

# THE SAS

## SURVIVAL HANDBOOK

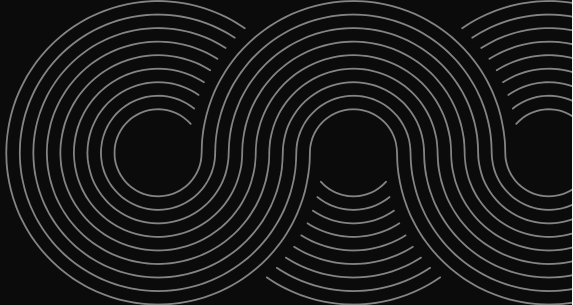
MASTER THE ART OF SURVIVAL – ELITE TECHNIQUES FROM  
THE BRITISH SPECIAL FORCES

PACKED WITH TIME-TESTED SAS SURVIVAL STRATEGIES,  
UPDATED FOR THE NEEDS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

SURVIVAL

GUIDE

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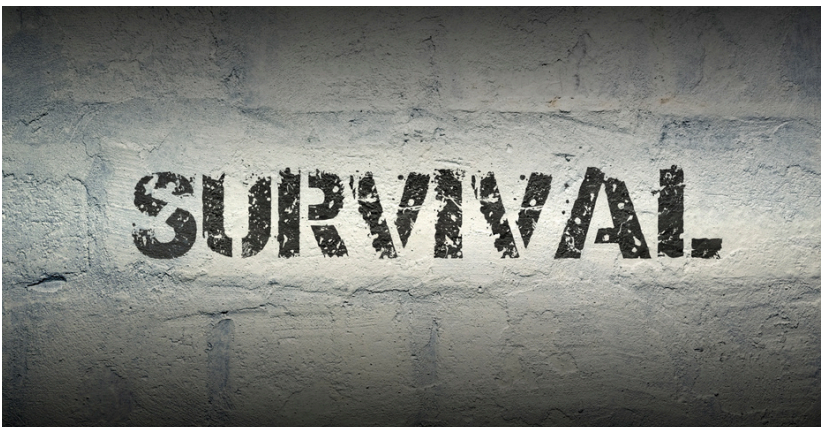
# The SAS Survival Handbook

When it comes to survival, few resources command as much respect, trust, and enduring global acclaim as *The SAS Survival Handbook* by John ‘Lofty’ Wiseman. As a former member of the elite British Special Air Service (SAS), Wiseman brings decades of hard-earned, field-tested knowledge to the pages of this iconic manual.

First published in 1986, the handbook has since undergone multiple updates to reflect evolving techniques, technologies, and environmental challenges.

Yet, its core mission remains unchanged: to equip readers with the critical skills necessary to survive and thrive in the harshest and most unpredictable conditions on Earth.

Far more than a simple instruction manual, this guide is widely regarded as the definitive survival bible. It is a treasure trove of wisdom for a diverse audience—military personnel, seasoned adventurers, outdoor hobbyists, preppers, and even urban dwellers concerned with emergency preparedness. From navigating dense jungles and building shelters in arid deserts, to identifying edible plants and administering first aid in remote locations, Wiseman’s handbook covers every conceivable scenario with clarity, precision, and authority.



# Essentials of Survival

At the heart of The SAS Survival Handbook lies a powerful truth: survival begins in the mind. John 'Lofty' Wiseman underscores that in any life-or-death situation, it's not just tools, gear, or physical fitness that matter most—it's mental fortitude. The opening section of the book lays the psychological groundwork for survival, emphasizing that calmness, adaptability, and the ability to think clearly under pressure are the most critical assets a person can possess in a crisis.

Wiseman introduces readers to a survival mindset: one rooted in self-discipline, situational awareness, and purposeful decision-making. Whether stranded in a k.

jungle, lost at sea, or facing a disaster at home, panic is the enemy. Survivors are those who stay composed, assess their surroundings, and take deliberate, prioritized action.



