

# The Poor Man's Survival Kit

## Introduction

The following article was first published by Live Free in 1996 from an earlier flyer that we were using in our programs. Keep in mind that in the 1970's and early 80's there were no real "survival kits" or any kind of survival gear like we have today. Mainly you had to go with old Army surplus items and Boy Scout supplies. Improvisation was (and still should be) a primary survival skill. Most of us were on extremely tight budgets and had to make do with what we could find or make. Hence "The Poor Man's Survival Kit". The original text was created on a very early version of MSWord that is long-lost, so I had to retype it for you to enjoy. The original illustrations would have been literally pasted into the master copy. I had to scan and past them to this document one at a time. I did update some of the text to make it work today.

## A Low Budget Survival Kit That Could Save Your Life

You can put this kit together from common and easy to find items. This kit is versatile enough to provide protection and aid in a variety of emergency situations. Being cheap and small you can have them at your office, in your pockets and any place you might need them. Most of the items listed cost less than \$1.00.

ITEM DESCRIPTION	EMERGENCY USES
(1) 55 gallon HD trash bag	Rain shelter, Sleeping Bag, Chemical protection, Floatation device, Water still, container, Sling, etc.
(1) N95 dust/mist respirator	Protection from chemical, biological and radiological hazards. Cold air respirator, Emergency water filter
(1) Single edge S/S razor blade (protected)	Last resort defense, cutting tool, escape
(1) 12 x 24 " sheet of HD aluminum foil	Signaling reflector, heat reflector, cooking pot, water collection and boiling, wound covering
(1) 12 x 24 ' sheet of Saran Wrap™	Eye protection, container, wound covering, splint holding
(10) 12' length of electrical tape wound on cardboard	Repair clothing and shelter, wound protection, general repairs
(10) waterproof matches and striker	Fire starting for heat, light, signals
(1) 10 ft. length of 25# nylon fishing line	Fishing, shelter building, trapping, repairs
(2-4) safety pins	Repairs, fishing, secure clothing and slings
(1) Coffee filter	Water filtration, fire starting
(2-4) sugar packets	Energy
(2-4) aspirin or other pin reliever	Pain relief. Heart attack reduction

These items were selected to provide the best options for the very least cost. Obviously items can be substituted with slightly more expensive items. The whole kit can be kept in a small ZipLock™ bag

## **SUBSTITUTIONS**

In place of the trash bag you could use one of the aluminized “survival blankets” now on the market. They are more effective for warmth, but less durable and versatile for other applications such as wind protection, chemical protection, etc. You may want to replace the razor with a small pen-knife. The filter paper is not as good as the commercially available filter straws that filter out most biological and chemical contamination. Another way to assure clean water is to add a few water purification tablets to the kit for use in combination with the coffee filter. You could upgrade the matches to a very same magnesium fire starter. Lifeboat matches burn hotter and are better at starting damp tinder. You could replace the sugar packets with an energy bar. If fishing and trapping are not a concern then replace the fishing line with strong string or even paracord. Remember that even slightly more expensive and bulky substitutes may defeat the whole (cheap and hands) point of the kit.

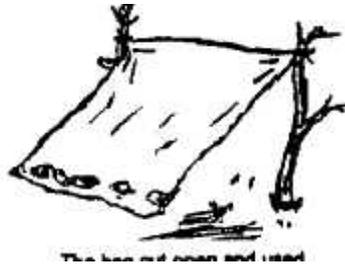
## **ADDITIONS**

I set my arbitrary limit for this kit at 12 items, but there are a few other cheap, small items that you might want to add. A miniature plastic whistle could come in handy for signaling. A small cheap compass would also be a good addition. . A pair of latex gloves could come in handy in a number of situations. You could add a very small LED flashlight. These lights were not invented when this kit was first developed.

## **HOW TO USE THE ITEMS**

Let’s take a look at some of the survival uses for the kit items.

