

HOW TO ESTIMATE DIRECTION WHEN HIKING

BEST ADVICE: BRING ALONG A SMALL MAP AND A COMPASS!

Dave Suttie Feb 2018

You've lost the trail ☹...now what?

Well....even the best compass won't help unless you first know which direction is out.

Which direction is out?

Before you venture out into the wilderness, look at a map of the area and figure out the "bailout direction" or what direction you would need to go to get out of the woods, if you should lose the trail.

Even better, why not print out a small map of the area, or make a rough sketch?

This will answer the question: which direction is out?

Which way do I go?

You know in what direction the road lies on the map, but what way do you go?

If you have a compass, then all is good...if not read on:

These methods are not exact, but precision is usually not needed to get out of the woods....you just need to head roughly in the right direction.

Your brain subconsciously uses the sun to judge direction, so be extra careful on cloudy days!

SUNRISE: The sun rises in an **EASTERLY** direction.

MIDMORNING: The sun is in the **SOUTH EAST**.

NOON: The sun is **SOUTH** of you...so a stick's shadow will point roughly **NORTH**.

MIDAFTERNOON: The sun lies in the **SOUTH WEST**.

SUNSET: The sun sets in a **WESTERLY** direction.

NIGHT: The Moon rises from the **EAST** and sets towards the **WEST**.

Look for the **NORTH STAR**.

Another method:

In New Brunswick the predominant path of airliners is either EAST-WEST (Montreal/Toronto), or NORTH EAST-SOUTH WEST (New York)...so look up...way up.

The last resort:

All water eventually reaches the sea, so theoretically if you walk downstream long enough you will get out of the woods...and you will have water all along the way...but you may have to trudge through many a swamp and bog to get there.

Maintaining your course: (useful even with a compass)

When you begin to walk, note in which direction the sun lies, and maintain that angle as you walk.

When going around obstacles such as fallen trees, try to go alternately left and right.

When following a compass heading, sight on something far ahead of you and walk to it, then recheck the compass.