

## The Savvy Hiker's Quiz – A potentially life-saving piece of equipment

Name the single piece of potentially lifesaving hiking gear that has these features:

- Size: Small as a person's thumb
- Weight: Less than a car key
- Cost: About the same as a cheap hamburger
- Weather Resistance: Works when frozen, wet, or in a heat wave
- Durability: Withstands accidental dropping
- Time required to recharge: Zero
- Universal: Internationally recognized

Stop reading here and think about this list – then name the wondrous piece of hiking gear that is described. Still stumped? Here's another clue: under the right conditions, it can be heard up to a mile away.

The answer: It's a simple whistle, like the kind that referees use. They are small, cheap, and always available. And they can be a lifesaver to a hiker who is lost in the woods, or injured, or has simply become separated from the other hikers.

Surprisingly, there is actually an International Whistle Code that is recognized in most countries. It consists of several different sequences of whistle blasts, each sequence signaling something different like "Come here" or "Where are you?". No need to learn the entire code---just the sequence for "Need help", which is three long whistle blasts (3-seconds each blast with a second between blasts). Even if you forget the code, however, simply blasting away should attract help.

Amazon and Walmart sell these whistles. Look for one with a loudness of 115 decibels (db) or more. Tuck it into your backpack or tether it to your water bottle and forget about it. Hopefully you will never need it, but maybe the day you get lost will also be the day your cell phone doesn't work and the little whistle will become awfully important.

By Ron Konieczynski