**Fifty-five gallon HD Trash Bag:** The black bag is proof against wind, water, sun and most chemicals. It is a great solar heat absorber. It can provide shelter in many configurations. You can place dry leaves or paper inside to use as a sleeping bag. You can use the razor blade to cut arm and face holes to make a partial rain, wind, chemical and fallout suit. Cut the bag open to make a 4 ft. by 6 ft. shelter sheet. Partially filled with air and tied off, it can be used as a flotation device.



The bag cut open and rigged as a small shelter



The bag used as an emergency flotation device

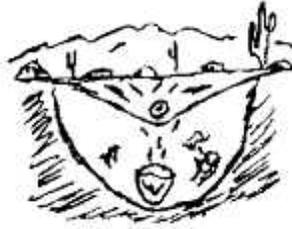


You may look funny in this improvised bag-suit, but it can prevent hypothermia. Used in conjunction with the N95 dust mask it can limit exposure to nuclear, biological and chemical contamination until you can escape the contaminated area. If you can do without the arm holes you can get even better protection.



Used in combination with available insulation such as paper, leaves, etc. it can be used as a partial cover sleeping bag.

The plastic bag can be used as a water still



Instructions: Dig a hole early in the day. Place a cup made from your HD aluminum foil in the center bottom of the hole to catch the water. Place any available moist plant materials into the hole so the water can be distilled from them as well as from the soil. Spread the cut open plastic bag over the hole with some slack. Anchor down the edges with soil and rocks. Place a small rock (not too big) in the center of the plastic so that the low point is directly over the foil cup. As the sun heats the black plastic and the inside of the hole, the water from inside will gather on the plastic and run down to drip into the cup. When the sun get low you will have some safe water in the cup. Note: the amount of water depends on solar heat and available plant and soil moisture. Water gathered may vary from a few ounces to a full cup.

#### Disposable Dust / Mist Mask

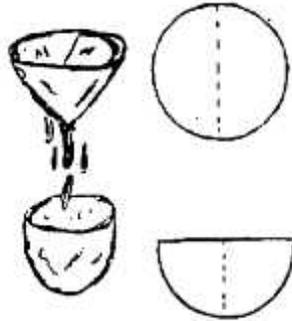
These masks come in a variety of styles and are available in medical supply stores for biological protection and in hardware stores for dust and mist protection. You will want the “N95” rated masks. These are effective against dust, soot, fallout, biological agents and give some short term protection from toxic chemical mists. They also can help reduce heat loss through respiration and should be worn in cold weather. They do not protect you against toxic gasses such as carbon monoxide. These masks only provide protection if not contaminated prior to use and if properly fitted and worn. They are ineffective if worn over heavy facial hair.

Instructions: Place the mask over the mouth and nose with one strap around the back of the neck and the other over the head as showed below. Squeeze the nose piece (if present) to fit snugly. Cover the mask with both hands and INHALE sharply. Pressure should be felt inside the mask. If not adjust the straps and the mask and test again until pressure is felt.



#### Laboratory Filter Paper or Coffee Filter

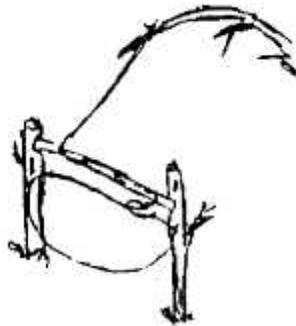
A coffee filter or laboratory-grade filter paper can be folded into a cone to pour water through into a receptacle made from your heavy-duty aluminum foil. You can then boil the water for 5-minutes in the foil pan to get filtered and decontaminated water

