, if possible.

## MAKE LASHINGS

Tear your bandana into inch-wide strips, then braid them together to make a rope. Use it like cordage for repairs, as replacement boot laces, or to haft a blade or sharpened stone onto a stick.

## STABILIZE AN ARM

Make a sling to reduce pain on a busted arm. Rip the bandana into strips to secure a splint.



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# A headlamp

You never leave home without one. Now put it to use to ensure you always make it back.

## FLAG DOWN RESCUERS

Flash your light in groups of three to indicate distress. If you're in a wooded area, tie the headlamp to the end of a long stick to reach over vegetation. Wave it to create a visible arc. Out of battery? Tap lightly around the side of the lamp with a sharp rock to separate the silver cup behind the bulb. Use the cup to reflect sunlight.

## CATCH FISH

If your batteries die or you can't ignore your hunger, repurpose reflective elements to attract fish. Work loose the silver LED backing by pressing the edge of the disc with a sharp rock. Then smash the headlamp casing and fashion a gorge hook (pictured) from a shard of sharpened plastic. Braid thread from the headband for a serviceable fishing line. Rather keep your lamp intact? Though illegal in some states under normal circumstances, holding a light over the water at night will attract plenty of species and lure them to a waiting hook or net.

## START A FIRE

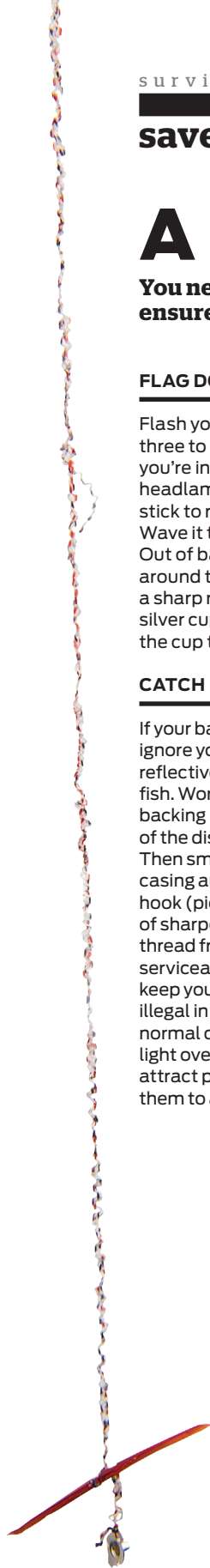
Strip and splice wires from the guts of the lamp until you can touch the ends to either terminus of a AA or AAA battery. (Partial charge will do.) This shorts the battery, turning the wire red-hot with electrical current. Use it to ignite tinder, but beware: Shorted batteries are prone to small but sudden explosions. Wear gloves and glasses if you can.

## REPAIR GEAR

The lamp's plastic casing is just a little whittling away from becoming a sturdy needle. Break it open with a rock and use a knife to hone splinters into sewing tools. Use your needle to work loose nylon strands from the headband to use as thread.

## TREAT INJURIES

The elastic headband can double as a compression bandage or hold a splint in place.





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# Lip Balm

When conditions have you risking life and lip, count on this sub-1-ounce wonder to save the day.  
BY TOM BROWN JR., TRACKER SCHOOL

## PROTECT WOUNDS

Dab lip balm on cuts to block dirt and debris. A smear can also prevent blisters in high-abrasion zones and keep scabs from cracking in cold or windy weather.

## STOP LEAKS

Spread balm on tent seams, worn-out DWR, and zippers for a quick fix. (Reapply after a week or when the leak reappears.)

## BLOCK UV

A thin coat of SPF formulas can prevent sunburn on exposed skin.

## FLOAT A FISH HOOK

Drill a hole in an empty tube with a knife. Push cordage through the hole and tie it in place to fashion a plastic bobber.

## STORE THE ESSENTIALS

Use the empty tube to keep pills and matches dry on rainy days. (But don't submerge—the seal isn't perfect.)

## CONDITION LEATHER

Soften your boots around hot spots by applying balm to both the inside and outside of the leather. Carefully

warm the conditioned area over a fire and work the goo in with your fingers.

## TRAP DINNER

Use a section of fruit-scented balm as bait for a snare.

## LIGHT THE WAY

For a portable light source, warm lip balm over a flame (without melting the plastic) and pour it into a bottle cap, hollowed-out piece of wood, or small container to make a candle. Twist cotton clothing fibers into a wick, insert, and hold still until the liquid sets. Need something brighter? Rub balm on both sides of a

long strip of bandana and wrap it around the end of a stick to make a seven-minute torch. (Beeswax-based formulas work best.)

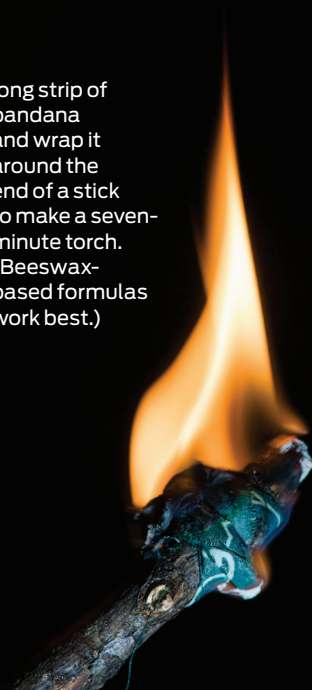


PHOTO BY NICK COTE

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# Aluminum Foil

Save your eyes, your electronics, and your life—as if you needed more reasons to start every trip with a breakfast burrito.

BY TOM BROWN JR., TRACKER SCHOOL



## **BLOCK THE GLARE**

Make glacier goggles to prevent snow blindness. Fold foil into a 6-by-2-inch bar and mold the mask to your face. Cut a space for your nose and horizontal slits for your eyes. Fold foil over at the edges to reinforce before poking holes for a cordage head strap.

## **SPLINT A JOINT**

Wrap a broken finger in cloth, then fold several layers of foil into a bar twice the length of your finger. Fold it in half longways over your finger to create a two-sided splint. (It's stronger than it looks.) Bend the splint to hold the finger at the most comfortable angle.

## **SIGNAL FOR HELP**

Wrap foil around a plate or a square frame made of twigs and reflect sunlight to signal aircraft. (Smooth out creases for best results). Too busy working that survival grind? Make sure your signal is always on: Tie ribbons of foil to trees or bushes in open areas.

## **LEAVE A TRAIL**

Lost at night? As you hike, wrap foil around trailside vegetation to catch your headlamp beam, so you can retrace your steps.

## **PURIFY WATER**

Fashion a cup to hold water for boiling. Suspend it over coals (foil will melt in a direct flame).

## **WATERPROOF YOUR PHONE**

Don't have a plastic bag? Wrap electronics in foil to protect them from heavy rain. Fold the edges over several times and crimp tightly to seal.