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MK I Survival Knife Kit

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Description :

A knife based Survival kit.

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As you can tell from previous articles, I really like making and using various kits. While I have made many knife-based kits, they have often been built around knives that were larger and heavier than truly necessary. A lighter, more compact kit is the kind that's easiest to carry, and therefore most likely to be on your person when it's truly needed. As a knife is one of the most useful tools a person can have in a wilderness survival situation, as well as being the single heaviest item in such a kit, that's the most logical place to start building a lighter, more compact, kit.

A lot of people are of the opinion that a big knife is the "best" survival tool one can have. And while one can, indeed, do a lot of work with a large knife, with proper technique a smaller knife will suffice. Also, a smaller knife is lighter and doesn't flop around on the belt as much as a big one, meaning it's less likely to be left behind when "just going to the stream to fill the canteen". After all, most survival situations unfold when least expected; that's why it's imperative to keep your kit on your person at all times.



I've used many different knives over the years, some quite expensive, some not so expensive, and that collection of knives has covered a few different styles as well. The latest knife I've been using is by far the least expensive, yet is quite likely the best of them all. It's the Spec Plus Navy Knife, MK I.



For those who don't know, the Spec plus line from Ontario Knife Company has a large selection of styles and sizes, one of which will almost assuredly fill most people's needs. They're all inexpensive, but still very well made. Ontario has been a supplier of military issue knives for decades and most of the Spec Plus line is, indeed, updates of their older, issue, blades. The Spec Plus line all have certain characteristics in common. These are 1095 blades (in most cases, although some, like the Navy MK I, are stainless), Kraton handles, and quite usable Cordura/leather sheaths. Some of the line have steel pommels, suitable as field-improvised hammers (or skull crushers, for those in need of such), while the majority have the Kraton rubber extend to cover the pommel in a sort of bird's beak shape. The latest addition to the Spec Plus line is the Freedom Fighter Series, which takes the blades and Kraton handle shape from the basic line and upgrades the "new" knives with steel crossguards and pommels. With the variety of handles, pommels, crossguards and blade shapes, one would be hard pressed to not find a knife suitable for his purpose. And since most of the knives in the line run around \$35.00, and none are over \$50.00 (that I'm aware of, at any rate) this line of knives are a great bargain, as well as being extremely functional.

The MK I has the metal pommel, Kraton grip and crossguards, and has a stainless steel blade. For some reason the MK I is listed as being made of 1095, but it definitely is a stainless of some type, though I don't know which. The blade is basically a drop point, with an unsharpened swedge and very stout tip; an interesting blade shape that should be more often emulated. Blade length is just over 4.5 inches, width is 1 inch, and thickness is 1/8 inch. With the full flat grind, given the blade's width and thickness, this knife is an exceptional cutter, slicer and whittler. Of course, it's too light and short for any but the most minor of chopping, but it is quite a good blade for use with a baton to handle larger wood. While a knife this size and of suitably robust construction is perfect for baton work, it's real niche is as utility blade, capable of doing all the myriad chores necessary while in the woods, for whatever reason.

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With the blade type chosen, after suitable reflection, it's time to ponder just what constitutes the best items to fill out your kit. It's also necessary to think about what type of pouch to use to hold your gear. Another choice that may need to be made is the type of sheath to be used to house the knife. Some sheaths, as they come from the manufacturer, are less adequate than others, especially for we of the left-handed persuasion. Also, the new line of Kydex sheaths available from aftermarket sources make it easy to attach pouches.



In the case of the Spec Plus line, they actually make a quite decent sheath. It's ambidextrous and of quality construction. But it lacked the ability to easily attach pouches, so instead I chose to use a Kydex sheath originally made for the Kabar "Shorty". Both knives are of very similar size and shape, so the sheath fits quite well (this sheath also fits the issue Pilot's Survival Knife, made by both Camillus and Kabar). It also has numerous lashing points to attach a pouch. In this case I actually chose two pouches. One is an issue mag pouch made to hold a single M-14 20 round magazine. The other pouch is a simple nylon "envelope" pouch with a Velcro closure. The mag pouch is attached by two short lengths of nylon webbing with simple buckles attached. I passed the straps through the lash-down points of the sheath, and through the pouch's belt loop. To further anchor the mag pouch I used a wide elastic strap with a snap, also passed through the pouch's belt loop. That elastic loop came in handy later, as well, when I added items to my kit.



