

How to Make a Firebed

Survival Topics Firesteels

Firesteels are one of the Most Reliable Ways to Start a Fire in the Wilderness, even when wet!

We offer 4-sizes - From HUGE to small enough to fit comfortably in your wallet.

Users report these firesteels give the largest sparks they have ever seen.

Help support Survival Topics.com: purchase your Swedish Firesteels at our Survival Supply Store.

Imagine a cold weather wilderness survival situation where your clothing is inadequate and you have limited sleeping gear or none at all. Exhausted and nearing hypothermia, you need sleep but know that if you lose consciousness you will never wake up.

Survival Topics will show you how to survive; there is a method where you can get plenty of comfortable, warm sleep outdoors in cold weather even if you are not dressed for the cold and have virtually no survival gear or survival skills other than being able to make a special kind of survival bed and build a fire. In fact, care must be taken to make this bed cool enough to sleep in!

The survival bed that makes your stay in the cold wilderness much more comfortable or even save your life is known as a "firebed".



Making a Firebed

Before I show you how to make a firebed, I want to emphasize that if you are not in an actual survival situation but are just practicing making a firebed, pay special attention to causing as little impact on the environment as possible.

Avoid damaging tree roots and fragile plants and be careful when making fires in wilderness areas. If you love the wilderness and wild places as much as I do, then you will choose to respect and care for the lands you enjoy.

Firebed Requirements

Because making a firebed requires a fair amount of time and labor, it is important that you first scout out the best area in which to make it. You will be looking for a variety of features that will make a firebed easier to build as well as provide natural materials needed for its construction and for your comfort.

These include areas:

1. Sheltered and protected as much as possible from wind, rain, or snow.
2. With ground you can dig ten or twelve inches deep without having to deal with large rocks, tree roots, ice, or water.
3. Having abundant dry fuel with which to make a hot fire; hardwoods are preferable to softwoods.
4. Having dry fluffy materials for insulation including leaves, pine needles, grass, cattails, etc.

Let's start with each point and work our way down.

Sheltered Areas



Dig the Trench

To make a firebed, dig a trench about 12 or 16 inches wide, six feet long, and one foot deep

If possible try to select an area to make a firebed that is naturally protected from the elements. Rock overhangs, areas beneath a thick tree canopy, or even under the roots of a fallen tree can provide significant shelter as compared to open, exposed areas.

You will want to find a piece of level ground that is at least a few feet longer than your body and wide enough to accommodate you.

Diggable Ground

Because you must dig into the earth to make a firebed, the type of ground you select is important. You need to choose an area where:

The water table is not close to the surface; if you strike water you will need to dig elsewhere.

The soil can be dug with the implements you have on hand.

Few tree roots or large rocks, which can be very difficult to dig up and extract.

If there is snow, find a location where you do not have to dig far down to reach the ground.

If you do not have a shovel with which to dig, you can usually find an alternative. Use your mess kit, a knife, a strong stick, or even your hands.

In cold climates the soil will often freeze to a considerable depth. Depending upon conditions you may be able to find soft ground at the base of south facing slopes where the sun's rays have warmed the earth sufficiently. Alternatively you could make a fire to thaw the ground prior to digging.

Fuel for a Fire

As you will see, a good firebed requires a layer of hot, long lasting coals. For this reason the best fuel for making a firebed comes from hardwood trees and you should try to locate your firebed as close to a good supply of dry hardwoods as possible.

Softwoods can also be used to make a firebed, though they will not produce the high quality coals that hardwoods typically do. Dry grass and other natural materials can also be used, though they will not make coals and you could be relying more on heating the ground itself.

Dry Insulative Materials

Especially if you are inadequately clothed or do not have proper cold weather sleeping gear you will need a good supply of dry, fluffy materials for use as insulation and padding. Often the forest floor is covered with this natural insulation including leaves, evergreen needles, and grass.

Even in areas with deep snow cover, if you search diligently you can often find insulating materials. Look around the edges of large boulders, where the ground is often snow free and dry leaves accumulate (this could also be a good place to make a firebed). Try south facing slopes and patches of evergreen forest which often have little snow beneath them.



Line Trench with Stones

If stones are available use them to line inside the trench.

Though not absolutely necessary, these stones will help air circulate through the fire to produce hot coals



Build a Fire

Here I am using a Survival Topics Swedish firesteel to light a fire

These firesteels should be an integral part of your survival kit. Able to start thousands of fires, even when wet, firesteels will not let you down.

During the winter wet areas may provide an excellent insulating material in the form of cattail fluff and reeds. Often these plants are easy to access because the wet areas in which they grow are frozen over and most snow is blown away by wind.

A tarp, blanket, survival blanket, sheet of plastic or any like material can be used to great advantage when making a firebed as we shall soon see.

The Wilderness Survival Scenario

Perhaps your truck has broken down in a remote mountain area and you will have to spend the night outdoors in cold weather you are not prepared for. As you can see in the pictures, it is cold enough for snow to be on the ground and you are inadequately clothed.

Your clothing consists of sneakers, thin cotton pants, t-shirt with one cotton sweatshirt, and a cotton hat. You should have been using the three layer clothing system, but you never planned for your

truck to break down – a common error in these mountains.

You also have a folding army shovel, an old wool blanket and one of those Survival Topics Swedish Firesteels that everyone has been talking about. These firesteels can be used start a fire anytime, anyplace no matter how bad the weather.

