

Included, A Skill List for Survivor Characters in the MP.

A list of skills that I could compile would most likely be not only incomplete, but also laughable. In a modern world with all of our amenities the skills necessary to live in primitive conditions, simply aren't taught.

Many of us have been in, or involved with scouts, camping groups or the like at some point in our past. It's been nearly 30 years in my case. The list I've compiled here is a semi-educated guess as to that which would be most likely. This is only a simple list, and with some of these I've added a little explanation for those skills that may not be immediately obvious.

Skills are to be purchased on a one for one basis unless otherwise noted. In our local gaming house-rules, adding up all the basic attributes and multiplying by an age group determine these points. (For more details contact me via e-mail.)

Scrounge: The quintessential survival skill for the next 150 years. This skill allows the player to look over a pile of junk, ruins, or trash heap and pull forth those items either necessary for survival or for economic gain. A positive or negative modifier can be applied to this skill depending on the area, and if it has been picked over extensively in the past.

Outdoor Survival: Some of the skills in this category are applicable throughout the various environmental areas others are very specific. The area that the character is most comfortable with should be specified when purchased. Positive or negative modifiers applied as necessary, based on the area, weather etc. If the PD and players like this can be bought as a skill at twice the normal cost when it includes the following subset of skills:

- Dowsing (find potable water)
- Fire-building
- Field cooking
- Field sanitation
- Fishing
- Hunting
- Build shelter (temporary)

These skills can also be purchased ala Carte by players, if they choose.

Dowsing: Finding potable water. This can be either of a natural source, or knowing where to look for other sources. This is a function of common sense and perception.

Fire-building: the ability to build a fire in harsh or outdoor circumstances. Two things, weather and availability of flammables can modify this.

Either or both of these can greatly affect your ability to stay warm. This also covers safety and building of fire pits.

Field cooking: the ability to take your catch, or harvested game, and cook it safely and to a point where it is edible. This also covers field cleaning, skinning, gutting etc.

Field sanitation: the ability to keep clean, and relatively free of creepy crawlies, infestations etc. This also will cover such things as digging field toilets, jack pits, and covering it up when you move from one site to another.

Fishing: look for viable areas in streams, ponds lakes etc. This also covers manufacture and use of poles, hooks, lures, etc.

Hunting: useful to have when there's no water about. The ability to track game animals, setting up hunting blinds, bait pits etc. Allows a basic understanding of the habits, tendencies, and feeding habits that a game animal might have. This is area specific. Does not grant any weapon proficiencies but is very good at allowing one to call a specific shot to bring down their prey faster, easier, and without damaging the kill.

Build shelter (Temporary): different than building a permanent dwelling. Most temporary shelters are to be occupied for less than 10 days. These include lean-to's, igloos etc. This is also area specific. Covers the construction and the skill to scrounge up viable material with which to do the job.

Equestrian: this skill covers not only the skills necessary to ride a mount, but those required caring for it as well. This covers such things as saddle bit and bridle use etc. Basic maintenance and repair of these items is also included in this. As those of you who've ever been in a farm or rural situation are aware, the mount comes first at the end of the day. Proper grooming, feeding, watering, and weight distribution are vital to maintain your mount's good health. Having adequate knowledge of how hard the mount can be ridden, or pushed is another very big factor in this. For those of you interested in a survivor campaign involving horses, I highly recommend the article on horses in the MP by K Darke, contributed by Ian Brooks' group and found at the Supply Bunker website.

Riding: not to be confused with the above. This covers motorcycles and any other 2-wheeled conveyance. Routine care and feeding of the device is included on this. The player won't be able to rebuild a motorcycle engine with baling wire and spit, but given proper tools and enough time should be able to maintain it and do simple repairs.

Mechanic: another vital survival skill. I envisage that the real heroes and power players in a post-OOPS environment will be plumbers, carpenters, mechanics, and to a lesser degree electricians.

The area of specialization should be determined when the character is created. This is information only; the skill is useless without tools, either improvised or proper tools for the job. Negative and positive modifiers should be taken into account when determining time allotted to the job, and quality or absence of tools.

Reading/writing: self/explanatory.

Mathematics: probably not using anything more advanced than addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Some limited geometry in use for those trained as builders. Higher math is probably available but in such an environment might be considered as secret or even sacred knowledge. Jealously guarded by those who possess it.

