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# URBAN ESCAPE AND EVASION

**by Orlando Wilson**

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and practice them.*





Here are some basic instructions on how to avoid getting captured if you manage to escape from kidnappers or terrorists, or from a location where things have gone very wrong. We do not encourage

people to break the law, but you must understand that in some situations what would be viewed as illegal actions, such as breaking and entering into a building or taking supplies, are your only option for survival.

# You should carry a minimum amount of nondescript equipment as discreetly as possible.

## Fundamentals of OTR (On the Run)

Part of your SHTF (shit hit the fan) plan needs to be what to do if you have to escape from a hostile situation: be it urban or rural, be it your local area or somewhere you're visiting or where you're doing business. Always ensure you have the basic equipment required to navigate and sustain yourself in the environment you're in; keep it basic, keep it light and keep it concealable. The following list gives some tips for how to escape undetected.

- Your goal is survival and to reach a safe area.
- If you have a cell phone on you, consider whether those after you can use it to track you. If those after you have access to the phone company's networks, dump the phone completely.
- Consider your means of leaving the area: on foot, swimming, public transport, aircraft, boat, hitching a lift, or stealing or hijacking a vehicle.
- After the initial escape, try to leave the area as quickly as possible and keep a low profile. Remember to blend in with your environment.
- As soon as you can, you need to make contact with friends, family, trusted authorities, or friendly embassies.

- If you cannot leave the area, then you'll have to go underground and hide. Hiding places can include parks or bushes, busy pedestrian areas, public bathrooms, bars and night clubs, etc. Consider what CCTV is in the area and if those after you can access it. If your hiding in areas such as parks, do those after you have thermal imaging equipment? Consider for how long you will have to go to ground and what your emergency escape routes are.
- Work out where are you running to and try to leave decoys pointing to different locations: Book a train ticket with your credit card but never take a train, etc.
- You will need money. If you are very lucky and have a credit card hidden on your person, you can use ATMs, but remember, this will show your location. If you are in an area where you're staying for a while, you could possibly have previously stashed cash with other important documents and equipment in a dead drop for emergencies. Your last resort would be to steal money.
- Consider burying a cache of escape essentials to be retrieved under such duress.
- You will also need clean clothes. If you cannot buy them or get them from a place of charity, you would need to steal them.
- If you need to travel a long distance, you will need to find somewhere to wash and stay clean.
- You will need somewhere to sleep; in urban environments, it may make sense to stay away from the usual places homeless people congregate because these would be the first places those looking for you would check. If you do not have money to buy food, you could possibly get it from charities, steal it, or check the trash cans behind restaurants and sandwich shops.
- To leave most countries, you will need a passport or other ID, if you have lost yours, you can try to covertly bypass border controls and then make it to the nearest friendly embassy on the other side. At most borders, there may be checkpoints on the roads, but go a few hundred meters either side and there is usually nothing, maybe a fence. So, if you are using a road, get off it a few hundred meters before the border, skirt around the checkpoint, and rejoin the road a few hundred yards on the other side. When crossing the border, do so quickly and quietly; use all your senses and be alert for any patrols, remote cameras, etc. Beware of dogs as well.
- If possible, use a local coyote to move you across the border.
- Try to have or get maps; even free tourist guides are better than

nothing.

- Learn to identify north and south without a compass.
- Always carry and try to conceal an escape compass on your person.
- Identify and remember prominent objects in the area, such as major roads, rivers, mountains, airports, and buildings; these will give you reference points when on the move.
- If you are in a rural area and want to locate people, follow rivers. Most villages are located around water sources.

### Escape and Evasion Equipment

The reason for escape and evasion equipment is to help you escape from captivity and stay alive for a limited amount of time. You should carry a minimum amount of nondescript equipment as discreetly as possible. Expensive, specialist, flashy military

equipment will only draw attention to you; it will be taken away by your captors or during a search and could possibly label you as a spy, police, etc. This is something you don't want, because it could lead to you being detained, tortured, and executed. The following list is a guide to what would be useful for you to have on your person. Pick the items and relevant to the situation you're in that you think you would be able to get hold of and conceal.

- Survival blanket: Usually silver in color and can be used to provide warmth and shelter, to collect water, and for signaling.
- Personal water filter: Many small water filters are on the market that are easily carried in a shirt pocket, etc.
- String or thin wire: Has various uses – for example, construction

of shelters, reclosing cut wire fences, trip wires, etc.

- Wire saw: These thin wire saws can be used to cut wood, plastic, and soft metals. Always try to buy those made from multiple strands of flexible wire, or “commando wire saws.” Beware of cheap imitations.
- Small lock pick set: Bogota picks, a diamond/needle file, and cuff shims are easy to conceal and inexpensive.
- Hacksaw blade: The blade should be broken into 2- to 3-inch pieces to make them more concealable; if possible, sharpen the ends and backs of the blades.
- Safety pins: Various uses, including first aid, mending clothing, building shelters, and picking open handcuffs.
- Razor blades: Small and concealable multi-purpose blades.



