

Are These 20 Basic Skills in Danger of Extinction?

If teenagers today need to locate something on Google Maps, no problem. If they need to locate something using a traditional map, they're probably screwed.

Skills such as being able to read a map or start a fire were once considered essential for everyday life. Now, however, possession of these skills is increasingly rare.

A [study](#) conducted last year by Ordnance Survey—the national mapping agency for Great Britain—showed that the British believe the following 20 basic skills are now in serious danger of dying out among their people, and among most peoples in the developed world:

1. Reading a map
2. Using a compass
3. Tie a specific knot
4. Darn socks
5. Looking something up in a book using an index rather than "Googling it"
6. Correct letter writing technique
7. Understanding pounds and ounces
8. Knowing your spelling and grammar
9. Converting pounds and ounces to grams and kilograms

10. Starting a fire from scratch
11. Handwriting
12. Understanding feet and inches
13. Knitting
14. Recall a friend or relative's phone number from memory
15. Recall a partner's phone number from memory
16. Identifying trees, insects and flowers
17. Touch typing
18. Baking bread from scratch
19. Taking up trousers
20. Wiring a plug

Granted, in the technological and consumerist culture of the developed world, knowledge of these skills has declined in large part because adults perceive that children can survive without them. But as Hilaire Belloc once said, people are blinded by their immediate past. There are no guarantees that the world as it is now is the world as it will be. Things can change, and many of these skills could once again become crucial.

In addition, many of these skills help people to retain a little humanity amidst technology. They connect us with both nature and the past, which is why, in part, some people still value them.

Should schools and parents make a better effort to prevent some of these skills from being relegated to the dustbin of

history?