



EXCLUSIVE CONTENT

SURVIVAL

THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO SURVIVE?

EDITED BY COREY BUHAY

PLAYER SELECT

Some people are more likely to get into a survival situation than others. Choose your character wisely.



NICK

Nick is a 22-year-old college grad with a few overnights under his belt. He's thinking about hiking the Appalachian Trail while he ponders what to do with his new liberal arts degree.



SCOTT

Scott's a 49-year-old recent empty-nester. He's been getting out a lot with his newfound spare time, and thinks he knows everything there is to know about altimeter watches.



CHRISTINE

Christine, 35, is a formidable weekend warrior and an Instagram goddess. Though she has a high-paying day job now, she often dreams of the summers she spent as a river guide.

NICK

SPEED	█	█	█	█
STAMINA	█	█	█	█
STRENGTH	█	█	█	█
EXP	█	█	█	█

SCOTT

SPEED	█	█	█	█
STAMINA	█	█	█	█
STRENGTH	█	█	█	█
EXP	█	█	█	█

CHRISTINE

SPEED	█	█	█	█
STAMINA	█	█	█	█
STRENGTH	█	█	█	█
EXP	█	█	█	█

LIVES ♥♥♥♥♥

Track your hearts as you move through the coming obstacles. At the end of each level, see if you have enough life to get to the next stage.

LOADING...

LEVEL 1: THE ESCAPE

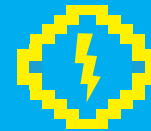
Lightning. Flash floods. Falls. To advance in this game, you first must survive the immediate threats. Here's how to think fast, avoid panic, and make the right decisions in the critical first hour.

UNDER AN HOUR

DODGE THE BOLTS!

When peak-bagging in July, when should you be below treeline?

- A) Noon
- B) 2 p.m.
- C) 4 p.m.



A: Set a hard turnaround time; 90 percent of lightning fatalities occur between June and September. +♥

Five seconds elapse between the flash of lightning and the sound of thunder. How far off is the storm?

- A) 5 miles
- B) 2 miles
- C) 1 mile

C: Time to take shelter in a ditch or ravine or in a wooded area. Avoid bodies of water, caves, lone trees, and small, isolated groves. +♥

Best group strategy in a storm?

- A) stick together
- B) spread out

B: Disperse to reduce the risk of getting struck en masse. +♥

IT HAPPENED TO ME

Struck Down

Mary Chandler, 29, and three friends got caught in a lightning storm on a Colorado Fourteener in 2015. As told to Morgan McFall-Johnsen

WHERE'S WILL? I woke up on the side of Mt. Bierstadt, soaked, shaking, and buzzing with electricity. I could smell burning hair, and my hiking partners—including my fiancé Will—were gone.

It was a beautiful June morning, and I'd wanted to make the most of it. Will and our friends Jonathan and Matt decided to grab our dogs and climb Bierstadt, an easy Fourteener near Denver, and set off around 7 a.m. I always wonder what would have happened if we'd left just 30 minutes earlier.

We reached the summit under partly cloudy skies, took some photos, and started down. Then a dark cloud rolled in. It started hailing. Suddenly, a flash of white light swallowed everything.

Next thing I knew, a stranger was wrapping my head in his T-shirt. I was confused and panicked, and my heart was beating so fast I thought it was going to rocket out of my chest. My forehead was damp with blood. *Did I fall?* I scanned the scene for Will. He was OK, sitting and surrounded by other hikers, as I was. *He must have fallen, too*, I thought hazily.

Then I heard Jonathan screaming. He was badly injured, and his dog, Rambo, was dead. Thunder clapped in the distance. Only then did it occur to me: *We were struck by lightning.*

Storms kept the helicopters away, so we hiked down. Matt, Will, and I walked on our own, but a group of hikers had to help Jonathan, who'd taken the brunt of the strike and had a bad head wound.

We all suffered spotty vision and migraines for months after the strike. Now those symptoms have faded, but the lesson never will: Everything can change in an instant. ⚡

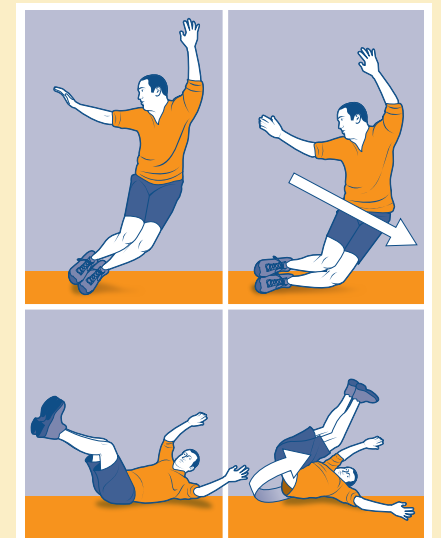
PLAY THE ODDS

79%

Lightning strike victims that are male. Sorry, guys; stats don't lie.



KEY SKILL ROLL OUT OF A FALL



After drowning, falling is the number one killer in the backcountry, and even a non-lethal plummet can leave you with broken bones. To improve your odds, relax your joints and take the hit like a paratrooper, rolling away the momentum and letting your thighs and shoulders absorb the brunt of the impact.

HEAD GAME

GO OFF-SCRIPT

Train your brain to neutralize panic.

YOUR BRAIN IS LAZY. Or, more charitably, your brain is efficient; it learns to do something, then codes it in what neuroscientists call a "script"—a task you can do without thinking, like tying your shoes. The trouble with scripts?

