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# A better belt order

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**Description :**

How to carry things on your belt(s).

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In a previous article I expounded on the virtue of keeping certain items on your person at all times while in the field. In that earlier treatise I recommended the use of a survival vest to contain all that gear. The point I was trying to get across was the need for diversified materials to keep you alive in a survival situation, whatever the cause of said situation, and an easy way to keep them handy. In this article I will show you another way to accomplish this task, and more besides.

But don't get me wrong, the vest is an admirable way to keep all of those little knickknacks in one place, and I use mine regularly for hiking and backpacking. It would even work in a combat situation in a pinch. But this method of "layering", or optimising and customizing your belt order, I'm about to divulge to you is even more versatile, and allows you to carry more than the vest.

Just as you layer your clothes in cold weather to give you the most warmth and versatility in changing temperature extremes, so too should you "layer" your defensive gear.

As I've stated before and will continue to believe, your best chance of surviving any calamity rests with your wits and reactions. But, these can be helped with a judicious mixture of physical items: your survival gear and weapons load.

We all have our own ideas of what the best rifle or pistol are, and, similarly, what gear would be the best to have on hand for an extended period away from civilization. And unlike in the novels of post-Apocalyptic survival so common today, most of us can't get by with only what we have in our pockets. Or at the other extreme, be so weighed down with two rifles, four to six handguns, and mussete bags of extra magazines and miscellaneous bits that you couldn't move. (Come on, now. You know the books I mean. You've read them, and so have I. They're fun, but hardly a primer for survival in the real world).

To get by in the world of our possible future you're going to need more than guns and all of their related gear: extra ammunition, spare magazines, cleaning kits and the like. You will also have to carry around (all day, every day), the stuff that we take for granted today: food, water, fire, medicine, and all the other little necessities. If you've never thought about all that's required, do so; then think about how you would carry it all; then consider that in addition to lugging all this stuff around with you, you have to do it in such a way that it doesn't restrict your movement. That's where layering proves it's worth.

For many years the combat infantryman of most countries has been well served by wearing a load-bearing belt (web gear) to carry all that he requires for battle. Unlike that soldier, we have different needs. Your average grunt carries around less than three hundred rounds for his M-16, two canteens, no pistol, a bayonet, a battle dressing, and maybe an MRE or two, and a poncho for shelter. That's all he has to carry, because he knows he's on a short-term patrol, or will be re-supplied in the field. We'll have no such safety net in a survival situation.

While the above scenario doesn't apply to every soldier in every situation, it's fairly representative. And completely unrealistic in a survival situation. Despite what Big Brother wants us all to believe, there will be no one for us to depend on in the event of a nuclear catastrophe or whatever. We will have to make up our own minds and live with our own decisions; while that is anathema to our would-be masters, it is the truth that all free men cling to.

So, how do we carry all that we are likely to need, in such a way that it doesn't limit our mobility? First, decide what is needed to sustain life, and then pare it down to the bare essentials.

Have that list ready? Good. Now decide how to carry it all.

For a system that works well with any type of longarm, as well as causing the least amount of encumbrance, a customized belt order, built to suit your needs, is the way to go. It's cheap, too!

My system is broken down into three layers, which are as follows:

### Layer 1 (Worn At All Times)

Large Bowie Knife, Shrade skinner, leaf-bladed throwing knife; whetstones, gun oil, matches, fishing kit, nylon cord, paracord, dental floss (in pouch attached to knife sheath); (5) Cyalume sticks and holder; Mylar space blanket; Magnesium bar w/flint, strike-anywhere matches; Swiss Army knife, Leatherman tool; IMI Mountain Eagle, (4) 15rd mags, (1) 20rd in weapon; Wire saw; 645 rds .22lr; (2) MR-8 food bars; (2) 1/2 quart canteens; (1) MRE; Basic Med-Kit; One quart canteen and cup; Halazone tablets (50); Potassium Iodide; Solid fuel; Fire-starting sticks; Mini-Binoculars; Toilet paper; Insect repellent; Poncho, (2) garbage bags; Pen flares; Nylon cord (various weights); Mini-torch [1], batteries and extra bulbs for same; salt and pepper, bouillon cubes, all-purpose spice, hard candy; Sewing kit

### Layer Two (Worn Whenever Outside of vehicle or camp)

(4) MRE's; (3) MRE entrees; One quart canteen; (50) Halazone tablets; Survival manual; Map kit and compass; 175 rds .22lr; Hardware box (wood screws, tacks, eye hooks, nails); Throwing knife (improvised spear head); Snare wire; Weapons cleaning kit; Solingen skinning knife; Piece of hacksaw blade; (1) bar soap; two-sided (Mylar/camo) tarp; More nylon cord and dental floss

### Layer Three [Worn for Extended Recce]

M-1 Garand; 176 rounds of 30-06 in clips.