History: unless used in a tribal word of mouth setting, requires the read/write skill prior to purchase. This is the history of a given area, or home area. This is very useful to leaders and troop commanders, in order to put their decisions into context. In case of a word of mouth situation should be “amended” due to perceptions, presentation, and memory of teacher. In the case of written text is also prone to the preceding, perhaps even more so.

Detect hazard: an inbred and necessary survival skill in the post-OOPS, game world. This would serve to aid the character in determining the safest path, reading hazard markers, observing natural signs indicating danger sites etc. This skill is greatly linked with Perception, and should be modified by factors such as weather, lighting, and other less obvious indicators such as whether the hazard has been covered up, by nature or on purpose. This should not be confused with another skill, Detect Ambush.

Detect Ambush: useful for identifying those situation where a potential enemy could be in wait, to attack or accost the character. The best tool to avoiding an ambush is to detect it. There is also the corollary; the most dangerous situation is that of a “turned” ambush. Another perception related skill, which should be modified by visibility, scent, hearing, weather, background noise etc.

Blacksmith: the guy to see when things break. This is also very useful when disciplining bad children. This fellow is responsible for many of the amenities in life, plows, knife blades, arrowheads, hinges, locks etc. In medieval times these were known to be either fixed or roaming smiths. A fixed smith was usually a journeyman, or freeman working for the local lord. Given great latitude and responsibility, this was someone the local government took very good care of. In the case of a roaming smith, a person who would walk a circuit from town to town, using fixed facilities to accomplish the work required before moving on. The main determining factors for this skill should be strength and intelligence.

Cobbler: the fellow who makes and repairs shoes.

Hooper: usually an apprentice working for the blacksmith responsible for building barrels.

Wainwright: the fellow to see when your wagon is broke, or you need a new one. In a post-OOPS environment could probably also be the guy to see when your vehicle breaks down.

Potter: another apprentice to the smith, responsible for making and repairing pots and pans, skillets etc.

Armourer: the fellow to see for construction and maintenance on any body armor or barding in use. This is dependent on the technology level inherent in your campaign.

Weapon-smith: a partner to the blacksmith who's responsible for the weapons used in your campaign. This is also very dependent on the tech level in your campaign. This fellow could be the guy who makes swords, axes, etc or the fellow who builds and repairs the firearms. Regardless of the tech level used, this is a very popular and powerful fellow in the community in which he resides.

Bowyer/Fletcher: the person or persons who manufacture and maintain the bows and arrows. The construction of the arrowheads would probably be sub-contracted out to the local smith. Based on archeological findings also a very important career field, as well as lucrative. Main factors governing this are strength, dexterity, intelligence and perception.

Woodcutter: another of those non-prestigious fields, but potentially lucrative; especially when dealing with hoopers, smiths, bowyer/fletchers etc. Main prerequisites for this field are constitution, intelligence and perception. The obtaining or sale of specialty woods, such as yew could make this a very popular fellow.

Farmer: while not a prestige profession, the farmer is the hub in the wheel that the others ride on. Without his product the others either cannot eat to support their endeavors or have nothing to trade for. In a barter economy, the farmer is both at the advantage, and disadvantage. If he doesn't have sufficient security to keep his crops safe, he and everyone else goes hungry. The advantage though that if he's in a good, secure area, he's probably wealthy if he works hard enough at it. The following is the text from Joe Benedetto, detailing the logistics involved in simple farming. Very enlightening and our thanks go out to Joe for all his hard work.

An acre of corn can fill a year's grain requirements for a pig, a single milk-cow, a beef steer and 30 laying hens.

A plot of land only 20 by 55 feet can supply all the wheat an average family of four will need in a year. The crop can be harvested, threshed and winnowed with hand tools and ground into flour in a tabletop mill.

Wheat:

Amount of seed needed per acre: 75-90 lb. Land area needed to grow one bushel: 10 x 110 ft (20 x 55 ft)

Oats:

Amount of seed needed per acre: 80 lb. Land area needed to grow one bushel: 10 x 62 ft

Field Corn:

Amount of seed needed per acre: 6-8 lb. Land area needed to grow one bushel: 10 x 50 ft

Barley:

Amount of seed needed per acre: 100 lb. Land area needed to grow one bushel: 10 x 87 ft

Rye:

Amount of seed needed per acre: 84 lb. Land area needed to grow one bushel: 10 x 145 ft

A plot of land only 20 by 55 feet can supply all the wheat an average family of four will need in a year. The crop can be harvested, threshed and winnowed with hand tools and ground into flour in a tabletop mill.

