

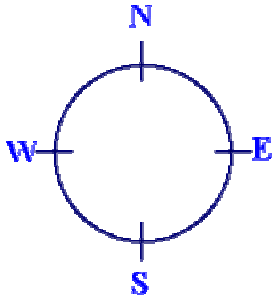
# How to use a compass

By Katie Cox

Illustrations from Kjetil Kjernsmo's illustrated internet guide

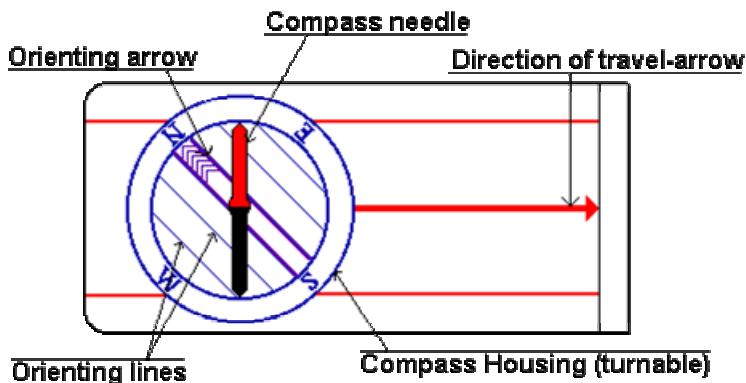
## Lesson 1 - Using the compass alone

This is a very easy lesson, and I would say, not sufficient for those who would like to travel safely in unfamiliar terrain.



The first thing you need to learn, are the directions. North, South, East and West. Look at the figure and learn how they are. North is the most important. The first lesson to teach Scouts about directions is to use a map. After Scouts can use a map to follow directions and find things, then you can introduce the compass.

Here is a basic compass:



## Parts of compass:

**Direction of travel arrow** – Point this in the direction you wish to go. It's best if you have your body facing the same direction, so normally you'd hold the compass in your hand with the direction of travel arrow pointing totally away from you.

**Compass needle** – The compass needle moves as you move the compass, floating in liquid or air. Usually the red point or darkest point faces north at all times.

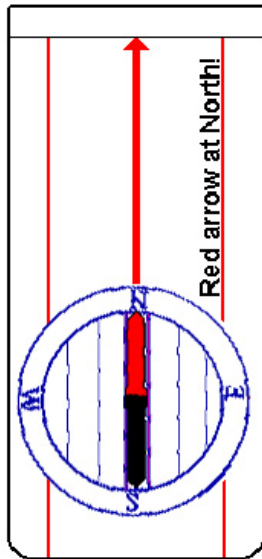
**Compass housing** – This is the “dial” on the compass that moves. When you turn it, the N,S,E,W markers on the dial move in a circle.

**Orienting Arrow** – That's what we call the part on the compass housing that points to the north (N).

**Orienting lines** – lines parallel to the orienting arrow. These are for use on a map so ignore them for now.

## Lining you and your compass up to go north:

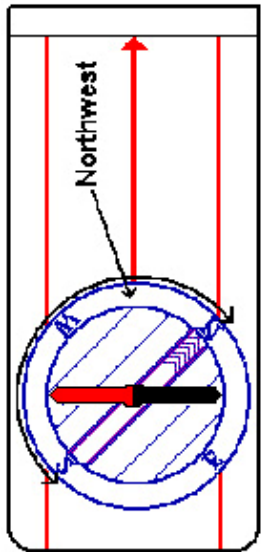
We'll start with an easy direction – north.



1. Turn dial so that the N on your **orienting arrow** (dial) lines up with the **direction of travel arrow**.
2. Put the compass against your abdomen so that the **direction of travel arrow faces directly away from you**. (Put the flat side of the compass against your abdomen and the red arrow should be pointing in front of you.)
3. **Keeping the compass against your abdomen and NOT MOVING THE COMPASS**, turn your whole body until the **red compass needle** is lined up with the **orienting arrow** and **direction of travel arrow**. Now all 3 arrows are pointing north and you should be facing north as well.

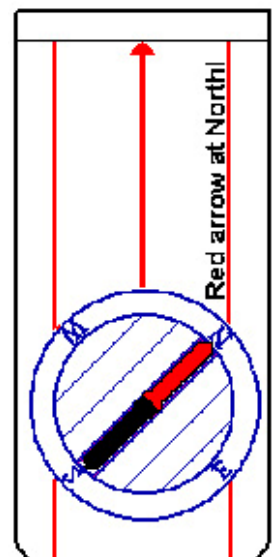
*Note: Some people have a tendency to move the whole compass and not have their bodies facing the direction they want to go. That's why you put the back of the compass against your abdomen and hold it there – so you won't move the compass. We want YOU facing in the direction of travel – not just your compass.*

## But if you don't want to go north, but a different direction? Hang on and I'll tell you.



1. Keep that compass against your abdomen! (When you're used to not moving your compass, moving your body instead, then you can just hold it flat in your hand, but to start with keep it against your abdomen.)
2. Turn the compass housing so that the direction you want to go lines up with the direction of travel arrow (which is still facing directly away from you.) To go northwest, for example, turn the housing so that the direction of travel arrow intersects with the compass housing right between N and W.

3. Now you'll notice that the red "floating" compass needle is no longer lined up with N or north on your compass. Keeping that compass against your abdomen, turn your body until the red compass needle lines up with the orienting arrow in the compass housing. Now that red floating compass needle no longer points directly away from you, but the **DIRECTION OF TRAVEL ARROW** points where you want to go – which is northwest!



This should give you a good start on how to use a compass. I suggest consulting books about orienteering or websites for further information.