*Photo by Unsplash*



- Flint and steel/matches: Used to light fires to keep you warm or cause distractions.
- Tinder: Cotton wool, lint, etc. used to help you light fires.
- Hairnet and condoms: Used for carrying water; the condom goes in the hairnet to stop it from splitting.
- Water purification tabs: For purifying drinking water.
- Compass: Chose a small and concealable compass.
- Whistle and mirror: Can be used for signaling and distractions.
- Knife: Choose a small concealable knife that won't be found and confiscated if you're captured or that can get you arrested for carrying an illegal weapon. Neck knives are an option because many searchers do not check the neck or chest areas.
- Flash Lights: Chose a small concealable flash light that can be used for light, signaling, and distractions. Forget the expensive tactical lights.
- Tools: Many good multi-pliers-type tools on the market are excellent pieces of kit for escape and evasion, but these will most probably be confiscated straightaway if you're arrested or kidnapped.
- Food: Try to conceal on your person high-calorie foods such as sweets, nuts, raisins etc.
- Money: Probably the most important piece of equipment you can carry. Choose small-value notes of a well-known currency; waterproof them and conceal them.

### **Concealing Escape Kit**

Most commercial escape-and-evasion and survival kits come in a plastic or metal container. This container can be used to drink from, and if it's metal you can also boil water in it. The trouble with tins and containers is that they are easy to find during a body search and will be confiscated. You want to try and conceal your equipment in your clothing.

- Jackets: Jackets have lots of places for you to hide equipment, especially if they are lined. Wire saws, matches, and money can be sewn into seams, draw cord channel at the bottom, etc., with larger equipment put into the lining. The lining itself can be used for tinder, etc.
- Travel Vests: These have lots of places to conceal equipment, but there is a good chance the vest will be confiscated. A tactical vest is also an indicator that you are in the security business and an FBI wannabe.
- Shirts: Sew money, etc. into the seams.
- Trousers: Sew money, wire saws, razor blades, etc. in the waistband, hems, and seams. Also keep a few bits of candy in your pockets.
- Belts: Sew equipment into your belt or look at buying a commercial money belt.
- Shoes: The heels and soles of your shoes have a lot of room to hide all sorts of equipment.
- Underwear: Sew money, wire saws, etc. into the seams.
- Flesh Wounds: Hide in plain sight

a shim or key under band-aids placed over fake bloody cuts. No one wants to touch your oozing fluids.

Always dress down, and don't wear clothes that will draw attention to you or that will be taken off you by your captors. Again, this is just a guide to get you thinking; if you just take a few of the above-mentioned items and conceal them on your person, they could make your life easier in an escape-and-evasion situation.

### **Camouflage & Concealment**

It makes me laugh when I see a lot of SWAT Teams and PSD (private security detail) guys wearing tactical black and other colors that look cool but do nothing but make them stand out. In reality black is one of the worse colors to wear; what is black in nature? Look around you; what in your surroundings is black? I expect very little... In urban areas, most walls are white, gray, or cream... Light colors! The colors you wear should blend in with your background whether it's day or night. Even in rural, dry areas, when moving through low bush and fields, the silhouettes of people in dark colors are easy to see at a distance.

You do not need expensive camouflage patterns to give you good concealment; a gray dress shirt and a pair of light khaki pants is way more effective than tactical Tim dressed in SWAT black!

### **Movement and Rural Camouflage**

Modern humans are at a positive disadvantage when surviving in and moving on foot in rural and wilderness areas. Most people these days have

never spent a night outside without any cover, let alone in bad weather. When you're in the woods or bush you need to get comfortable in the environment. I remember one of my military instructors telling me that to be able to fight in an environment, you must first be able to live comfortably in that environment, and this is very true. If you're having difficulty living day to day, how can you operate?

You need to start using all your

bush or wooded areas, you should be able to smell or hear people before you see them. When moving, you must do so quietly and regularly stop to look, listen, and smell for any indication of people. If you identify people in your proximity, are you going to take cover, or evade or ambush them?

You should always consider camouflage and wear clothes that blend in with your environment; in urban areas, wear light blues and

casting a shadow that could be seen by your opposition.

- Silhouette: Don't stand out against skylines, lights, white walls, etc.
- Shine: Do not wear chrome, shiny watches, mirrored glasses, sparkly jewelry, and the like.
- Spacing: If moving with others, remain spread out, but not too regularly and do not bunch together.
- Movement: Move carefully;



*Photos by Unsplash*

senses as the animals do; learn to identify sounds, smells, movements, and what they mean. You need to especially be able to identify things associated with people, such as footprints, cigarette stumps, broken twigs or foliage, fences, straight lines, domestic animals, aircraft, vehicles, talking, etc. Think about human smells such as fires, food, fuel, human waste, and tobacco; if your senses are sharp in

grays, and in rural areas, browns and greens. As I have said before, military camouflage clothing will just draw attention to you.

It is basic fieldcraft that things are seen because of these reasons:

- Shape: Disguise your shape; use foliage or rags to break up your outline.
- Shadow: Keep in the shadows and always be sure that you are not

a sudden movement draws attention and is the main reason camouflaged personnel and animals are seen.