### KEY LESSONS:

- **The “Rule of Threes”:** One of the most important concepts introduced early on is the Rule of Threes, a simple framework that illustrates the body's basic survival limits:
  - You can survive 3 minutes without air,
  - 3 hours without shelter in extreme environments,
  - 3 days without water, and
  - 3 weeks without food.
  - This rule helps survivors quickly assess and address their most immediate threats.
- **Prioritizing Needs:** Wiseman emphasizes tackling survival needs in order: secure shelter first, then water, fire, and food—a strategy central to his book.



# Climate & Terrain-Specific Survival

One of the standout features of *The SAS Survival Handbook* is its extraordinary breadth—Wiseman doesn't offer a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, he delivers meticulously detailed survival strategies tailored to the world's most diverse and extreme environments. From the frozen isolation of the Arctic tundra to the suffocating heat of deserts, the dense, disorienting vegetation of tropical jungles, and the vast, unforgiving expanse of the open ocean, Wiseman equips readers with the skills necessary to survive wherever they might find themselves.

Each terrain presents its own unique set of challenges, and Wiseman's insight into how to adapt survival techniques based on geography and climate is both practical and life-saving.

## IDENTIFYING NATURAL SHELTERS AND SAFE ROUTES

In any survival situation, one of the first and most critical tasks is securing shelter and navigating safely through the environment. Exposure to the elements—whether it's freezing cold, scorching heat, or relentless rain—can quickly become life-threatening. That's why John 'Lofty' Wiseman, in *The SAS Survival Handbook*, places significant emphasis on the ability to recognize natural shelters and identify safe routes, tailored to various terrains and climates.



### Common Types of Natural Shelters by Terrain

- Forests & Woodlands: Look for spaces beneath large, low-hanging branches or fallen trees with dense foliage. Caves, rock overhangs, or the

- base of large tree roots can offer cover from rain and wind. Be cautious of animal dens and inspect the area for signs of recent wildlife activity.
- **Mountains:** Natural rock formations, cliff overhangs, and crevices can provide windbreaks and protection from precipitation. However, high-altitude conditions can change rapidly—avoid avalanche-prone slopes and be aware of loose rock.
- **Deserts:** Shade is your most urgent need. Rocky outcroppings, canyon walls, or the lee side of dunes can provide partial protection from the sun and wind. Avoid enclosed areas like caves during the day, as they can trap heat.
- **Jungles:** In rainforests, raised areas under dense vegetation may offer drier ground. Use natural canopies for rain protection but watch for hazards like snakes, insects, and water pooling. Building a raised sleeping platform from nearby wood may still be necessary.
- **Arctic/Cold Regions:** Snowbanks and natural hollows can be shaped into snow caves or quinzhees, which insulate body heat well if constructed properly. Avoid open ridges where wind exposure is highest and always test snow stability to prevent collapses.
- **Coastal & Island Areas:** Driftwood piles, rock formations, or even overturned boats can serve as emergency shelter. Look inland to avoid tides and salt spray. Avoid low ground, which can flood quickly with changes in tide or weather.

## SAFE ROUTE IDENTIFICATION: NAVIGATING WITH CAUTION

Finding shelter is essential in any survival situation, but getting to that shelter—or moving safely between locations—requires careful navigation. Terrain can often be deceptive, and choosing the wrong path may lead to injury, exhaustion, or even becoming trapped. To identify safe routes, several key principles should be followed. First, it's helpful to use natural lines such as ridgelines, riverbanks, or animal trails, as these paths are often well-established and lead to critical resources like water and shelter. However, caution is needed near water, especially in flood-prone zones or where predators may lurk.

It's equally important to avoid obvious hazards. Steep slopes, unstable gravel, marshy ground, and thick underbrush can all slow progress and conceal dangers. In snowy regions, there's the added risk of falling through ice-covered water or encountering hidden avalanche zones and unstable cornices. Being aware of elevation is also vital.

