ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY CADETS

SILVER STAR

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

SECTION 1

EO M324.01 – CONSTRUCT AN IMPROVISED SHELTER

Total Time: 90 min

PREPARATION

PRE-LESSON INSTRUCTIONS

Resources needed for the delivery of this lesson are listed in the lesson specification located in A-CR-CCP-703/PG-001, Chapter 4. Specific uses for said resources are identified throughout the instructional guide within the TP for which they are required.

Review the lesson content and become familiar with the material prior to delivering the lesson.

Construct an example of each type of shelter. If adequate materials are unavailable, use a picture to illustrate the shelter.

PRE-LESSON ASSIGNMENT

N/A.

APPROACH

An interactive lecture was chosen for TP 1 to introduce factors to consider when selecting a site for an improvised shelter and present background information.

Demonstration and performance was chosen for TP 2 as it is allows the instructor to explain and demonstrate constructing survival shelters while providing an opportunity for the cadets to practice under supervision.

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

The review for this lesson will be from EO M224.01 (Identify Immediate Actions To Take When Lost, A-CR-CCP-702/PF-001, Chapter 14, Section 1).

FIVE ELEMENTS OF SURVIVAL

After successfully completing the S.T.O.P. (Sit, Think, Observe, Plan) action and recognizing a survival situation, the lost individual shall take inventory of all the food and equipment on hand and proceed to procure the five elements of survival. These are listed in order of priority:

1. **Attitude.** Maintaining a positive attitude is essential. One can survive by staying calm, using all available resources, and prioritizing personal needs.

2. **Shelter.** A shelter is designed to provide protection from the weather and, depending on the conditions, protect a person from either hot or cold temperatures. Hypothermia and hyperthermia are two of the greatest

Unofficial convenience copy of A-CR-CCP-703/PF-001, cached 2026-11-08 from https://app.cadets.gc.ca/cadet-publications/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001.pdf.
Verify against the official publication.

dangers in a survival situation. A proper shelter can help prevent these from occurring. In a desert scenario, for example, the goal is to stay under a shelter, shaded from the effects of the sun. In cold weather situations, the shelter will provide insulation.

3. **Water.** Water is the most essential nutrient for the human body. Even when thirst is not extreme it can dull the mind. Lack of water will slowly degrade the ability to survive. With adequate shelter and water one can survive for weeks.

4. **Fire.** In a survival situation, fire provides heat and light, and signals for rescuers. Cold weather not only lowers the ability to think, but it also lowers one's will to do anything. Even a few degrees drop in body temperature can affect the ability to make reasonable decisions.

5. **Food.** Individuals in good physical condition can go for many days or even weeks without food. The goal in a wilderness survival situation is to be located in the shortest time possible, so in most cases one will be located long before food becomes a survival issue. However, it is always important to prepare for the worst and find ways to supply the body with substance, through berries, fish, animals, birds, etc.

QUESTIONS

Q1. What are the five elements of survival?

Q2. What is the one essential nutrient the body requires to function?

Q3. What does a shelter provide?

ANTICIPATED ANSWERS

A1. Attitude, shelter, water, fire and food.

A2. Water.

A3. Shelter provides protection from the weather and depending on the conditions, protects you from either hot or cold temperatures.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson the cadet shall be expected to construct an improvised shelter.

IMPORTANCE

It is important for cadets to know how to construct improvised shelters as a method of preventing boredom, as well as helping to combat the seven enemies of survival. Having a shelter that provides protection from the elements and is a source of motivation will increase chances of survival.

Unofficial convenience copy of A-CR-CCP-703/PF-001, cached 2026-11-08 from https://app.cadets.gc.ca/cadet-publications/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001.pdf.
Verify against the official publication.

Teaching point 1 **Select a Shelter Site**

Time: 25 min Method: Interactive Lecture



The instruction area for this lesson should match the factors of site selection as detailed in TP 1 under terrain and location considerations.

By the end of this lesson cadets will be expected to construct an improvised shelter. Introduce this TP by presenting the cadets with a scenario where they have become lost in the field and they have only a few hours of daylight left.

Shelter is the first concern. The location chosen to demonstrate the selection of a site should meet most if not all considerations. Ask the cadets what they think about the location. These questions should get them thinking about considerations when choosing a site.

