EXTIREME SURVIVAL WEAPONS

ULTIMATE SURVIVAL

HOW TO MASTER THE SURVIVAL KNIFE IN POST-COLLAPSE COMBAT

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Choosing A Survival Fighting Knife

The "survival knife" concept, as popularly understood in our culture, pretty much started back with the *Rambo* movies.

think that's the first time people as a nation, as a collective society, became aware of a category of knives known as a *survival knife* as such.

Before then, of course, people were using knives for survival.

The knife is the most basic of tools.



There are very few tools that don't require a knife to create them.

Arguably everything requires a cutting edge.

Any manufactured object has to be cut at some point.

Probably the first tool ever made, not just something picked up like a rock or a stick, but shaped and broken and required to be a certain way, most likely, that first tool was a knife.

We'll never know, but the knife is one of the most basic, most fundamental of implements that we as tool-using human beings employ.

When we talk about survival, when we talk about knives for survival, we're talking about something different depending on the situation.

Your survival fighting knife is a different object, arguably, depending on what you're doing, what you need it for.

Your survival fighting knife could be a general utility tool, something that you need to accomplish a task.

This might be something as simple as cutting open a can of food.

It might be something as simple as prying something open, even though practically every knife manufacturer in the world tells you not to pry with your knife.

The fact is, people use knives to pry something open every day.

What you may be doing with your survival fighting knife is what we think of when we think of survival... and of *long term survival*.

This means using the knife as a tool of extended urban survival or bushcraft, or just the implement with which you shape the objects you find in your environment in order to get what you need from them.

To me, that's what a survival fighting knife really means at its core.

I've always thought of the survival fighting knife as a long-term survival tool.

Of course, there's another way to look at the survival knife... and that is as a tool of self-defense.

That means defending yourself from predatory human beings.

Your "survival knife," in any given emergency situation, COULD be the weapon that you use to defend yourself.

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Carry More Than One Knife

Really, rather than just carrying one knife, you should carry at least two.

You should have a utility knife (the knife you use as a tool) and then a selfdefense knife.

The two knives do very different things.

They're usually carried differently.

They're definitely employed differently.

And you require different things of them.

A knife that would be completely unsuitable for long-term survival craft, something with, let's say, a double edged blade, something that is essentially a long, thin stabbing weapon, is probably a very suitable self-defense tool.

This is the exact OPPOSITE of what you need in a survival-utility knife.

The two uses, survival-utility and self-defense, are simply not really compatible at their extremes.

Let's look, then, at the attributes of a survival and utility knife, before we get into the self-defense angle, as it is long term survival and utility that define the survival blade most often.

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Survival Knife Blade Size

The first and most basic attribute of any knife that we have to look at is blade size.

This means, simply, how big is the knife?

Yes, you can get drawn into finer distinctions like the blade to handle ratio, or in other words, how big is the handle versus the size of the blade, and is it efficient?

Another question you have to ask yourself with regard to blade size is, is it comfortable and is it balanced?

You can buy truly monstrous Rambo-style knives, just absolute short-swords of knives, if you want to.

You really don't need such a gigantic knife for long-term survival, however.

When the knife starts to get beyond a certain point (and that point is vague and we won't try to define it here), it stops being a knife and it becomes something more akin to a machete.

And machetes have their purpose.

Machetes are a tool of all around bushcraft and survival and agriculture.

South of the border and in South America, machetes are a way of life, a cultural implement.

Unfortunately, in places like Africa, machetes are also a widespread tool of genocide and mass murder.



The weapon potential of a machete certainly cannot be understated.

And the utility of a machete is definitely there.

Most of us are going to put our survival knife in a SCRAM bag or a SCARE bag, though, so for most us, a full size machete is a little bigger than what we're looking for.

Your survival knife, therefore, should be something like medium size.

Something that's not too big and not too small.

That's pretty vague, I know; it's going to mean different things to different people.

But if you stop and think, "What to me is a very large knife? What to me is a very small knife?" you can then pick something in the middle of those extremes.

I think you'll get the best mileage out of that "happy medium" in terms of what a

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knife can do.

An extremely large knife is not very good for fine cutting work, such as something as simple as cutting small tent pegs and sharpening pieces of wood to make tent pegs or furring strips for use as tinder.



The bigger the blade, the harder it is to do fine work with it.

In a long-term survival situation, you may NEED to do fine work.

Maybe you're repairing clothing.

Maybe you're doing surgery on yourself.

You've gotten something stuck in a wound and you need to cut it open.

Well, I would rather be using a Swiss army knife, or something middle of the road, to cut out a fish hook that I've gotten really good and jammed in my own hand.

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I would rather have a medium sized blade than a giant machete to try and carve that thing out of my arm.

This is a hypothetical scenario, but I'm sure every one of us can think of a situation where we needed to use a knife for a delicate task.

We can probably all picture using up to a medium sized knife for that.

So, to define "medium size," let's put a number on it. Call that knife any blade with an overall length UNDER one foot (although that's really just arbitrary and there will be some who disagree).

Beyond that size, what you've got is a machete-sized blade that's probably not as useful for all-around utility (although it excels at things like hacking brush).

Some people do use their survival knives in lieu of a camp hatchet.

They'll hammer that knife through a piece of wood by banging on the spine of the knife and pushing it through, because they don't have an axe.

Personally, I hate to see a knife used that way.

I consider that abuse of a knife, even though lots of us, myself included, do it and have done it.

There are any number of scenarios when we might find ourselves forced to abuse our tools for some greater or emergency purpose.

You've got to do what you've got to do.

Still, I think a medium sized knife will get the job done, something with an overall length of a foot or smaller.

Once we have the blade size issue taken care of, we need to consider blade shape.

Survival Knife Blade Pattern

There are lots of different blade shapes on the market.

You've got a clip point blade, which is much like a bowie knife.

It has a nice curved cutting edge and a nice sharp point.

You've got a drop point knife, which may or may not have a pronounced sharp tip.



That tip might be more curved on some models than others, but it still has a nice sweep for cutting, usually.

You've got, let's say, a Wharncliffe blade, which curves down to just a straight cutting edge.

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Those, in my opinion, are not as versatile for survival knives because they have no curved belly for cutting and slicing.

For a utility knife, for a survival knife, you really need a curved cutting edge.

Yes, it's harder to sharpen.

But that curve helps draw your knife through whatever it is you're cutting and makes the knife a more efficient cutting tool.

That's why knives are curved.

There are some blade patterns on the market that are very straight.

Daggers and things like that are straight because they're intended to be used for sticking in people, rather than cutting for utility purposes.

The Americanized tanto blade shape, which was probably made very popular by Cold Steel's marketing of the tanto as an all around knife of self-defense, is very strong because the tip is quite thick, typically.

Many people like it and it has that sort of Asian martial arts influence to it that many people find appealing.

The problem is what you've got are two hard angles that meet at a secondary point.

That's not ideal for most utility cutting chores.

It sort of renders your knife a sharpened pry bar more than a slicing and cutting tool.

Americanized tantos are great for chopping and hacking, not so great for cutting and slicing.



Cutting and slicing, remember, is the utility task that a bushcraft knife, a survival knife, will be used for most often.

So of all the blade shapes available, your survival knife should have a curved belly for cutting and slicing, as well as a sharp tip.

This means the blade pattern should be a drop point or a clip point, in many cases.

Once you've decided on the pattern and the size, however, you've got to consider the steel the blade is made of.

Survival Knife Blade Steel

Blade steel can get really complicated.

There are all kinds of steels on the market.

It's a dizzyingly confusing topic for anybody to try and get into.

There are some people who think they know steels really well.

My eyes glaze over when I hear the topic, frankly.

All you need to know, really, is that stainless steel is less likely to rust than carbon steel.

Both will rust.

Carbon steel, when you add chromium and a few other alloys to it like vanadium, becomes stainless steel.

It rusts less, but it is not really rust-PROOF.

In terms of a knife's actual usability, proper heat treatment of the blade steel makes more of a difference than the blade steel composition, all other things being equal.

(Be aware that for the purposes of this special report, I'm grossly generalizing, so please don't send angry emails about the finger points.)

Really, to me, just about any blade steel usually will "work" in a WORKING knife.

You should avoid 420J2, which is the very soft stainless steel that is used in fantasy knives, knives that are meant to be hung on a wall or put under a display case.

This includes the Gil Hibben fantasy stuff (including the Rambo III survival knife based on the movie) that came out a few years back, that I've noticed is now being reissued from China.

The reason 420J2 is used for knives like that is because it's very soft.

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However, 420 is also used in diving knives, because while it's relatively soft, it is very resilient to rusting.

It isn't completely rust proof, but it takes you a long way, so it's used in knives that are meant to go under water fairly commonly.

