

THE LIVING ROOM FACT SHEET



OUTBACK SURVIVAL

As Australians, we love the idea of getting out into the bush and being at one with nature. But venturing out can be a dangerous pastime if you don't know what you're doing.

Chris meets up with a hardened survival veteran, Gordon Dedman, who will teach him the basics of survival. Chris' mission: to survive 24 hours alone in the bush.

Gordon shows him how to find water, make fire and build a shelter and survive if lost in bush.



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TOP TIPS

When faced with a real-life survival situation, many people focus on the wrong things. If it ever happens to you, it's important to remember the **Survival Rule of Threes**.

In an extreme situation, people cannot survive for more than:

- **3 minutes without air**, e.g. if you are underwater
- **3 hours without shelter**, e.g. in an exposed environment, extreme cold or heat
- **3 days without water** – even this long will affect your ability to function normally
- **3 weeks without food** – although it shouldn't be ignored, food is the last priority.

If you are going into the outback on a planned trip or bushwalk, there are also three key things you should do first. These top tips could make all the difference if you find yourself in a real survival situation.



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1. **Tell someone.** Even if you are planning on going on a day hike for a couple of hours, it's essential to tell someone where you're going and what time you expect to be back. That way if anything goes wrong and you haven't returned, they can act on it.
2. **Dress appropriately.** Dress for the environment you are going in to. Wear long sleeves and a hat to protect against the sun and have warm layers for the evenings.
3. **Bring these essential items.** There are 5 life-saving items that every bushwalker should have in their daypack.



5 LIFE-SAVING ITEMS

If you are planning a trip into the bush, these 5 essential items should be top of your list. They are all hard to find or make in nature, so it's best to come prepared.

1. **Cutting tool (aka a knife).** This is probably the most important tool. Ideally it should be a 5" (11cm) carbon knife without serrations, as this makes it easier to sharpen and





means it can be used to create sparks. The blade should have a 90 degree angle and be full tang – meaning the blade goes all the way through the handle, making it robust so it won't break.

2. **Combustion device or flint.** If you don't have a cigarette lighter or matches, the best thing you can have with you is a sparking tool such as a Ferrocerium Rod – a mixture of magnesium and different alloys that produces a hot shower of sparks. Having a striker with a 90 degree angle enables you to produce a very hot shower of sparks with one of these rods. It can get soaking wet and it still works.
3. **Covering or shelter.** Re-usable space blankets reflect up to 70-80% of your body heat back to you. You can use them as a ground sheet, moisture barrier or a cooling device in a hot environment, as the shiny side can reflect heat away when erected as a lean to. A more common item that can be used as shelter is a wheelie bin liner. This can be cut open and tied into a shelter. If you don't cut it open, you can use it to carry water or you can stuff it with leaves to use as a sleeping bag or mattress.
4. **Metal container.** Ideally pack a metal container and a nesting cup, as you need a way of carrying water as well as heating water. Boiling is the best way to ensure water is safe to drink. If you don't have both, you should at least have a nesting cup to boil water in.
5. **Cordage.** Parachute cord is the best as it has 7 inner strands and each one of those 7 strands can be broken down into 2 smaller fibres. If you break the cord down to these fibres, you can use them for fishing line, trap making and suturing cord.

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HOW TO GET WATER

It's not always easy to find water in the outback. Fortunately, there are often plants. When plants draw water up from the ground they filter out many impurities. This clean water then evaporates from the leaves as vapour and, using the right method, can be collected to drink. In Australia you can do this on all gum and wattle trees. The process doesn't harm the plant, works relatively quickly and can be repeated on the same tree (but on different branches).

Method

1. Find a tree that's north facing and in sunshine for the maximum amount of time.
2. Use the clear plastic bag from your 5-piece kit.
3. Bunch some of the leaves together and put the bag over the top.
4. Tie it off and make sure it's airtight. Condensation will begin to form.
5. Use the cordage from your 5-piece kit to tie the bag to the trunk of the tree so that the water runs down and collects at the bottom of the bag.



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Getting water isn't always such a challenge. Sometimes you can find a river or lake nearby, but you should always treat water from an unknown source as contaminated – and contaminated water is going to need to be filtered and boiled.

Using your metal nesting cup, scoop off the top layer of the water. Filter it through some material as you pour it into the metal container. You will then be able to boil the water in the metal container on a fire. Only once the water has boiled and cooled down is it safe to drink.



HOW TO MAKE A FIRE

First, clear the ground around the area you are using to build a fire so that the flames don't spread – you should have at least 2 metres either side of the fire, but in a heavily wooded area you will need further.

Then you need to collect firewood and kindling. Always make sure you get dead standing wood because it's going to be dry. Gather wood of all different thicknesses and plenty of it to





last you through the night. Divide the wood into 3 piles – small kindling, sticks and twigs of finger-thickness and branches bigger than a wrist.

Place a raft of dry sticks on the ground in the centre of your cleared area. This will act as a barrier between the ground and the fire – and also gives you a flat surface to place your metal container on in the centre of the fire, allowing you to boil water.

To light the fire, find some paper bark and fluff it up with your knife – this is the perfect fuel for sparks to light. You can also use small twigs and sticks as kindling.

Use your knife and Ferrocerium Rod to create sparks to light the kindling. Once it has caught, add larger sticks and twigs gradually to build the fire.

Once your water is boiling, you can use a folded green branch as bush tongs to take it carefully out of the fire.

Keep adding more wood to fuel the fire throughout the night. Once you are finished with it, make sure it is fully extinguished before leaving the area.

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HOW TO BUILD A SHELTER

The bin liner in the 5-piece kit is one of the most useful items. To create a shelter, hold it taut and cut along the edges with your knife to open it out. When unfolded it creates a decent sized covering to protect against wind and rain.

Using the cordage, tie the top two corners of the shelter between two trees and stake out the bottom two corners in the ground to make a lean to. Lay logs as a bedframe on the ground and pad the floor with grasses as a makeshift mattress.



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ABOUT GORDON DEDMAN

Gordon is a survival expert and instructor who runs Bushcraft Survival Australia. Growing up in the small NSW country town of Moree, he spent lots of time camping, fishing, building shelters, making fires and going for long walks in the bush, fostering an early passion for nature and bushcraft.

He has completed numerous bushcraft survival certifications at some of the leading schools in the world, such as Dave Canterbury's Pathfinder School (USA), Paul Kirtley's Frontier Bushcraft School (UK), Ray Mears Woodlore Bushcraft School (UK), Lofty Wiseman's Trueways Survival School (UK) and Bob Cooper's Outback Survival School (WA).

He is a former member of the Australian Army 1st Commando Regiment and is presently a survival instructor in NORFORCE, an Australian Army Regional Force Surveillance Unit that conducts patrols in the remote wilderness areas of northern Australia, working closely with Aboriginal communities.





Today he runs a variety of multi-day survival courses to suit all levels of experience, from the novice to the advanced, from those new to the bush to the seasoned outdoorsman.

Find out more here: bushcraftsurvivalaustralia.com.au



WEBLINKS

bushcraftsurvivalaustralia.com.au

survival.org.au/survival.php

nambuccaguardian.com.au/story/5043349/the-getting-of-bush-wisdom