Continue this lesson by identifying the rest of the factors and considerations described in TP 1.

During the summer months the need for shelter is not thought of as a great concern. It should be, as the weather could change drastically, especially in hilly or mountainous areas. In winter, a survivor may be tempted to set up a fire first rather than tackle the job of building or finding a shelter. When discussing the five elements of survival, shelter is the second survival element. A shelter provides protection from the elements, particularly wind and precipitation. Shelters improve morale by providing comfort, security and a sense of accomplishment.

TERRAIN CONSIDERATIONS

There are several factors that must be considered when selecting a site. Locations to construct a shelter should meet certain criteria, to avoid being awoken during the night due to an overlooked problem.

Select an Area Large Enough for the Shelter. Possible sites that are perfect in their natural form may be too small to accommodate one person. Ensure that the site can comfortably, considering the situation, fit oneself for the duration of the survival situation.

Select an Area That is Elevated and Provides Drainage. A site should provide dry footing and drainage in the case of rain. Keep back from rivers or lakes which may flood after a rain fall.

Identify Sheltered Areas That Protect From Wind, Rain and Sun. Shelter from wind, rain and sun can be sought from boulders, hillsides, trees or other available sources. In the summer, a little breeze will reduce the number of insects and can keep one cool during hot summer days. During winter, a shelter will separate the body from wind and snow and provide warmth. If the entrance of the shelter faces leeward (away from the wind), rain or snow will swirl over and drop inside. If the entrance faces windward, smoke and ashes from the fire will blow into the shelter. Place the back of the shelter into the wind.

LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS

Proximity to a Water Source. The availability of a nearby water source will reduce the amount of energy expended while collecting water. A source of water may also provide fishing grounds that may supply food.

Proximity to a Fuel Source. Situating a shelter near a fuel source will reduce the amount of energy required to gather fuel for the fire.

Proximity to Building Materials. Although the shelter is an emergency shelter there is always the need to make what is natural more livable. Situating the shelter near building supplies will reduce the amount of energy required to build and secure the shelter.

Unofficial convenience copy of A-CR-CCP-703/PF-001, cached 2026-11-08 from https://app.cadets.gc.ca/cadet-publications/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001.pdf.
Verify against the official publication.

Proximity to Animal Trails or Holes. In the wild, the food chain is active. Beware of locating your shelter near the natural paths animals create. Where there are animals, there may be danger.

An Area That Can be Seen From the Air. When lost in a wilderness area it is important to establish contact with or attract the attention of searchers and rescuers. Staying in a site that is easily seen from the air will increase the chance of being rescued.

An Entrance That is Sheltered From the Wind and Preferably South Facing. Situating the shelter so the prevailing wind is blowing against the rear will help ensure the occupant will be able to maintain some heat inside. Face the entrance, if possible, into the sun allowing sunshine into the shelter. This provides heat to the occupant.

TIME REQUIRED TO BUILD THE SHELTER

Depending on the amount of time available, one may choose to construct a simple emergency shelter for the night. Estimate the amount of daylight left when constructing a shelter by looking at the horizon. If the sun is near the horizon, there is not much daylight left. One technique is to measure the number of hand widths between the sun and the horizon. Each hand will represent approximately one hour.

CONFIRMATION OF TEACHING POINT 1

QUESTIONS

Q1. What are the terrain considerations one should take into account when selecting a shelter site?

Q2. What are three location considerations that one should take into account?

Q3. Which way should the entrance of a shelter face?

ANTICIPATED ANSWERS

A1. Select an area that is large enough for the shelter, elevated and provides drainage, and helps protect from the wind, rain and sun.

A2. The location should be in close proximity to a water source, a fuel source, building materials, and in an area that can be seen from the air. It should also be far from animal trails or holes.

A3. The entrance should face the leeward side (away from the wind).