"According to the research, when you're put under extreme stress, you're not going to invent new behaviors to deal with it. You're going to do what you've done in the past," says Laurence Gonzales, author of *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why*. When you panic, your brain essentially turns off your prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for executive decision-making, and looks for shortcuts. And those automatic reactions—like lunging for a dropped camera during a river crossing—can be dangerous.

To skip the autopilot phase, Gonzales recommends practicing some neurological exercises, like tying your shoes a new way every day or moving your cups to a different cabinet. The more you can avoid creating scripts, the faster your brain will redirect to the prefrontal cortex when you're in trouble—giving you back precious seconds that could save your life.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER SUCHESKI (KEY SKILL); TEXT BY MORGAN MCFALL-JOHNSEN (HEAD GAME); RYAN WICHELINS (KEY SKILL)

SURVIVE A BEAR ENCOUNTER

Reality check: Fatal bruin attacks are pretty rare. There were 46 reported occurrences in North America from 2000 to 2017, or an average of three per year. But we get it; you don't want stats, you want to be prepared. So here's how to handle a bad-news bear.

WHO'S THAT BEAR?

Color and size can be misleading. Black bears often sport a brownish coat, and young grizzlies can be small. Knowing the difference is important: Grizzlies have been known to attack humans to defend their young, which means backing off or playing dead could spare you a mother's wrath. Black bears are more often responsible for predatory attacks—meaning playing dead for too long could get you eaten. Learn the right identification to help you predict the bear's next move.



BEST BEHAVIOR

TRUE/FALSE

- 1. Tie on a bear bell and you're good.**
 - 2. Bears are slow.**
 - 3. Bears are skittish.**
 - 4. If the bear charges, you're S.O.L.**
- 1. FALSE.** No study supports this feel-good measure. Talk loudly as you hike to alert nearby bruins.
- 2. FALSE.** A bear can run 30 mph. Can you? Slowly back away, and speak in a calm, monotone voice to establish that you're a human, not a threat.
- 3. TRUE.** If the bear approaches (even after a calm talking-to), yell, wave your arms, and stand together if you're in a group.
- 4. FALSE.** If the bear precedes the charge with huffing, hopping, or jaw-popping, it's likely a bluff; stand your ground. Not sure? Play dead (lay belly-down; protect your neck with your hands). If the bear turns predatory, it's time to defend yourself (see right).

Each correct answer: +❤️
Each incorrect one: -❤️

FIGHT RIGHT

If you know a bear's not acting defensively, or if you're playing dead and it starts chewing on you, it's time to start swinging. Where do you aim?

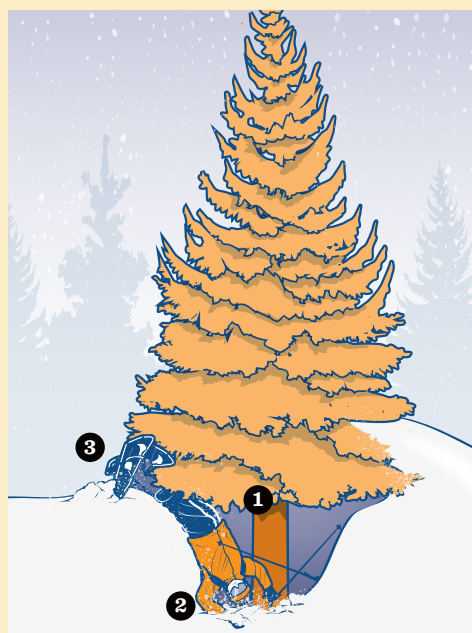


Go for the eyes and nose? Those are the most sensitive.

+❤️
Land a shoulder or neck punch? Not so effective.

-❤️

KEY SKILL ESCAPE A TREE WELL



Skiers and snowshoers who fall in often end up head first and can suffocate within 15 minutes.

- 1)** When sliding into the well, grab the tree's branches or trunk to remain upright.
- 2)** Too late? Move your head slowly from side to side to look for air pockets. Avoid sloughing in more snow.
- 3)** Shout for help. If you're alone, your chances are slim. Try to pop out of your skis or snowshoes and slowly and methodically feel for a branch or trunk. Grab on, try to shuffle your feet sideways, and haul yourself upright.

AVALANCHE!

On average, there are 28 avy fatalities each winter in the U.S. Nine of those are hikers, snowshoers, and skiers. While careful planning and navigation can prevent most accidents, sometimes the slope still rips.

- 1. Learn the basics.** First things first: Get certified with an AIARE Level 1 course, which offers instruction on snowpack and terrain hazards. Pack a beacon, probe, and shovel into the backcountry—and know how to use them.
- 2. Avoid steep.** Don't cross on or below slopes between 30 and 45 degrees—those are the ones most likely to let loose.
- 3. Get to stable ground.** If the snow starts sliding under (or above) you, try to escape the avalanche path and reach for a tree or plant a ski pole or ice axe beyond the break line. Move fast—slabs can hit 80 mph within five seconds. Far from the fracture? Start ditching potential anchors like skis and poles.
- 4. Stay above the snow.** Only 40 percent of victims survive after being fully buried for 15 minutes. Keep your pack—bigger objects tend to “float” in an avalanche, and it may protect your backside. Fight to keep your head above the surface, using your arms to “swim” upward.
- 5. Create an air pocket.** If you're caught in the flow and likely to be buried, tuck your face into the crook of your elbow (do this before the snow stops moving—once it does, it'll set like quick-dry concrete). If you can thrust your hand upward, it'll make you easier to find, but digging yourself out isn't an option; save your energy, and rely on your partners for rescue.