That's what I carry, now down to the how of carrying it.

Layer One is simply standard LBE, with an international twist. At the rear is a British butt pack, with an M-16 pouch, (3) double M-14 pouches, one single M-14 pouch and assorted smaller pouches I either made or modified myself to hold my gear. A one quart canteen and cover, complete with canteen cup, is my field kitchen. Under the canteen cup I keep twenty-eight bouillon cubes. The hard candy is kept in the single M-14 pouch; hanging below that is my sewing kit and more nylon cordage. The butt pack holds my poncho and most of the larger items. The rest is spread around the other pouches, wherever it is most accessible. All of the items I used to make up this layering system were ordered through various catalog companies or acquired locally at the Army Surplus shop. (I cannot over-emphasize the importance of getting numerous, current mail-order catalogs; they allow access to inexpensive gear, delivered right to your door.) Layer One should never be far from your side, preferably worn at all times, except when sleeping.

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In keeping with the layering theme, I wear it under my ammo chest pouch (Level Three). I designed my system with this in mind, and it's quite comfortable.

More about that sewing kit: learning to sew is paramount as a survival skill. Not only will you have to repair your clothes in the field, but a certain amount of sewing is necessary in order to get your web gear exactly as you want it. You'll be sewing manly stuff here, gentlemen, so there's no stigma attached.

I consider Layer One to be my core survival kit, so it contains the essentials for life: food, water, shelter, first aid, and fire. Since survival, not sustained combat, is our goal, the weapons I chose to outfit Layer One reflect this. My main knife is a large, modified bowie which I bought at a flea market, originally of Filipino manufacture. I cut the blade to its present shape and size, and added extra sheaths and a pouch to the main sheath. This allows me to carry matches and all the rest that Rambo carried in his hollow-handled knife, and more besides. In the extra sheaths, one front and one on the back, are a Shrade skinning knife (for all the delicate stuff a large blade can't do) and a throwing knife (a spearhead).

The holster for my Mountain Eagle was originally a right-handed shoulder holster, which I modified to its present form. It holds the weapon securely, yet allows for a moderately fast draw, should the need arise. Spare mag pouches are on the suspenders of my LBE, where they are easy to reach. When working out your belt order, be creative with space.

The reason I chose to carry a twenty-two is two-fold: it allows me to carry a ridiculous amount of ammo, and it serves my purposes better than any other sidearm I own. If I were to carry my Browning P-35, I could only carry 300 rds in the same space and weight allowance; my S&W M-586 would allow me to carry around 200 rds. By having 900 rds of .22lr in my kit, I can be assured of plenty of ammo for a good long while. And a twenty-two is all the pistol I need. My main reason for carrying a sidearm is primarily for food gathering in the form of small game, and only incidentally as a self-defense tool. If I were expecting to be going to a gunfight, I'd much prefer my rifle over any pistol or revolver, regardless of caliber. And in a pinch, I think a "lowly" twenty-two would ruin some miscreant's day.

Layer Two is real easy. I took a German butt pack, attached a shoulder strap to distribute the weight and put my small skinning knife on the strap, in easy reach. Behind the skinner I keep a six-inch long piece of hacksaw blade, with duct tape for a handle; this is great for cutting slots in branches for traps and such for those of us who don't believe in saw-back knives. Add a canteen holder and double mag pouch for an M-14, and I have plenty of room for all of my goodies. Worn slung from your shoulder, you still have all of that storage, but more conveniently located than at the rear of your belt. As long as it's sturdy, just about any bag of this type will do. Look around surplus shops and find one that suits your needs. Keep away from any bag that's too big, as you will be tempted to fill it to max-capacity. We want a light kit that we won't mind carrying all day; if it's too heavy, you won't have it when you need it, because it will be back at base-camp, resting on a log. Outside pockets are a must, as they make it easy to get at anything that might be needed in a hurry, or used often. My cleaning kit is divided between the rods and brushes which are stored in the butt of the M-1, and the lower pocket of the mussete bag for patches, oil, bore cleaner, rag, and ruptured case removal tool. I also keep a few spare parts handy, such as firing pins, ejectors, and springs. Small stuff that's easy to carry and do field repairs with that can keep your weapons functioning are essential. I keep my map kit (maps of the local area as well as the continental U.S., compass, paper and pen) handy in the M-14 pouch.