# Food & Water Procurement

In a survival scenario, securing food and water is vital—not just for physical sustenance, but for maintaining morale and energy. As John ‘Lofty’ Wiseman emphasizes in *The SAS Survival Handbook*, nature becomes your pantry, and with the right knowledge, you can turn even the harshest environment into a source of nourishment. However, survival isn't about abundance—it's about making smart, sustainable choices using available resources, often under stress and with limited tools.

Wiseman's approach is both practical and methodical. He teaches readers how to locate, collect, and prepare food and water in the wild while minimizing risk, conserving energy, and respecting the ecosystem.

## How to Purify Water Using Natural Methods

In a survival situation, finding water is only half the battle. The real challenge lies in making that water safe to drink. Rivers, ponds, puddles, and even rainwater can contain harmful microorganisms, chemicals, or debris that can cause severe illness—or even death—if consumed untreated.

The *SAS Survival Handbook* explains practical ways to make water safe without modern tools—crucial knowledge for wilderness survival.

### 1. Boiling

Boiling is the most effective natural method to kill pathogens, including bacteria, viruses, and parasites such as *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*.

How to Boil Water:

- Collect water in a metal container or any heat-safe vessel.
- Bring it to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute (or 3 minutes at high altitudes).
- Let it cool before drinking.

**⚠ Note:** Boiling doesn't remove chemical contaminants (e.g., heavy metals or pesticides), so always choose the cleanest source possible.



3 Ways to Purify Water in the Wilderness

## 2. Solar (Sunlight) Disinfection – SODIS Method

This method uses the UV rays from the sun to disinfect water. It's slower than boiling but effective in sunny climates.

### How to Use the SODIS Method:

- Pour clear water into transparent plastic bottles (PET bottles work best).
- Lay them flat in direct sunlight for at least 6 hours (or up to 2 days in cloudy conditions).
- The UV-A rays and heat together kill most biological contaminants.

 **This method is especially useful in desert or tropical survival scenarios.**

## 3. Natural Filtration Using Sand, Charcoal, and Gravel

This method removes physical debris, odors, and some bacteria.

### How to Make a Natural Filter:

- Use a container like a bottle with the bottom cut off or a hollowed-out piece of bamboo.
- Layer the contents from top to bottom:
  - a. Clean cloth or grass (to catch large particles)
  - b. Fine sand
  - c. Charcoal (from a campfire, crushed into small bits)
  - d. Gravel or small stones
- Pour the dirty water slowly through the top; collect it as it drips out the bottom.

 **Filtered water still needs to be boiled or treated to kill microscopic organisms.**

## 5. Cloth Filtering (Basic Pre-Filter)

A piece of tightly woven cloth (e.g., a shirt or bandana) can be used to remove large debris, mud, and visible particles.

How to Use:

- Fold the cloth several times for a tighter weave.
- Pour water through it into another container.
- This does not purify the water chemically or biologically—it's just a first step before boiling or further treatment.



## 6. Using Natural Coagulants (e.g., Moringa Seeds)

In some environments, seeds from plants like *Moringa oleifera* can be used to bind and settle particles in cloudy water.

How to Use:

- Crush the seeds into a fine powder.
- Mix with water and stir.
- Let the water sit for an hour; particles will settle to the bottom.
- Filter the clean water on top and boil before drinking.

 **This method is most effective when combined with filtration and boiling.**

## CHARTS OF SAFE VS. TOXIC PLANTS AND FUNGI

In a survival situation, the ability to distinguish between safe and toxic plants and fungi can mean the difference between life and death. In *The SAS Survival Handbook*, John ‘Lofty’ Wiseman includes detailed charts and illustrations that help readers accurately identify edible species while avoiding their poisonous look-alikes. These charts provide vital information such as visual characteristics, habitats, and which parts of the plant or mushroom are safe to consume. For instance, the book highlights safe options like dandelion, cattail, and wild garlic—nutritious and widely available in the wild—while warning against deadly species like hemlock, belladonna (deadly nightshade), and the death cap mushroom.

