

I've been a student of personal preparedness since 1978, when an unfortunate incident left me stranded overnight in the Adirondack north woods. Not quite lost, but as Daniel Boone once described, "...a bit bewildered." Being the invincible 19 year old that I was, I'd gone hunting in those unpredictable and potentially hazardous woods with only my rifle, a knife, a packs of smokes, and a cigarette lighter. Had it not been for that knife and lighter I'd have probably succumbed of hypothermia that night. I remember sitting on some pine boughs that night, thinking constantly, "If I only had ..."

Once I made it back to my truck late the next morning, I recalled that "If I only had ..." list that I'd made earlier. I vowed not to be without those items again, Ever. Memories of cold, thirst, hunger, fear, and a nagging chronic medical condition hardened my resolve. My quest began.

My knee jerk reaction was quite comical. I threw everything but the kitchen sink into a rucksack and called it my survival kit. After toting that ruck during my next hunt, reality set in - finally. I realized that I needed to trim down on gear and refresh some long forgotten and/or rusty skills. Reassessment in order, the question became, "Where do I start?" The key proved to be those memories of the events and pains of that cold October night in the Adirondacks.

- ▶ I was cold. I could feel the heat radiating away and everything I touched sucked the heat from me. Cold was quickly sapping my energy and nearing the point where clear thinking would be impaired. I needed the ability to quickly and efficiently make shelter & fire.
- ▶ I was thirsty. I could have easily obtained water, however, fear of contamination kept me from doing so. I needed the ability to effectively store & purify water.
- ▶ I was essentially lost. I needed to promote rescue or find my way back.
- ▶ I needed medication. Not only did I not have medication, I didn't have a 1st Aid Kit and it had been a few years since I'd taken a 1st Aid Training Course.
- ▶ I needed training and supplies to maintain a healthy condition.
- ▶ I was hungry. I'd not eaten all day. The workout from the day's activities, the cold, and the stress were taking their toll. I needed to obtain food.

After categorizing my needs, it was time to shop for the right gear to suit those needs. I decided that any gear selected needed to be:

- ▶ Field proven reliable,
- ▶ Waterproof / water resistant whenever possible,
- ▶ Compact and lightweight,
- ▶ Easy to see / find (high visibility),
- ▶ Reusable whenever possible, and;
- ▶ Capable of one hand deployment / use whenever possible.

Although the gear selected has been revised over time, below you'll find a compilation of my needs assessment and the gear selected to meet those needs to be included in an everyday carry "support / survival" kit.

Shelter & Fire:

- ▶ Victorinox Classic pocketknife
- ▶ Mini BIC lighter w/ cable tied actuator to inhibit leakage
- ▶ Sparklight and TinderQuik
- ▶ Fresnel Lens

- ▶ 20' Cortland 135lb test planer tow line
- ▶ 6 1.5" hard wire nails

Store & Purify Water:

- ▶ MicroPur Purification Tabs
- ▶ Gerber Milk Bags

Promote Rescue / Find my way back:

- ▶ Victorinox / Recta Compass
- ▶ Post It notepaper
- ▶ Pen (Victorinox mini refill w/ heat shrink tube body)
- ▶ Bison Designs small cylinder whistle
- ▶ Victorinox signal mirror
- ▶ 12' Orange surveyor's tape
- ▶ AT&T 60 minute phone card
- ▶ Spare Photon Batteries

Maintain Health:

- ▶ Band-aids
- ▶ Alcohol preps
- ▶ Antibiotic Ointment
- ▶ Sewing Kit
- ▶ Personal medications

Obtain Food:

- ▶ Snare Wire
- ▶ Fishing supplies
- ▶ Seasonings

Selections assembled, I needed to find an appropriate means to carry them conveniently. I've settled on a small Otter Box. The Otter Box provides waterproof storage with excellent crush protection. I added a rubber ranger band and a replacement Velcro type watchstrap to the exterior of the box. They not only minimize the potential for accidental opening, they have value as connectors or tinder. I also replaced the box's issued lanyard with a lanyard made of 550 cord - which, in a pinch, provides me with up to 10' additional cordage. The lanyard is equipped with a GlowRing so as to be able to be seen at night or in the dark. Lastly, I added strips of electrical tape to the container's lid - Hey, ya never know ...

Mini PSK Tutorial



The beauty of such a minikit is that many of the items have multiple uses, limited only by the stretch of your imagination. Loose muffler on your car? You've got wire to secure it temporarily! Just be sure to replace that which you use! Also, I strongly recommend making a habit of carrying a high quality fixed blade or folding knife and a decent quality flashlight on a daily basis.



My best advise? Do your own personal needs assessment and obtain the gear you prefer to meet those needs. Keep in mind, however, if it's too big, sooner or later, it'll be left behind. Keep it simple and keep it small. Also, having tools to promote survival is one thing. Being able to effectively deploy them in an emergency is altogether different. Take a "time out" in the backyard or other controlled environment to learn how to properly use the equipment you select for your kit before hand.

Mini PSK Tutorial

Need training in a weak area? Seek it now and keep it updated. There's a host of info on the internet and lots of books in the library to help you. There's also a host of professional instructors, too. If you're cheap like me, another avenue might be local agencies like the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, Boy Scouts, and Royal Rangers.

As the great Benjamin Franklin once wrote, "By failing to prepare, You're preparing to fail."