

DIY Survival Bracelet

In an emergency, paracord can prove just as valuable as a knife and firestarter. You can use it for lashings, tourniquets, makeshift shoelaces, snares, and tying splints. You can even tease out the cord's individual strands and make a fishing line or sewing thread. But how do you carry a useful amount—that will always be on your person—without just shoving it in your pocket? Enter the survival bracelet. Often worn by American soldiers, this is not a fashion accessory but a survival tool. Just like your knife and lighter, this can be worn on your body, in case you become separated from your gear. To construct one, you'll need scissors, a lighter, a tape measure, and 10 feet of 550 paracord (breaking strength of 550 pounds). Here are the steps:

1. Cut a two-foot length of cord and melt the ends with the lighter. Fold the cord in half. Wrap the doubled-up cord around your wrist, pulling the tag ends through the loop. Tie an overhand knot with the ends; this is the stopper knot. Adjust the knot so you can slip a finger between the cord and your wrist. Do not trim the ends. This is your base cord.

2. Lay the remaining eight feet of cord in front of you horizontally. Now place the base cord—with the loop at the top—over the middle of the eight-foot cord, forming a T.

3. Make a cobra knot. To start, take the cord on the left and bring it over the top of the base cord to form an S.

4. Take the right cord and thread it down through the loop on the right side of the base cord; then go under the base cord and up inside the loop on the left and pull tight. Make sure the overhand knot will fit through the small opening at the top of the base cord.

5. Starting on the right, reverse the process. This will complete the first cobra knot.

6. Repeat steps 3 through 5 until you are about one-quarter of an inch from the stopper knot. Check the fit on your wrist by pushing the stopper knot through the loop at the apex. You can adjust the fit by moving the overhand knot up or down. The bracelet needs to fit snugly without being too tight. When you are satisfied, trim the tag ends and melt them with the lighter.

7. To wear, push the stopper knot through the loop to hold the bracelet securely on your wrist. If desired, you can also add wooden toggles, buttons, buckles, and other fastening methods. To use the cord, simply unweave the bracelet.

Accessorize

Find a step-by-step slideshow on building this bracelet at backpacker.com/survivalbracelet.