Again, though, any knife, stainless steel or carbon steel, if it has a decent heat treat is going to get the job done for you.

The harder the steel — and when you get up into certain alloys, D2 is a tool steel that comes to mind — the harder it's going to be to sharpen that knife.

You have to balance those considerations.

Yes, you want a tough knife.

Yes, you want a knife that's not so brittle it's going to break.

Yes, you want a knife that will hold an edge and keep an edge in use so that you're not sharpening it every time you take it out and use it.

But all of those things have to be balanced against each other because if you give up one quality to gain another, you're making a tradeoff.

That tradeoff is unavoidable because they haven't yet invented the magical steel that can do everything well.

Your middle of the road stainless steels that are used in a lot of knives, especially budget priced knives, will get the job done.

You'll need to sharpen such a knife more.

It won't hold an edge for as long, but it will work.

There are some really tough survival knives on the market that are marketed as practically indestructible, and there are people who enjoy destructive testing of those knives.

They pound them into cinder blocks and they drive them through car hoods and they do all this abuse to the knife to see what it will take.

I've never seen much point in that type of testing.

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But if you decide that you want a survival knife that has proven to be really tough and that's what you're confident with, and you've decided that, yes, it means it's going to be harder to sharpen, okay.

Make your choice fully informed.

If you've decided to go with a knife that is relatively easy to sharpen that you'll be sharpening more often, the bad news is *you'll be sharpening it more often*.

The good news, however, is you can sharpen that knife on just about any smooth rounded stone that you find.

You could sharpen a knife on glass.

You can sharpen a knife on asphalt.

You'll get a crude edge, but it can be done.

There are people in prisons across the United States who have found that concrete and cinder block are great surfaces on which to sharpen improvised blades.

All you need is an abrasive.

Serrations, No Serrations, or Partial Serrations?

With your blade size, your blade shape, and your blade steel determined, there's yet another choice you need to make.

Should your knife be serrated or not?

Remember that "saw teeth" and serrations are not the same thing.

Saw teeth are meant for sawing through wood. They're triangular in cross section.

Serrations are meant to aid in cutting and slicing. They are scalloped in cross-section.

Many people prefer a knife that doesn't have serrations because they find it easier to resharpen.

However, serrations are much better for cutting cloth.

They're much better for cutting things like hanging rope.



This is because the serrations will grab the material that's being cut, even if it's loose and moving freely, such as a hanging rope, a piece of line, whatever.

The serrations dig into cloth and other flexible, yielding material and enable you to cut more easily.

A serrated blade, even when dull, will continue to cut when a straight blade that has gone dull won't.

And that is because the dull serrations act like saw teeth and continue to tear away at the material even though the blade is relatively dull. That's just physics.

You've got these prominent protrusions that are digging into the material.

As you saw away, the serrated edge will grind away and it will continue to cut after a straight, plain edge, has gone dull.

Are serrations harder to resharpen?

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Not if you have the proper tools.

You can even sharpen a serrated knife as if it didn't have serrations.

If you do this, while you'll probably lose some of the serrations themselves as you grind away at them, what you'll have is a sharp knife when you're done.

So: Serrations are good to have for things like cutting fabric and yielding material, and for cutting things that are hanging loose.

They are not, in my opinion, an absolute MUST have, but they are available on many knives and there is no reason not to have them.

Many of my survival knives have at least a partial serrated section, and that's great.

You have the best of both worlds there.

When I'm hedging my bets and purchasing or acquiring a survival tool and I don't know what I'm going to face, sometimes my preference for no serrations gives way to the consideration that, "Hey, I might need them."

Fixed Blade or Folder?

The knife world is full of "tastes great, less filling" debates that people are really devoted to.

This is one of them.

You'll never run out of arguments when discussing knives, but the choice of fixed blade or folder is one of the fundamental considerations.

Should your knife fold... or shouldn't it?

That's really just a question of personal preference.

Yes, a fixed blade is stronger.

A fixed blade has fewer moving parts, and therefore fewer points of failure.

It's also, in some locations, not as legal as a folding knife, and not as likely to be seen as a utility tool compared to a folding knife.

These things vary widely.

You really have to check your local laws and the legal climate where you are.

Choose the folder or fixed blade with which you are most comfortable.

Choose what you think is most likely to be legal AND most likely to serve your needs.

If you're going to choose a folding knife, however, you need to make sure that it opens smoothly, that it locks securely, and that the blade does not move a lot back and forth or up and down when the knife is locked open.

That's what we call lateral and vertical blade play.

Blade Play in a Folder

If a folder blade, when it is locked open, moves side-to-side that's lateral play.

If it moves up and down in a line parallel with the locking mechanism, that's vertical blade play.

You don't want vertical play in a folding knife.

And if you can at all avoid that, do so.

A little lateral play is normal in a plastic-handled folding knife.

Vertical blade play, however, indicates a potential failure of the locking mechanism.

One-Hand Folder Opening

If you go with a folding knife, it's best to go with one that has some means of opening it with one hand.

This is not necessarily for self-defense, although that is a consideration.

Remember, we've talked about having a survival knife and a self-defense knife separately.

So your survival knife should also have a means of one-handed opening simply because in a survival scenario, you don't know what you're going to be doing with the other hand.

Heck, you might have BOTH hands occupied and have to figure out how to remove one of them for whatever you're doing in order to deploy your knife.



And of course, this is an argument for fixed blades.

It is indeed easier just to take a fixed blade out of a sheath than it is to open a folder, which is arguably a fine motor skill movement.

You can't predict the exact situation you'll face.

You don't know.

There's any number of things that could occur in the course of your survival situation.

You just have to try to prepare as best you can ahead of time.

Handle Ergonomics

Once you've decided fixed or folder, and you've chosen your blade and your blade shape ,and your blade size and all that, there's something else you have to consider.

That is, how comfortable is the handle of your knife?

I don't care if it's a folding knife or a fixed blade knife, you need to ask yourself, "How comfortable is it?"

The market is full of knives that look great but will chew up your hand.

Some of them have hard edges.

Some of them have nasty angles that are not ergonomic.

Some of them have textures that look like they're going to be great for traction, but instead end up chewing up your hand when you try to use them.

You need to consider this.

Whether it's a fixed blade or a folding knife, you have to ask yourself, "How comfortable is my knife going to be?"

Make sure you choose a knife that's not only comfortable, but that provides good traction.

You don't want a knife that's going to become slippery when it's wet or covered in, let's say, deer blood... or your own blood... or somebody else's blood.

You want a knife that provides you good traction, even when covered in liquid.

Should Your Knife Be A Spear?

A minor consideration, but one that should at least be mentioned, is whether your survival knife can be used as a spear.

Plenty of survival knives on the market can be lashed to a handle, or fit onto a heavy pole, for use as a hunting and self-defense spear.

You may want that option, for everything from hunting game to fending of a bear, in your long-term survival bushcraft knife.

I don't consider it a major consideration.

I don't usually worry about it when I'm choosing a knife.

But there are certainly many great knives on the market that do that and that have that feature.

Choosing A Specific Knife

There are some brands of survival utility knife on the market that make great choices for long-term bushcraft and urban survival.

A couple that I have in my own bug-out and SCRAM bags are the Gerber LMF II and the Gerber Prodigy.

These are the perfect size.

They're a nice medium sized knife.

They have comfortable handles that provide good traction.

There are lots of points for lashing them to things.

They're not hollow handle knives, but they don't need to be.

The blade shape is perfect.

It's sort of a drop point with partial serrations.

There are lots of great knives on the market, and these are just two.



Gerber in particular has released an entire line of Bear Grylls knives.

I've had a chance to look at some of them.

I actually own one of the smaller Bear Grylls folders.

And there are a lot of Gerber Bear Grylls survival knives that I would consider owning.

Whether or not you buy into the fan mystique of survival personalities like Bear Grylls, one presumes if he has a television show devoted to the concept of survival he probably knows a thing or two about survival.

He also probably had a fair hand in the design of the Gerber products that bear his name, one would hope.

A few other brands that I can think of just off the top of my head that are good for survival include Fallkniven, which makes some great all around survival knives.

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There's also Ranger knives, and I believe Ontario now sells the Ranger Knives.

There's RAT knives, which is the cutlery produced by Randall's Adventure Training.

Those are great knives.

The basic KA-BAR shouldn't be overlooked either. Some of those are perfect; they are a good size and have a good overall feature set for survival knives.

Really though, so many companies offer a good survival knife, or more than one, that it is impossible to name them all.

A few others include SOG, Becker, and Cold Steel.

I don't believe Buck manufactures the old Buckmaster survival knife any more, but I had one when I was younger.

That thing was just enormous.