EXPERT WISDOM

“Remember, a lot of these crises happen to people who aren't aware of their surroundings. You've taken the responsibility to put all kinds of stuff in your pack, but ask yourself: Have you taken the time to turn on all the mental switches? It isn't enough to just know that flash floods, predators, and potential hazards exist. You need to move that awareness to the front of your consciousness. Don't get complacent—that's what will get you into trouble.”

—Shane Hobel, founder, Mountain Scout Survival School

PHOTOS BY (LEFT) ISTOCK.COM (2); STEVE BLOOM IMAGES/ALAMY; STOCK PHOTO TEXT BY STASIA CALLAGHAN; RYAN WICHELS; ETHAN SCHOWALTER-HAY ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER SUCHESKI (LEFT); WALTER NEWTON

SPEED ROUND

Short-term catastrophes play out fast. Take this quiz to find out how you'd fare.

- Midway through a river crossing, you're swept off your feet and into the racing current. You decide to:
 - (a)** Crawlstroke like mad for the riverbank.
 - (b)** Ditch your pack, flip over onto your back, and float feet-first downriver.
 - (c)** Swing your trekking poles overhead in hopes of snagging a low-hanging tree branch.
- You're crossing a frozen lake, but—surprise!—you hear a sudden crack and feel yourself plunge underwater. Your plan?
 - (a)** Ditch your trekking poles and bust out the beached-whale move.
 - (b)** Use your poles to span the break so you have something to support your weight while you call for help.
 - (c)** Stab those carbide tips into the ice and claw your way out.

Answer: (c) If you were smart, you'd have brought something like ice claws (basically little dowels with spikes on the end) in case of a plunge. But sometimes sharp pole tips will do the trick. Get horizontal, float your legs up behind you, and frog-kick yourself forward onto the ice.

3. In a hurry to pick up a resupply before the post office closes, you're hustling down the trail when a rattler sinks its fangs into your ankle. You're 5 miles out, and there's no cell reception. You should:

- (a)** Apply a tourniquet to keep the venom from spreading.
- (b)** Keep on walking; you've got a limited amount of time.
- (c)** Wait for help. Sitting still will slow the venom's spread.

Answer: (b) True, a jackrabbit heart rate will pump venom through your system faster. But in most cases, you've got a few hours before you're in real trouble—long enough to hike a ways, but not enough to spend the night. Stay calm, try to ID what bit you, and walk at a steady pace toward the nearest trailhead. Have cell service? Call 911 ASAP.

For each correct answer: +❤️ For each incorrect answer: -❤️

PLAY THE ODDS

22 TO 36

Average age of avalanche fatalities in the U.S. Did you pick Nick or Christine?

-❤️



PREDICAMENT STUCK IN A SLOT CANYON

A dayhike through canyon country takes a turn for the worse. See if you have the decision-making chops to survive.

RESULTS



LIFE AFTER SURVIVAL

MAULED BY A MOUNTAIN LION

How do you move on after a cougar tries to kill you? Following an attack in 2004, Anne Hjelle got back on the trail. As told to Katherine Blunt

B EING TACKLED BY a mountain lion feels something like getting hit by a bus.

The animal sprang out of the brush in Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park in Southern California without warning, and the force tore me off my bike and off the trail I'd been riding. I fought, thrashing and punching as its jaws clamped down on the back of my neck, and then my face. I felt my left cheek tear away.

My riding partner, Debi, hurled her bike at the lion, to no avail. She grabbed one of my legs, trying to pull me from its grip as it dragged me away. I felt its jaws close on my throat, and passed out.

I regained consciousness moments later, choking on my own blood. Other riders had thrown rocks at the lion, at last scaring it off.

My first surgery was that night. It lasted six and a half hours. When the bandages came off the next morning, a nurse reluctantly handed me a compact mirror. Nothing about my face looked familiar.

Eight days later, I left the hospital and returned home on my own

two feet. Strangers stared at me when I ventured out to pick up prescriptions, triggering the urge to look down, to hide my face. It was a taste of my new reality: Those stares have persisted ever since.

When I was cleared to ride my bike a few months later, I brought my husband and some friends back to the trail. The lion that had attacked me (and killed another rider that same day) had been caught and euthanized, and mountain lion attacks are exceedingly rare as it is, but I still felt the grip of fear. I told myself not to give into it: I had to prove to myself that my nerves would not control me. I couldn't do anything to speed up the healing of my face, but I could work on strengthening my mind. I decided to focus on that.

As soon as we started the ride, I felt that old feeling of euphoria creep back in. For the first time since the attack, I felt my life was finally returning to normal.

I was hopeful for the second reconstructive surgery. But once it was over, I knew I would never look like I once did. The dead nerves around my eyes would never heal, my smile would never regain its former symmetry. Now I had to accept that, as a personal trainer in Orange County, I would always look a little different in a place and a career where appearance really matters.

But I couldn't dwell in grief or self-pity. The damage was only cosmetic, I reminded myself: I was alive, I had my family, I could still ride.

I kept biking consistently, forcing myself to fight my fears. I used to relish solo rides before the attack, but now, I feel more comfortable having someone else in sight. It will probably always be that way, but that's all right: Solo or not, I'm still out there.

In the years since the attack, I've thought a lot about fear. It can be useful for making safe decisions, but it can also be restrictive. Over time, I've learned to balance my fear with logic: There is almost no chance that I will get attacked again. That's what I tell myself when I feel my heart rate start climbing. And I look around: Among mountains and trees, it's easy to remember that braving a little uneasiness is worth it.

