

HOW TO LEARN WILDERNESS SURVIVAL ON YOUR OWN

It may not always be possible to attend a class to learn wilderness survival. And many of these classes are not necessarily taught with end-time Christian values. But Jesus has promised that the Holy Spirit would come to teach us “all things,” (John 14:26). Also keep in mind that God essentially placed Adam and Eve in the wilderness, (outside of the garden was just a vast world full of nature). So He evidently intends for humans to live close to nature. And Jesus is the one who has instructed us to flee to the wilderness. So the “all things” that the Holy Spirit has come to teach would definitely include learning how to get around in nature and live in the wilderness. We just need a willingness to learn, a sense of adventure, and a determination to keep at it.

Begin by memorizing the Survival Priorities. Keep in mind that wilderness survival is really all about living with nature, gathering and making the things you need from what God has provided there. Put together a simple survival kit which contains the basic tools for wilderness living and an initial supply of provisions. Be sure to keep your kit light-weight and low-bulk so you will be willing to carry it even on afternoon outings. In this way you will have the ‘tools’ that you need to be able to ‘play’ with the things you find in nature along the way. Focus at first on learning how you can get each of the Survival Priorities from nature. Remember to always stay safe and healthy —so be sure to also find out about the things in your area that could be hazardous. The rest of this section lists ten things that you can do to learn wilderness survival on your own.

1. Discover the ‘Flow of Nature’

Since wilderness survival is all about living with nature, anything you can learn about nature will be helpful. Get into nature as often as possible. Find a place where you can go to just sit and observe. Notice how nature ‘flows’ and changes throughout the day and from season to season. As much as possible go out year around. Watch how the different birds and animals go about their lives, and how they interact with the rest of nature. Pay special attention to how everything in nature ‘fits together,’ and work toward being able to ‘fit into nature’ yourself, becoming a part of what’s happening around you. This will help you to know what to expect from nature, which will give you confidence and minimize fear. It will also help you to find the things you need more easily, because you will already have an idea of where to look for them.

2. Invest in Some Wilderness Equipment

As mentioned earlier, get your equipment together, keep it packed and ready to go. This will be helpful, not only in case of an emergency or disaster, but also for those unexpected times when you suddenly realize that you can take off and do a quick trip. Review your equipment after each outing —at least mentally. Replenish supplies you have used. Add items you wish you had taken. Take out the things you really didn't need. Strive for simplicity, low-bulk, and low-weight. Otherwise, your pack will quickly grow so big and heavy that you will end up not taking it with you —and then you won't have what you need when you really do need it. Look for items that have multiple uses. But don't waste your time or money on the flimsy ‘survival gadgets’ that are on the market. Research what other people living and traveling in nature have carried, such as various native peoples around the world and the early American frontiersmen.

3. Go Exploring!

Possibly start with simple afternoon outings, exploring nearby natural areas with easy to follow trails. On these outings, practice your wilderness skills, especially direction finding. Also start learning the different plants in your area. Where do they like to grow? Are they in the shade, or in the sun? Do they like dryer areas? Or do they 'like to have their feet wet?'

As you become more familiar and competent in nature, start doing longer trips and exploring off the trail a bit. When you have learned of some suitable nearby places to go, try an overnight trip . After you have done a few overnight trips to refine your gear list, do weekend and longer multi-day trips. As soon as possible, wean yourself from the "I'll do that when I get back home" mind-set. Figure out how to take care of all of life's needs in, and from nature.

4. Invest in Some Field Guides, and Set Up Your Own 'Nature Center'

Invest in some good books on wild edible and useful plants, as well as books on the trees and animals that live in your area. Look through these books both before and after your excursions to see what you can recognize. Learn how to identify edible and useful plants in the field, and then experiment with eating them. But be sure not to eat any plant you are not absolutely sure is edible. Observe the changes that these plants make throughout the seasons so you can find and make use of them over as long a range of time as possible. Also, be sure to get to know which plants to avoid, like stinging nettles, poison ivy and poison oak.