It's hard to imagine ever carrying that thing around for survival purposes; it was as heavy as a ship's anchor.

It even had these hooks that I guess you could attach to use it as a grappling hook.

I wasn't quite too sure what those anchor hooks were for, but it had them.

Don't choose a knife like that, which is too heavy to be useful.

You should choose your brand based on whether it offers the feature set that you're looking for.

You Get What You Pay For

Just be aware that you really do, in the world of knives. get what you pay for.

Whether or not you want to buy a knife that's made in the United States or not, that's up to you.

It's certainly much harder to buy an American made knife than it used to be, because so many knife companies are doing their production in China or elsewhere overseas.



I would say if it has the features you want and it is at a price that is affordable to you, and it's not a cheaply made knife — and usually a cheaply made knife is a cheaply *priced* knife — you'd be okay with whatever you choose.

The huge caveat emptor here is you get what you pay for.

If you cheap out on your survival knife, you will end up with a cheap piece of

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junk.

The hollow handle survival knife hit the industry when the *Rambo* movies came out, and immediately became the thing that every one of us as teenagers had to have.

I was a teenager in the 1980s.

I remember that.

And there are some really good hollow handle survival knives on the market.

Chris Reeve is probably best known for his really nice hollow handle survival knives.

There are a few others.

I think Schrade makes a hollow handle survival knife called the Extreme Survival that has received some good reviews.

Just stay away from the really cheap stuff.

If it's a \$10 or \$20 hollow handle survival knife, and it's a name you've never heard of, avoid it, because that knife is not going to serve you well and most likely it will break.

You can buy a very decent knife for \$50 U.S.

You can buy *really* decent knives for much more.

You can buy a \$50 knife for \$300, because there are knife companies who will be more than happy to overcharge you.

Remember that pricing of a knife is as much a function of marketing as anything else.

When a knife company puts a price on a knife, they are creating the *perception of value*.

It may not have anything to do with how much it costs them to make that knife.

Let's say I'm producing my gut splitter death master 5000 knife and it cost me \$25 to manufacture because I'm doing most of it in China, bringing it into the U.S., putting some finishing touches on it, boxing it u,p and shipping it out.

Well, I might sell that knife for \$120 because I think it looks like a \$120 knife compared to other knives on the market.

More importantly, I THINK YOU'LL PAY THAT MUCH

So you should be aware that you might run the risk of getting overcharged, but very rarely will a knife company *undercharge* you.

Sheaths

There are people who build entire survival knife kits out of the sheaths for their knife.

They take a knife and they build a survival kit around it.

There's a small industry, a subset of the knife industry.

That is people who make aftermarket sheaths that have extra pockets and pouches and are oversized for building a survival kit into, and then putting your knife in.

These are great.

I don't actually own any survival kit knives myself.

I've always kind of wanted to, though, because I think it's a neat idea.

Your knife sheath though is AS important as the knife.

It's not just as important.

It's not almost as important.

It is AS important.

It's on a level completely equal to the knife.

A knife with a bad sheath is a knife that you won't carry, which means it is a useless piece of junk.

I've owned some really great knives before that came with terrible sheaths.

I remember the worst of them was a knife made by a company that's no longer in business.

I really liked the knife, but it came with this lousy nylon blade cover.

Some sheaths are so rudimentary that they really qualify as nothing more or less than blade covers.

Yes, it will cover the blade.

Will it stop the blade from going through if you apply any pressure? No.

Does it provide a means for you to carry the knife securely? No.

If you carry it for any length of time will your knife work its way out of the sheath or will the sheath just blow itself apart as the seams pop or things come apart?

That is a lousy sheath if you can see that happening.

Unfortunately there are companies that put out great knives with terrible sheaths.

In some cases what you've got is a company that is trying to be too many things to too many people.

The more things a tool does, the more you have to make concessions among those functions.

Carrying multiuse tools is a good idea, especially when you have a finite load capacity in your bug out bag.

You can only carry so much weight, so you SHOULD carry tools that have multiple uses.

But if you're making so many compromises that what you've got is a completely useless knife or a useless sheath, then you're not really carrying a knife at all.

You're carrying some weird hybrid implement that's not really going to help you when you need it.

That's true for knives, and that's true for sheaths.

So many knife companies try to make these gee whiz all-to-everyone sheaths that just aren't that great.

I wish, instead, they would just keep things simple.

Make a sheath that is an inside the waistband sheath for a knife.

Great.

Make a sheath that is a belt sheath for a knife.

Equally great.

But don't try to be everything to everyone.

Don't try to make it, "Well, you can wear it as a shoulder harness, you can wear it on your belt, you can wear it inside your waistband, you can wear it on your pack." Well, by the time you're done doing all that, what you've got is a really crappy sheath.

It's going to be big.

It's going to be clunky.

And it's going to be annoying.

There are plenty of places that you can go online to replace the sheath for your knife.

Two that come immediately to mind are Survival Sheath Systems, run by a guy named Bob Humelbaugh.

He's always giving me great service.

There's also Mike Sastre of River City Sheaths.

Both of those men work in Kydex.

There are plenty of other people.

There's a fellow named Eric who has a company named On/Scene Tactical in Canada from whom I've purchased Kydex sheaths in the past, too.

But now I'm talking knife sheath materials, so let's get into that.

Choosing Sheath Materials

Your sheath can be of several different materials, all of which have advantages and disadvantages.

You can have traditional leather.

Traditional leather is great.

Many people prefer a leather sheath.

If it's done well, it's done very well.

And I know my father has survival knives that he's owned for decades that have their original leather sheath, and that sheath is still going strong.

With a little care and a little maintenance, you can keep a leather sheath going for the lifetime of a knife and beyond.

Leather however is noisy. It creaks, it can crack as it ages and it tends to attract moisture or at least allow moisture to affect the knife.

In some cases, the chemicals used to tan the leather can affect the knife blade.

So a knife with a leather sheath should not be stored long-term in the leather because it could corrode the knife itself.

If you don't do leather you could do nylon, and "ballistic" nylon, which is basically really thick nylon.

Some of the ballistic nylon sheaths on the market have plastic inserts.

These are usually fine.

You need to take a good, hard look at them, though.

The cheaper the knife is, the thinner that material gets, the more your nylon sheath hedges toward "blade cover" status.

But nylon generally is okay.

Then there's Kydex.
Kydex, to me is one of the best sheath materials, because it's strong, it's versatile, it is relatively lightweight, and it lends itself to so many different systems of carry.

There are so many great Kydex sheaths on the market.

Cold Steel is one company that offers a lot of knives with what they call Conceal-Ex, which, to be honest, I don't know if it's a different formulation or if that's just their trade name for what they do with Kydex.

But you do need to be aware that Kydex sheaths can be affected by heat.

They're molded using heat, and it's relatively low heat.

So if you leave a Kydex sheath, let's say, on the dashboard of a car in 100 degree sun, what you're going to come back to is something that's all warped out of shape.

I don't think it will be a puddle of Kydex.

But I remember back when VHS tapes were all the rage.

They used to warn you, "Don't leave a VHS tape on the dashboard of your car because it gets hot enough in there to warp the tape." Well Kydex will be similarly affected by very hot temperatures, so you have to keep that in mind.

Also, since Kydex doesn't give at all, if you get grit inside a Kydex knife sheath or handgun sheath, will allow your gear to get scratched up.

But we're talking about survival implements here, so I can't believe that there's anyone reading this who fears his \$3,000 safe queen is going to get scratched up.

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Concealing Your Knife

You have a lot of options when it comes to concealing your knife.

The first thing you have to do is be the "gray man."

You need to blend in with your surroundings.

You can't afford to look "tacticool," covered in tactical gear and wearing militaryslogan clothing.



Walking around covered in anything that shouts "weapon" or even "tool" will make you a target for attack and theft in a social chaos or collapse scenario.

What you also must consider, though, is that you have to be able to access your knife quickly, especially for self-defense, while keeping it concealed.

For example, a good knife can be attached underneath your Bug Out Bag so that you can reach it with your strong-side hand, but it isn't visible to anyone looking at you.



From the outside, my bag, which looks like an ordinary hiking bag, conceals my knife.

Can't see it?



There it is, right there.

If you remove the modular bags from outside the bug out bag, you can see my Gerber LMF survival-fighting knife strapped the MOLLE tabs *underneath* those bags.



If you want to carry your knife on your body, though (and it's definitely more accessible if you do so), you've got to make sure that anybody looking at you will see this:



In other words, they see NOTHING.

There's some gaming out of the concealment method and the draw you've got to consider here.

A full-sized survival-fighting knife requires a little managing to conceal properly.

Picture this:

You're walking down the street when, without warning, you're jumped.