Once, at a local speaking event, a woman told me that she stopped hiking at Whiting Ranch after hearing what happened to me. That broke my heart. I tell my story because I want people to know that if I can overcome my fear, anyone can.

I took her hiking there the next week. For her, it was the first step forward.



PHOTO BY BRANDONFLINT.COM

PLAY THE ODDS

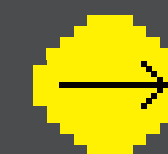
125

Reported cougar attacks in the last 100 years. They're rare, and the human almost always wins. It doesn't matter who you are: +❤️



LEVEL UP

More than 10 hearts? You're soaked, mangled, and/or cursing with electricity, but you're alive. Ten or fewer? Replay the level; you're not ready for what comes next.



LEVEL 2: THE THICK OF IT

You escaped the immediate threat, but as the minutes stretch into hours, your ordeal is just beginning. Choose your next moves wisely.

1 TO
24
HOURS

COAX FLAME FROM A SPARK

There's no better heater, S.O.S. signal, or morale booster than a crackling fire. No lighter? Start one the old-fashioned way.

1

GATHER

Sparks are tiny, fragile things, and they won't last long without the right environment.

Collect dry grass, frayed wood shavings, shredded birch bark, cattail fluff, or dried ferns, which all take a spark particularly well. Build them into a loose nest big enough to fill two cupped hands. Set it aside. Then, gather bundles of sticks of varying thicknesses—pencil-, thumb-, and wrist-

size—and build a teepee with the smallest sticks on the interior and the largest on the outside. (Leave enough room between sticks for plentiful airflow, and leave an opening in the center of the teepee to insert tinder.)

2

SCRAPE

If you've got a magnesium or ferrocium rod, scrape a dime-size pile of shavings into the center of your tinder bundle. If you don't, go to the next step.

3

SPARK

Kneel as close to the bundle as possible. Hold your ferro rod or flint palm-up in one hand, and brace that hand against your thigh. The end of the rod should touch the tinder. Scrape the back of the knife blade (the straight edge just behind the tip works best) down the rod in a firm, even stroke to throw sparks onto the tinder bundle. Repeat until the tinder catches.

4

BREATHE

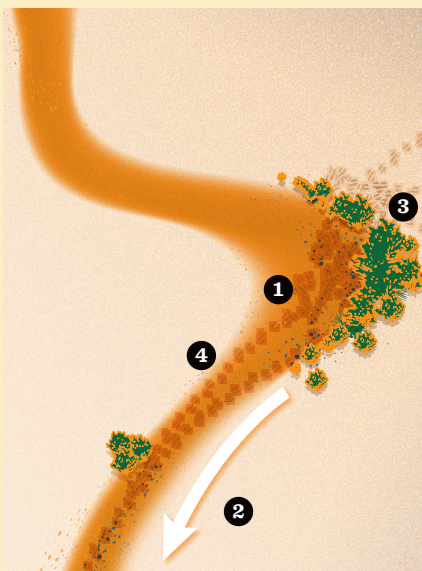
When the tinder's smoldering, lift the bundle. Blow gently, careful not to extinguish the spark or send shavings airborne. If the ember fails to grow after a few exhales, throw more sparks.

5

BUILD

When you have a small flame, tuck the tinder into the teepee. Blow gently if it starts to fizzle. When the smallest sticks light, close the door of the teepee. Add bigger kindling as the fire grows.

KEY SKILL FIND WATER IN THE DESERT



- 1) Look for a wash.** Dig at the outside of a curve in the waterway—it may yield subterranean water. If the soil's not damp a foot deep, try elsewhere.
- 2) Walk downstream.** You might find surface pools or wet spots (dig there).
- 3) Look for green.** Vegetation is often a giveaway for the presence of a nearby spring.
- 4) Follow animal tracks.** They may lead to water.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER SUCHESKI (KEY SKILL)
TEXT BY MORGAN MCALL-JOHNSON; ETHAN SCHWALTER-HAY; RYAN WICHELS

HEAD GAME SHAKE OFF STRESS

After the adrenaline wears off, there's just you, holding your life in your own hands.

THINK OF STRESS as a cloud. It inhibits decision-making in ways scientists haven't quite figured out, but most agree that too much of it almost always breeds bad choices. Stress makes us act before we've considered all options. It wakens a chattering inner voice that explains away "missing" lakes or mountains—a phenomenon called "bending the map." It tells us to keep going lest we be forced to admit that we're lost.

So your best first move is to breathe, observe your surroundings, and do simple tasks (like making a snack) until the panic subsides. "Check your pulse," suggests Robert Koester, the CEO of search-and-rescue research company dbS Productions and author of *Lost Person Behavior*. "If it's in the normal range, 60 to 80 beats per minute, the adrenaline rush has died down." Only then is it time to make a plan.

The good news? Research suggests that stress turns us all into risk managers. So while you might not make the best decisions, your psychology is firewalled against making those likely to kill you. Find that reassuring.

SPEED ROUND

Ready to handle an all-day emergency? Take this quiz to find out.

1. It's 104°F, the sun's directly overhead, and you swear you're seeing the shimmer of a mirage. Or is that your vision fading out? Your head's pounding... oh, and, yep, you just passed out for a minute there. You:

- Pound your last liter.
- Find some shade, sip, snack, and make a plan to find water.
- Keep moving; the map shows a blue-dotted line on route in a few miles.

Answer: (b) You need to replenish water and electrolytes; have a salty snack with that liter, then look for a reliable water source on a map (dotted blue lines indicate intermittent ones). If you can, rest in the shade until temps drop, then set out.

