

"To Build a Fire" by Jack London
Reading Warm-up A

Read the following passage. Pay special attention to the underlined words. Then, read it again, and complete the activities. Use a separate sheet of paper for your written answers.

Imagine being lost alone in the wilderness, hungry, cold, and unprepared—no cozy sleeping bag, no packets of belly-warming cocoa to heat over a campstove. If you should find yourself in this undesirable situation, would you know what to do?

According to survival experts, the first and most important thing is not to become panicky. Sit down, take a deep breath, and think carefully and methodically about your options. What equipment or supplies do you have with you? Even a plastic garbage bag can be extremely useful for keeping you warm and dry. Likewise, you can find natural shelter in unexpected spots—even in deep snow, for instance, there may be a dry, clear area under the lowest branches of a big evergreen tree.

To survive cold weather, it is imperative that you keep your body temperature up. Instead of sitting directly on the ground or in the snow, make a pile of branches or find a fallen tree. Be sure your head is covered—thanks to extra blood circulation around the brain, you can lose forty percent of your heat through your head. If possible, stuff your clothes with dry leaves for insulation. Then, curl yourself up into a ball to conserve your body heat.

Aside from staying alive, your main responsibility is to be found, so *stay in one place*. Searchers are more likely to discover you if you have not floundered around getting even more lost. Also, try to make yourself easy to see: stay out in the open, or use sticks and rocks to make a sign pointing to your shelter. Lastly, if a helicopter flies overhead, wave wildly and aggressively with *both* arms so they know you are in trouble and not just saying hello!

1. Underline what is undesirable about the situation. Then, describe another situation that would be *undesirable*.
2. Underline what to do to keep from getting panicky. What is the opposite of *panicky*?
3. Circle a word that means something similar to methodically. How could a pencil and paper help you think *methodically*?
4. What word could you substitute for *likewise* in this sentence?
5. Underline what is imperative for survival in cold weather. What would be *imperative* to know before riding a bicycle downhill?
6. Underline what circulation in the head has to do with keeping warm. What words mean the same as *circulation*?
7. Underline what could happen if you floundered around rather than staying put. Would you use the word *floundered* for someone who moved with grace and purpose?
8. Circle what you should do aggressively if you see a helicopter. What else might someone do *aggressively*?