Teaching point 2 — **Demonstrate and Have the Cadet and a Partner Construct a Two Person Survival Shelter**

Time: 60 min — Method: Demonstration and Performance

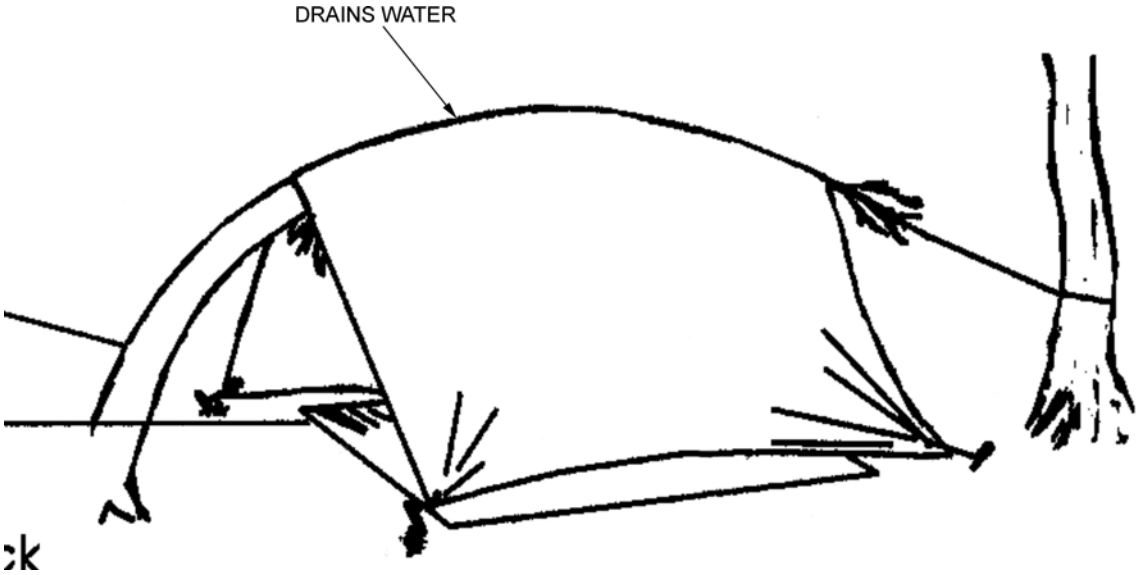


Cadets will construct the selected shelter using a groundsheet in place of a bough roof.

Unofficial convenience copy of A-CR-CCP-703/PF-001, cached 2026-11-08 from https://app.cadets.gc.ca/cadet-publications/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001.pdf.
Verify against the official publication.

BENT TREE SHELTER

A bent tree shelter is prepared using a young sapling with a natural bend. Bend the tree and attach it to a second tree or secure to the ground with pegs. Place a groundsheet over the tree to protect the area from the weather. The curve of the sapling will drain water away from the shelter.



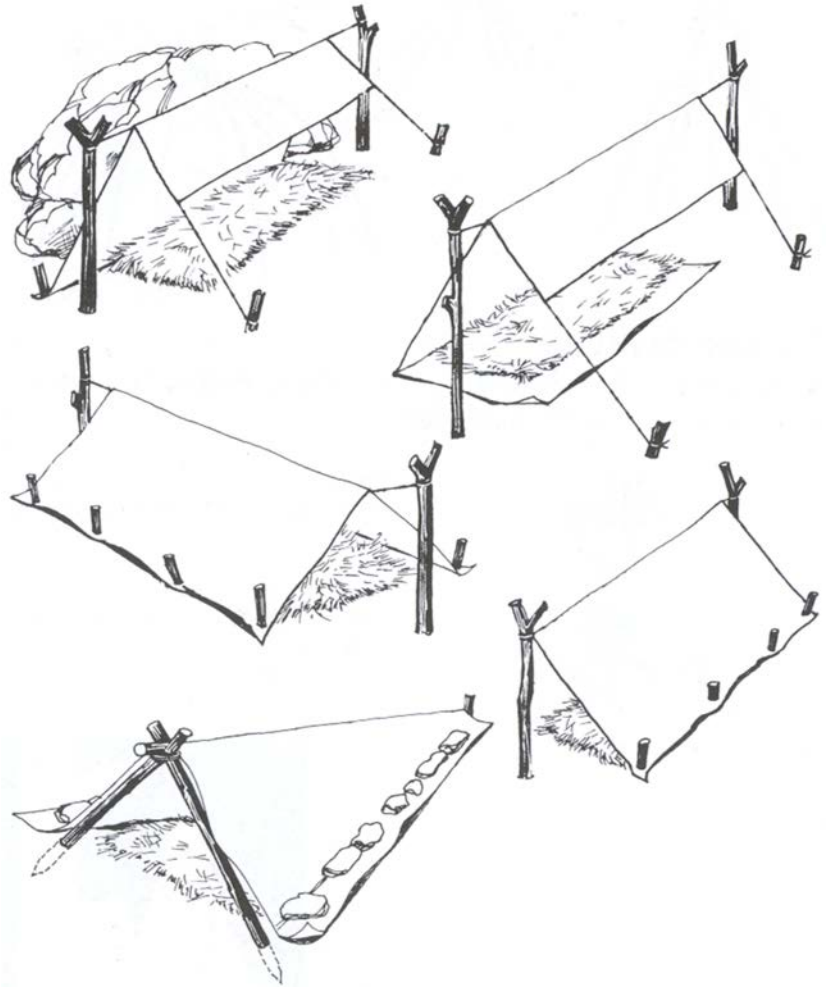
P. Tawrell, Camping and Wilderness Survival: The Ultimate Outdoors Book, Paul Tawrell (p. 98)