**Wiseman also offers general rules of caution:** avoid white berries and mushrooms, never eat a plant unless you are 100% certain of its identity, and use the Universal Edibility Test only as a last resort. The charts are designed for quick reference in the field, making them practical tools for real-world foraging. By following the guidance and visual cues provided, survivors can confidently harvest food from their environment while minimizing the risk of accidental poisoning.

Ultimately, these charts reflect one of the most important lessons in survival: knowledge is power, but caution is everything. By learning to recognize what’s safe and what’s not, survivors can avoid dangerous trial-and-error mistakes and make the most of nature’s offerings. Foraging becomes not a gamble, but a skill rooted in observation, discipline, and respect for the wild.

# Shelter Building

One of the most essential survival priorities, especially in extreme environments, is the ability to construct effective shelter. In *The SAS Survival Handbook*, John ‘Lofty’ Wiseman provides comprehensive, step-by-step guidance on building shelters using only the materials available in your natural surroundings. Recognizing that every environment presents unique challenges, the book offers shelter designs that are specifically adapted to various terrains and weather conditions—from cold, snowy regions to arid deserts and dense tropical jungles.



In addition to structure, Wiseman emphasizes the importance of insulation and ground protection, noting that contact with cold or wet ground can rapidly drain body heat. He explains how to use natural insulation materials such as dry leaves, grass, moss, or pine needles to line the interior of shelters or create makeshift bedding. These not only increase comfort but are critical for preventing hypothermia in cooler climates. The handbook also addresses how to waterproof shelters, create windbreaks, and select the safest locations—avoiding low-lying flood-prone areas or places vulnerable to falling branches or rockslides.

What sets Wiseman’s shelter-building advice apart is its balance of simplicity, adaptability, and effectiveness. Whether you’re in a dense forest, open plains, coastal region, or snow-covered mountains, the book empowers you to create a reliable refuge using only your hands, surroundings, and a sharp eye for natural building materials. Shelter is more than a comfort—it’s a shield against the elements, a psychological boost, and a strategic foundation for survival. With Wiseman’s guidance, even the most unprepared person can learn to transform the wild into a place of safety and rest.

# Navigation Without a Compass

In today's world, we rely heavily on modern GPS technology for navigation, whether hiking through forests, trekking across deserts, or sailing the seas. However, GPS devices can fail—batteries die, signals get lost in remote or dense areas, and electronics can malfunction. In such situations, knowing natural navigation techniques becomes invaluable.

Wiseman, an expert in traditional navigation, teaches how to use the sun, stars, and simple improvised tools to find your way without a compass.

## USING THE SUN AND SHADOWS

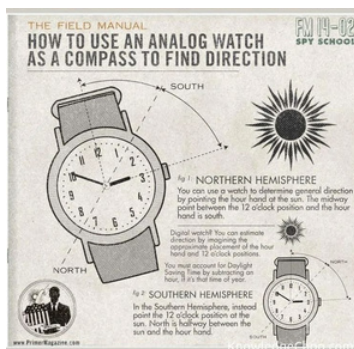
One of the most accessible natural navigation methods involves the sun and shadows. For example, you can determine approximate directions during daylight using a watch and a stick:

### 1. Stick and Shadow Method:

- Place a straight stick vertically into the ground.
- Mark the tip of its shadow with a small stone or scratch.
- Wait 15-20 minutes and mark the tip of the shadow again.
- Draw a straight line between the two marks — this line roughly runs from west (first mark) to east (second mark) in the Northern Hemisphere.
- From there, you can orient yourself by standing with the first mark (west) to your left and the second mark (east) to your right. You'll be facing north.

### 2. Watch Method:

- Hold an analog watch flat.
- Point the hour hand toward the sun.
- Halfway between the hour hand and 12 o'clock mark on the watch dial will indicate south in the Northern Hemisphere (and north in the Southern Hemisphere).