You don't know why or by who, but suddenly there's a guy on top of you, punching away... and he might not be alone.

Unable to get to your concealed handgun on your back hip, you reach across your body, under your jacket... and suddenly the handle of a full-sized fixed blade is in your fist.

It gives you a fighting chance - maybe the one that will save your life - maybe even against multiple opponents.

But who carries a "shoulder sheath" for a knife other than some Marvel comic book character, right?

Well, anybody with some paracord can.

Now the first thing you must understand is that, when it comes to the best weapons for survival, you're way better off with a fixed-blade survival and fighting knife over a "tactical folder," especially in an emergency or a collapse.

The reality is, if you're ambushed, you're not going to be able to get into your front pocket... draw a folder... and snap it open while you're getting beaten about the head and neck.

A fixed-blade knife is always ready — WHEN you can get to it — which is why we figured out how to build this rig.

Here's how to do it...

Make sure your knife has a leather or kydex-style (preferred) sheath with 2 grommet holes at the bottom.

Next, cut off about 4-5 feet of 550 cord.

Tie both ends of the cord through the sheath grommets so it creates a loop.

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When you're done, what you've got looks like this:



Then just put your arms through the loop with the cord stretched across your back and behind your neck.

(You'll need to adjust the length so it hangs however you want it on your side.),



That's all there is to it!

You now have a shoulder harness sheath for your survival knife that's low profile and easy to create in a matter of minutes.

If, however, you want to put your knife in your waistband, you can do the exact same thing with the exact same combat-survival knife.

How do I know?

Because I've done it.

Back in the mid-80's while assigned for some jungle training and counter-drug patrols in Honduras, my platoon was finally given a pass to leave our muddy mosquito camp at Palmerola and head into the local town for a sampling of the culture and a few brewskis.

Now there had recently been a bombing in a nightclub in Tegucigalpa, so I was damn skippy not about to go on a walkabout without packing some sort of backup.

I take my survival weapons plan very seriously, and since firearms were out of the question, all I had was this one weapon I thought to take with me...



What I decided to carry with me for defense was my big-ass survival knife that was normally strapped to my field gear for jungle ops.

Now, of course I couldn't walk around town looking like a reject extra from Rambo 17, so I engineered a way to carry my knife covertly inside my waistband and found that not only was it comfortable enough that I barely knew it was there, but...

... it was so hidden that no one around me had a clue I was packing!

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Today, I still make sure I have this option for covert carry of my Gerber LMF-II survival knife.

Think about it...

In a collapsed environment where resources are scarce, wearing your survival knife where it's visible can make you a target.

People see that knife and figure you may have equipment they can use and aren't afraid to ambush you to get it.

Especially in urban areas, you've got to be ultra-covert, so here's how you can hide your own knife when walking around in an emergency or collapse scenario:

First, it helps to have pants a couple sizes too big at the waistband, but if you're used to concealing a firearm inside your waistband, you already have this covered.

Next, it's largely about the sheath, so make sure your chosen knife's has lashing holes at least near the top where you can zip-tie it around your belt (or have one made).



I pierced 2 tiny holes at the waistband to allow the ties to remain vertical and hold the sheath tightly in place so it didn't ride up when drawing the knife.

Personally I wear the knife vertically on my strong side (at the 3:00 position) because I'm used to drawing my Glock (at the 4:30 position) in the same

manner... lift shirt with opposite hand – grab knife handle with an "icepick grip" – draw.

With a little practice, you can get a 1-second extraction that's smooth as butter.

There are other options you may consider, too.

Many of your carry options will be sheath-specific.

And of course, context matters.

Different sheaths do different things.

This brings us to sharpening your knife.

Sharpening Your Knife

We've talked about the knife, we've talked about the design, and we've talked about the material. We've also talked about whether the handle is comfortable and how you should carry the blade.

But what about keeping it sharp?



There will be people who tell you that a dull knife is much more dangerous than a sharp knife, because with a dull knife, you could be forcing the knife through the material that you're cutting, and because you're forcing it, you might slip.

When you slip, you could cut yourself or someone else, which is why a dull knife is dangerous.

Well, that isn't true.

I've been told that piece of lore all my life, but in my actual experience, there is no knife more dangerous than a razor-sharp knife.

The sharper a knife is, the more easily it will cut you.

An extremely sharp knife will cut you before you even know anything's wrong.

You'll look down and you'll go, "What just happened there?" And then suddenly blood will well up.

I should know.

I've done it to myself plenty of times.

And it was always with razor-sharp knives.

I've drawn dull knives against my skin or poked myself with them and it was never as bad as a really sharp knife.

But you need your knife to be sharp.

A knife that is dull is useless.

It's not really a knife.

It's a knife shaped object.

You need to keep your knife sharp.

We talked before about the fact that the harder the blade steel is the harder it is to sharpen and maintain your knife.

However, because you do need to keep your knife sharp, you should invest accordingly in a sharpening system or a sharpening means.

If you're using a relatively soft steel in your survival knife, or in your self-defense knife for that matter, anything you find can be used to sharpen that blade to a working edge, or even to an extremely sharp edge.

Any abrasive. from glass to smooth, round stones, will work in a pinch.

I have made a hobby of finding relatively smooth rounded stones, stones that are sort of worn with time and don't have a lot of sharp edges.

I like to find a stone and then see what kind of edge I can put on my survival knife.

And I've gotten pretty good at it.

A stone is a stone.

You can just hone your blade up and see just how close to razor you can get it using a stone that you found out in the yard or out in the woods.

It's kind of fun and it's a little test to yourself to say, "If my knife was dull and I needed to sharpen it and this was all I had, could I do it?"

However, I also have an entire drawer full of sharpening implements.

Let's talk about the different types of sharpening gear available.

First of all, what is sharpening? When you sharpen a knife you are making a consistent angle on both sides so that those two angles come together and meet at a point.

The more consistent you are with the angle on both sides, the sharper the tip is because the finer the point at which they join will be.

That is sharpening.

That's the geometry of sharpening.

You could use a traditional stone.

I personally do not use oil when I use wet stones.

I don't use water.

I don't use anything.

I first started doing it that way when reading *The Razor Edge Book of Knife Sharpening*.

I've got that book around here somewhere.

The common wisdom is that you need oil or water to help carry the particles of knife that you're grinding off the blade away from the stone.

If you don't use anything, you'll see the shiny metal particles begin to build up on the surface of the stone.

That's okay.



It's not going to stop you from sharpening the knife.

When the stone starts to get really bunged up, just scrub it clean with Comet or some sort of cleanser like that.

Basically any household detergent will help scrub that off.

I like to use a plastic scrubber.

It gives you a little more leverage.

And actually, I use plastic scrubbers for any number of cleaning chores.

The "manly" way to clean a house is with a plastic scrubber and some sort of all-

purpose cleaner.

But you don't need to worry about using water or oil.

I think using a dry stone produces a sharper edge faster.

Opinions vary and certainly people have been sharpening with oil and with water for many. All of them have had good success, at least the ones who stuck with it.

If you're not using a traditional whetstone you could be using a synthetic stone.

The concept is the same.

Again, especially with synthetic stones, I've found that using them dry works better.

Then, if we take a step above synthetic stones, there are the "diamond" stones, which aren't really stones and aren't really diamonds.

They're usually a plastic base with a metal mesh or grid set in them into which diamond grit has been deposited.

They produce an edge that's typically not as fine, but moves much faster, comes on the knife much faster because diamonds are so abrasive.

And of course, the coarser the diamond grit, the faster you'll get a coarse edge on the knife. (The hones come in different grits.)

Angle Guide Systems

Regardless of whether you're using traditional stones or synthetic stones, or even diamond stones, you can buy angle guide systems.

Lansky makes one, Smiths makes one, and there are others.

These are clamp systems that allow you to put your stone at an angle, and using a guide rod, maintain a consistent angle as you move the stone across the knife.

You then curve it to match the curve of the belly if the blade has a curve to it at all.

This is where things like the Americanized Tanto tend to shine in terms of maintenance, because a straight edge is much easier to sharpen than a curved edge.

When you draw a stone at an angle over a curved edge, you've got to change the angle of the stone laterally — not vertically, but laterally — to match where the knife edge is going.

It's hard to picture if you're not looking at it happen.

The art of sharpening a curved edge has stymied many people because of that subtle adjustment as you travel through the curve of a knife.

Angle guide systems help eliminate some of the guess work, because no matter where your stone is, it's at the proper vertical angle.

I personally find angle guide systems a little limiting.

It's kind of like training knives for sharpening.

Once you get past needing them, you can do it freehand.

You'll get an eye for it, a feel for it.

But it takes practice.

It's not easy to learn to sharpen well.