Figure 1 Bent Tree Shelter

Unofficial convenience copy of A-CR-CCP-703/PF-001, cached 2026-11-08 from https://app.cadets.gc.ca/cadet-publications/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001.pdf.
Verify against the official publication.

LEAN-TO WITH PONCHO

A poncho or groundsheet is perfect for constructing a lean-to. There are different variations on this shelter. The simplest form of a lean-to is secured to the ground and raised to allow enough head room for the tallest occupant to sit up. The groundsheet should be pulled tight between two trees or between two supports.



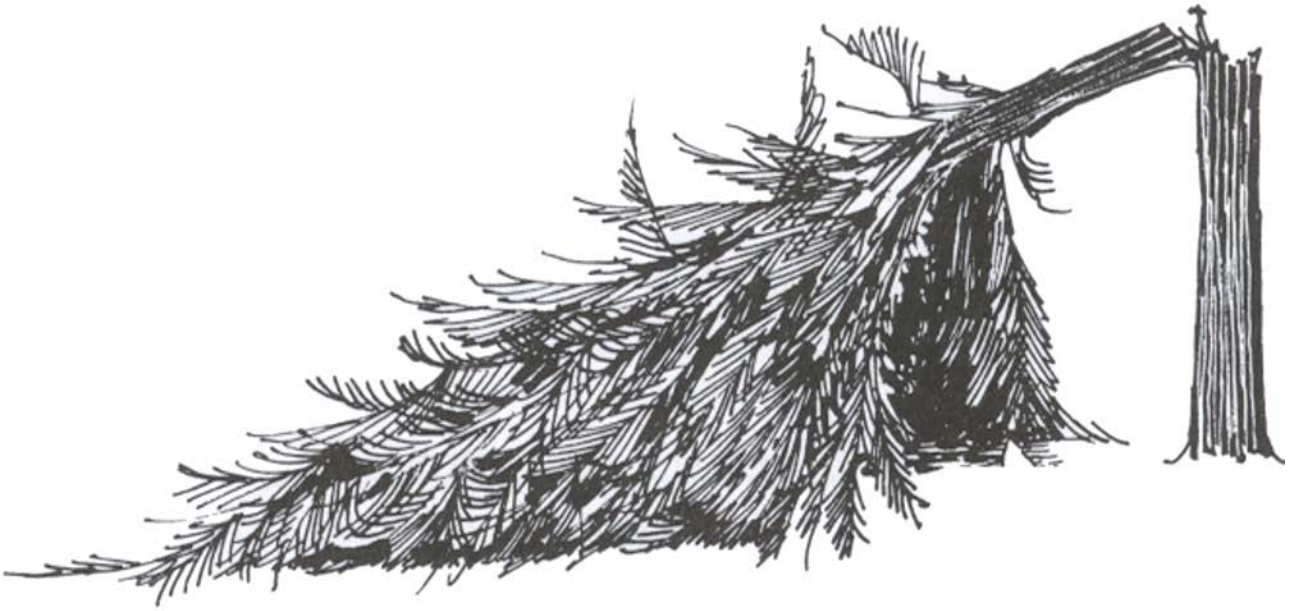
J. Wiseman, The SAS Survival Handbook, HarperCollins Publishers (p. 245)

Figure 2 Lean-To With Poncho

Unofficial convenience copy of A-CR-CCP-703/PF-001, cached 2026-11-08 from https://app.cadets.gc.ca/cadet-publications/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001.pdf.
Verify against the official publication.