You can make a firebed without a shovel or a blanket, but you would not want to be caught in the wilderness without a firesteel.

Making the Firebed

When you realize you will be spending the night outdoors, remember what Survival Topics has taught you; you know what to do - you are going to survive in the wilderness.



Bury Coals

Bury the coals with the dirt you dug from the trench.

You begin looking for a suitable location to build a survival firebed.

Even though most of the forest floor is in deep snow cover, you find a south facing slope where a patch of pines are growing. The pines have kept the snow from accumulating too much depth beneath them and the warm spring sun has melted off most of the snow. As an added bonus, the ground is sufficiently thawed to allow digging and there are plenty of pine needles on the ground for insulation. Nearby hardwoods will provide sufficient fuel wood.

The first thing you do is dig a trench about 12 to 16 inches wide by six feet long and a foot or so deep. Carefully pile off to the side all dirt you dug from the trench while separating out the larger rocks; you will need these later.

Once your trench is of sufficient size, line the inside with fist sized rocks. Space them an inch or so apart as shown in the picture. The rocks are not absolutely necessary but they will help create air spaces so that the fire burns hotter and produces better coals. If you have not dug up a sufficient number of rocks you can often locate some nearby, though be careful not to obtain rocks that

have been soaking in water – they may break with tremendous force when heated in a fire.

Then set up your tinder and kindling in the trench and using your Survival Topics firesteel light the fire. Shown here I am using dry pine needles and a pine cone as tinder to help catch sparks from the firesteel and ignite the kindling. Both are excellent fire starting aids.

Once you have a good fire with plenty of hot coals being formed, spread it out through the length and width of the trench. The idea is to keep a steady, coal producing fire that is six feet long and one foot wide to evenly heat the trench and the surrounding ground. You are not trying to build a bonfire, just a steady blaze with flames just a foot or two high.

Keep the long narrow fire burning for two or three hours, adding wood and spreading coals as necessary. Now would be an excellent time to cook food or boil water to make it safe to drink if you have the means to do so. It is also a good time to dry any damp clothing or bedding materials.

After two or three hours let the fire burn down to coals and evenly spread them in the trench. Next shovel a layer of dirt onto the hot coals to a depth of about four inches and stamp it down so that the dirt is well compacted. Be sure to cover all the coals and especially the edges and corners.

Once the hot coals of the firebed have been completely covered with dirt, make sure there are no areas of visible smoke and steam escaping from the trench.

Now here is where the waiting begins. It should take about an hour before you begin to feel the dirt covering the hot coals become warm to the touch. If it happens earlier it is likely you need to shovel another inch or two of dirt on top of what is already there. Otherwise your bed may become too hot for you to lie upon.

While you are waiting for the dirt on top of the hot coals to become warm, gather into a pile any available dry, fluffy bedding material that you can find. In this case there are plenty of dry pine needles lying on the ground, and these make an excellent material for this purpose.

When the dirt has become warm to the touch, but not too warm, your firebed is just about right. Only with practice will you be able to best reach this point in your survival firebed making skills since every situation is different.

Cover the bed with a layer of the dry fluffy material so that you have a nice heated pad to lie upon. You will also want to place a large pile of natural insulation to place on top you as well so that heat from the firebed is retained. Depending upon how cold it is, you may want to gather enough for several feet of thickness.



Compress Dirt

Tamp down the dirt to a depth of about four inches. Be sure the entire trench is evenly covered.

After about one hour you should start to feel warmth rising up through the firebed. If the bed becomes warm earlier than this, place additional dirt on top or it may become too hot to lie on during the night.



Padding and Insulation

Add a thick layer of padding and insulation

Logs placed on either side will help deflect wind and keep your insulative materials from sliding down.

A couple of good sized logs, placed parallel to the firebed, can help keep you warmer. These logs will serve as windbreaks, keep your loose insulative materials from sliding away, and help hold in the heat.

Firebed Considerations

When I made this particular firebed the air temperature was about 25-degrees F. After four hours the temperature at the dirt surface of the firebed had risen to 110-degrees F and the earth a foot on either side of the trench was toasty warm. By adjusting the amount of padding beneath you, you can regulate the warmth of your bed to the desired temperature.

A common problem with the survival firebed is steaming. The dirt will typically contain moisture as will the natural materials you use for padding and insulation. When heat from the coals rises up through this, a sauna of sorts is made. For this reason the dryer the insulating materials the better. If you can place a sheet of waterproof material such as plastic, a tarp, or survival blanket underneath your body you won't feel something like a prune come morning!

The next morning, fourteen hours after making the fire bed the air temperature was 17 degrees F and the temperature of the firebed was still about 90 degrees F. This long-term warmth is what you are looking to create. It would be an easy matter to dig

open the trench and make another batch of coals for as many nights as necessary.

The Survival Firebed Can Help You Survive

So there you have it, the survival firebed that can be used to comfortably survive in cold weather environments even if you do not have adequate clothing or sleeping gear.

The next Survival Topic on How to Make a Survival Blanket Sleeping Bag will show you an excellent way to wrap yourself in a blanket or tarp that maximizes its effectiveness in keeping you warm.

Original at: <http://www.survivaltopics.com/survival/how-to-make-a-firebed/>