

Lost At Sea Worksheet

Instructions:

You are adrift on a private yacht in the South Pacific. As a consequence of a fire of unknown origin, much of the yacht and its contents have been destroyed. The yacht is now slowly sinking. Your location is unclear because of the destruction of critical navigational equipment and because you and the crew were distracted trying to bring the fire under control. Your best estimate is that you are approximately one thousand miles south-southwest of the nearest land.

Below is a list of fifteen items that are intact and undamaged after the fire. In addition to these articles, you have a serviceable, rubber life raft with oars large enough to carry yourself, the crew, and all the items listed below. The total contents of all survivors' pockets are a package of cigarettes, several books of matches, and five one-dollar bills.

Your task is to rank the fifteen items below in terms of their importance to your survival. Place the number 1 by the most important item, the number 2 by the second most important, and so on through number 15, the least important.

<i>Individual Rank</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Group Rank</i>	<i>Expert Rank</i>
_____	Sextant	_____	_____
_____	Shaving Mirror	_____	_____
_____	5 gal can of water	_____	_____
_____	Mosquito netting	_____	_____
_____	One case of US Army C rations	_____	_____
_____	Maps of the Pacific Ocean	_____	_____
_____	Seat cushion (flotation device)	_____	_____
_____	2 gal can of oil-gas mixture	_____	_____
_____	Small transistor radio	_____	_____
_____	Shark repellent	_____	_____
_____	Twenty square feet of opaque plastic	_____	_____
_____	1 qt of 160-proof Puerto Rican Rum	_____	_____
_____	Fifteen feet of nylon rope	_____	_____
_____	Two boxes of chocolate bars	_____	_____
_____	Fishing Kit	_____	_____

Adapted from the 1975 University Associates Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators

Lost At Sea Answer and Rational Sheet

According to the “experts” the basic supplies needed when a person is stranded in mid ocean are articles to attract attention and articles to aid survival *until rescuers arrive*. Articles for navigation are of little importance: Even if a small life raft were capable of reaching land, it would be impossible to store enough food and water to subsist during that period of time. Therefore, of primary importance are the shaving mirror and the two gallon can of oil-gas mixture. These items could be used for signaling air-sea rescue. Of secondary importance are items such as water and food, e.g., the case of army rations.

A brief rationale is provided for the ranking of each item. These brief explanations obviously do not represent all of the potential uses for the specified items but, rather, the primary importance of each.

1 – Shaving mirror

Critical for signaling air-sea rescue.

2 – Two-gallon can of oil-gas mixture

Critical for signaling—the oil-gas mixture will float on the water and could be ignited with a dollar bill and a match (obviously outside the raft).

3 – Five-gallon can of water

Necessary to replenish loss by perspiring, etc.

4 – One case of U.S. Army C rations

Provides basic food intake.

5 – Twenty square feet of opaque plastic

Utilized to collect rain water, provide shelter from the elements.

6 – Two boxes of chocolate bars

A reserve food supply.

7 – Fishing kit

Ranked lower than the candy bars because “one bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” There is no assurance that you will catch any fish.

8 – Fifteen feet of nylon rope

May be used to lash equipment together to prevent it from falling overboard.

9 – Floating seat cushion

If someone fell overboard, it could function as a life preserver.

10 – Shark repellent

Obvious.

11 – One quart of 160-proof Puerto Rican Rum

Contains 80 percent alcohol—enough to use as a potential antiseptic for any injuries incurred; of little value otherwise; will cause dehydration if ingested.

12 – Small transistor radio

Of little value since there is no transmitter (unfortunately, you are out of range of your favorite AM radio stations).

13 – Maps of the Pacific Ocean

Worthless without additional navigational equipment—it does not really matter where you are but where the rescuers are.

14 – Mosquito netting

There are no mosquitoes in the mid Pacific.

15 – Sextant

Without tables and a chronometer, relatively useless.

The basic rationale for ranking signaling devices above life-sustaining items (food and water) is that without signaling devices there is almost no chance of being spotted and rescued.

Furthermore, most rescues occur during the first thirty-six hours, and one can survive without food and water during this period.

Officers of the United States Merchant Marines ranked the fifteen items and provided the “correct” solution to the task.