

SURVIVAL BASICS GUIDE

5 Principles Every Civilian Must Know

This guide delivers the core awareness and response principles taught in every WOFT training program. Read it. Apply it. Then come train with us — because reading and doing are not the same thing.

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide contains the five foundational principles that WOFT instructors teach in every program. The information is real, it is actionable, and if you apply it consistently, it will make you meaningfully safer. It is not a substitute for training — but it is the right place to start.

1 in 4

AMERICANS WILL BE A VICTIM OF
VIOLENT CRIME

3 sec

AVERAGE TIME BEFORE A THREAT
ESCALATES

90%

OF PEOPLE FREEZE IN A REAL THREAT

THE COLOR CODE SYSTEM

Understanding Your Level of Awareness at All Times

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01

Developed by Lt. Col. Jeff Cooper, the Color Code System is the most widely used awareness framework in military, law enforcement, and civilian self-defense training. WOFT instructors use it as the foundation of every program because it provides a simple, memorable model for managing your mental state in any environment.

CODE	STATE	DESCRIPTION	WHEN TO USE
WHITE	Unaware	Relaxed, no attention to surroundings. Dangerous in public.	Home only
YELLOW	Relaxed Alert	Aware of surroundings without focusing on any specific threat.	Always in public

ORANGE	Specific Alert	Something has caught your attention. You are evaluating a potential threat.	Threat identified
RED	Ready to Act	Threat is confirmed. You have a plan and are prepared to execute.	Imminent threat
BLACK	Breakdown	Panic, freeze, or irrational action. Caused by skipping Yellow/Orange.	Avoid at all costs

The 60-Second Daily Practice

Every morning before you leave your home, consciously shift from White to Yellow. Say it out loud if you need to: *"I am in Yellow."* Scan your immediate environment. Identify two exits. Note anyone who seems out of place. That's it. Sixty seconds. Do it every time, and within two weeks it becomes automatic.

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Awareness is not paranoia. It is respect for reality. The most dangerous assumption you can make is that nothing will happen to you.

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PRE-ATTACK INDICATORS

How to Recognize a Threat Before It Becomes One

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Most violent encounters are not random. Research by law enforcement and behavioral scientists consistently shows that attackers display observable pre-attack behaviors before initiating violence. Learning to recognize these indicators is one of the highest-value skills you can develop.

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	THREAT LEVEL
Target Glancing	Repeatedly looking at a specific person or location, then looking away.	High
Grooming Gestures	Touching the face, adjusting clothing, or checking a waistband repeatedly.	Medium-High
Interview Behavior	Asking probing questions: "Are you alone?" "What time do you get off?"	High

Bladed Stance	Turning the body sideways to conceal a weapon or prepare to strike.	Very High
Thousand-Yard Stare	Unfocused, glazed expression — person is mentally rehearsing an action.	High
Unusual Clothing	Heavy clothing in warm weather; clothing that conceals the hands or waist.	Medium
Proximity Violation	Closing distance without social justification; entering your personal space.	High

What to Do When You Spot an Indicator

- Do not stare — use peripheral vision and casual glances
- Create distance — move to another area of the space
- Identify exits and position yourself near one
- Alert others nearby if the threat level escalates
- Trust your instincts — discomfort is data, not weakness

The goal is not to confront — it is to remove yourself from the threat's decision-making process. A predator who cannot complete the interview phase will almost always select a different target.

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You cannot fight what you don't see coming. Recognition is your first line of defense — and it costs nothing.

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THE FREEZE RESPONSE

Why Your Brain Will Betray You — and How to Override It

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When the human brain perceives a sudden, extreme threat, it triggers a survival response — fight, flight, or freeze. Research shows that in real-world violent encounters, **approximately 90% of untrained civilians freeze** for a critical 2–4 seconds. In a violent encounter, those seconds are often the difference between survival and catastrophe.

Why Freezing Happens

The freeze response is not cowardice. It is a biological default — your brain's attempt to buy time while it processes an unexpected input. The problem is that in a violent encounter, time is not on your side. The freeze response is most likely to occur when:

- The threat is unexpected and does not match your mental model of "danger"
- You have no pre-made decision — your brain is trying to create a plan in real time
- Your heart rate exceeds 145 bpm — fine motor skills degrade significantly above this threshold
- You have never mentally rehearsed a response to this type of threat

The One-Decision Method

WOFT instructors teach a simple cognitive tool called the One-Decision Method: before you enter any new environment, make one decision in advance. Not a detailed tactical plan — just a first action. "If something happens in this restaurant, I will move toward the kitchen exit." One decision, made in advance, is enough to break the freeze.

TIME	UNTRAINED RESPONSE	TRAINED RESPONSE
0–2 sec	Untrained: Processing delay, no action	Trained: First action already executing
2–4 sec	Untrained: Freeze deepens, paralysis	Trained: Moving to cover or exit
4–8 sec	Untrained: Panic response, random action	Trained: Secondary decision made
8+ sec	Untrained: Victim posture established	Trained: Position of advantage secured

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Courage is not the absence of fear. It is a trained response that overrides fear long enough to act. That response can be built — but only through practice.