The envelope pouch I placed over the sheath's belt loop, on the back side of the sheath itself. It's held in place simply by virtue of its position; the knife handle presses against it, keeping it from bouncing around, and the retention strap on the knife's handle keeps it from sliding off.

Since this meant that the belt loop was no longer able to be used in the normal manner, I needed another way to attach the knife to my belt. I also wanted the attachment to allow me to easily slip it on and off my belt, without needing to remove the belt from my pants, or move pouches off a web belt. To this end I made a secondary attachment system out of some 1-inch nylon webbing and a Fastex buckle. The sheath came from the factory with a plastic attachment point made for an optional belt loop, similar to what I made. I sewed the Fastex buckle/webbing arrangement to this piece of plastic, and this allows me to easily attach the knife and kit to any belt I choose.

Now that all the "hardware" was out of the way, it was time to think about just what was needed to fill out these pouches. There are a few basic items that all kits have in common, and these usually revolve around (in order of importance) shelter, water and food procurement, fire, and tools. These are, after all, the basics of "survival", or even of Life itself.

On the back of the sheath, held in place by the elastic strap that stabilizes the M-14 pouch, is a folding Allway saw. This is a very basic saw, and can be very useful in any number of ways. It consists of an orange plastic handle, with locking screw, that holds 2 three inch segments of hacksaw blade. One is coarse for cutting wood and plastic, the other is finer for cutting light metals. I added a third blade that splits the difference between these two extremes. While one can't saw down a tree with such a small tool, it's more than worth its negligible weight and bulk. It comes in handy for shelter building, as well as trap parts, or any time it would be necessary to cut a smooth notch in wood. It can also be used for minor equipment repairs, etc.. There are many uses for a saw in the woods; as with any tool, once you begin carrying a saw, it will come in handy more often than one might think.



Also on the back side of the sheath, inside the envelope pouch on the belt loop, I have a Photon II red LED light. I chose red for long battery life, as well as maintaining night vision. This is a very bright light, and the red tint it gives to objects is of little consequence, so long as you aren't in EOD. I keep a second battery in the pouch as well, giving me 10 days of continuous light. Along with the light and battery there is an SAS wire saw, mini-Bic lighter, and a 4 inch piece of harness leather for use as a strop to help maintain the edge on my knife.

The M-14 pouch holds 25 feet of tarred nylon twine with a breaking strain of 165 pounds; 15 feet of nylon light rope; 50 feet of 20 pound monofilament fishing line; a BSA Hot Spark ferro rod; tinder for the ferro rod consists of 20 cotton balls with candle wax, a 1x4x1 inch piece of fatwood, and 2 bars of Trioxane wrapped in a plastic bag, held closed with tape (triox oxidizes quite readily, so it's best to keep it well wrapped); 4 pre-made wire snares made from USGI tripwire; and lastly a Lansky ceramic pocket hone and an M-1 oiler for sharpening my knife. I have epoxied a 1/8 inch ferro rod in the hook groove of the hone for an additional firestarting method.

Also in the M-14 pouch is a small tin containing a mini survival kit. Inside the tin are: 6 Tinder-Quik tabs; a small bag of char cloth; 15 waxed paper strips, also for tinder; 45 Coghlan's green head matches in a plastic baggie for waterproofing; 2 30 inch pieces of tripwire; a large hook for giggering fish, as well as 2 small nails for attaching the gig to a pole; 4 large needles, and 2 small bobbins of thread; and a fishing kit with assorted hooks, weights, rubber worms and lures.

This kit isn't all encompassing, nor could it be given the small size. What this kit gives you are the tools and bare

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essentials that, along with natural or man-made materials scrounged by the survivor, will increase the odds of survival. The individual's own resourcefulness and will to live provide the rest. No set of tools, no matter how vast or well thought out, can replace the simple desire to persevere, no matter the odds. But a little bit of a kit can tip the balance when things get tight.

If you have questions, criticisms, or things to add - email me please.

Post-scriptum :Original article at [OldJimbo's site](#).