



# Basic Survival Shelters - Outdoors

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

Provide Rangers with the necessary information and skills to confidently, effectively and safely construct basic survival shelters in the outdoors.

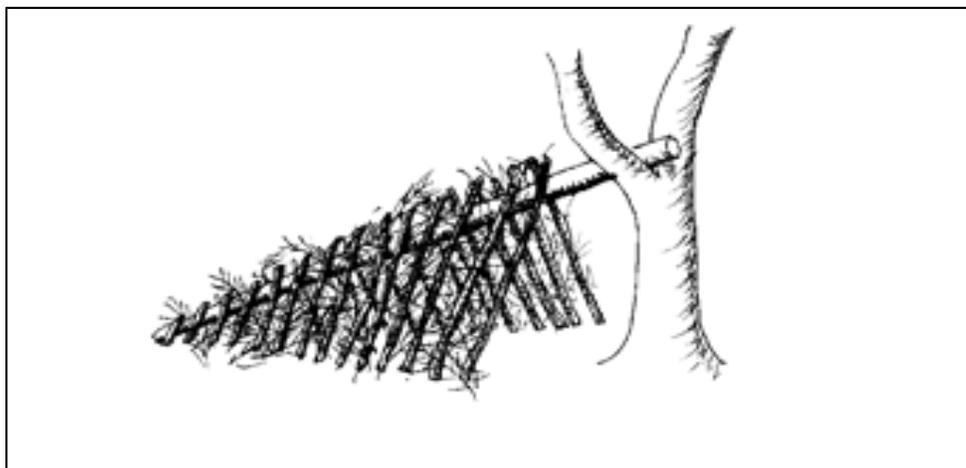
## **GENERAL**

These structures are fairly easy to construct and can be a warm, dry place to spend the night. First of all, location is key. Aside from the normal criteria (avoiding low spots, steering clear of standing dead trees, etc.), proximity to materials can save a lot of time and energy. Take the time to find a spot that feels right.

## **DOUBLE LEAN-TO SHELTER (DEBRIS HUT)**

For construction, the first thing you'll need to build a survival shelter is a strong ridgepole that is at least a little taller than you are with your arm stretched above your head. You'll also need something for one end of the ridgepole to securely rest on—a stump, boulder, fork of a tree, or some kind of prop. The other end rests on the ground. At the high end, the ridgepole should be at about hip height.

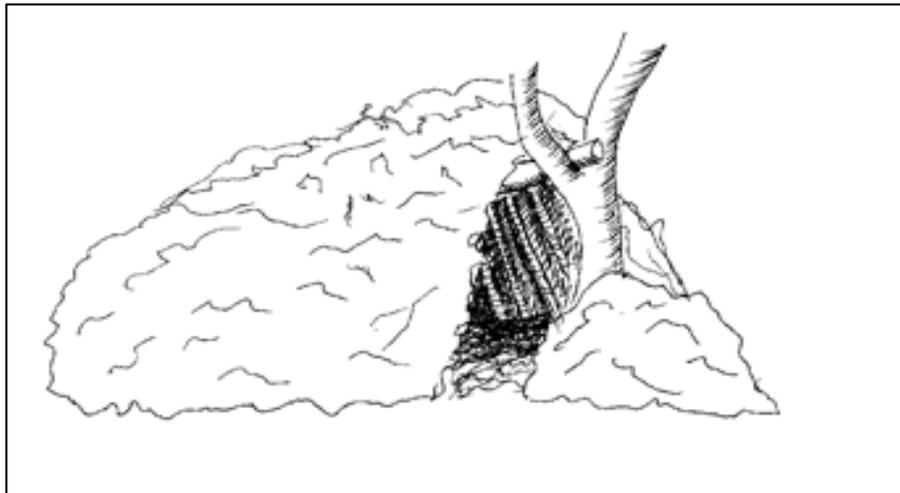
Once your ridgepole is in place, you'll need ribbing. Lean the ribs against the ridgepole fairly close together leaving a door at the high end. Once ribs are in place, crawl inside feet first checking to see that you have a little room to move, but that it is still snug and cozy. If your survival shelter is too big, you will have trouble staying warm. Imagine you are making a sleeping bag out of natural materials!



Next, add a layer of lattice, something to act as a net to hold debris in place when it is piled on next. Brush and twiggy branches may work well. The debris that you have available can help determine how small the spaces in your lattice can be.

The structure is now in place and it is time for the essential component of insulation. Of all the things you'll learn about how to build a survival shelter, not having enough insulation on a cold night will teach you quickly what is required. Get ready to shuffle your feet or make yourself a rake and start gathering debris! For good insulation, you'll want material that can trap air. Obviously, dry material is optimal. Pile on your leaves, ferns, grass, or other available debris.

Keep piling, keep piling – go for TWO FEET THICK or more if you might get rained on. Be sure to close up the door area so that you have just enough room to squeeze in without disturbing the structure. Crawl in to see how your cocoon feels. Finish up your insulation by adding some small branches that will hold the debris in case of wind, maintaining as much loft as possible.