In an emergency situation where you're without a compass, it's possible to create a simple yet effective navigational tool using a common sewing needle, a leaf or piece of cork, and a basic understanding of magnetism. This improvised compass can help you determine direction when modern electronic devices are unavailable or inoperable.

### Step 1: Magnetizing the Needle

To begin, you'll need to magnetize the needle so it can respond to Earth's magnetic field. This can be done in a few different ways, depending on what materials are available:

- **Using a Magnet:** Stroke the needle in one direction (not back and forth) along a magnet about 20–30 times. Always stroke from the eye to the point or vice versa, keeping the motion consistent.
- **Using Friction (If No Magnet is Available):** If you don't have a magnet, you can generate a weaker magnetic field by rubbing the needle briskly against certain types of fabric—such as silk, wool, or synthetic materials—for a couple of minutes. Rubbing the needle in one direction helps align the electrons inside the metal to create a magnetic field.
- **Alternative Methods:** In survival situations, some people have also used friction from their hair or even struck the needle lightly on a rock to induce magnetic properties, though with less predictable results.

### Step 2: Creating a Floating Base

Once the needle is magnetized, it needs to be able to move freely to align with the Earth's magnetic field. To do this:

- Find a small leaf, piece of cork, foam, or even a scrap of plastic or paper.
- Gently push the needle through the material, or lay it balanced on top. Make sure it lies flat and is well-supported so it doesn't sink.
- Place the floating platform gently on the surface of still water—such as a puddle, pond, calm stream, or even a cup or bowl. Avoid moving water, as currents can interfere with the reading.

**Step 3: Reading Your Improvised Compass:** After a few seconds, the magnetized needle will align along the north-south axis. If you remember which end you magnetized (usually the tip), that end points north. If you're unsure, use the sun as a guide: in the Northern Hemisphere, it rises in the east, sets in the west, and is generally southward at midday. This can help confirm the needle's direction.

# First Aid and Health

In both everyday life and emergency situations, first aid and health are critical components of safety and survival. Whether you're at home, traveling, or in the wilderness, having the knowledge and confidence to respond quickly and effectively to injuries or medical emergencies can save lives—possibly even your own.



## ESSENTIAL FIRST AID SKILLS

A well-rounded first aid understanding includes how to:

- Stop bleeding using pressure, dressings, or tourniquets
- Clean and dress wounds to prevent infection
- Treat burns by cooling the area and protecting it from further injury
- Stabilize fractures and sprains with splints and slings
- Respond to bites and stings, including snake bites, insect bites, and allergic reactions
- Perform CPR and rescue breathing in life-threatening situations
- Recognize signs of shock and respond appropriately

## IMPROVISED MEDICAL SOLUTIONS

In remote or resource-limited environments, you may not have access to a first aid kit. In such cases, knowing how to improvise is vital. For example:

- A sturdy stick and cloth can become a splint.

- A clean T-shirt can serve as a bandage.
- Honey or clean water can help clean wounds if antiseptics are unavailable.

Training yourself to adapt and make use of available materials is a key survival skill.

## MANAGING INFECTIONS AND ILLNESS

Injuries left untreated or poorly cleaned can lead to infection, which can become life-threatening in the absence of antibiotics. Learning to identify signs of infection—redness, swelling, pus, or fever—is crucial. In survival situations, natural antiseptics like iodine, alcohol, salt water, or medicinal plants may be used to clean wounds.



## BUILDING A FIRST AID KIT

Everyone should have a basic first aid kit tailored to their environment and needs. A well-stocked kit includes:

- Bandages, gauze, and tape
- Antiseptics (alcohol, iodine, antibiotic ointment)
- Pain relievers and anti-inflammatory medications
- Tweezers, scissors, and gloves
- Emergency blanket and CPR mask
- Any necessary personal medications

Regularly check and update your kit to ensure everything is functional and within its expiration date.