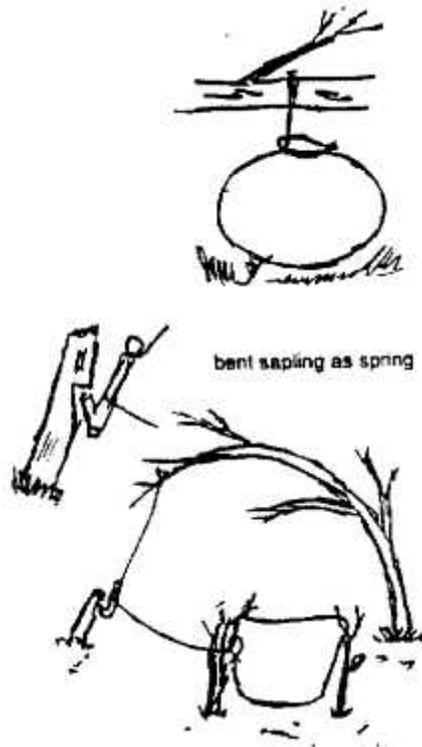


Folding and using the filter paper to filter water into a foil pot.

### Fishing Line or Cordage

Fishing line or cordage can be used to rig a variety of snares and traps. A few basic trigger configurations are illustrated here.





Note the notches cut in the sticks to make the trigger system

### Pins and Safety Pins

The safety pins have many applications as they are and can be modified for other uses as below



The fishing line can be used with a safety pin fashioned into a hook for fishing

You can magnetize a piece of a pin by stroking it in one direction with silk or through your hair. Placing the pin carefully on still water out of the wind on a very small leaf or other float it will eventually turn to point north



Floating a magnetized straight pin or broken off safety pin on a small leaf to find north.

### Saran Wrap™

The 12 x 24 inch sheet of Saran Wrap™ can be used to cover the eyes for dust and chemical protection or to cover the hands for chemical and biological protection. This material can also be used for a waterproof, blood proof bandage for a variety of wounds and to hold a splint in place

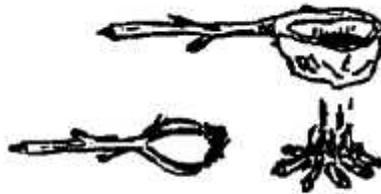


### Heavy-Duty Aluminum Foil

The 12 x 24 inch sheet of heavy duty aluminum foil can be used as an effective signal mirror to get help. You can also place the foil in the back of your fire to reflect the heat. You can shape or fold the foil into a bowl to cook food or boil water. Drinking warm water can save your life under cold conditions and boiling water for 5-minutes can make contaminated water safe to drink. Aluminum foil is the dressing of choice for wounds that expose internal organs\*



Aluminum reflector



One way to make a cooking pot out of your aluminum foil



Fold and smooth out the foil to make a signal mirror. To aim the beam (e.g. at rescuers, planes, etc.) place the target between two fingers, then move the mirror so that the beam shines through the fingers.

**THIS KIT MAY NOT LOOK LIKE MUCH BUT IT CONTAINS MANY VERSATILE ITEMS THAT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE.**

The whole kit fits into a ten inch freezer zip bag and weighs about 6.5 ounces. The optional items brings it up to about 8 ounces.



The bag itself has many uses. Note the optional addition of latex gloves, Band-Aid's™, rubber bands, a whistle and a mini-compass.

A survival kit is like any tool. It is only as good as the person using it. Calm determination and an organized approach to managing the situation you face will go a long way towards keeping you alive in any emergency.

**SURVIVAL PRIORITIES**

- You can survive 3-minuetes without air
- You can survive 3 hours without shelter in extreme cold, wind and wet
- You can survive 3-days without water under most conditions
- You can survive 3-weeks without food at rest in moderate weather

## SURVIVAL PHYLOSOPHY

- Knowledge is the key to preparedness
- Preparedness is the key to self-reliance
- Self-Reliance is the key to freedom
- If you think you can survive or if you think you can't survive you are probably right.

*\* Exposed internal organs must be kept moist to survive. Sterile water is preferred for this purpose*

### **Conclusion**

Well that's the entire article as it appeared in the 70s with a few updates. Even now that we have all sorts of custom made survival kits and high-tech items to put into them, being able to improvise is still important. The original article was copied in small print and intended to go into the kit as a guide. It still has a lot of good ideas.