Now that the outer layer is complete, it is time to stuff your primitive survival shelter with dry soft debris. If you only have wet leaves, use them anyway, you may get wet, but you can still be warm. Once your shelter is full of debris, wiggle in to compress a space for your body. Add more debris as needed, and don't forget the foot area! Fill up the spaces if you are concerned about being cold. Before you crawl in for the night in your primitive shelter, gather a pile of leaves near the door so that you can close yourself in most of the way.

**Materials needed:**

- Rope or twine or vine
- Tree
- Branches
- Leaves grass, etc. to lay on ground to preserve body heat
- Leaves piled on sides

### **PONCHO/TARP/BLANKET A-FRAME SHELTER**

A poncho tent is a useful shelter you can make with the materials (literally) on your back. This will show you how to make two different types: One with an overhanging branch, the other using an A-frame support.

This tent provides a low silhouette. It also protects you from the elements on two sides. It has, however, less usable space than a lean-to. To make this tent, you need a poncho, two 1.5- to 2.5-meter ropes, six sharpened sticks about 30 centimeters long, and two trees 2 to 3 meters apart.

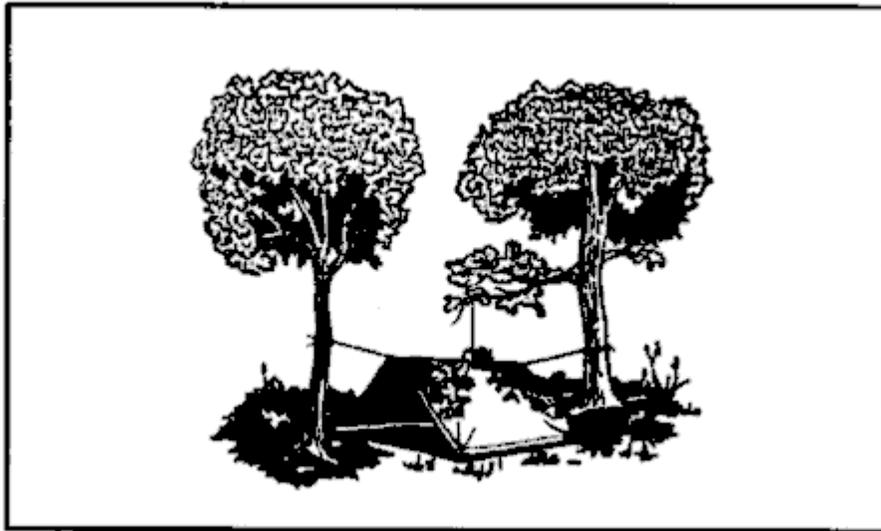


Figure 5-2. Poncho tent using overhanging branch.

- Tie off the poncho hood in the same way as the **poncho lean-to**.
- Tie a 1.5- to 2.5-meter rope to the center grommet on each side of the poncho.
- Tie the other ends of these ropes at about knee height to two trees 2 to 3 meters apart and stretch the poncho tight.
- Draw one side of the poncho tight and secure it to the ground pushing sharpened sticks through the grommets.
- Follow the same procedure on the other side.

If you need a center support, use the same methods as for the poncho lean-to. Another center support is an A-frame set outside but over the center of the tent. Use two 90- to 120-centimeter-long sticks, one with a forked end, to form the A-frame. Tie the hood's drawstring to the A-frame to support the center of the tent.

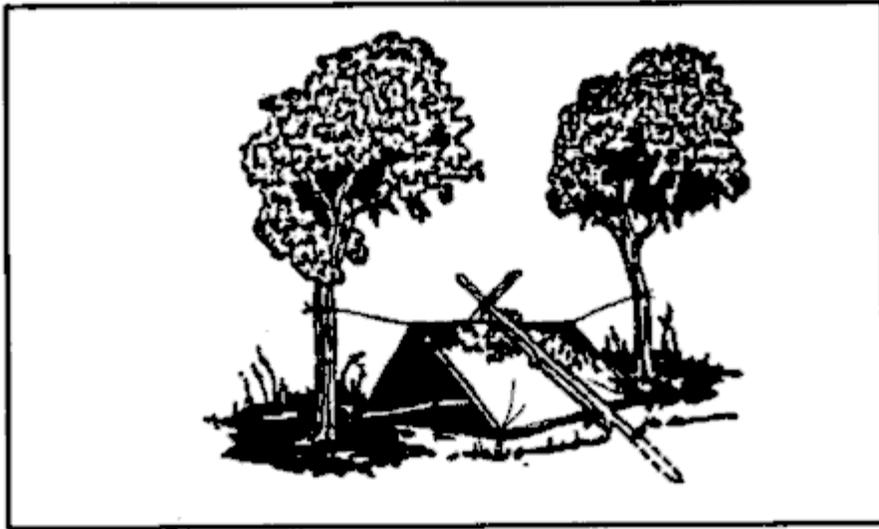


Figure 5-3. Poncho tent with A-frame.

**Materials needed:**

- Poncho
- Blanket
- Foil emergency blanket
- Rope or twine or vine
- Two trees
- Rocks or logs to lay along sides
- Leaves grass, etc. to lay on ground to preserve body heat
- Leaves piled on sides