Some people take right to it and other people struggle with it.

Then there are angle guide systems that involve two abrasives sticking up at an angle so it looks like a "V" jutting up from the table.

What you do is you take your knife and you draw it down one side of the V and then down the other side of the V.

You just move in and out through that V-shape and you sharpen the knife that way.

The Spyderco Triangle Sharpmaker is probably the best known of those systems.

I have one, and they're great; they do a superb job. There are plenty of other systems based on the same concept.

Some of the V-shape systems use ceramic rods, and these are also great to sharpen with.

Sharpeners to Avoid

Steer clear of little sharpening gadgets that are basically hand-held plastic frames with V-set ceramic inserts. These often break.



You can also buy these plastic handled gizmos that have tungsten carbide abrasives set at a V-shape.

These are very popular with things like kitchen knife sharpening systems.

The idea is, you just draw it down the blade, straight down the edge, and the V does all the work and grinds an edge onto your knife.

The problem with those things is, oh boy, do they grind.

Those tungsten carbide sharpeners will chew up an edge and leave it ruined.

You'll have to go back and reprofile the whole thing.

If that's all you had, if you had that and a very fine stone of some kind, you could put a rough edge on a very dull knife and then polish it up later.

You're basically abusing it and then remediating the abuse.

I hate those tungsten carbide sharpeners, and I would recommend that you avoid them.

But they work for some people.

And some people will get an edge that they like.

Really, I must caution you against using ANY of the automated sharpeners that are intended for use with kitchen knives.

These are motorized things, little better than can openers, that have a couple of abrasive wheels grinding away inside.

You shove your knife into this torture device and it grinds away at it and usually leaves it ruined.

I wouldn't even put a kitchen knife in those things; they're wretched.

Remember again, a sharp knife is the most dangerous thing in the world.

There is nothing more dangerous.

I don't care what anyone else says.

A sharp knife will cut right through clothing before you even know that it's done it.

I've stabbed myself before by accident with extremely sharp knives, and boy it was not fun.

The only reason it worked was because the knives were really, really sharp.

Know The Law

No discussion of knives, be they survival knives or any other type of knife, would be complete without considering knife laws.

There exist people in the world who don't want you to own a knife just because they think knives are dangerous.

In countries other than the United States, places like the U.K., for instance, knives are as heavily, if not more heavily, restricted than are guns, especially compared to this country.

I actually am more opposed to knife laws than I am to gun laws.

I oppose both, but knives are such fundamental tools that everyone needs to use in and out of daily life.

Yes, a gun is a useful self-defense implement.

It's arguably a necessary self-defense implement for every citizen.

But if you own a gun, apart from having the shield of its protection with you, you're not taking your gun out and doing something with it every single day, unless you're one of those people who gets to the range every single day.

(If you are, I envy you.)

If you carry a knife, however, you can conceivably use that knife actively for its intended purpose every single day.

For people to say, "No, you can't own a knife because you might misuse it," and to make knives illegal on that basis, is a tragedy.

It's a tragedy to our society.

Typically, as long as it's not evident that you're planning on murder or some other illegal act, generally you can get away with carrying large knives and machetes in your vehicle if you're not violating an explicit law that says you can't have a knife over this size.

Yes, there are some types of knives that are immediate "cop bait."

Carrying a switchblade in a state where switchblades are illegal, there's no defense for that.



Make sure what you carry is, as far as you can tell ,not illegal by the letter of your state's law.

Then,, as long as you conduct yourself in a reasonable manner, like a good citizen, chances are if a cop were to stop you and talk to you, you probably would not get in trouble.

Remember that if you are stopped by a police officer and he takes your knife from you, if that knife is not illegal, generally if you ask for it back he will give it to you.

Most people, if they've been stopped by a police officer and that police officer actually took the time to take a knife away from them, will probably count themselves lucky and not push the issue.

I would probably recommend that you follow that course of action if you want it to

be the simplest incident possible.

The fact is, though, that unless your knife is explicitly illegal and you're being charged with a crime, police aren't supposed to just take things off of you.

There's paperwork involved.

It's evidence.

So if you're carrying a knife that you know is legal and you conduct yourself reasonably and you're not doing anything stupid, you probably won't get hassled.

You'll probably be okay.

And if a cop is tempted to take your knife, if you ask for it back politely and you know that it's legal, you'll probably get it back.

Remember, though, that I'm not a lawyer. This is just one citizen's advice to another.

Do your best to conduct yourself as a reasonable rational person and a good citizen and you'll be okay.

Knife Fighting... Or Self Defense with a Knife?

You've heard it said that you should never bring a knife to a gun fight.

But in a day and age when guns are more controlled than ever before, where honest, law-abiding citizens may be unable or unwilling to get to a firearm or to carry one with them, the knife becomes an attractive option for self-defense.

But what is "knife fighting," really, and would you be insane to engage in it?

Is there a difference between "knife fighting" and *self defense with an edged weapon?*

What are the secrets of knife fighting?

You already know that using a blade to defend yourself is nothing to play at.

A knife is a lethal weapon.

Deploying one means escalating any self-defense situation to the level of deadly force, which means that if you are not in reasonable fear of being gravely injured or killed, you are not justified in doing so.

Using a blade on another human being is a potentially traumatic experience.



Depending on your exposure to another person's blood, it might even be a death sentence.

Can you imagine plunging a blade into another person's flesh?

Can you picture what it must be like to slice open another human being?

What if this is being done to YOU?

Even a light cut from a small blade can lay you open and change your life forever... if the wound doesn't kill you.

That's the world you're about to enter.

You're dealing with tools that, in fractions of a second, can do THIS to the human body.



Does that picture seem graphic to you?

Good. It should.

You have to embrace this reality before you can go any further with this.

You have to understand that this is what happens when blades come out.

That's the reality you must accept if you are to become master of the blade.

And it all starts with the combative mindset.

The Combative Mindset

First, let's talk about the terminology we're using.

People tend to get confused when they hear the word "combative."

They automatically think that we're talking about looking for a fight, which is not the case.

There is something called "neurolinguistic programming."

When you engage in it, you create associations in your mind based on the words that you use.

When we consider knives, and using edged tools as protective weapons, it's very important that our mindset be "combative," because these situations are very up close and personal.



There are going to be tools like knives and guns and pieces of rebar involved.

This is serious, potentially lethal business.

There may be multiple attackers involved, too.

When it comes right down to it, if you have to fight -- if someone forces your hand, your threat recognition and manual tactics don't work, and you're forced to protect yourself or a loved one (or someone you are responsible for) -- then the time to be "defensive" is over, and the time to be combative is upon us.

In other words, when you realize someone is threatening to hurt you seriously or kill you, it is no longer time for "self-defense."

It is time to bring the fight to the attacker, to take and keep the initiative.

Many people underestimate how important having that mindset really is, because everything we do is driven by it.

Successful self-defense cannot, by nature, be "defensive."

It has to be proactive.

If you're being defensive, you're reacting.

You're behind the curve, struggling to catch up to your assailant, who has the initiative.

I don't like to think that if someone's got a knife and they're coming after me, or there are two people with knives, that I'm behind the curve.

Unfortunately, we ARE going to have to start out behind the curve to some degree, based on the criminal assault paradigm.

What this means is that criminals choose the time and place to attack you.

They start out knowing when the attack will occur, and you do not.

So you have to catch up to the fact that you're BEING attacked in the first place.

Once you know that you are being assaulted, or that an assault is imminent, however, you can do everything possible to catch up and get ahead of that threat curve.

Having a combative mindset is what that's all about.

Having a combative mindset, therefore, is the opposite of being complacent.

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You will hear some self-defense "experts" use the term preemptive self-defense, because a lot of people think couching it like that gives them a "go" card that lets them just start striking for any reason, or attacking for any reason.

You have to understand justifiable use of lethal force, when you can and cannot use force, before you do so.

If you use lethal force when it isn't justifiable, it's you that's going to go to prison.

What we're really talking about, when it comes to combative mindset, is that you cannot be passive.

It is possible to wait too long to act to defend yourself.

You can think defensively for too long, and then find yourself in a situation in which it's too late to save yourself.

Under the stress of a real altercation, fear plays a very big role.

So do other emotional and psychological reactions that we've all heard about before, such as fight or flight.

One that many people don't hear about as much is freezing.

Freezing During An Attack

Freezing is a very common reaction to sudden violence.

One way that students can be taught to break out of that freezing is to have a combative mindset, a sense that it's time to fight when it's time to fight.

If someone comes up to you and sticks a gun in your face, you can't take the time to freeze and think to myself, "Geez, what's happening here? I can't believe this is happening."

Let me tell you about a YouTube video I saw recently.

You see security camera footage of this guy walking down the street.