# Disaster Preparedness & Urban Survival

In an increasingly unpredictable world, the need for disaster preparedness and urban survival skills has never been more critical. Natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and wildfires, along with human-made emergencies like power grid failures, terrorist attacks, and pandemics, pose constant threats to urban populations. Preparing for such events is not just wise—it's essential.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Disaster preparedness involves planning and implementing measures to reduce the impact of emergencies. For urban residents, this means recognizing that dense populations and infrastructure vulnerabilities can magnify the effects of disasters. Preparedness can save lives, reduce injuries, and minimize property damage.

Key components of disaster preparedness include:

- **Awareness and Education:** Understanding local hazards and knowing how to respond is the first step. Communities should be educated on the risks specific to their area and the appropriate responses to different scenarios.
- **Emergency Kits:** A well-stocked emergency kit can sustain individuals and families for at least 72 hours. These kits typically include water, non-perishable food, a flashlight, batteries, a first-aid kit, medications, cash, and important documents.
- **Communication Plans:** Families should establish communication strategies to stay in touch or reunite during disasters. This includes identifying out-of-town contacts and using emergency alert systems.
- **Evacuation and Shelter Plans:** Knowing evacuation routes and shelter locations is vital. Urban residents should also be familiar with public shelters and local emergency services.

## URBAN SURVIVAL TACTICS

Surviving in an urban setting during and after a disaster presents unique challenges. Here, survival isn't just about finding food or water; it involves navigating a complex environment filled with potential hazards.

- **Important urban survival strategies include:**
- **Situational Awareness:** Being observant and aware of your surroundings helps avoid danger and find safe routes or resources.
- **Resource Management:** Urban survival often depends on limited resources. Knowing how to purify water, ration food, and secure shelter are vital skills.
- **Self-Defense and Security:** In some extreme situations, protecting yourself and your family from crime or civil unrest may become necessary.
- **Medical Knowledge:** Basic first aid and the ability to treat minor injuries or stabilize serious ones until help arrives can make a life-or-death difference.
- **Community Cooperation:** Isolation can be dangerous in urban disasters. Strong community networks can provide mutual aid, share resources, and support emotional well-being.

## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION IN PREPAREDNESS

Modern technology has improved our ability to prepare and respond to disasters. Smartphone apps can alert users to incoming threats, map evacuation routes, or connect users to emergency services. Drones, portable solar chargers, and water filtration devices also enhance urban survival capabilities.

## BUILDING RESILIENT CITIES

Beyond individual preparedness, city planners and governments play a major role in disaster readiness. This includes enforcing resilient building codes, maintaining emergency services, investing in early-warning systems, and educating the public. Urban resilience is a shared responsibility among citizens, authorities, and private sectors.

Disaster preparedness and urban survival are not only about reacting to emergencies—they are about building a mindset of resilience, foresight, and adaptability. Whether you're facing a hurricane, power outage, or civil emergency, the time to prepare is now.



# Why This Book Still Matters Today

In today's world, with increasing natural disasters, global instability, and outdoor adventurism on the rise, knowing how to survive without modern conveniences is more valuable than ever. "The SAS Survival Handbook" is not a book to read once and shelve—it's a lifelong reference tool.

Whether you're:

- Planning a wilderness trek,
- Preparing for climate emergencies,
- Building an off-grid lifestyle,
- Or just intrigued by survival skills,

This book equips you with the knowledge, mindset, and techniques to stay alive and adapt.

## Who Should Read It?

- Campers, hikers, and adventurers
- Military and security professionals
- Preppers and emergency planners
- Anyone who wants to be ready for the unexpected

## Final Thoughts

"The SAS Survival Handbook" is not just a survival manual—it's a philosophy of resilience. It teaches you to rely on your skills, instincts, and resourcefulness, regardless of the situation. In an uncertain world, this book reminds us that knowledge truly is power, especially when survival is at stake.

Whether you keep it in your backpack, bug-out bag, or bedside table—this handbook deserves a permanent place in every self-reliant person's life.

**THANK YOU!**