



Oathkeepers CPT Training

Emergency Fires starting and maintenance.

1. How to Make Tinder for a Fire

Whether you're stranded in the woods in the middle of the night in desperate need of heat, or simply trying to impress your friends with your top-notch scouting skills, finding and making dry tinder to start your fire can be tricky. The key to making your own tinder is finding small bits of easily combustible, dry material that can be nurtured into a larger flame or can transfer heat to a burning coal.

- **Finding Dry Tinder in Nature**

Use tree bark. The type of tree will vary depending on your location. The most important characteristic of the bark is that it is dry. Break off the inner bark and shred or break it into small strips or chips, depending on the strength of the wood.

- Do not strip bark unless absolutely necessary. Cutting bark can damage or kill trees. Ideally, pick bark that is on dead trees, on the ground, or the like. Peeling bark off trees should only be done in an actual emergency.
- Different barks burn differently. As natural material, they also will burn differently depending on your environment, the season, and in your weather conditions.
- Choose cedar, if possible. You can spot a cedar tree by its reddish-brown fibrous bark that is easy to shred with your hands.
- Cut off a chunk of **cottonwood bark** with whatever sharp tool you have and whittle away the outer bark until you can see the cord-like strands on the inside. Cottonwood bark has a soft characteristic that can, like cedar bark, be stripped into small pieces.[\[1\]](#)



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Search near bodies of slow-moving water for cattails, sometimes called bull rushes. Cattails are common throughout Europe and America and are abundant around swamps and ponds.[\[2\]](#)

- You want to use the bushy, cotton-like material on the top of the stem which flourishes in the fall as the plant goes to seed. Simply snap it off and ignite.
- In mid to late summer, cattails bloom into a brown sausage-shaped substance on the top of the cattail. This part of the plant works for tinder as well. Snap it off and break or cut it open to get to the driest material possible.

Locate trees with patches of tinder fungus, a specific growth that works excellently as tinder. Cut off a large piece and break it into smaller chunks if it is sufficiently dry.

- Tinder fungus predominantly grows on birch trees, which can be identified by their white bark, and has the appearance of a chunk of burnt or blackened crusty bark.
- If the material is wet, you can slowly air-dry the fungus over time for later use.[\[3\]](#)

Whittle bamboo reeds into thin shavings.

- Holding a knife at a right angle with the blade pointing away from your body, run the blade back and forth to create small shavings. Your shavings should look similar to sawdust.

Gather other plant materials in nature. In a pinch, almost any dry plant material can be used as tinder. This includes dry grass, leaves, sticks, dry pine needles, cotton fabric, or natural twine or rope. These may not be the easiest materials to ignite, but they will kindle a fire in desperate situations.



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- **Using Man Made Material**

Make char cloth squares using pieces of cotton fabric. This material is an invaluable resource to take with you when you venture into the outdoors.[\[4\]](#)

- Place several small squares (about one square inch in size) of cotton fabric into an airtight container that can withstand heat, such as a metal water bottle.
- Set the container atop an already flaming fire for about five minutes.
- Remove the container from the fire using tongs and allow to cool.
- Open the container and observe the squares. They should be blackened in color.

Purchase steel wool from a supermarket or hardware store. The steel wool you use to scour your pots can be excellent tinder and all you have to do is light it.

Collect dryer lint from the screen in your clothes dryer. Finally, that annoying lint that you have to clean out of your dryer every time you put in a new load has a use! Simply collect enough lint to form it into a long rod-shaped mold and ignite.[\[5\]](#)

Soak cotton balls in petroleum jelly and store them in an airtight container. The petroleum grease ignites extremely easily.[\[6\]](#)

Tear up whatever paper products are available to you into long shreds. A rolled-up newspaper, the cover of a paperback novel, or whatever paper material is available to you will help get a fire started. While you wouldn't want to turn your map into tinder, any spare paper can work to ignite a fire, though it requires more patience than some of the other methods.



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If you are trapped in the wild, that would count as an emergency. In that case, you may want to signal for help by flashing a mirror, building a smoke signal by burning green wood or leaves, and yelling for help when you hear passersby. If you have to build a fire to keep yourself warm, you should do that. Also, insulate yourself from the ground while sleeping by placing pine needles or other material beneath you while sleeping, because you lose more body heat from the cold ground than from the cold air.

- **Tips**
 - Choose freezer grade ziplock bags--they are thicker than sandwich ziplock bags and are more effective at keeping water out than regular Ziplock baggies.
 - Once you ignite your tinder using waterproof matches or a lighter, make sure to kindle the flame by blowing steadily on the material until it glows bright red and becomes a coal. This allows you to sustain heat and transfer the glowing coal into a burning flame when added to larger logs of wood.
 - Fluff or shred materials. This will make it easier for the flame to get access to the most area of combustible material.
 - Stock up on other easy to find tinder storage containers such as aluminum water bottles, old cough-drop boxes, small snack-sized food storage containers and travel toothbrush containers.
 - Cotton wool covered in petroleum jelly also works well.
 - Keep your tinder dry. Good tinder can save your life in the wilderness, especially in wet weather. When you have a good supply of tinder, secure it in a waterproof container, such as a small container found at most outdoor supply stores. Ziplock bags are not waterproof!
 - Practice using your home made tinder, so you don't waste your one shot in the wild.
 - Fluff from a tumble dryer works as great tinder.



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- **Warnings**
 - Make sure to put out your fire properly when you are finished with it by smothering it with sand or water.
 - Whenever dealing with fire, be sure to use caution to prevent accident or injury.
 - Always tend fires responsibly, and as prescribed by authorities, on all public lands.
 - Make sure you are legally allowed to start a fire in the wilderness. Certain conditions may warrant a fire ban.



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2. How to start a fire:

- Recommendations
 - Pack some type of fire starter pellets for emergencies.
 - Prepare other fire starters.
 - Cotton Balls with Vaseline (or Chapstick)
 - Charcloth Tinder (Burned fabric in a tin)
 - Cell Phone Battery (Li-ion Battery)
 - Magnesium Fire Starter
 - Road flare
 - Steel wool and car battery or other small battery
- Methods
 - Bow and drill (difficult, only use as a last resource)
 - Make a bow, Tie paracord around a branch to make a bow.
 - Make a drill/spindle. Make the contact end rough!!!
 - Get a baseboard, make a hole with a V-Shaped notch from the center out. This will catch the hot embers.
 - You can add steel wool under the baseboard to quicken this up.
 - Wrap string on bow around the drill, spindle.
 - Recommend using a rock to apply pressure on top of drill





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- **Steel wool and battery**
 - Prepare a tinder ball and fire Teepee
 - Remove a small strip of steel wool (fine)
 - Connect to both terminals of the battery.
 - A fire should ensure. Immediately place into tinder
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- Using a Flint and magnesium starter
 - Make a small ball of fine tinder
 - Scrape magnesium shavings into tinder
 - Use flint to drive a spark onto shavings.
 - The tinder should light. Immediately place into fire Teepee



- Cell Phone Battery (Li-ion Battery)
 - Dangerous, use only in a dire emergency.
 - Cover nose and mouth as fumes are toxic
 - Remove battery from phone.
 - Use a knife or other metal strip to short the terminals.
 - If dead, place in kindling and use a knife to pierce the battery. It will start a fire.
- References
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