OFFLINE RESILIENCE GUIDE // UK EDITION

Survival Priorities: What to Do First When Things Go Wrong

A practical order of operations for emergencies: deal with immediate danger, exposure, location, communication and water before spending energy on lower-priority problems.

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LAYER 1 // ACT

FIRST ACTIONS

Start here. Then read the conditions and exceptions below.

1. Pause long enough to identify the thing most likely to hurt you next.
2. Treat life-threatening injury and immediate danger before equipment or comfort.
3. Get dry, out of wind and away from environmental hazards before chasing food or gadgets.
4. Make yourself findable: establish your location, preserve communications and avoid unnecessary movement.
5. Protect drinking water and energy; food is usually a later problem in a short emergency.

> **IMPORTANT**
> This is preparedness information, not a substitute for emergency services, medical advice or instructions from responsible authorities. In immediate danger call 999 or 112.

There is no universal survival checklist

The useful lesson from classic fieldcraft is not a rigid sequence. It is the habit of ranking problems by consequence. A serious injury, fire, floodwater, traffic, falling debris, severe cold or extreme heat can matter immediately. Hunger usually does not.

A good first question is simple: what can harm us in the next few minutes, and what can wait? That keeps limited time, battery, water and physical effort focused on the real threat.

Pause, observe, then commit

Unless staying still is dangerous, resist the urge to start walking, unpacking everything or solving five problems at once. Check injuries, weather, daylight, surroundings, communications, water and the safest nearby shelter. If you are with other people, account for everyone before splitting up.

Then choose a short plan that you can explain in one sentence: for example, move 100 metres to the vehicle, get the wet person into dry layers, call for help, then stay there. Clear plans reduce wasted movement and conflicting decisions.

Immediate danger and exposure come first

In UK conditions, wet and wind can turn an inconvenience into hypothermia. NHS guidance treats suspected hypothermia as a medical emergency. At the opposite extreme, heatstroke is also an emergency. Move away from the hazard, reduce further exposure and call 999 when the symptoms or circumstances require it.

Shelter does not need to mean building something. A safe building, vehicle, bothy, staffed facility, waterproof layer, emergency shelter or simply getting behind a windbreak may be the right answer. The priority is to stop heat loss, heat gain or continued wetting.

Be findable before you become more lost

If you are lost or an accident has happened, unnecessary movement can make rescue harder and can turn a navigational problem into an exposure problem. Mountain Rescue England and Wales advises callers to provide a grid reference if possible and, after calling, not to change position until contacted by the rescue team.

Preserve phone battery, note your location while the device still works, and keep a map or other offline reference. If official instructions tell you to evacuate, follow them; otherwise, do not wander simply because movement feels productive.

Water matters before food

Dehydration can impair judgement and physical performance. Carrying water is safer than assuming you will find a usable source. If a mains water problem occurs at home, follow your water company or Drinking Water Inspectorate instructions rather than inventing your own treatment regime.

Food is important for comfort, energy and longer disruptions, but in the first hours of most household or outdoor emergencies it should not displace injury care, shelter, rescue, safe water or communications.

Fire is a tool, not a default objective

Classic survival writing gives fire a prominent place because it can provide heat, light and morale. In modern Britain it is often unnecessary or inappropriate. The Countryside Code says

not to light fires and to use barbecues only where signs permit them. Clothing, insulation, a shelter, a stove used lawfully and safely, or simply leaving the area may be better options.

The efficient approach is not to recreate a wilderness checklist. It is to use the least risky method that solves the actual problem.

Fieldcraft influence, modern evidence

This guide is inspired by the priority-first fieldcraft approach associated with John “Lofty” Wiseman’s SAS Survival Handbook. It does not reproduce the book. The wording and recommendations here are independently written and checked against current UK public-safety sources.

Useful kit for this plan

Equipment should support the plan, not replace judgement or skill. The commercial catalogue is kept on a separate page.

KIT IS KEPT SEPARATE
Named products and Amazon UK affiliate links are kept on the dedicated KIT page so this guide remains editorial. Use the kit only after the plan identifies a genuine equipment gap.

OPEN KIT →

Sources checked for this guide

We use public sources for the factual backbone and write the guide in our own words. Source pages can change, so the links below are the place to check current official advice.

> **PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE**
> **NHS: Hypothermia**
> Symptoms, emergency status and immediate actions while waiting for medical help.
> https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hypothermia/

> **PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE**
> **NHS: Heat exhaustion and heatstroke**
> Cooling, hydration and when heat illness becomes an emergency.
> https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/

> **PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE**
> **Mountain Rescue England and Wales: Stay safe**
> Planning, essential outdoor kit, calling for rescue, location information and staying put.
> https://www.mountain.rescue.org.uk/safety/

> **PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE**
> **GOV.UK: The Countryside Code**
> Outdoor responsibilities including fire restrictions, local signs and protecting the environment.
> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors

Editorial review date: 25 September 2026. If an official source conflicts with this page, follow the official source.

INFORMATION CHECK✓ CURRENT REVIEW

REVIEWED	NEXT REVIEW DUE	OFFICIAL REFERENCES
25 Sep 2026	23 Jan 2027	4 primary sources

If an official source conflicts with this guide, follow the current official source.

GET PREPPED NOW // ORIGINAL GUIDE

Source page: https://getpreppednow.co.uk/guides/survival-priorities-what-to-do-first.html
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