With layers one and two combined I have a week's worth of food, three quarts of water, shelter and first aid. All of the comforts of home, without a backpack. And let's not forget nine hundred rounds of twenty-two ammo.

A few items may need a little explaining, their utility in a survival situation perhaps not immediately apparent. The throwing knife, as with the one on the back of my main knife sheath, is for making an improvised spear. Wrapped

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around the sheath is eight feet of insulated, copper wire. Cut yourself a ten-inch section of wire, strip the insulation, twist it together, and you've got some great, cheap, snare wire. I attach the wire to nylon twine, and then rig the trap as usual. The rabbit can't chew through the wire, it holds a loop shape easily, and the twine pulls it tight when the trap is sprung. And, even though it is a survival situation, wouldn't that rabbit taste better with a little salt and pepper; or some other spice? Just fill a couple of 35mm film cases, and you're set. Bouillon is just the thing for a cup of quick energy on a cold day. Just fill your canteen cup, boil, and enjoy. A sewing kit will keep your clothes hanging together; you may be wearing the same duds for a while, so mending them will be mandatory. The hardware box is there to make life a little easier. The wood screws will come in handy for attaching the throwing knife to a spear shaft, prior to lashing; small eye hooks may be just the ticket to string a trip-wire around the perimeter of your temporary camp; and who can tell when a few 8 penny nails might be handy? Soap makes camp hygiene possible, and large garbage bags are great for any number of uses. These are just a few small, nearly weightless items which will prove themselves in a survival situation.

Layer Three is dependent upon the longarm being carried. In the case of my M-1, I started with an SKS bandoleer, which I modified to attach to a pair of H-suspenders. This allows me to carry (21) 8rd clips for my M-1, plus one in the weapon. I also plan to make myself a stock pouch one of these days to hold (2) more clips.

If I were carrying something other than my Garand, Layer Three would change as follows:

Mini-14: Put (11) 20rd mags in the chest pouch, plus one up the well. (240rds)

Mossberg M-500: I could put ten rounds in each small pouch on the chest, twenty in the large. I'd also have twelve rounds attached to the weapon by way of a buttstock cuff and Sidesaddle on the receiver, and could add a bandoleer to carry an additional fifty-five rounds. (Max load= 177 rds)

#1 MK III\*: 3 Enfield clips per pocket of a 1918-vintage grenade pouch and ten rounds in the weapon. (175rds)

Adding a backpack would result in another layer, but that is another subject, to be dealt with another day. As you can see from the list of what's in each layer, while they can stand alone, together they dramatically improve your chances of survival.

The big question on everyone's lips right now is, "An M-1?".

Yes, a forty year old Garand.

Remember, the object of the exercise is to stay alive, not to go Rambo-ing across the landscape. Except in the event of a full-scale invasion (à-la Red Dawn), most of us won't need the firepower afforded by even a semi-auto militia rifle, much less full-auto. Then there's also the care and feeding of a Mini-14 to consider. Semi-autos of less robust lineage than the M-1 break more parts more often, and can gobble up prodigious amounts of ammunition. Ammo and parts that you can't carry on your back. A 30-06, or any other .30 caliber round, also has a greater effective range than a .223, as well as greater penetration. Given that your most realistic threat is likely to be starvation, or at most attacks by random individuals, a bolt action battle rifle is likely to be your best choice. I carry a Garand as a good compromise between the possible (though remote) need for more rapid-fire shots and a caliber larger than .223, and also because I'm left handed. As much as I love my SMLE, working a right-handed bolt is no picnic.

But, in the event of actually needing that firepower, having a militia rifle of one kind or another is probably a good idea. I've got mine, in case the Russians do invade, or to repel whatever other manner of unsightly hordes might

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come around. Of course, before I moved to Oregon I lived in the great socialist state of California, so I didn't advertise the fact that I had a politically-incorrect firearm. Who knows, the next Waco might happen anywhere.

Justifiable paranoia aside, the real point I wish to get across is this: Plan for the most likely scenario, while not totally ignoring the more outrageous. In these days of increasingly-odd happenstance, anything could come to pass. It behooves us, as responsible men and women, Survivalists all, to prepare as best we may.

*Post-scriptum* :Original article at [OldJimbo's site](#).

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[1] brand name removed