

## What people typically do when they're lost

In *Lost Person Behaviour*, Canadian psychologist K A Hill identifies eight common strategies:

1. Random travelling, in which the person moves randomly through the woods, with no particular motivation except to find safety.
2. Direction travelling, in which the lost person attempts to travel a specific direction regardless of terrain. Direction travelling and random travelling are the strategies are most likely to be used by children aged 12 years or younger.
3. Route sampling, in which the person tries out or "samples" various routes leading away from an intersection.
4. Direction sampling, in which the person travels short distances in various directions leading away from a base or landmark.
5. View enhancement, in which the person climbs a hill or tree in an attempt to see landmarks in the distance, or to determine the layout of the land.
6. Backtracking, in which the lost person attempts to follow his or her own tracks back to safety.
7. Using folk wisdom, in which any of various adages or other bits of wayfinding advice (such as 'follow the streams') are applied.
8. Staying put until searchers arrive.

## And what they should be doing

*Mountains Mishaps* gives this great advice:

1. **Stop.** Sit down and think.
2. **Think carefully about how the situation arose:** Too far uphill? Too far downhill? Location of the campsite or the track — on a ridge or in a valley? Rough direction using the sun?
3. **Can you retrace your steps?** If so, mark your progress by leaving toilet paper squares, broken branches, scratches on the track surface, etc
4. **Gaining some height may help** in orientation and communications. In the Blue Mountains, do not go down into the bottom of the valley, try to go to the top. That will usually be a shorter route to safety. Tracks follow the tops of ridges.

If the above does not help, **STAY WHERE YOU ARE.** Then:

- **Call 000 and ask for Police** if there is mobile or satellite phone reception. Do not move after calling them. If you have the **Emergency+ App**, use that to tell them where you are.
- **Activate your beacon**, if you have one e.g. PLB, SPOT or InReach. SPOT and InReach devices allow 2-way text communication via satellite but tend to be more expensive.
- **Stay together.** If you are in a group stay together, never separate.
- **Find and/or prepare shelter** (e.g. shade, out of the wind and rain, or snow) if hot or cold, tired or it gets dark.
- **Stay warm and dry.**
- **Ration your food and water.** Source local water if possible and it is safe to do so. Minimise movement to conserve energy.
- **Make your position visible** to searchers on land and in the air; e.g. leaving bright clothing or equipment in an open area that can be seen.
- **Light a fire** if you have the means but **only if it is safe to do so.** Green leaves will create smoke.
- **Listen carefully** for voices, shouts, whistles, engine noises, etc. and respond.
- **Distress signals.** Give audible or visible signals — three consecutive signals at regular intervals (e.g. three shouts, whistles, flashes of a torch, waving bright items) if people or rescuers are nearby or aircraft are in the vicinity.