BOUGH SHELTER

A bough shelter, also known as a lopped tree shelter, makes use of a fallen tree. With some preparation this shelter provides good cover from the elements. The fallen tree branches are cut from the centre of the tree, creating a hollow for shelter. The excess branches are woven through the remaining tree branches, making the shelter weatherproof.



J. Wiseman, The SAS Survival Handbook, HarperCollins Publishers (p. 245)

Figure 3 Bough Shelter

Unofficial convenience copy of A-CR-CCP-703/PF-001, cached 2026-11-08 from https://app.cadets.gc.ca/cadet-publications/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001.pdf.
Verify against the official publication.

ROOT SHELTER

Protruding roots act as the frame for the shelter. Spreading roots and earth act as a wind barrier. Ideally a root shelter should be at a right angle to the wind. Digging into the remaining root system, or filling in the sides between the roots will make the shelter more effective.



P. Tawrell, Camping and Wilderness Survival: The Ultimate Outdoors Book, Paul Tawrell (p. 98)

Figure 4 Root Shelter

ACTIVITY

Time: 40 min



Take time at the beginning of this activity to show the cadets the pre-constructed improvised shelters.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this activity is for the cadets to construct an improvised shelter.

RESOURCES

- Groundsheet (one per cadet),
- Twine,
- Pocket knife (one per two cadets), and
- Sticks for pegging.

ACTIVITY LAYOUT

An area in which each pair of cadets can build an improvised shelter.

Unofficial convenience copy of A-CR-CCP-703/PF-001, cached 2026-11-08 from https://app.cadets.gc.ca/cadet-publications/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001.pdf.
Verify against the official publication.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide cadets into pairs (same gender).
2. Assign each pair the required resources.
3. Have cadets gather materials for building a shelter.
4. Have cadets construct a shelter. Cadets will check their shelters to ensure:
    a. there is room for two people to sleep and sit upright;
    b. the lines are secure; and
    c. it is waterproof.
5. Inspect the cadets' shelter to ensure it is well constructed and safe to sleep in.
6. Tear down shelters and distribute any materials back into the area.

SAFETY

- Cadets will respect boundaries for the activity.
- Cadets will ensure safe tool use at all times.

CONFIRMATION OF TEACHING POINT 2

The cadets' participation in the activity will serve as the confirmation of this TP.

END OF LESSON CONFIRMATION

The cadets' construction of an improvised shelter will serve as the confirmation of this lesson.

CONCLUSION

HOMEWORK/READING/PRACTICE

N/A.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

This EO is assessed IAW A-CR-CCP-703/PG-001, Chapter 3, Annex B, Appendix 6 (324 EC-01).

CLOSING STATEMENT

Knowing how to construct an improvised shelter in a survival situation will assist in maintaining the cadet's self-confidence and help in preventing the seven enemies of survival.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES/REMARKS

Prior to conducting this lesson the instructor shall locate an example of each type of shelter.

It is understood that seasonal differences and location may restrict the ability to construct all shelters; however cadets should be provided with as many visual examples as possible.

Unofficial convenience copy of A-CR-CCP-703/PF-001, cached 2026-11-08 from https://app.cadets.gc.ca/cadet-publications/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001.pdf.
Verify against the official publication.

REFERENCES

C2-004 (ISBN 1-896713-00-9) Tawrell, P. (1996). *Camping and Wilderness Survival: The Ultimate Outdoors Book*. Green Valley, ON: Paul Tawrell.

C2-008 (ISBN 0-00-653140-7) Wiseman, J. (1999). *SAS Survival Handbook*. Hammersmith, London: HarperCollins Publishers.

Unofficial convenience copy of A-CR-CCP-703/PF-001, cached 2026-11-08 from https://app.cadets.gc.ca/cadet-publications/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001/A-CR-CCP-703-PF-001.pdf.
Verify against the official publication.