2. Your foot snags between two rocks, and down you go. You hear a snap just as

your leg riots with shooting pain. You're not positive, but it sure feels like your shin bone (or whatever that's called) is broken. What's your move?

- Apply a splint.
- Pop some ibuprofen and hobble to the trailhead.
- Try to confirm that the leg is broken.

Answer: (a) Just assume the leg's broken. Pad the area with clothing, and wrap a sleeping pad around the limb, including the joints both above and below the break. Tie it in place (ensure good circulation). Then wait for rescue. No supplies or no one coming? Use a Y-shape stick as a crutch, pop that Vitamin-I, grit those teeth, and start hiking.

3. You look up from your class 4 scramble and realize you've climbed yourself

into a pickle: Going up looks impossible. Climbing down to the broad ledge 15 feet below looks just as scary. You have some paracord, and a storm's coming. You:

- Go for the downclimb.
- Stay put and wait for rescue.
- Lower off a nearby rock or tree.

Answer: (c) If there's little chance of a deadly fall, tie a hand line to a rock that's well attached to the mountain and that the rope won't slip off the top of, or a tree that's alive and at least 6 inches in diameter and 5 feet tall. Wrap the rope around your anchor three times and tie it off with a double fisherman's knot. Add overhand knots every few inches along the length of the rope to give it more grip. Face the cliff and lower down, hand-over-hand. (You'll have to leave the rope behind; this is for emergencies only.)

For each correct answer: +❤️ For each incorrect answer: -❤️

IT HAPPENED TO ME

In for a Dip

In December 2013, Samantha Robbins fell into an icy lake near her family cabin in Cle Elum, Washington, and lapsed into hypothermia. As told to Stasia Callaghan

IT WAS A CLEAR, 21°F December morning, and I had just gotten a new camera, so I strapped on my snowshoes for a quick hike down to Kachess Lake to try it out. It was just over a mile, but the path was steep and filled with deep snow.

At the shore, I found a few stumps sticking out of the water. If I could climb onto one, I figured I'd get some cool shots. So I set down my pack and camera and stepped onto one stump that appeared wet from snowmelt, just to test it out. But what I thought was a sheen of water turned out to be a layer of ice, and I slipped, plunging into the lake. The ice-cold water ripped the breath from my lungs as my head submerged. I fought to the surface, then the shore.

I shed my wet jacket and shirt and burrowed into the dry coat in my pack. Still shuddering, I began the adrenaline-powered hike back up the trail. My ears were ringing and my pulse was racing so violently I could hear it thumping in my head. I slogged uphill for 20 minutes and was about halfway back when the adrenaline started to drain from my system. I sat down, sagging into a snowbank. My muscles refused to work. All I could do was lie there.

I could feel my heart rate dropping and breaths slowing. I wanted to sleep. After five minutes, I tried to move again and found my pants had begun to freeze to the ground. That scared another jolt of adrenaline out of me—enough to peel myself up and keep hiking. At the cabin, I immediately put on dry clothes and climbed under the covers. My brother took my temperature: 93.8°F—any colder, and I might not have been able to get up out of that snowbank at all. ❄️

PLAY THE ODDS

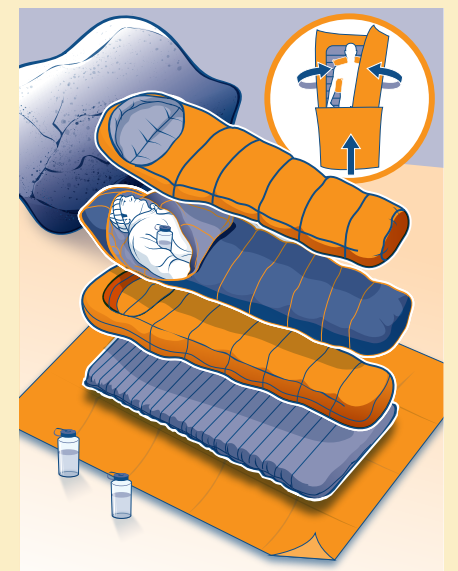
40
TO
65

Age of hikers most likely to need rescue because they exceeded their abilities. Sorry, Scott.

-❤️



KEY SKILL MAKE A HYPO-WRAP



Cold and wet? Body temperature can drop to 95°F in as little as 15 minutes. Here's what to do for a severely hypothermic partner.

- Replace wet layers with dry ones.
- Lay down a tarp or tent fly, then a pad.
- Stack three sleeping bags (if possible). Get your partner into the middle one.
- Add hot water bottles (put them in socks).
- Wrap up the tarp, burrito-style.
- Get him or her to consume snacks and warm drinks.

PREDICAMENT CAUGHT IN A BLIZZARD

You only meant to be out a few hours, but winter had other plans. Think you can outlast the cold?

RESULTS



START

You set out for an early spring dayhike through dense forest. You encounter several feet of snow, but the trail is visibly packed down already. How do you navigate?

A With a map and compass. **C** By following the trail.
B With a GPS.

The packed trail ends after a mile. What's your move?

A Keep going, following a snowy furrow. **B** Call it quits.

The other half of your breakfast burrito is still warm when you get to the car.

It starts to snow and your tracks fill in. You've got no way of knowing where you are. You:

A Hike up a steep, treeless slope for a better view. **C** Push onward.
B Call for help.

The snowpack wasn't as stable as it looked.
AVALANCHE!

The flurries turn into a blizzard and before long, you can barely see the trees in front of you. Exhausted from postholing, you stumble over a cliff.

