

Hiking Compass Checklist

Print or save this checklist to select, setup, test, and maintain your field compass for reliable wilderness navigation.



1 Before Buying

- ☐ Decide whether the main use is marked trails, regular map work, off-trail travel or international travel.
- ☐ Choose baseplate, mirrored baseplate or lensatic only after understanding the workflow.
- ☐ Confirm regional balance or global-needle coverage.
- ☐ Check the declination system.
- ☐ Match the map scales to the maps you use.
- ☐ Confirm that the bezel and labels are easy for you to read.
- ☐ Check the current official specifications and return policy.

2 Before the First Hike

- ☐ Read the manufacturer's instructions.
- ☐ Identify every main compass marking.
- ☐ Find the current local declination.
- ☐ Practice orienting a map in a familiar place.
- ☐ Take and follow short bearings where getting the answer wrong is harmless.
- ☐ Perform the three-reading test away from interference.

3 Before Leaving Home

- ☐ Inspect the baseplate, capsule, bezel and lanyard.
- ☐ Check that the needle settles and moves freely.
- ☐ Confirm the declination setting for the destination.
- ☐ Pack a current map and suitable offline navigation backup.
- ☐ Keep the compass accessible and separated from magnets.
- ☐ Share the route and expected return time.

4 After the Hike

- ☐ Wipe away dirt and moisture.
- ☐ Let the compass dry before storage.
- ☐ Check for cracks, a loose bezel or abnormal needle movement.
- ☐ Store it away from magnets, electronics and extreme heat.
- ☐ Note any navigation skill that needs more practice.

Compass Setup & Navigation Notes

COMPASS MODEL & NOTES

Brand/model, declination adjustment method, map scale grid, practice notes...

DECLINATION & SCALES

Local Declination _____
Declination Set _____
Map Romer Scales _____

POST-HIKE CHECKS

Capsule / Bubble Check _____
Bezel Action Check _____
Skill Practice Goal _____