

HOW TO MAKE WATERPROOF SELF-IGNITING FIRESTARTERS

In a survival situation, your well being and, quite possibly, your life may depend on being able to get a campfire going in a hurry. There are classic methods of making fire such as flint and steel, fire by friction, etc., but these are difficult methods to learn and perfect. It is definitely worth the time and effort to learn them, but there may come a time when your safety depends on getting a fire going quickly, and you will simply not have time for the classic methods. I don't even remember how long I have been making these particular fire starters, but it has been well over 20 years, and I have found NOTHING in sporting goods stores that does nearly as good a job and stands up to bad weather better than these little babies. They are called "firebugs" by those who make and use them. I don't know where the name came from, but it's pretty accurate. A "firebug" is a bunch of Diamond brand strike-anywhere wooden kitchen matches lashed together with waxed dental floss with the heads all pointing one way and soaked in paraffin wax to provide a long burn time and to waterproof it. A firebug has several distinct advantages over store bought firestarters. For one thing, you don't need matches to light one. For another, these suckers are waterproof. And lastly, they will burn twice or three times longer than the storebought kind if they are made properly.

This is how you make a firebug:

1. Go to your local supermarket and buy the following items:
 - a. 1 pound of paraffin wax from the canning supplies section.
 - b. 2 or 3 large boxes of Diamond brand strike-anywhere matches.
(Make sure you get the strike-anywhere kind!!)
 - c. A couple of containers of waxed dental floss.
2. When you've got it all home, set the paraffin aside for a while.
You don't need it during the first part of making a batch of firebugs.
3. Gather groups of ten or twelve strike-anywhere matches together with the heads all facing one way and lash them together with the dental floss. Be generous with the floss and wrap at least an inch or so on each bundle of matches. Leave a few inches of floss on each bundle to hold it by when you dip it in the paraffin.
4. After you've made as many of these as you want or need, find an old saucepan that is deep enough for the matches to stand up in without getting above the rim of the pan.
5. Take a block or two of paraffin and put them in the saucepan and put the pan on your stove on VERY LOW HEAT. THIS IS IMPORTANT!! IF YOU GET IT TOO HOT, PARAFFIN WAX WILL FLASH AND YOU'LL HAVE A FIRE!!! KEEP AN EXTINGUISHER HANDY AT ALL TIMES WHEN YOU ARE DEALING WITH HOT, MELTED PARAFFIN!!!
6. After the paraffin melts, take each match bundle and dip it in the wax rear end first, taking care not to immerse the heads of the matches, and leave each one in the wax for a couple of minutes so the paraffin soaks into them well.

7. After you finish all of them, dip them all again in the same way, but this time just dip each bundle and pull it out again and wait for the wax to harden. Keep dipping each bundle until it is well coated. The object of this second series of dippings is to waterproof each bundle, and provide more wax to burn at the same time.
8. The last step is to dip the head end of each bundle several times to coat it thoroughly with wax to waterproof it. When you have finished this, you can cut the excess dental floss off of each bundle.

You now have a bunch of the finest homemade firestarters I know of at less than a tenth of what a package of store bought firestarters costs, and you can make two or three dozen of them for less than 5 bucks!

It is easy to use a firebug. Simply get your firewood together and make a firelay.

Then find a good big rock with one relatively flat side and rub the head end of a firebug against it until the paraffin wears off and the matches ignite. Shove it under your tinder and you should have a decent fire going in five or ten minutes.

Richard W. Shultz