He's what we call "task fixated."

He's looking at his phone and not paying attention to what's around him.

That was his mistake, but hey, we all make mistakes.

What happens next is a great example of the combat mindset in action.

A mugger with a pump action shotgun appears from off camera and shoves the gun right up in that guy's face.

The guy who was looking at his phone doesn't hesitate.

He doesn't stop to ask what's going on.

He doesn't try to reason with the attacker.

What he does is recognize the threat.

He immediately slaps the barrel of the shotgun out of his face, grabbing the weapon and pulling it out of his attacker's hands.

The mugger runs away... and our hero is safe because he knew when to use the combative mindset.

If you've never experienced violence, and some guy walks up to you out of nowhere and sticks a gun in your face, it's quite common to think, "Holy crap, I can't believe this is happening to me."



That pause is where we lose the initiative and then our attacker can gain the upper hand.

If you take the time to think, "Okay, now I am going to do self-defense and protect myself, I don't want to fight unless I really have to," you are being reactive rather than being proactive.

If we want to protect ourselves successfully, we must be proactive.

The Criminal Element

Don't ever underestimate the criminal element pervasive in big cities and what we call "hot zones" or "red areas."

This is especially true in big cities.

For years, self-defense teachers have taught that criminals are dumb, that they're just idiots who can't manage to do anything else in life.

How many times have you been told that criminals are basically like big animals, just looking for a fix or whatever, and that you're smarter than they are?

The reality is that statistics and after-incident reports show that many criminals are actually very smart.

They aren't geniuses, but they know what they're doing when it comes to the "trade" of crime.

They have a plan.

That plan is to isolate you, get you into a situation where they have an advantage, where they don't have to challenge you to a match.

They don't care about your black belt.

They want to get paid.

Criminals are motivated.

Their mindset, primarily, is motivated by three things:

- Financial gain
- Physical gain (such as rape or kidnapping)
- Emotional gain

You can find videos online all the time that show people, out of nowhere (seemingly), being attacked.

A lot of people who watch videos like that think, "Why did he do that?"

Well, the WHY is irrelevant.

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The fact is that it can happen to any of us at any time.

The criminal's motivation was to rob you, or to rape you, or simply to harm someone because he was angry that day and looking for somebody to take it out on.

For dangerous criminals, violence is a way of life.

They engage in violent acts of predation against strangers as regularly and as casually as you and I go to work in the morning.

Here's another example of an online video from which we can learn something.

This took place in New York City during Hurricane Sandy.

A man who is carrying some items in his hands is running somewhere, just hurrying to get to his destination, when another guy trips him.

Then two or three guys come out of nowhere and start kicking him, really putting the boots to him.

They robbed that guy.

Then the final guy walks up and just stands there with his foot on the victim's neck.

The incident is over.

The victim has already been robbed.

But one of the criminals is standing there putting a boot on this poor guy's neck, simply to show his power.

He was showing that he was in control.

This is an example of an emotional gain to a criminal.

Criminals are, therefore, motivated only by their own goals, those financial, physical, or emotional drivers.

They don't care if you carry a knife or a gun.

They don't care if you're a skilled mixed martial artist.

They're not interested in how skilled you think you are.



They're simply going to choose a set of circumstances in which they have the advantage and you do not.

The perfect example of this is when you are attacked while you're in a dark parking lot, where the lighting is poor and you are fixated on some task (like checking your phone).

The average girl walking down the street texting away is the perfect target.

She's never going to see it coming if she's hit from the side or the back.

She'll lose her wallet, her purse, probably that phone that everybody seems to want, and maybe even her life... all because she is task fixated in public.

Criminals look for that.

They are adept at spotting it.

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The element of surprise, of setting things up to the criminal's advantage, circles back to mindset.

If you're behind that curve, you're getting hit out of nowhere.

You have to immediately switch from zero to 60 to do what you have to do to win and survive... just like the fellow with the phone who found a shotgun in his face.

Threat Recognition and Threat Management

There are several elements to threat recognition. These are.

- Awareness
- Avoidance
- Escape

You have to understand what we call the "modern personal protection dilemma."

That is the statistic that shows us that a very large majority of assaults occur at close range.

Criminals almost always use some type of tool, such as a knife or a gun, and there is usually more than one attacker.

That's a bad day in the making, right there.

If you've got two guys coming at you, and one of them has a gun, especially if in you're in a confined space like a hallway in which you can't run, you're in a very grave situation.

So the when it comes to threat recognition, realize what it is that criminals are trying to do.

We need to understand their game plan.

Look for areas when you're out and about, especially in "hot spots," that are conducive to assault.

Is there a dark alley between these two buildings?

Does this parking garage afford good hiding spots close to your car?

This means that the first tenet of threat recognition is AWARENESS.

Very few people, even if they pay lip-service to awareness, are truly aware because we all get caught up in our lives.

We think about the things we do every day.

We think about our kids, our jobs, or bills, our deadlines.

When you're walking to your car in the parking lot, you're probably busy contemplating, say, something going on at school with your child, instead of having your eyes up scanning the car and checking the spaces around it.

If you are not aware, that's when those two guys you didn't notice are suddenly very close to you.

The next component of threat recognition and threat management is **AVOIDANCE**.

This is simple to explain.

It starts by avoiding bad places where bad people do bad things.

Simply not going to such areas will help you avoid many threats.

Also, if you see a threat forming, just leave if you can.

Then the problem is solved.

The third component of threat recognition and threat management is **ESCAPE**.

If you're being assaulted, you want to try and get away if you can.

If you can't get away, then it's time to act.

That action might be putting up your hands and forming some kind of barrier.

It might also include using physical force to fight your way free.

Threat Cues

Some of the things that tip you off to the fact that a threat is approaching are called *threat cues*.

There is a ton of video footage on video sharing sites like YouTube that shows you real attacks.

You can watch these to observe some of the threat cues that criminals exhibit before they assault someone.

Some of these threat cues start with what's called a *criminal interview*.



This is when a predator feels out whether you're going to be an easy target. The first cue that someone might intend you harm is, do they encroach on you? This means, do they close space in order to get within striking distance of you?

In today's world, if a guy in a Wal-Mart parking lot comes up to you, and tries to start a conversation with you when you do not know him, you put your hands up with your palms out and tell him to stop.

You tell him not to come any closer, and if he continues to encroach, you amp up the power of your verbalizations, throwing in profanity if necessary.

Look, there's no easy way to say this.

Criminals understand swear words.

Many people simply won't pay attention to you if you say, "Back up, please."

But they WILL hear you if you say, loudly and firmly, "BACK THE FUCK UP!"

A high percentage of incidents involving people encroaching on you happen in parking lots.

Parking lots are a VERY "hot" zone.

There's no specific reason why, but good reasons might be the lack of lighting and the hiding places and obstacles created by the parked cars.

Say you're piling your packages in your trunk, minding your own business, fixated on your task, and and suddenly there's a guy behind you.

That's a great time for him to stick a knife in your ribs, or point a gun in your face, and try to rob you.

That's why you have to stay alert, and that's why you have to warn someone off when they try to encroach on you.

It shocks some people that simply telling someone to back up once or twice won't change their behavior at all.

If they keep right on coming, that's when you have to get more forceful.

You've also got to get it into your head that some people will keep coming until you have to hit them.

If you don't understand and acknowledge this, you might freeze when someone doesn't respond to your command.

That causes the fear and therefore the hesitation that can get you killed.

When you warn someone off, put your hands up to form a physical barrier.
Warn them off, and if they keep coming, warn them off forcefully and with profanity.

Most people, if you "show them their teeth" in this way, will back off, and go in search of some young girl texting on her phone.

In some ways, this is like putting "the club" on your car.

You're not preventing car theft... you're just encouraging the car thief to pick a different car.

Your Default Response

This is a great time to talk about your "default response" to someone attempting to assault you.

If someone encroaches on you, doesn't listen to your warnings, and gets close enough to strike you, your "default response" is what you do to cover yourself when you are hit.

Some people, especially those with martial arts training, think they have it all figured out.

They think when a punch comes in they're going to use a fancy block of some kind, that the techniques will be clean, and that the attack will come in a way that they can deal with it specifically and positively.

Real attacks simply don't happen this way.

They're much messier.

In a brewing confrontation, when someone comes up to you and is talking to you, you don't know if you're being attacked or this is a benign contact.

You have to deal with a contact like that in a different manner than if you know you're being assaulted or about to be assaulted.

In the second scenario, with the attack coming, your reaction is very important.

You already know that action beats reaction.

A default response, therefore, is like the seatbelt in your car.

You don't intend to get into a car accident, but you put your seatbelt on in case you do.

