

Survival Skills

the rule of three's: shelter before food



How does the outdoors person prioritize survival needs when the unexpected happens? Making quick rational decisions can be the difference between life and death.

The rule of three's is a guide to help prioritize immediate survival needs. It goes like this: A person has three minutes without oxygen; three hours without shelter; three days without water; three weeks without food, and three months without human companionship. Some of these time frames can be debated; please remember these are just averages and are used as a guide.

Some of these three's are self-explanatory—like the need for oxygen—while others should be considered more closely. Let's look at the need for shelter versus food.

Hunger tends to lead us to believe that food is more important than shelter, when in reality humans are able to survive weeks without food. Most people forget that hypothermia can strike even when temperatures are in the low fifties.

If you should find yourself lost, construct a simple, A-frame shelter using a survival blanket, small tarp or plastic sheet. String a line between two trees, throw the tarp over top, and stake it down. If you don't have anything with you, make a shelter out of leaves and sticks. Insulate

yourself from the ground and get out of the elements. In the morning, you can take care of your next priority.

Using the rule of threes can help lead the outdoors person to make the right choice in a survival situation. Making up your own survival scenarios is a great way to train the mind. Use different environmental conditions, varying equipment types and challenges.

Being mentally prepared before heading outdoors can help you make critical survival decisions when the unexpected happens. 🏕️

—Shawn Grose