

In the Wilderness: Navigation

Compass: Reciprocal Heading

“Close your eyes, tap your heels together three times, and think to yourself, There’s No Place like Home.” — Lyman Frank Baum

THE 2¢ OF A WISE OLD GEEZER

Finding your way home is about as easy as “Close your eyes, tap your heels together three times, and think to yourself, ‘There’s No Place like Home.’” It just take a compass, a little training, and 2 seconds of planning. Taking a heading before venturing out and returning on a reciprocal heading is the simplest of tasks you will learn, yet it can save your life when you venture out in a dense forest, thick fog, zero visibility water, or simply in the dark. It is the most basic skill learned in navigation; it alone would have saved Gerry the Inch Worm; it should be a habit; it should be an unconscious response to stepping off into the wilderness.

READ:

1. The Death of Gerry the Inch Worm (Doc EOS-01.1.1)
2. The Anatomy and Physiology of the Professional Compass (Doc EOS-06.7.1)

LEXICON:

1. Dog House or Index
2. Bezel
3. Lubber Line
4. Heading
5. Reciprocal Heading

THE ESSENTIALS

WHAT DO I NEED TO HAVE?

- Compass with a movable dog house or index
- Or if you have a compass without a dog house you will also need a grease pencil
- Bright Bandanas (Two)
- Note pad and pencil

WHAT BASICS DO I NEED TO KNOW?

You need to be able to identify the following on your compass

1. Lubber line
2. Dog house
3. North pole of compass needle

4. South pole of compass needle

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

TAKING THE HEADING

We first need to know where home is (point A). This is where you will take your heading from and where you set the intention of returning to. It may seem that you are identifying only your destination (Point-B) but you are at the same time setting your heading to return.

1. Stand on the trail and face the direction you want to go. If you can see a significant object you want to hike to great that is even better.
2. Tie a bandana where you think you could see it from your Point-B goal. Your bandana is your home; your Point-A goal.
3. Place your compass square against your waist the lubber line should be pointing directly to your Point-B.
4. Without changing the orientation of the compass twist the bezel to have the dog house (open red arrow printed on the crystal) until the North end (North Pole of the magnet) of the compass is in the dog house. If you do not have a dog house on your compass put a mark on the crystal where the north needle is with your grease pencil.
5. **NOTE:** Don't move the bezel until you are back at your starting point. Jot down the compass heading and what your significant object is.

THINK ABOUT IT. If you were to put the South Pole of the needle in the dog house what would the heading be? Where would it take you? ("Listen closely and don't tell anyone I told you, but your teacher is probably going to ask you these questions in group discussion.")

TURNING THE CRANK

6. Now walk to where you want to go side stepping back and forth around obstacles but keeping the North Pole in the dog house, count your forward paces until you get to where you want to go to. If you can continue to see the significant object simply walk to it.
7. Jot down the number of paces it took you to get to your goal.
8. Tie your bandana as high as you can reach.
9. Look back at Point-A can you see your bandana? If not, GREAT! Now you have to rely on your heading.
10. Please Note:
 - a. Don't venture from sight of this landmark
 - b. Don't move the bezel on the compass or
 - c. Don't remove the grease mark
 - d. Go explore and play and find something you want to share with the group, don't take it but be prepared to describe it.
 - e. Remember don't venture from sight of this landmark.

TAKE A RECIPROCAL HEADING

Now to go home:

1. To return Home (Point-A) facing the general direction you want to go put your back to your bandana.
2. Hold the back of the compass again to your waist but this time pivot on foot until the **south** (white) end of the needle is now in the dog house or at your grease mark. That is your reciprocal heading.
3. Jot down your new heading and remove and stow your bandana.

4. Keeping the South Pole of the compass needle in the dog house count back the number of paces you counted. You should get back to your starting point or at least within sight of it.
5. Jot down how many paces you ended up being from your Point-A.

SUMMARY

Just so you know, Gerry The Inch Worm had a compass in her backpack but not a single person could say they had ever seen her use it. Given that, we'll assume she did not know how to use her compass, or maybe she did, but simply was not in a habit to use it. We know from her journal she did not mention using it if she did she would have not gotten lost. Practice this often even when you don't need to make it a habit. If you do you will be building myelin each time and with that myelin when you are stressed you will do it without having to think about it.

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