If you're looking down at the radio when another car runs a red light in front of you, your seatbelt is what saves you.

The default response works like this.

It is a cage with the arms that protects your head and upper body.

Some call it a "cow catcher," others call it a "helmet."

The concept is the same.



It's a three point cover.

You put your hands up, protecting your face.

Your arms encircle your knockout triangle, caging the "computer" that is your brain.

The default response also covers your jaw line, protecting your neck from rotation and securing your head in place while protecting your temples.

Knockouts generally occur from rotation, from brain shake.

Protecting your brain with your arms helps prevent you from being knocked out.

You're going to take your left hand, bring the palm back, and touch the side of your head.

You're also going to touch the bicep of your left arm to your cheek so that your left elbow is pointing in the same direction as the opponent (if you are right-handed).

You want that elbow approximately at the centerline of your face.

You're really hugging the side of your head with your left arm, forming a vertical elbow shield.

Your right arm (again if you are right-handed) comes across the top in a horizontal elbow shield.

George Foreman used to do what he called the Foreman Cover, where he would take both his arms and put them right in front of his face horizontally.

The horizontal cover right in front of his nose and jaw was forming a frame or box around the center of his face.

He could use it to weather the storm long enough to get in a clinch or get close and throw an uppercut or work the body, or whatever.

Fighting From the Default Response

Obviously, you've got to practice quickly throwing up your arms in the default response so that it BECOMES your default when you are startled.

Some teachers call this the "startle reflex."

You can train that startle reflex to make the default cage your... well, default.

From that default response, where you absorb whatever incoming attack has presented itself, you can take the initiative.

Your combative mindset kicks in and you can, for example, engage in a heavy and aggressive forward drive into your opponent while throwing palm heels.

From there, once you have taken the initiative back, throwing whatever technique you choose to employ, you can then choose to access a tool.

You have to understand that if you tie up with someone, you'll need to know how to fight from the clinch, a position of standing grappling.

You can't just stay in front of an opponent.

You've got to fight for dominant position.

You've got to take and keep the initiative.

In the context of using a knife for self-defense, however, your unarmed combatives are your means of gaining a better position so you can deploy your knife.

This must be because, for example, you believe the threat to your life is so grave that it warrants introducing a potentially lethal weapon, a force multiplier like a knife.

Over and over again, when someone is attacked while in the default position, we see the confrontation evolve into standing grappling.

This is where you have to get out of your cage and put your hands on the other guy to be proactive.

You're in a fight now; you can't afford to just cover up and take whatever he offers.

Your hands are on him and his hands are on you.

Now is the time to stop and ask yourself where you carry your knife.

Where is your tool, and can you get to it?

If you try to access it, will he somehow stop you, or even use the weapon against you?

In-Fight Weapon Access

The best way to carry a weapon is to carry it as close to your centerline as possible.

Centerline Carry

For example, a small fixed blade carried in the "appendix" position is a very good option.

So is carrying a knife, if it is in your pocket, as close to the front of the pocket as possible (near your belt buckle).



You want the primary tool you carry to be as close as possible to where your hands naturally drop in front of your body. This is because, when you are clinched up with someone, that is the easiest place to access your tool. A knife farther away from the centerline may as well be in your desk drawer back home if your hands are occupied clinching up with someone and fighting for position.

Just because you can access a knife that is in your back pocket, or on your hip at the side, in the dojo or in a training seminar doesn't mean you'll be able to access it under stress, when someone is on top of you pounding away.

You don't want to have to reach all the way across your body in an emergency.

Having that tool at the centerline, therefore, is incredibly helpful in a real altercation.

Beware of the behind-the-hip location for weapons for this same reason.

Many people carry a weapon, such as a gun or a knife, behind their hip because this is a comfortable spot to carry even a large weapon.

This is especially true if you have some extra pounds that make carrying in the front of your body uncomfortable.

With centerline carry, if you are bear-hugged, you can still access a centerline tool.



In the same situation, the kinesthetics of reaching behind your hip while your arms are pinned is much more difficult.

Timing

Another aspect of accessing your weapon in a fight is timing.

The only way to develop timing is through practice.

If you panic and go for your knife right away, you may not be in a position to deploy it before he can stop you.

If you feel that your opponent is going for a weapon, what do you do?

You go for that drawstroke and you try to prevent it.

Well, when you attempt to deploy your knife, he's going to do the same thing.

That's why you have to time the access of your knife for a moment in the fight when he is less capable of fighting you for the weapon.



You have to set up a dominant position, possibly moving the weapon side of your body away from him to make it more difficult for him to foul your draw.

Now you have two hands and he only has one.

This is temporary, in a fight, but it's all you need to be able to access your knife.

The rest is a matter of practice and training, as you learn how to deal with a resisting opponent in this context.

Knife Fighting Grip

The basic grip for all "real" survival knife fighting is the ice pick grip.

You grasp the knife in your fist and hold it tightly, as if you are holding a hammer or an ice pick.

There is nothing fancy about the grip.

Stabbing with the knife is a natural motion and the only really reliable way to deliver force to someone in the adrenaline dump of a real-life encounter.

Slashing away in some fancy angle pattern is unlikely to help in real life, because the clothes that people wear will afford them some protection against slashes and fancy maneuvers.

To stop a person with a knife, you need to put the blade in them, and you need to do it with force.

Another thing to consider is that stabbing the torso isn't likely going to be a quick "stop."

It takes a long time for someone to bleed out from torso wounds, and sometimes, they don't even know they've been cut or stabbed until after the fact.

Instead, aim for the head, the face, and the neck.

These are natural "quick stop" targets, but they're also the areas of the body that will cause the most reaction.

Slapping someone's arm down and stabbing for their face is sure to make them react, which will give you some reactionary distance in a real-life encounter.

Knife Fighting Stance, Folders, And S.T.A.B.

We've been using the term "knife fighting" in this report, but the fact is, you don't want to "knife fight" someone the way they do in the movies.

This isn't "West Side Story."

While you can adopt a very basic stance as described in the section on the S.T.A.B. method (which we'll get into), stance itself is not the goal.

There are no magic foot or hand positions here.

Surprise and aggression are you key advantages.

You want to put the opponent in "defense" mode.

Their only thought should be how not to get stabbed or assaulted by YOU once they initiate aggression against them.

Now, let's revisit, for a moment, the concept of folding knives as survival fighting knives.

The question of whether to carry a fixed blade knife or a folding knife for protecting yourself can be very controversial.

The industry is geared toward tactical folding knives.

If you look, there are many more folders on the market than there are fixed blades.



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The problem with fixed blades is that large ones simply aren't legal in many areas.

Carrying one is therefore a legal liability.

We can divide fixed blades into large and small knives.

Small fixed blade knives are generally knives with blades from three and a half inches or less.

These are preferable to folders because, let's face it, in a fight with two guys trying to take you down, it doesn't take a genius to realize you can deploy a fixed blade faster than a folder (which must be opened, and that's arguably a fine motor skill).

The fixed blade knife you can simply grab and pull from its sheath.

The folder requires manipulation of its blade, and that manipulation, apart from requiring fine motor skills, also requires time.

Time is at a premium in a self-protection scenario, especially when facing multiple aggressors.

There are plenty of times when a folding knife is what you can legally carry, though.

Folding knives are more often seen as utility tools, so there may be a compelling reason for carrying one.

If you do choose a folding knife, carrying it in your dominant side pocket, as close to centerline as possible, is idea.

While waistband carry can be problematic for some, that is also an option.

This begs the question: Tip up or Tip down?

Tip up refers to knives whose point is oriented up in the pocket when folded, based on how the carry clip is oriented.

Tip down refers to knives whose tip is pointed down when the knife is folded and in the pocket.

Test both and choose the knife that you can deploy most comfortably and quickly under stress.

This will vary from person to person.

Also, keep in mind that you want to carry the knife that affords you the best grip on the draw from the pocket.

Test that as well, and choose the knife that lets you get the most digits around it when deploying it.



The basic methodology for deploying a folding knife can be remembered using the mnemonic STAB.

The first part of Stab is S, for Slap.

You slap the knife where it sits in your pocket.

This is because your knife may have shifted as you moved about during the day.

Slapping it enables you to verify where it is.

The next is T, for Tuck.

You tuck your thumb down behind the knife as far as you can get it, to afford the best grip.

The next is A, for Access.

Deploy the knife from your pocket, accessing it and holding it close to your body.

You want to make sure that your movements are tight to your body so that, under stress, you don't run the risk of flinging the knife from your body.

This is why kinetic opens like snapping the knife open with your wrist are a bad idea in real personal protection encounters.

There's a good chance that, in the adrenal stress of an encounter, you could just throw your knife across the room.

The B in STAB stands for Brace.