#### **The Basic Guidelines for Camouflage**

- Learn to blend in with your surroundings.
- If you are using foliage to conceal yourself or your position, don't use too much or too little.

# You must have your immediate reaction drills for encountering a person or for being caught in light or hostile fire at the forefront of your mind.

- If you are in a long-term hide, remember to keep your camouflage fresh; dead foliage will alert people to your position.
- When moving, avoid skylines.
- Don't use isolated or obvious cover; it's the first place others will look. Consider hiding in thorny bushes or nettles because most people will not expect anyone to hide there.
- Camouflage your face, neck and any areas of the exposed flesh with mud, ash or charcoal from fires. Or use a balaclava or scarf to cover your face and wear gloves.
- Take all noisy objects such as keys and coins from your pockets and make sure nothing on your person rattles.
- Make sure there are no shiny surfaces on your person, equipment, or clothing.

## Guidelines for Movement

You should always move quietly and cautiously, and avoid stepping on dry twigs or breaking through foliage and undergrowth because this will make noise and leave an easy trail to follow. If you know you're going to a rural area or possibly going to be

in an escape-and-evasion situation, avoid smelly foods, strong soaps, and aftershave, as these will be easy to smell by those used to being in the bush. Always be careful not to leave signs you were in an area such as footprints, broken foliage, human waste, or trash. Trash and human waste should be carried out of a hostile area and disposed of when safe to do so.

You should always move in "bounds" from one piece of cover to another. Your bounds should never be more than, say 50 yards, especially at night. When you stop at the end of each bound you should use your senses to try to detect any human presence then plan your next bound. Moving in short bounds is the safest way to move through populated areas or places where there are unfriendly forces. Remember, always be prepared to take evasive action or defend yourself.

The speed at which you travel will depend on whether it's day or night, the type of terrain you're in, and people or police patrols in the area. Never push yourself to your limit; you always need to have energy in reserve so you can run in an emergency, and tired people are also rarely mentally

alert. If you must run from your opposition, try to do so only for a maximum of a few hundred yards, then slow down and move quietly and cautiously, covering any signs of your direction of travel. Do not use obvious routes, which tend to be the easiest routes to use; head up hills, into thorny areas, etc.

Although there are no set time periods for halts, you should try to take ten minutes in every hour on long journeys. Tracks, paths, and roads make for fast, easy travel and can aid navigation, but can also be very dangerous because your opponents will watch them closely. To be cautious, walk a few meters off to the side of any roads or tracks. Places to expect sentries are at the entrances to urban areas, on bridges, at crossroads, and on high prominent terrain.

Avoid being silhouetted when crossing skylines and hills; go around them rather than over them where possible. If you need to cross an obstacle or skyline, then keep low and crawl; if it's a fence, crawl through it or under it. If you have to cut through a fence, cut through the lower strands and then disguise the hole with undergrowth or tie the wire strands



back together, never cut through the top strands because this will be easily noticed.

### Moving at Night

You need to learn to treat the night and darkness as your friend; darkness affords you cover. Many people are afraid of being in the dark, especially in rural areas or derelict buildings; you should use this to your advantage. If you are moving, you should always try to stay in the shadows. If you get caught in a beam of light or car headlights, you should freeze; the chances are that you will remain unnoticed. You must have your immediate reaction drills for encountering a person or for being caught in light or hostile fire at the forefront of your mind. Being caught off guard will get you captured or killed.

Both natural and manmade noises are useful to you because they can cover up or disguise the sounds that you make when moving. The best time for moving covertly is during bad weather; rain will cover the noise of your movement and any ground

sign you leave. Bad weather also keeps people under cover and lowers the morale of those standing guard. Learn to love bad weather.

### General Guidelines for Rural

#### Movement

- Wear clothing that blends in with local people and the terrain.
- Do everything possible to disguise evidence of your passage; cover footprints, never break twigs or undergrowth, and repair broken foliage.
- Avoid contact with all people unless absolutely necessary.
- Litter, food, and human waste must be buried or carried with you.
- Learn about tracking, then you'll be aware of what anyone following you will be looking for.
- If moving with others, spread out, and when crossing obstacles such as a rivers, roads, etc., take up positions to be able to give warnings of any threats that might be approaching. Also stay low, move fast, and cross one by one.
- Always be ready to take cover

from gunfire or people you may encounter by surprise.

- Remember certain smells indicate human activity; odors float downhill in cool air and rise on warm air.
- Watch for stones, leaves, or logs that have been moved. The undersides of these will be darker in color and damp environments. This can be an indicator of human activity or the location of hides.
- Always look for straight lines because they are rare in nature and are usually man made.
- Learn to identify unnatural vegetation, such as green leaves among dead branches or areas of too much foliage, because this could indicate human activity such as hides or ambushes.

These are some basic guidelines to get you thinking. These skills can't be learned sat in a comfy chair; you need to get out and learn and practice them. Everything I have written about here is simple, and the main thing required is situational awareness and common sense! •



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