You discover that the packed trail was not your intended route, which is mellow and less prone to avalanches. You set out on the right path and soon come to a stream crossing. There's an ice bridge about 4 inches thick. You:

A Throw your pack across, then step gingerly. **C** Scout farther upstream for a safer crossing.
B Try to make the leap.

You go to dial 911. Where was your phone?

A Chest pocket. **B** Pack.

Too cold: Battery's dead. You:

A Keep hiking to stay warm as the snow piles up. **B** Build a snow cave.

Lunchbox the Cadaver Dog sniffs out your corpse three months later when you thaw out. The look of panic on your face is remarkably well-preserved.

Rrrring! The operator puts you through to **Crusty SAR Guy Steve**, who grumbles something about naive greenhorns but sends out a search party anyway.

Sweaty after digging for several hours, you crawl inside. Without a sleeping pad to insulate you from the snow, you're soon hypothermic. You:

A Eat a snack and do some pushups. **B** Curl up in a ball to conserve body heat.

You fall in and are swept downstream. You pull yourself out but start to feel unnaturally warm—a symptom of severe hypothermia. Alas, you strip off your clothes. **Lunchbox the Cadaver Dog** tries to avert his eyes from your naked body when he finds it three days later.

You find a narrow stretch and try to rock-hop across. Flip a coin:

A Heads **B** Tails

Steve and his crew find you, cold but alive.

You wake up several times to clear the vent hole and do more pushups, and make it to morning. It's cold, but clear and sunny. You decide to:

A Stay put. **B** Find your way out using your map and following low-angle slopes.

You make it, but going out of your way takes longer than expected. You get caught in a blizzard.

You make it home and treat yourself to a big bowl of chili with extra cheese.

LIFE AFTER SURVIVAL

FREE FALL ON RAINIER

Sometimes, the worst of the trauma is invisible. After a fall on Mt. Rainier in 2012, that's the kind Stacy Wren Liedle had to face. *As told to Kassandra Cloos*

THE BERGSCHRUND SLICED the glacial ice beneath us like a split-lipped grin. My team—comprised of myself and three friends—was still buzzing from our successful summit of Mt. Rainier when we decided to pull out our anchors for the last of the traverse around the fissured ice on Emmons Glacier. I pulled up the last picket, took a few steps—and slipped. I felt the rope go taught, yanking my partners off their feet, over the lip of the bergschrund and into a 40-foot free fall onto the slope below. There was no time to self-arrest. I woke up 20 minutes later, bleeding and bruised but unbroken. Two of my partners were nearby and badly injured. I clawed up the ice, looking for the third. Then I heard her screaming: She had tumbled head-first into a crevasse on the way down and now acted as a counterbalance, keeping the rest of us from sliding to our deaths. I scrambled to build a snow anchor and administer first aid while one of my partners called 911. The helicopter arrived two hours later and started loading up my friends. During all the chaos, I heard panicked voices over the radio. Shortly after, the weather turned, and the chopper had to evacuate before I could finish clipping in. I was left behind to camp on the mountain with two rangers.



Later that night I learned what all the yelling had been about: One of the rescuers, 33-year-old Nick Hall, had fallen while wrestling with one of the litters in the high winds, sliding 3,000 feet. He was dead. The next morning, the weather was still too bad for flying, so we hiked down. I was so cold, tired, and hungry. I tried to give up. I begged them to leave me behind. "This is when you figure out what you're made of," one of the rangers told me. "This is when you dig deep." When we eventually got down, I was herded away from the horde of reporters at the trailhead to see my parents, who'd flown in the night before. My mom fell to the ground sobbing when she saw me. I felt shaken for weeks. The accident affected each of us differently, and we mostly dealt with our trauma on our own. I blamed myself, especially at first. I knew it had been an accident, but I also knew that my friends wouldn't have been injured if I hadn't fallen. It didn't seem fair that I'd escaped unscathed.

I did my best to get back into a routine—I would walk to a friend's house every morning to make coffee and sit on her porch and just appreciate being alive. I felt like I had cheated death, like I had been given bonus time. I didn't want to squander that.

But I didn't know how to confront what had happened. I thought the best way to cope with fear of falling would be to rock climb more, to push myself harder. But when I neared the edge of my comfort zone, I'd freeze on the wall, images of the fall flashing through my head. About 13 months after the accident, I locked up mid-climb on Lumpy Ridge in Estes Park, Colorado, and fell 30 feet, shattering my leg on impact. I started seeing a therapist. I thought I'd gotten past all the guilt about my friends' injuries and Nick's death, but now I found it was all still in my head, a shadow following me everywhere I went. Therapy helped me look at those memories objectively and to see not just my shame, but the strength and resilience I used to survive. I learned to believe that I am strong, that I am capable, and that I'm worthy of being loved, even though I've messed up. That became my mantra.



EXPERT WISDOM

"Whether you're out for a few hours or a few days, the priorities of survival always come in the same order: shelter, water, fire, food. Weather is a big factor in deciding what kind of shelter to make, but weather changes. And even though you might assume you're going to be rescued (or be able to self-rescue) within 24 hours, you also have to assume something could go wrong. So make sure you have layers and raingear or the means to set up a tarp, tent, or lean-to. Then, stay hydrated, fueled, and alert for whatever might happen next."
—Shane Hobel, founder, Mountain Scout Survival School

I don't think about the accident every day anymore. But on the anniversary, I always do something special and toast to Nick and to being alive. I want his family to know he is not forgotten. I think about him when I'm laughing really hard, skiing an amazing line, or standing on a mountain ridge. I try hard to live a meaningful life he would be proud of. It's my way of honoring him, and the debt I can never repay.