You brace the knife against your body and you deploy the blade.

From here you can use that knife to deal damage to your opponent, either in a forward or reverse grip.

Keeping it low against your body makes it less of a target for him to go after.

People naturally want to know about things like grip or stance, but stance implies a fixed position.

Mobility is very important in a fight, so just keep your knife forward to create a barrier between you and the opponent as you move.

Your grip should be a natural fist, a "hammer grip," if you want to call it that.

Note that many of the pictures herein show students placing their thumb along the spine of the knife.

If you do that, keep in mind that it isn't as strong as a true "fist" or "hammer" configuration, because under stress your thumb could be jammed.

Knife Methodology

You may have heard of angle systems in the context of knife fighting.

Many systems and martial arts use these.

For most laymen, however, trying to wrap their heads around an angle system can lead to information overload.

What we should focus on, instead, for using our knives to deliver force is a good, clear verbal cue for applying the blade or the tip of the knife.

For example, instead of saying, "Angle one," which is generally a slash from the high right to the low left, we can just describe that as "forehand."



A backhand, then, would be the return motion.

In a reverse grip, there is also a forehand and backhand motion.

Using the knife can be as simple as that, drawing either the blade through the target or inserting the point IN the target.

Our goal, in using a knife for personal protection, is simply to get the attacker away from you.

You're not looking to maim, to kill, or to produce any other specific effect other than making your attacker stop attacking you, or creating an opening so you can escape.

So, let's return to our parking lot scenario.

Say someone approaches you while you are at your car.

You deploy your knife.

Meanwhile, a bystander sees you and calls the cops.

Well, criminals aren't stupid.

They don't want to get caught.

If you resist, there's a possibility they will be hurt, and the time involved increases the chances they will get caught.

Chances are they will disengage once you provide that resistance.

A good method is a point-driven methodology.

You can use the point of the knife to do damage even if the blade is dull.

If the weapon you have is not a knife, but a pen or a screwdriver or even a sharp piece of wood, you can still use a point methodology.

When someone comes at you, you want to put the point in their face to back them off.

You're not fighting with them.

You're not dueling them.

This isn't a "knife fight."

You're simply putting the point of your knife in their face.

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Yes, if you can slash to the face, you might, but generally you are jabbing the face.

This produces a very specific effect.

When the assailant sees that sharp tip coming at him, he's going to realize he almost got a knife in the eye.

The body reacts very instinctively and quickly to anything coming at the face or eyes.

Your body alarm reaction throws you off and sort of derails you.

One minute you, as Mr. Criminal, are thinking about getting paid, and the next minute you're instinctively recoiling because a knife blade just came at your face.

Your knife methodology need not be any more complicated than that.



Grappling and Counters with Weapons

We already know that many self-defense situations will end up in a clinch, a standing grappling situation.

If a guy throws a hook at you and you crash into him to block his arm, you and he are now tangled up in a standing grapple.

If you end up on the ground, or if you stay on your feet, you've got to fight for a dominant position.

The only way to do this is to get some grappling training, such as with a few months at a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu or wrestling school.

Learn what it's like to fight off someone who is sitting on your chest.

This way, if you end up grappling with someone in the future, you won't freeze up wondering, "What do I do? What is happening?"

You'll have a frame of reference and you'll have a plan for what to do.



Live Blade Knife Drill

A good live blade knife drill you can practice at home is to practice your basic forward and reverse grip thrusts with live blades.

Secure a sheet of cardboard, such as between two pieces of wood.

(You want the cardboard secure, not just hanging freely.)



A good cardboard box is a little more rigid than human skin.

Skin is very elastic.

With your big piece of cardboard, start off in the forward grip with your strong side foot forward and the knife in your strong side hand.

Practice with your everyday carry knife.

You want to get a feel for what it's like to use your knife from that position, braced against your body as we did in the STAB deployment exercise.

Your elbow should be tight to your body.

You should have a nice, compact physical platform from which to work.

Now simply thrust that knife forward until your arm is fully extended, palm down.

You've done what is essentially a corkscrew in the air.

When your palm reaches full extension, the blade should be entering that piece of cardboard.

Your corkscrew strikes will form little half-circles that take chunks out of the cardboard.

From there, you can also practice forehand and backhand slashes.

The goal for this drill is simple.

It's like hitting a heavy bag.

You can get a great workout, but the primary purpose of the heavy bag is to learn what it's like to make contact.

The same thing happens when training with the live blade.

If you practice in the air only, but never actually make contact with anything, you will not be prepared when you actually have to cut someone.

You can also use training knives to strike a mat of some kind to simulate contact.

Survival Knife Fight Training

If you're interested in really learning how to defend yourself with a knife and against someone with a knife, find a teacher.

Look for a school.

There is a realistic component to training.

If it's just two people standing in front of each other doing a drill, and nobody's sweating, nobody's getting knocked down, and nobody's really exerting himself, how are you developing skill?

How is that anything but a hobby or a pastime?

Martial arts are great, but the skills taught under a pressurized model, with a guy coming at you looking to take you out with a training knife, is what you want.

You want realism.

You want things to hurt a little.

Look for training that has that pressure component to it.

Don't get caught up in the gear bandwagon, either.

Don't fixate on a single tool or kind of tool.

Don't get too enamored of only one training methodology.

Find something that works for you, train it, and have an open mind about it.

One method for training, for example, is to take a rubber training knife, and a sheathed survival knife, and find yourself a young, flexible tree.

This puts you in an outdoor "survival environment," which permits realistic practice.

Once faced with the flexible tree limbs, you can use your practice knife to practice slapping the limb out of the way and stabbing or slashing.

You can do this exercise with a Body Opponent Bag, too, although you'll have to kind of imagine his limbs, and you'll want to make sure whatever you use doesn't damage the skin of the BOB.

The best training drills, though, are had with a partner.

If you really want to try out how to do this, put on a pair of safety glasses (each of you should wear these) and each of you should wear a disposable white t-shirt.

Using red markers, or chalk-covered training knives, go at each other and apply the methods we've described in this report.

You'll quickly get a feel for just how nasty things can get... and just how easy it is to get cut in a slap-and-stab, force-on-force practice drill.

Here's a tip, too: Use those washable kids' markers if you don't want to ruin your clothes!

Knife Retention

You've probably heard that your knife could be taken away from you at some point.

Maybe you've trained in a martial art that teaches disarms, in which you take the knife away from your opponent.



Some knives fill the hand better than others, which aids in retention.

If the only thing that sticks out of your hand is the sharp blade, more or less, it's much harder for someone to disarm you.

The best retention method is really, if someone grabs your weapon wrist and you are holding your knife in the forward grip, you simply put your blade into their arm.

You can rotate the knife around the opponent's wrist, too, essentially carving your way out.



Another method, when someone grabs you in a rudimentary wrist grab, is to grab your knife hand with your support hand and simply yank your knife back.

When you do that, you can shear the thumb, or hook the blade outside of the opponent's arm, trying to shear the pinkie line where their palm is on the pinkie.

In a reverse grip, you can hook the knife over the opponent's wrist and do the same thing, shearing the hand as deeply as you can.

When He Has a Knife

If you carry a knife for protection, and you get attacked by a guy who carries a knife, there is actually the potential for a "knife fight."

It comes down to the tools involved.

A lot of knife training comes down to knife versus knife because of the methodology involved.



If you have a training knife and I have a training knife, we both get value from the drill.

We might be practicing for an occurrence that is a true knife fight, but this is really more of a "training modality" -- a way of developing skill sets, not a simulation of the actual attack we may face.

Of course, you may also face a random attack that is essentially you being stabbed before you even know what's going on.

There are viral videos floating around the Internet that depict just that.

If someone wants to stab you for no reason, it's pretty hard not to get stabbed.

But if you are attacked, you have to remember your combative mindset.

You can't just freeze up and say, "Oh my God, I'm being stabbed, I can't believe it."

You've got to switch on, fight for your life, and maybe die on your feet, but at least you can give your attacker something to make him pay for taking you out.

How Ready For Combat Is Your Survival Knife?

The ultimate survival fighting knife, the ultimate tool that you need to keep sharp, isn't a knife at all.

It's your mind.

Keep your MIND sharp, and everything else will fall into place.

It should be obvious by now that there are many, many choices when it comes to carrying a survival and self-defense knife.

To make those choices intelligently, you have to use your mind effectively.

That makes YOU the key element, for YOU decide what you buy, what you carry, and what you use.

The knife you carry is useless without you, the prepared individual

Choosing the best survival knife is more about your ability to use that knife for combat and THEN utility than it is about that knife's ability to chop wood.

Take that to heart... and start planning accordingly.

As always, train hard, stay safe, and prepare now.