If possible, set up a little 'Nature Center' in your home. Make it a place for those 'treasures' you have found on outings, where you can identify them from your field guides, and look at them as you walk past. This could also be a good spot for your primitive skills books, and projects you are working on. Essentially it is a place where you can slip into for those extra few minutes here and there, and do something to advance your knowledge and skills. It may also be a good place to hang your pack, ready to go on that next outing.

5. "What If We Had to Survive Here? Now?"

While you are hiking along, or when you sit down along the trail to take a break, ask yourself, "What would we do if we had to survive here indefinitely, with just what we have with us right now?" This is also a good question to discuss together with your group. If necessary, pretend that all traces of civilization, near and far, have suddenly vanished.

Look around. Base your thoughts on: The Survival Priorities. What resources are in the immediate area? Take stock of what equipment you have with you. What else do you wish you had brought along? Some other things to think about are: What type of Shelter would you build? Where would you make your camp? Where could you get Water? How would you purify it? What would you do for Sanitation and Hygiene? How would you make Fire? Are there any Wild Edibles in the area? What else could be gathered and made from what you see around you?

Also consider: What do you expect the weather to do in the next few hours? What will it do in the next few days? What would you do between now and when it gets dark? What would have to wait until tomorrow? What would you do the following day?

Would you stay camped in this same area, or would you move to another location? Why? If you chose to move, where would you go? What route would you take? What would you take with you from this area? And, what would you do when you got there?

6. Check Out Some Maps

Pour over maps of your region. Look for natural areas that you can explore. Check to see if they have trails to hike, then go and check them out. As you go over the maps, also look for remote places. What resources do you think they may have for survival? Think through how you might get to these places, and which route you might take to get there?

7. Develop Your ‘Camping Skills’

Many wilderness survival skills are also common ‘camping skills,’ such as: direction finding, what is adequate clothing, using good sanitation practices, fire-building and fire safety, campfire cooking, knife safety, knife sharpening, wood carving, and knot tying. Invest in some good books on camping skills to help you learn these skills. There are also many good videos on these subjects on YouTube.

8. Learn ‘Bushcraft’ and ‘Primitive Skills’

There are many good books and videos on bushcraft and primitive skills. Invest in some of these books and DVDs. Search ‘bushcraft’ and ‘primitive skills’ on YouTube. Learn as much as you can. When you go on outings, gather natural materials and ‘play’ with making things. Be sure to practice your ‘Caretaker Attitude’ as you gather. Choose a nice spot to sit and work on your project while you keep your eye out for what's happening in nature around you. Or, bring the natural materials home to ‘play’ with later. You can actually learn a lot at home, just limit yourself to doing only what would be possible to do away from civilization, such as just using the tools in your survival kit.

Another good resource for information about the primitive skills of local native groups, as well as useful plants in an area, are historical sites and the visitor centers at state and national parks. Whenever you visit these places check out what they have to offer in their exhibits.

9. Get Together With Other Like-Minded People

Talk with other similarly minded people, sharing ideas, skills, and places to go. Go on outings together, and work together on primitive skills and bushcraft projects. Our ‘learning curve’ has risen most sharply when we have had other people to learn and share with.

10. Your Collective Experience

As the saying goes, “experience is the best teacher.” As important as skills and equipment are, your collective experience in and with nature will be your most valuable asset. It is your collective experience that will enable you to bring all the different pieces of the survival ‘puzzle’ together. As you experience nature you will learn what you can expect from it, and what you can do with it. As you experience God working in and through you while you are out in nature, you will know how He can both guide you and provide for you, (see Psalm 32:8, and Phillipians 4:19). This experience will give you

the wisdom, confidence, courage, and faith to know what you need to do, and to keep you going through to the end. You can not get this type of experience by just reading, watching a video, thinking or talking about it. You simply must get out and do it!

This is basically the way I have learned what I know today. Of course I've picked up many different ideas and skills from a lot of different people. Some difficult yet invaluable skills, such as making fire with a bow-drill, I have learned from books and some hard earned experience. Others things, such a making cordage and flint knapping, I still might not know if I had been left to myself. However, other than the Holy Spirit, (remember John 14:26), I have never had any particular teacher, or mentor to guide my learning. You can learn this way too.