LEVEL UP

Fewer than 12 hearts? Try again. Twelve or more? You've made it past the intermediate dangers, but you're not out of the woods yet. Let's see how you handle the long game.

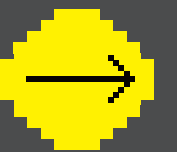


PHOTO BY ANNA POWELL TEETER

LEVEL 3: THE LONG WAIT

Most search-and-rescue operations resolve within 24 hours, but some push both the clock and the human ability to endure. Play on to find your breaking point.

24+ HOURS



GET UNLOST

Face it: You're beyond "just a little turned around." Try these strategies.

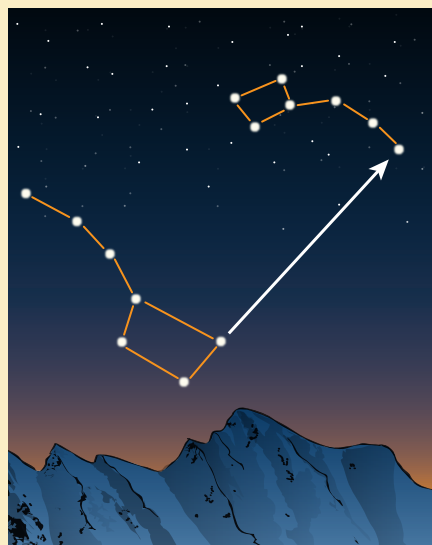
- 1. Triangulate.** Align the 0-degree mark on the compass with north on the map, then spin both together until your needle points north (adjust for declination). Match two landscape features to the map. Draw a bearing line from each. Your location should be where they intersect.
- 2. Backtrack.** Retrace your steps to the last place you knew where you were. Do better next time: When hiking off-trail, compare your surroundings to the map every half hour and note waypoints like peaks, ridges, or bodies of water. On trail, mark off junctions and landmarks on the map as you pass them.
- 3. Sample routes.** Can't backtrack? Hike a short distance in several directions (mark your route so you can get back to your original position if you need to).
- 4. Wait it out.** No dice? Stay put if you expect a rescue.

BUILD LONG-TERM SHELTER

You're starting to realize you're going to be out for a while. Here's how to settle in for an indefinite stay.

- 1 SCOPE YOUR OPTIONS.** Find a spot close to water, under tree cover, and within walking distance of an open field or ridge for signaling. Avoid camping on game trails or in wind-exposed areas or cold sinks.
- 2 ERECT A SHELTER.** With the door facing away from the wind, put up a tent or tarp, or build a lean-to or debris hut. For the latter (the most protective option), butt the end of a slender, 12-foot log against a rock, and prop up the other end about 3 feet off the ground using two Y-shaped sticks planted at a 90-degree angle to one another (rest the log where the two forks overlap). Next, lean adjacent wrist-size sticks against either side of the log at a 45-degree angle. Pile leaves or duff 3 to 4 feet thick against the ribs. (Gather all wood at least 200 feet from camp so if you get hurt or sick you'll still have materials within easy reach.)
- 3 ADD INSULATION.** To protect your body from the cold ground, add at least a 12-inch layer of leaves to the floor of your shelter. Using a tarp? Pile snow or dry debris around the edges to seal out weather.

KEY SKILL NAVIGATE BY THE STARS



Pop quiz: What star is this?

(If you answered the North Star, give yourself +❤️)
Tip: If you can't see the Big Dipper, find your direction using the crescent moon. Draw a line through its two points. You'll find south where that line intersects the horizon.

HEAD GAME DON'T STOP BELIEVING

Emotional resilience can be the difference between enduring a long-term survival challenge, and succumbing to one.

LEAVE OPTIMISM TO the rubes; it's not as helpful in a survival situation as you might think. According to Steven Southwick, a professor of psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine, the overly optimistic can be just as dangerous as the pessimistic: They tend to overestimate their abilities and underestimate hazards.

Resilience comes from realistic optimism: acknowledging the negatives, then forcing yourself to look at the positives. According to Southwick, survivors of long-term trauma tend to be able to set aside their fear: They see it as a helpful guide rather than its own emergency.

To get to that point, Southwick recommends acknowledging your fear, then using positive self-talk to keep up your morale (and temper your stress response). "Tell yourself, 'I'm a lot stronger than I think. I have a reservoir of resilience and I'm going to call on that,'" Southwick says. "Stay positive. Imagine that you're going to make it out." Do that and you just might.

ILLUSTRATION BY PETER SUCHESKI; TEXT BY STASIA CALLAGHAN; RYAN WICHELS; MORGAN MCFALL-JOHNSON

PREDICAMENT LOST IN THE ALPINE

You got more adventure than you asked for when you wandered off-trail above treeline. Can you save yourself?

RESULTS



START

You embark on a day of peakbagging under clear skies. It's an 18-mile out-and-back to a Fourteener. When do you start hiking?

A 3 a.m. Better safe than sorry.
B 8 a.m. The forecast is pretty good.

By the time you reach the final summit scramble it's 2 p.m. The forecast was wrong. A storm is rolling in. You:

A Bolt for the summit—you're so close!
B Hike quickly and carefully to a trailside gully to take shelter. When the storm passes, you descend.

Lightning is no joke. Flip a coin.
A Heads | **B** Tails

Zzzap! Lunchbox the Cadaver Dog sniffs out your crispy corpse the next day.

