

FIRELIGHTING FOR BEGINNERS

When it comes to firelighting, time spent in preparation is never wasted, from choosing a fire site, to the selection and collection of fuel. **David Alty** issues sure-fire instructions.

To start a fire, you will need three things, commonly known as the **fire triangle**.

- A source of ignition (heat)
- Fuel
- Oxygen

Use of a fire steel and knife is demonstrated here, but matches, lighters or flint and steel are also excellent tools and many types are readily available. There may be large quantities of wood in a woodland, but not everything is suitable as firelighting material. Dead branches which snap easily from trees are ideal. Try to avoid fallen limbs, as they will have absorbed moisture from the ground.



1 Collect a selection of different-sized sticks and sort them by thickness, placing them easily within reach. This is your kindling. Next, you need tinder – something that will ignite readily when put in contact with a spark. Birch bark, carefully peeled from a tree, is ideal, as are various kinds of dry seed heads, such as bulrush, thistle or willowherb, or the dead branches from the base of a gorse bush (beware of the spines).

2 Make a platform from some of the thicker branches. This will isolate the young fire from the damp ground and also allow oxygen to flow readily into the heart.

3 Make a loose nest-shaped ball from your selected tinder. Rubbing and shredding the birch bark will make it easier for a spark to cause ignition.

4 Strike sparks from the fire steel using the back of your knife and make sure the blade and point are away from you. Bracing the knife firmly against your leg and pulling the steel backwards gives stronger sparks and it is easier to direct where they land. Once a flame has started, add in extra strips of bark to give it strength.

5 Now gradually feed on the prepared kindling bundles. Hold the sticks above the fire to enable the flames to get a hold, before carefully placing the sticks on top of the burning timber.