FACTOID: if you figure an acre of ground based at four rods wide and one furlong/40 rods/1 chain long, you get the amount of land that can be plowed in a single day by a team of oxen.

BY THE ACRE: An acre is 4840 square yards, or 43560 square feet, and we know that an area of 1100 square feet can supply enough wheat for 4 people for a year, so by division we get 39.6 -- in round figures, an acre of ground should be able to supply enough wheat to feed 40 people, or 10 average families, for a year. If you want to make the bread more of a staple in a postwar economy, cut the figure in half, and guesstimate that an acre can feed 20 people using farming hand tools and a horse team to plow.*

**In the Middle Ages, bread was the main food item for everyone--"The Staff of Life"--and ANYTHING else you ate was, well, just something you eat with bread!*

If you can, you may want to look for a copy of "Rogue 417", one of the Tri Tac modules for the FRPG "Fringe worthy" by Richard Tucholka (one of the guys who did TMP). There is a section in there on Farming, dealing with randomly generating the harvest, crop yield, amount of produce an average acre can produce based on soil quality...some good tables, IF you know how many people a bushel can feed!

Hope this helps a little!

Joseph Benedetto Jr.

Thanks again Joe, very good info.

The above data only applies to grain crops. Other types of vegetables, fruits and other crops can be harvested year round, in very temperate areas, or can be pruned and harvested multiple times though out a growing season. For example; I always have way more Zucchini than anything else in my garden. This precludes the use or availability of greenhouses. Main attributes required are strength and constitution.

Animal Husbandry: a fancy title of a non-trained veterinarian. This would in the case of a post-OOPS environment be very non-standard word of mouth training and seat of the pants training. Would include shepherds, dog handlers, chicken keepers, horse wranglers etc. Primary type of animal would need to be determined prior to purchase, with perhaps one or two others thrown in.

Midwife: responsible for aiding in safe pregnancies and deliveries. A medic in all senses of the word. Specialized in female anatomy, home medicines, herbs, poultices and other esoteric data. Would be very helpful for the rendering of all forms of first or last aid. With one hand brings forth life into the world, and with the other; helps others to a painless end. In many ancient and medieval societies may have been considered a witch. A very important career choice, but also one fraught with peril. Associated skills are plant identification, brewing, treat poison, treat disease.

Doctor: one heals the sick. Not necessarily taking the place of a midwife, but may be allowed to assist. An efficient doctor, with genuine skills would be another person in the community who would be given a special status. Many of these hedgerow physicians would have been trained as part of a family tradition, or by a Master, in an apprentice role. Length and competency of the training would depend greatly on the experience of the teacher, and the intelligence of the student. This is a field where intelligence and perception are crucial. Associated skills, pharmacology, treat disease, treat poison, etc.

Sheriff/deputy: charged with the maintenance of law and order in a given community. This above all a job where strength, constitution and perception are paramount. This is applicable whether your law enforcement types are knights or knaves. Depending on the socio-economic status in your area, these could be selected by popular vote, nominated by the local guilds or appointed by the local lord. Necessary skills that are associated with this would be weapons training, hand-to-hand combat, security training, tactics and possibly even investigative skills.

Weaver: the person who makes the cloth and or clothing in the community.

Cooking: in town type cooking. This includes everything from soup to nuts and the bread that everyone relies on; a skill that most families will have at least one expert in. Use of a stove or cook area in a fireplace required for this.

Entertaining: an excellent skill for someone, especially someone who travels a lot. This is a catchall term for singing, dancing, musical instrument play, story-telling etc. The specialty should be determined upon purchase.

Combat skills: these will vary by tech level and cultural bias. As they have already been written up in TM 1-1, I won't dwell on them here. In a good balance of combat skills, at least one melee weapon and a decent range weapon are good for keeping your survivor alive and kicking. In most survivor enclaves there won't be a lot in the way of special weapons, or crew served, so these skills will see little use. Grenade type weapons, hand-to-hand, melee weapons, bows and some firearms will be in the great majority. The P.D. will be the final arbiter in these cases.

As I stated at the beginning this is by no means a complete listing, and shouldn't be treated as such. If nothing else it will, hopefully stimulate others into thinking about the skills that their NPC's and possible survivor characters will have. Many of those listed in TM 1-1, will work with minor tweaks, or none at all. Use this or line the birdcage with it as you see fit.

Have a Nice Nuclear Hell Day.!!