

# SURVIVAL

A Scouting Ireland challenge

**Abandon ship**



# Survival scenarios

Imagine yourself with a walking party. There is a blast of wind, a lot of noise and you are engulfed in an avalanche of snow. You are sailing in a yacht a heavy wind blows, you lose your mast and are set adrift. How do you cope?

These situations are ones which people have found themselves in on occasions in the past and will, doubtless, find themselves in the future. For this reason a knowledge of survival can be as useful as a knowledge of first aid.

Although we live in a relatively civilised environment the ease of modern travel, coupled with the fact that Scouts are going to more remote areas, maintains the need for a knowledge of survival skills.

Before going further it may be as well to define the term 'survival' - 'Survival is the art of remaining alive in and escaping from a hostile environment, without full facilities.' This needs a few words of explanation. If you camp in the hills in winter with a good mountain tent, a warm sleeping bag, a stove with plenty of fuel and no shortage of food, this is camping not survival. Survival begins when some relatively essential item is missing and becomes more acute the less one has.

The American Rescue Service has said that country people or city people who

have had a lot of Scout training are the best survivors.

To stay alive the following must be considered

## Food

Without it one will eventually die although not as rapidly as one might think. In her book, *Hey I'm Alive*, Helen Klaben describes how she stayed alive for forty nine days on virtually nothing.

## Water

With no water available a man, even in a cool climate and doing no work, is unlikely to survive more than fifteen days.

## Shelter and Warmth

Without these the physical condition of the survivor will deteriorate.

## Medical

Untreated injuries or sickness will undermine the body to some extent especially if allied to a lack of shelter and food. Additionally the ability to escape on foot will be inhibited.

## Communication

A person is a very small object and the earth is a very big place. Some means of attracting attention is vital for anyone in need of help. A mobile phone is excellent

if a signal is available if not then traditional means of communication will need to be used.

## Movement

How to move, when to move, etc. now become vital questions to be answered.

## Navigation

This may not be to one-degree accuracy but in many types of terrain it is quite an effort to keep going in a constant compass direction without veering well off course.

## Load-carrying

Too big a load will reduce your chances of reaching help but too small a load may mean vital items are abandoned.



# Lost at sea

You are on a yacht with three friends, for the holiday trip of a lifetime across the Atlantic Ocean. Because none of you have any previous sailing experience, you have hired an experienced skipper.

Unfortunately in mid Atlantic a fire breaks out in the ships galley and the skipper have been lost whilst trying to fight the blaze. Much of the yacht is destroyed and is slowly sinking. Your best estimate is that you are many hundreds of miles from the nearest landfall. You and your friends have managed to save 15 items, undamaged and intact after the fire. In addition, you have salvaged a four man rubber life craft and a box of matches.

Your task is to rank the 15 items in terms of their importance for you, as you wait to be rescued. Place the number 1 by the most important item, the number 2 by the second most important and so forth until you have ranked all 15 items.

- A sextant
- A shaving mirror
- A quantity of mosquito netting
- A 25 liter container of water
- A case of army rations
- Maps of the Atlantic Ocean
- A floating seat cushion
- A 10 liter can of oil/petrol mixture
- A small transistor radio
- 20 square feet of opaque plastic sheeting
- A can of shark repellent
- One bottle of 100% proof rum
- 15 feet of nylon rope
- 2 boxes of chocolate bars
- An ocean fishing kit & pole



# Lost at sea

## Ranking of items

According to the experts, in this case the Coastguard, the basic supplies needed when a person is stranded mid-ocean are articles to attract attention and aid survival until rescue arrives. A transatlantic trip takes roughly 20 days; significantly less with good winds and significantly more without them.

Articles on the list for navigation are of little importance since even if a small life raft were capable of reaching land, it would be impossible to store enough food and water to survive for that amount of time. Without signaling devices, there is almost no chance of being spotted and rescued.

Rating	
<b>15</b>	<b>A sextant</b> Useless without the relevant tables and a chronometer.
<b>01</b>	<b>A shaving mirror</b> Of all the items, the mirror is absolutely critical. It is the most powerful tool you have for communicating your presence. In sunlight, a simple mirror can generate five to seven million candlepower of light. The reflected sunbeam can even be seen beyond the horizon.
<b>14</b>	<b>A quantity of mosquito netting</b> There are NO mosquitoes in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and the netting is useless for anything else.
<b>04</b>	<b>A 25 liter container of water</b> Vital to restore fluids lost through perspiration. 25 liters will supply water rations for your group for several days.
<b>03</b>	<b>A case of army rations</b> This is your basic food intake
<b>13</b>	<b>Maps of the Atlantic Ocean</b> Worthless without navigation equipment.
<b>11</b>	<b>One bottle of rum</b> Contains 80% alcohol, which means it can be used as an antiseptic for any injuries, otherwise of little value.

Rating	
<b>02</b>	<b>A 10 liter can of oil/gasoline mixture</b> The second most critical item for signaling. The mixture will float on water and can be ignited using the matches.
<b>12</b>	<b>A small transistor radio</b> You would be out of range of any radio station.
<b>05</b>	<b>20 square feet of opaque plastic sheeting</b> Can be used to collect rain water and shelter from the wind and waves.
<b>10</b>	<b>A can of shark repellent</b> To repel sharks, of course!
<b>09</b>	<b>A floating seat cushion</b> Useful as a life preserver if someone fell overboard.
<b>08</b>	<b>15ft nylon rope</b> Could be used to lash people or equipment together to prevent being washed overboard. There are a variety of other uses, but none high on the list for survival.
<b>06</b>	<b>2 boxes of chocolate bars</b> Your reserve food supply
<b>07</b>	<b>An ocean fishing kit with pole.</b> Ranked lower than the chocolate as there is no guarantee you will catch any fish. The pole might be used as a tent pole.