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SAK Fob Kit

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- Skills and guides - Bushcraft and Survival -



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Description :

A survival kit based on Swiss Army Knives.

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In a seemingly never-ending quest for the ultimate kit, the one kit that is as small as I can get it yet still maintain functionality, this is the latest endeavor. Like all of us I have a desire to have the basics on me at all times, but recognize that our lifestyles and simple physics impose certain limitations upon us. As for the lifestyle limitations, we just have to recognize that overburdening ourselves for an eventuality that may never come to pass is counterproductive and can even lead to a kit that, while perfect, isn't carried due to bulk. The physics angle is self evident, I hope; we can only carry so much in our pockets before our pants are in danger of dropping down at the most unfortunate of times.



My fob kit came about as a desire to have a minimal kit that is sufficient for most occasions, yet is still light and small enough to be carried in the pocket of my sweat pants or shorts, for those times when I'm not wearing my normal BDU pants. After all, while it's easy to carry a large and nearly self sufficient kit when wearing pants with plenty of pockets, and a jacket or vest besides, there are times when I'm more likely to be casually dressed, such as when at home or just generally "bumming around". The fob kit is made for just such an occasion. It's also a great addition to a larger kit, of course.



While making this kit I came up with a few variations. Not only were the contents of the kit itself in a state of flux, but so too was the choice of knives. The accompanying photos show a few such interim stages of evolution. Trial and error is sometimes the only way to come up with an end result that suits our needs. The knife I finally went with is the Victorinox WorkChamp, one of their large locking folders. The 111mm range has the advantage of a locking main blade and more robust tools in general. The downside of such a large knife is that it's, well, a large knife. I chose the WorkChamp because it has all of the tools I feel are most needed for a pocket survival knife. When you make a kit this small it must be understood that there are certain limitations imposed. One of these limitations is that since you will have a limited amount of tools and materials to start with, those items you do choose must be as versatile as possible. And since it's quite likely that one will have to make other tools and implements in a survival situation, it's a good idea to choose a knife (and materials) that gives a good assortment of items to work with. Tools are made from other tools, and the WorkChamp is a veritable pocket tool chest.



SAK Fob Kit

Other knives which would be suitable for this type of kit are quite numerous, of course. For a slightly smaller kit one could go with the Pioneer series of SAK's. While the main blade on these models don't lock, they do have a very strong backspring. Also, the blades on this line are very nearly as thick as those on the 111mm frame. Or, one could choose just about any other multi-bladed pocketknife, so long as it had (as a minimum, in addition to the main blade) a saw, can and bottle openers, awl and requisite screwdrivers all SAK's come with. Some multi-tools might also work, but in general I don't care for the "knife" function on most multi-tools.



As to the components of the kit itself, we need to cover as many of the basics of survival as we can. After a good sharp blade (and a few other well-chosen tools) the next most important matter in outdoor survival is a means to make fire reliably. To this end I have included a BSA Hot Spark ferro rod, with a separate striker. The striker serves 2 purposes; one is its primary purpose of making sparks. By using the striker as opposed to one of the blades from my knife to strike sparks, I prevent unnecessary wear to my knife. The other purpose is as a small piece of easily worked steel in my kit that could be made into a small spearhead or fishing gig by working on it with the other tools on my knife.



To catch the sparks from the rod when I can't find natural tinders I have 25 small cotton balls, plain, in a matchsafe. They are protected from the weather by the waterproof seal of the matchsafe, which means I will always have a source of dry tinder to use with my ferro rod. I also have 4 small Ranger Bands wrapped around the matchsafe. Right now their sole purpose is to prevent the matchsafe and ferro rod from clinking together, which could damage the rod.

In a survival situation, though, they would be a ready source of accelerant to get my fire burning hotter and quicker.

Shelter is another paramount item that the survivalist needs to always take into consideration. With a kit this small it's impossible to carry the normal garbage bags or tarps that make up the normal "quickie" shelter. And while it is possible to make shelter solely out of native materials, cordage used to lash tree branches together would make shelter building quite a bit easier. In fact, cordage is of such importance to a survivor that it serves in any number of ways other than shelter building. It can be used to mend our clothes, as fishing line, as snare line, made into a bowstring... Indeed, there are so many uses for cordage in just our everyday lives that its importance in a survival situation is readily apparent.

To make the most of our cordage, though, requires other items as well. Items such as sewing needles (I have 2 large sewing needles secured under the pliers of my SAK) and safety pins (11 overall, of various sizes). The needles can be used to repair a survivor's tattered clothing by making thread from his cordage. I chose waxed nylon cordage with a breaking strain of 165 pounds for just this purpose. Not only is the cord strong enough to be used in a variety of ways, it can be unbraided to make much finer cordage for other uses. And the wax on the cordage makes it take and hold a knot quite well. With the smaller strands it can be used as fishing line, sewing thread, used (with pine pitch) to lash arrow heads and fletching onto arrows; the cord, left as-is, could be used to make a bowstring, or used in conjunction with the 20 feet of tripwire wrapped around it to make snares for small game.

The safety pins can be used as fishing hooks, gorge hooks, treble hooks (wired together with some tripwire) or for their normal use to make temporary clothing repairs.

Wrapped around the cordage and tripwire bundle are 2 types of tape, each of which could be used in any number of ways. There's about 25 feet of black electrician's tape, and over that is 15 feet of duct tape. The tape, in addition to its later possible uses, also keeps the tripwire and cordage bundle from coming unraveled.

Securing the cordage bundle, safety pins and firemaking kit to the main fob are 3 short lengths of beaded chain. These chains could be fashioned into fishing lures, or even used as "lures" for small critters on land as well. A number of birds are attracted to shiny objects, and given a squirrel's inquisitive nature they, too, might be brought to the pot by a strategic use of a bit of beaded chain and safety pin "lure".

Also attached to the main fob (20 inches of 550 cord, the inner strands of which also have many uses) is a Suunto mini compass. While the compass is indeed tiny, it's nonetheless quite accurate and could be used for most land navigation chores should the survivor find him or herself lost.

To supplement the tools of the WorkChamp I added an M2 Sebertool to the fob, on a large split ring. The M2 is basically a small multi-tool, and has pliers jaws, wire cutter, and on each "leg" of the tool is a screwdriver. One is a Phillips head, which can be used on both large and small screws. The other was a straightslot screwdriver, until I modified it to be a small chisel. I took a file to the screwdriver and ground down one side of it flat, and to an edge. By folding the M2 so that the main body of the tool forms a handle, I can use the chisel to carve square or rectangular slots in wood. So far this has mainly been used for decorative purposes, but I think there are a number of possible other uses for this tiny tool which adds no weight.

The last 2 items of the fob kit are for emergency lighting. One is a blue Glow Ring, the other is a red Photon II LED flashlight. The Glow Ring's main purpose is so that I can find my kit if lost in the dark; it could also be pressed into duty as a fish attractant, as a lot of fish are lured in my bright, shiny objects. The LED light is there for all the times when you wished you had a light handy, but didn't. With the red LED in place the lithium battery will provide 120 hours of usable light. While it isn't quite bright enough to read by, the LED puts out sufficient light to allow for walking

a trail at night, or illuminating a small area.

Separately, any of the items listed above would be handy to have with you in a survival situation; a number of them will see daily use, making their inclusion even more mandatory. But when they're all taken together, and used in a manner for which they might not have been originally intended, they could make the difference between life and death. Which is a pretty good reason alone for carrying them.

If you have questions, criticisms, or things to add - email me please.

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