

Wilderness Survival

Directions:

Following are twelve questions concerning personal survival in a wilderness situation. Try to imagine yourself in the situation depicted. Assume you are alone and have a minimum of equipment, except where the question tells you differently. The season is fall. The days are warm and dry, but the nights are cold.

Working alone, select what you believe is the best of the three choices given under each item.

After you have completed this task individually, you will again consider each question as a member of your team. Your team will have the task of deciding by consensus, the best answer for each question. Do not change your individual answers, even if you change your mind during the team discussion.

	Question	Your Answer	Team Answer
1.	<p>You have strayed from your party in trackless timber. You have no special signaling equipment. The best way to attempt to contact your friends is to:</p> <p>a. call for help loudly, but in a low register. b. yell or scream as loudly as you can. c. whistle loudly and shrilly.</p>		
2.	<p>You are in snake country. Your best bet to avoid snakes is to:</p> <p>a. make a lot of noises. b. walk softly and quietly. c. travel at night.</p>		
3.	<p>You are hungry and lost in wild country. The best rule for determining which plants are safe to eat (those you do not recognize) is to:</p> <p>a. try anything you see the birds eat. b. eat anything except plants with bright red berries. c. put a bit of the plant on your lower lip for five minutes; if it seems all right, try a little.</p>		

	Question	Your Answer	Team Answer
4.	<p>The day becomes dry and hot. You have a full canteen of water (about one liter) with you. You should:</p> <p>a. ration it -- about a cupful a day. b. not drink until you stop for the night, then drink what you need. c. drink as much as you think you need when you need it.</p>		
5.	<p>Your water is gone; you become very thirsty. You finally come to a dried-up watercourse. Your best chance of finding water is to:</p> <p>a. dig anywhere in the stream bed. b. dig up plant and tree roots near the bank. c. dig in the stream bed at the outside of a bend.</p>		
6.	<p>You decide to walk out of the wild country by following a series of ravines where a water supply is available. Night is coming on. The best place to make camp is:</p> <p>a. next to the water supply in the ravine. b. high on a ridge. c. midway up the slope.</p>		
7.	<p>Your flashlight glows dimly as you are about to make your way back to your campsite after a brief foraging trip. Darkness comes quickly in the woods, and the surroundings seem unfamiliar. You should:</p> <p>a. head back at once, keeping the light on, hoping the light will glow enough for you to make out landmarks. b. put the batteries under your armpits to warm them and then replace them in the flashlight. c. shine your light for a few seconds, try to get the scene in mind, move out of the darkness and repeat the process.</p>		
8.	<p>An early snow confines you to your small tent. You doze with your small stove going. There is a danger if the flame is:</p> <p>a. yellow. b. blue.</p>		

	Question	Your Answer	Team Answer
	c. red.		
9.	<p>You must ford a river that has a strong current, large rocks and some white water. After carefully selecting your crossing spot, you should:</p> <p>a. leave your boots and pack on. b. take your boots and pack off. c. take your pack off, but leave your boots on.</p>		
10.	<p>In waist deep water with a strong current, when crossing the stream, you should face:</p> <p>a. upstream. b. across the stream. c. downstream.</p>		
11.	<p>You find yourself rimrocked; your only route is up. There is mossy, slippery rock. You should try it:</p> <p>a. barefoot. b. with boots on. c. in stocking feet.</p>		
12.	<p>Unarmed and unsuspecting, you surprise a large bear prowling around your campsite. As the bear rears up about ten meters from you, you should:</p> <p>a. run. b. climb the nearest tree. c. freeze, but be ready to back away slowly.</p>		

WILDERNESS SURVIVAL ANSWER AND RATIONALE SHEET

Here are the recommended courses of action for each of the situations on the Wilderness Survival Work Sheet. These answers come from the comprehensive course on woodland survival taught on the Interpretive Service, Monroe County (New York) Parks Department. These responses are considered to be the best rules of thumb for most situations; specific situations, however, might require other courses of action.

1. (a.) *Call help loudly but in a low register.* Low tones carry farther, especially in dense woodland. There is a much better chance of being heard if you call loudly but in a low key. "Help" is a good word to use, because it alerts your companions to your plight. Yelling or screaming would not only be less effective, but might be passed off as a bird call by your friends far away.

2. (a.) *Make a lot of noise with your feet.* Snakes do not like people and will usually do everything they can to get out of your way. Unless you surprise or corner a snake, there is a good chance that you will not even see one, let alone come into contact with it. Some snakes do feed at night, and walking softly may bring you right on top of a snake.

3. (c.) *Put a bit of the plant on your lower lip for five minutes; if it seems all right, try a little.* The best approach, of course, is to eat only those plants that you recognize as safe. But when you are in doubt and very hungry, you may use the lip test. If the plant is poisonous, you will get a very unpleasant sensation on your lip. Red berries alone do not tell you much about the plant's edibility (unless, of course, you recognize the plant by the berries), and birds just do not have the same digestive systems we do.

4. (c.) *Drink as much as you think you need when you need it.* The danger here is dehydration, and once the process starts, your liter of water will not do much to reverse it. Saving or rationing will not help, especially if you are lying unconscious somewhere from sunstroke or dehydration. So use the water as you need it, and be aware of your need to find a water source as soon as possible.

5. (c.) *Dig in the stream bed at the outside of a bend.* This is the part of the river or stream that flows the fastest, is less silted, deepest, and the last part to go dry.

6. (c.) Midway up the slope. A sudden rain storm might turn the ravine into a raging torrent. This has happened to many campers and hikers before they had a chance to escape. The ridge line, on the other hand, increases your exposure to rain, wind, and lightning, should a storm break. The best location is on the slope.

7. (b.) *Put the batteries under your armpits to warm them, and the replace them in the flashlight.* Flashlight batteries lose much of their power, and weak batteries run down faster, in the cold. Warming the batteries, especially if they are already weak, will restore them for a while. You would normally avoid night travel, of course, unless you were in open country where you could use the stars for navigation. There are just too many obstacles (logs, branches, uneven ground, and so on) that might injure you-and a broken leg, injured eye, or twisted ankle would not help your plight right now. Once the sun sets, darkness falls quickly in wooded areas; it would usually be best to stay at your campsite.

8. (a.) *Yellow.* A yellow flame indicates incomplete combustion and a strong possibility of carbon monoxide build-up. Each year many campers are killed by carbon monoxide poisoning as they sleep or doze in tents, cabins, or other

enclosed spaces.

9. (a.) *Leave your books and pack on.* Errors in fording rivers are a major cause of fatal accidents. Sharp rocks or uneven footing demand that you keep your boots on. If your pack is fairly well balanced, wearing it will provide you the most stability in the swift current. A waterproof, zippered backpack will usually float, even when loaded with normal camping gear; if you step off into a hole or deep spot, the pack could become a lifesaver.

10. (b.) *Across the stream.* Errors in facing the wrong way in fording a stream are the cause of many drownings. Facing upstream is the worst alternative; the current could push you back and your pack would provide the unbalance to pull you over. You have the best stability facing across the stream, keeping your eye on the exit point on the opposite bank.

11. (c.) *In stocking feet.* Here you can pick your route to some degree, and you can feel where you are stepping. Normal hiking boots become slippery, and going barefooted offers your feet no protection at all.

12. (c.) *Freeze, but be ready to back away slowly.* Sudden movement will probably startle the bear a lot more than your presence. If the bear is seeking some of your food, do no argue with him; let him forage and be on his way. Otherwise, back very slowly toward some refuge (trees, rock outcrop, etc.)