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HOME DEFENSE FUNDAMENTALS

Your Home Is Not as Safe as You Think

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Home invasion is one of the most traumatic forms of violent crime because it violates the one place where people feel completely safe. The FBI reports that approximately **1.65 million burglaries occur annually in the United States**, with a significant percentage occurring while occupants are home. Most home invasions are preventable — or survivable — with layered preparation.

LAYER	TYPE	EXAMPLES	PURPOSE
Layer 1	Deterrence	Lighting, signage, visible cameras, reinforced doors and locks.	Prevents entry
Layer 2	Detection	Alarm systems, motion sensors, dogs, neighborhood watch.	Alerts you early
Layer 3	Delay	Reinforced door frames, secondary locks, safe rooms.	Buys response time
Layer 4	Defense	Firearm, non-lethal tools, trained family members.	Last resort
Layer 5	Communication	Phone charged, 911 pre-dialed, family rally point established.	Coordinates response

The Family Communication Plan

The single most overlooked element of home defense is communication. Every household should establish and practice:

- A designated safe room with a solid-core door and a lock
- A family code word that means "get to the safe room now"
- A rally point outside the home in case of fire or forced evacuation
- A clear protocol for who calls 911 and what to say
- Regular practice — at minimum, a verbal walkthrough every 6 months

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Home defense is not about being aggressive. It is about buying time — for law enforcement to arrive, for your family to reach safety, for the situation to resolve. Every layer of defense buys more time.

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THE DECISION FRAMEWORK

Run. Hide. Fight. — And When to Use Each

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Run-Hide-Fight is the most widely taught active threat response framework in the United States, endorsed by the Department of Homeland Security and used in corporate, school, and government training programs nationwide. Understanding it conceptually is not enough — you must internalize the decision criteria so the right choice is

automatic.

ACTION	PRIORITY	WHEN TO USE	OBJECTIVE
RUN	First priority	A clear escape route exists and you can reach it without passing the threat.	Move immediately
HIDE	If run fails	Running is not possible. Conceal yourself, lock/barricade doors, silence phone.	Reduce visibility
FIGHT	Last resort	Running and hiding are both impossible. Commit fully — attack aggressively.	Survive at all costs

RUN — Getting Out

- Leave everything behind — bags, phones, other people if they refuse to move
- Move quickly and keep low if gunfire is present
- Do not stop to warn others unless you can do so without slowing down
- Do not stop until you are genuinely clear of the building or area
- Once clear, call 911 and do not go back

HIDE — When Running Is Not Possible

- Choose a room with a solid door that locks
- Barricade the door with furniture
- Turn off lights and silence your phone completely (not vibrate — silent)
- Stay away from the door and out of the direct line of sight
- Call 911 and leave the line open if you cannot speak

FIGHT — The Last Resort

Fighting is the option of last resort — when running is impossible and hiding has failed. Use whatever is available. Attack aggressively and without hesitation. Commit fully or not at all. People who survive by fighting do not decide to fight in the moment — they decided **before** the moment.

- Use whatever is available — fire extinguisher, chair, laptop, coffee mug
- Attack aggressively and without hesitation
- Target the eyes, throat, and knees — the most vulnerable points
- Create chaos and disruption — your goal is to change the outcome, not win a fight

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Run-Hide-Fight is not a checklist. It is a decision tree. The right answer depends on your position, the threat's position, and what options are available to you in that moment. Training teaches you to make that assessment in seconds.

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WHAT THIS GUIDE CANNOT GIVE YOU

You have just read five principles that WOFT instructors teach in every program. This information is real, it is actionable, and if you apply it consistently, it will make you meaningfully safer.

But there is something this guide cannot give you — and it is the most important thing of all.

It cannot give you the experience of making a decision under real stress.

Reading about the freeze response is not the same as having your heart rate spike to 180 bpm and being required to act anyway. Reading about pre-attack indicators is not the same as identifying them in real time, in a crowded space, when everything is moving. Reading about Run-Hide-Fight is not the same as executing it in a simulated scenario while your hands are shaking.

The gap between knowing and doing is enormous. It is the gap that WOFT training is designed to close.

WOFT's weekend workshops use UTM (Ultimate Training Munitions) scenario training — realistic, simulated threat scenarios that safely replicate the physiological experience of a real encounter. Participants don't just learn what to do. They practice doing it, under stress, until the response becomes automatic.

READY TO CLOSE THE GAP?

If this guide gave you value, the training will transform you. WOFT offers weekend workshops for all experience levels. All food, gear, and equipment is provided. No prior experience required.

Weekend workshops start at \$875. Visit woft.com to book your session.

woft.com/training-programs