



Campfires guarantee that *full* camping experience. Perhaps it roots from something primal within us (?), but a campfire is a rather practical feature of the campsite too. As well as warmth and hot food infused with a subtle smokiness, they also provide light, a focal point for social gatherings, and a means of repelling insects.

In this blog, we prepare the fire pit from scratch, outlining how to light a campfire efficiently, cost-effectively, and even using wet wood.

Collect the kindling, gather the tinder, strike a match - and read on

Preparation Prevents Poor... Campfires?

Now, you could get all extreme by rubbing two sticks together, lighting a ball of wispy grass in your hand, and thumping your chest in a Bear Grylls-esque display of survival prowess. Or, if you take the time preparing the right materials - with a few simple cheats, one match should be all you need to get a fire started safely. Sorry, that rules out that jerry can of petrol!

Before You Leave Home...

Collect these items:

- Tinder: newspaper, a few small twigs, firelighters (can be store-bought or homemade).
- Ignition method: lighter/matches/flint striker.
- Wood processing items: a saw, hatchet, knife, and club.





Here we have some tinder (newspaper) and ignition, in the form of a flint striker, and a hatchet for splitting logs.

Collect Enough Wood to Last 30 Minutes

At least! It makes for sloppy spectating watching someone who's finally got their first bit of flame in damp timber, running around trying to find some more material to keep it going. Collect all the timber you think I'll need for the majority of the time; if there's any extra, leave it as a gift for the next person!

Be Environmentally Conscious

Don't collect any standing timber, live or dead, as both are habitat for animals.

Organise the Timber

Do so into size stacks, based on categories of thickness - starting with the finest twigs, working up to finger-width, then arm width. It's a good idea to have them in lengths that will make for easy use (say, half a meter). Use your wood processing tools to assist with this.

Collect Your Tinder

A crucial part of the process; it should be dry, fine, and easily take a flame. This is where having some with you already is handy. Otherwise, look for dry grass underneath tussocks, dry leaves, or the inside of bark (beware of Huntsman spiders with that last one!).

Light Your Campfire!

This is the part where it all comes together. It's all about escalating the size of fuel as required, and utilising the wood stacks you made earlier.

Start by lighting your tinder (either natural, newspaper, twigs, or firelighters you brought from home), with some small twigs loosely placed on top. Once alight, progressively lay larger sticks just before the previous stage is burning. This gives it time to dry and warm up. It's recommended positioning the wood in the typical tepee shape, to give good aeration and expose most of it to the flame. Once a base of coals has built up, you can rest easy.



A nice little campfire, well on its way. Image: [Kooikkari](#).

Starting a Fire in Wet Weather

Starting a fire in wet conditions can be an absolute nightmare, and sometimes it doesn't even happen. That said, follow these steps and you'll be fostering a flame in no time.

- Use wood from the inside of logs; this is where it's the most dry
- Lots of kindling is key!
- Use large logs or rocks to build a platform to hold your fire off of wet ground
- Lay the wood beside your fire, to promote drying as you go
- Bring extra materials

1. Collect Both Small Twigs and Larger Logs

Gather a good heap of wood, ranging from small twigs to larger logs. Finding plenty of dead twigs and small branches is key. These are best snapped off dead fallen trees, or even dead standing trees. You are looking for branches that make that loud cracking sound when snapped (this means they are definitely dead).

Then, collect larger pieces of wood and logs, avoiding anything that has been on the ground for too long - these will be the most sodden, and may also be hiding creepy crawlies underneath!

2. Create Some Dry Kindling

Split a large log into quarters using an axe or hatchet. The inside of larger logs will be the



driest wood you can find. Then, using a hatchet or knife, shave the dry wood and create some kindling. Snap all the small twigs and place them in a heap next to where the fire is to be made.

3. Build a Platform

Use large logs or even rocks to build yourself a platform that will keep your fire off the wet ground. This will provide it with airflow, and eventually burn the wood underneath (if you choose to use logs).

4. Build Your Fire

Build your fire into a teepee shape using small twigs and branches, placing the kindling underneath. This also allows for good airflow, dries more wood while burning, and helps your fire light faster. You could also lay one large log down and lean the rest against it, lighting your fire underneath. This will both support your fire and dry large wood quickly.

5. Light Your Kindling

You are now ready to light your kindling!

If you have any paper, cloth, or other material to help ignite your fire, place it in with your kindling. Use a lighter or matches to light the dry kindling or paper. You may need to gently blow on the embers to help the fire along. Once the kindling is lit, it will burn and start to dry and catch onto the small twigs you have placed on top.

Additional materials you could add to get your fire going are:

- Flavoured corn chips
- Dry spaghetti
- Steel wool
- Cloth or clothing
- Paper or toilet paper
- Or, best of all, some sort of fuel-based fire-lighters. These can be purchased from most camping shops.

6. Add Wood Carefully

You now have yourself a small fire. Continue to add wood, working up by size. It's important to keep adding plenty of wood to the fire to help it dry quickly and keep alight – remembering not to overload or smother it. Lay the rest of your wood close to the fire, allowing it to dry before burning. Continue to do this throughout the evening, and your fire will stay warm and bright.

This method will help you to light a fire. It may not be easy, but it will work!

7. Don't Forget to Extinguish It!

As important as it is to light your fire, it is as equally important to put it out before departing the site. You can do this by extinguishing it with water, or, as a last resort, burying it with dirt or sand. The latter is not a preferred method, as the next group of people to come along may burn themselves. To prevent this and avoid injury, it should be clearly marked.

Some Final Words of Campfire Wisdom

- Beware of dry leaves: too many will smother a small flame.



- It's a good idea to not use all the timber from each stack the first time, in case it does not work.
- With damp timber, you'll need more 'small' fuel to get the 'bigger' fuel to dry and catch alight. Plan for this accordingly when creating your size stacks.

From here, the fire can help with a multitude of tasks with different arrangements, such as for cooking, efficiency, warmth, or longevity. Now you've got the basics down pat – sit back and enjoy the warmth of your fire!

Got some tips of your own for any campfire novices out there? Let us know down below.