Summit selfie! The storm rolls away as you head down, but the rocks are wet and slippery. After two hours of stepping carefully and staring at your feet, you look up and realize you're still far from treeline. In fact, you're off route.

You slip, tumble 10 feet, dislodge a loose rock, and roll 50 feet down the mountain. What hand do you write with?

A Right | **B** Left

You emerge, somehow unscathed! But now you're lost.

A Get out your map and compass.
B Use your intuition to pick a direction.

Salvation! Bonus: Jake's Saloon is open late.

Good move: Staying fueled and hydrated can help mitigate the symptoms of altitude sickness. You summit by 10 a.m. and are back below treeline at noon.

You hike up to treeline by headlamp. At sunrise, you're making good time but feeling a little light-headed. You:

A Take a 20-minute break, chug a liter of water, and down a breakfast bar (with a side of ibuprofen).
B Shake it off and pick up the pace.

Next stop: Jake's Saloon.

A bear eats your corpse before Lunchbox the Cadaver Dog can find it.

You're still hiking at nightfall, and you have no cell service. You:

A Keep hiking.
B Curl up to sleep at the base of a tall cliff.
C Wrap yourself in your emergency space blanket.

Crusty SAR Guy Steve finds you six hours later.

And fall off a cliff.

Rockfall crushes your camp during the night.

You survive the night! Time to:

A Hike up the nearest hill for cell service.
B Put on bright clothing and build a signal fire.
C Follow a creek downhill; surely it will lead to road.

You carry on but symptoms worsen. You try to push through the nausea, but it's positively debilitating. You have to lay down to take a nap.

You meet another hiker who knows the way out.

Water doesn't always lead to civilization. You wander for days. Roll the dice.
1 or 2
3 or 4
5 or 6

You find a road and hitchhike to safety.

Lunchbox the Cadaver Dog finds your emaciated corpse four months later. Marmots have devoured most of your gear.

LIFE AFTER SURVIVAL

FROSTBITTEN AND STRANDED

When Eric LeMarque was rescued off California's Mammoth Mountain in 2004, he had no way of knowing the hardship was just beginning. *As told to Ryan Wichelns*

“WHY DON'T YOU just meet me down the hill? I think I'm going to ride down,” I told the dumbfounded National Guard medic.

He had rappelled from a helicopter to save me. My body temperature, he'd just told me, was 86°F. That I even had a pulse was remarkable considering I'd been wandering in the snow for the last seven nights. One foot was naked, and the other was frozen in its boot. But somehow, all I could think about was snowboarding.

I'd been riding at Mammoth Mountain Ski Resort when ski patrol started ushering people down. I ignored them, sure I'd be able to get in another run before the storm hit, and hiked out of bounds and into the backcountry in search of powder. Then the fog rolled in. Before long, I was hopelessly turned around. I wandered, on foot and via snowboard, all day and night, and eventually found a river, but I slipped at the edge and fell into the icy water. Soaked and freezing, I hauled myself out and walked 9 miles through deep snow over the course of a week, chewing on pine seeds and bark to stay alive. When I peeled off

my socks on day three, I found strips of my own flesh clinging to them. Starved and exhausted, I ate that, too. By the time rescuers found me, I was critically hypothermic—and delirious.

Rational thinking only returned later, in the hospital. By then, both my feet had been amputated. Sit with that fact in a small, white room, and it's impossible to avoid digging back into your memory and picking apart the experience that got you there. I wanted to avoid thinking about all of it—the cold, the fear, the arrogance that had led me to ignore ski patrol's warnings—but that luxury stopped the minute I looked at the other end of the bed and found it empty.

My feet had been my livelihood. They'd taken me to the NHL and the Olympics as a hockey player. As a snowboarder, it was my feet that had conveyed those sensations of gliding and floating. What had I done to end up here without them? And what was I going to do now?

I was disappointed in myself, angry that I had so blatantly ignored my own safety for the thrill of another run. But it wasn't just one bad decision that led me to that hospital—it was a long line of them. When my hockey career ended, I'd filled the void with snowboarding—and with drugs. The day I'd gotten lost, I was waiting for a court date for trespassing and drug possession, and I had a bag of meth in my pocket. In some ways, I'd been headed for disaster for a while. But I had to remind myself: I'd gotten lucky. I should have been dead, but I wasn't.

So as I bounced from hospital to hospital, I was both upset and thrilled with my situation. With some help from experts and my parents, I learned to focus on what I could still do: turn my life around.

The first step was humility. I'd been an elite athlete for so long, it was hard to start at the very beginning. I had to learn to walk with the prosthetics. I needed help at every turn. But I realized that asking for that support was the first step toward finally growing up.

I met with counselors and support groups, battled withdrawal, and stopped doing drugs. I learned to play hockey again, took a humbling entry-level tech job, and eventually got back to snowboarding. That last effort was about more than just picking up my old hobby. It was proving to myself—the athlete—that I was still the same person, that I could redefine my future without losing my past. 🇺🇸



THE NEXT LEVEL

These tips are a great start. Now take your lifesaving know-how to the expert level with our online class, **Outdoor Survival 101**.

Your Instructor: Shane Hobel, founder of Mountain Scout Survival School

Course topics: Building shelter, making fire, finding and filtering water, foraging, crisis management, and more

Register now: Go to backpacker.com/survival101 and use the code **BPMAG** at checkout for a 20 percent discount.

YOU SURVIVED!

Or did you? Count up your ❤️'s to see what you've got: **18-23** Not a scratch.

11-17 One arm and a speaking tour. **0-10** Our condolences for your family's loss.

