FIELD GUIDE · NO. 21

Compass Parts

A compass has one job — it points toward magnetic north. Know the parts that help you use that information.



FROM THE BOOK

1. Most modern baseplate compasses include a magnetic needle, a rotating bezel marked with degrees, a direction-of-travel arrow, and a clear baseplate for lining the compass up with a map.
2. The magnetic needle always points toward magnetic north. The direction-of-travel arrow points where you intend to go.
3. Unlike a phone or GPS, a compass does not need batteries, a signal, or an internet connection — as long as it is working and you are using it correctly.
4. Hold the compass flat and level, and keep it away from vehicles, fences, power lines, large tools, firearms, and electronic devices, which can pull the needle off.
5. Before a trip, check that the needle moves freely and settles smoothly. If the needle will not settle or behaves oddly, move away from metal or electronics and check again.

PRACTICE IT

Sit with your compass, name the needle, bezel, direction-of-travel arrow, and baseplate, then hold it level and watch the needle settle away from keys, phones, and tables with metal parts.