3 Easy Steps To Using A Compass & Learning The Basics Of Direction

This is a guest post by: Craig Caudill

Compasses have been around for centuries to help folks find their way. Technology has given us GPS, and compasses have slowly lost favor. It is dangerous to rely solely on technology for direction. You need to take the time to learn how to use a compass. One of the major drawbacks to a compass is that ugly thing we call math. Okay, not everybody dislikes the subject, but using a compass relies some use of mathematical skills. However, I would like to help you learn how to use a compass to establish the basic, or four cardinal directional points.

Step 1

Before you can use a compass, you need to grasp the concept of the four cardinal directions; North, South, East and West. Understanding these basic directions is as important as knowing your left from your right. Kids in elementary school are taught the cardinal direction points, so you can certainly brush up on your own skills. One trick teachers use to help kids remember is by teaching the kids a little saying, Never Eat Sour Watermelons. You see that? The first letter of each word refers to a point on the compass. Now that you have that down, let’s move on to step 2.

Step 2

It is time to practice your directional knowledge. For whatever reason, north and south seem to be the easiest to recall. That is great, but you also need to have a good grasp on east and west. I
suggest practicing in a room with a friend. If you don’t have a friend available, no worries and no excuses, you can still do this exercise.

Stand in a room with your compass and find north. While facing north, have your friend call out a direction and turn to face it. For example, you are facing north, you are instructed to face east. Once there, you are asked to face northwest and so on. If you are alone, draw up 16 flashcards with the different points of direction and practice that way. This will help you get a firm grasp on direction.

**Step 3**

Now that you are familiar with direction, you need to apply it to your everyday life. Don’t let your skills get dusty. While you are at work or sitting at home watching television, quiz yourself. Do you know which direction you are facing at any given moment? This activity literally takes up no time out of your busy schedule, but it is a very effective method of learning.

There is no excuse for you not to practice your directional skills. You will soon be impressed with how easy it is and will soon realize establishing direction is second nature.

**Craig Caudill** is an instructor in wilderness survival training. You can read more of his articles [here](http://knowledgeweighsnothing.com) at Dan’s Depot.com. He also is the chief instructor at the [Nature Reliance School](http://knowledgeweighsnothing.com).