

3 Steps To Start A Fire When Everything Is Wet

Starting a fire in adverse weather, whether is rain or wind or both is a very important survival skill every outdoors aficionado must possess. The ability of igniting a fire when things are less than perfect is a fine art which must be learned and practiced until mastery is achieved.

The thing is, nature doesn't care much about our best laid plans, mice and men alike and an emergency never comes alone. I mean, when confronted with a survival situation, you'd at least expect fine weather, cool breezes and sunshine.

In reality, your survival in an emergency situation will become much more complicated than initially thought and I would dare to say nine times out of ten, as you'll end up not only lost in the woods or wherever, but you'll also have to deal with rain, cold and high winds.

Emergencies almost always bring bad weather with them, it's almost like a 2 for the price of 1 deal. And that's fine as long you're prepared both physically and mentally.

However, in critical times, your survival may depend on your ability to light a fire under rain and/or wind and any hardcore survivalist, even Bear Grylls will tell you that you should always carry at least 2 primary and 2 secondary tools for starting a fire.

The idea is that a regular fire starter may not always provide you with the best results, especially if it's raining and it gets wet. Also, if it's windy and rainy, your chances of igniting a fire with just one match are pretty slim. If it's freezing cold, your BIC lighter (which uses butane) may not work at all.

Basically, starting a fire when it's windy, cold and rainy is one of the worst situations imaginable, other than starting a fire under water, which is a skill only Chuck Norris masters (he uses phosphorus by the way).

I think I have already told you a dozen times in my previous articles about the holy trinity of survival, which includes fire as a means of providing you with (cooked) food, (safe) water and shelter (warmth, protection from wild animals etc), but also about the importance of location.

But do you know which survival essential is the first most important?

[Find out how this little survival stove that fits in your pocket can save your life!](#)

1. Find an Adequate Location for Making the Fire

Everything in life is location, as Van Helsing used to say back in the day, and the same mantra is true when it comes to making a fire.

The first thing to look for is an adequate location for making a fire in harsh weather conditions. The idea is to provide your fire with as much protection possible from both wind and rain if possible. And if you're not in the middle of a frozen desert with no snow around, that's not impossible.

Shelter means three basic things:

- shelter from the wind
- shelter from the rain
- shelter from the ground water.

2. Shelter the Fire

Ideally, you should shelter your fire on more than one side (upwind).

Build a Windbreak

You can protect your fire by building a C shaped windbreak with the open side downwind. You can build a windbreak using wood, rocks, snow, dirt, just use your imagination.

To shelter your fire from the rain when outdoors is the hardest job, but it can be achieved.

Make the Fire Under a Tree

But pay attention! The easiest way is to make your fire under a tree, as evergreens can be regarded as a natural tent of sorts. All you have to do is to pick a big one and make your fire under the lowest branches.

Making a fire under a tree may not seem like the best idea, as there are inherent risks attached, like setting the tree on fire, but if you're paying attention and keeping your fire under control, the chances of such an event happening are minor.

You can minimize the risks further by building a good fire pit with no combustible materials around the fire.

Build a Fire Pit

The third requirement is how to protect the fire from ground earth, with the previous two taken care of by now. The easiest method is to use rocks for building a fire pit on a spot where the ground is raised from the floor.

Or you can do that yourself, i.e. you can build a little mound and on top of the mound you'll put a layer of rocks, thus

preventing your fire from staying directly on the wet ground and also making sure any running water will be drained ASAP.

3. Tinder, Kindling and Fuel

So much for location folks, let's move on to the next issue and I will start with an axiom: if you don't have the Bear Grylls flame-thrower with you, [starting a fire using wet wood is basically impossible and a no-go under any circumstances](#). You'll waste your time and your gear, bet on a dead horse and the whole palaver.

Video first seen on [CommonSenseOutdoors](#).

However, there are ways, as Gandalf used to say, but ideally, you should try to find something dry for starting your fire. As a general rule of thumb, a fire gets started in 3 stages: tinder, kindling and fuel.

The *tinder* is a combustible material which is very easy to ignite, i.e. it will catch fire quick and easy.

The *kindling* can be improvised using pieces of finger-thick wood that will be lit from the kindle.

The rest is pretty straight forward, as far as your kindle gets ignited you'll start the main *fuel* and you'll have a fire burning in no time.

[Two of the best survival-tinder \(fire starters actually\)](#) which can be used for igniting a fire in adverse conditions (even with wet wood) are cotton balls soaked in petroleum jelly and dryer lint mixed with paraffin. These will burn for at least 2-3 minutes, thus providing you with plenty of time to get your fire started. I've already written an [article](#) about this issue.

As an interesting factoid, even in the midst of a rainstorm,

you can almost surely find dried branches under the bottom of big/old pine trees. Another great place to look for dry combustibles is the underside of uprooted (or dead) trees.

Video first seen on [IA Woodsman](#).

How to Make the Best Fire Starter for Wet Wood

The best fire-starter for wet wood can be home-made using black powder (gunpowder) and nail polish remover (the one that contains acetone). The acetone will be the solvent for the gunpowder. The idea is to make something that burns slow and as hot as possible and the gunpowder/acetone mix is by far the best in this regard.

Making the mix is fairly easy, as you'll start with a small quantity of gunpowder the size of a golf ball put inside a ceramic/glass bowl. Start adding nail polish remover so that the mound of gunpowder is totally covered then mix it together slowly and thoroughly (always wear rubber gloves).

Once the stuff inside the ball gets in a putty-state, you can pour off the extra nail polish and then start kneading the putty, just like when making bread. i.e. folding it over time and time again.

The purpose of the kneading is to create layers inside your fire-starter. In this way, the burn rate is more controlled. The more layers, the better your fire-starter will be. The finished putty can be stored in an airtight container, but keep in mind that you'll want to use your putty when it's still moist. If dried, it burns too fast.

This fire-starter burns at 3000 degrees Fahrenheit and a golf-ball sized piece will burn for more than 3 minutes. Basically, you can set anything on fire with this baby and even dry out damp wood in the worst conditions imaginable.

One final thing, it would always be nice to use fire accelerants, like gasoline (or alcohol, paint thinner etc), for starting a fire in rain or wind.

If you have your car around, the better, as you can siphon out some gasoline from the tank and start a fire even with damp wood in a jiffy. Okay, you'll not receive those extra bonus style points, but that's okay.

You'll always have the peace of mind knowing that no matter where you go and no matter how bad the weather is you'll be able to start a fire and safely cook food and boil some water. Click the banner below to grab this offer!



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