

Magnesium Fire Starter

By Steven Dykeman

Be safe
Have fun
Better yourself



The magnesium fire starter is a useful and popular tool. It consists of a bar of magnesium with a ferrocerium rod attached. A striker is often attached with a small chain. Since the magnesium bar has a ferro-rod and striker, it makes for a complete instrument for most fire making conditions. The short chain is found to be inconvenient by most, and it is either unfastened before use or completely replaced with a cord of adequate length. The striker can be used for scraping off magnesium and for creating sparks with the ferro-rod.



The striker is stamped out from a metal sheet resulting in a sharp edge on one side, and a smooth edge on the other. It is only the sharp side that is useful. You can find the sharp side by feeling with your finger. Many people use the toothed side as apposed to the straight side for creating sparks. Others find that the toothed side creates unwanted gouges in the ferro rod. And yet others prefer to use a knife blade. It is your decision to do as works best for you after practicing different options.

The method of scraping the magnesium block and the type of shavings produced can be important to your success. For best success, small curled shavings are preferred. The sparks from the ferro rod are small pieces of iron that are very hot. If the small piece of iron lands on a large metal piece it will cool too quickly. It is easy to see that the shavings on the left will give better results.

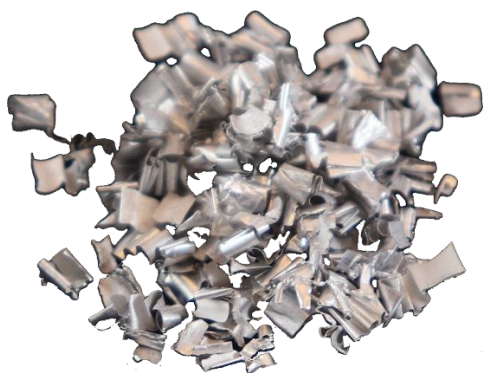


Preferred shavings; small curls



Shavings that are more difficult

It is possible to purchase magnesium shavings that are essentially floor sweepings from a machine shop. Be careful because some of these shavings are large and will not ignite from a spark. Always try what you buy and practice. Below are examples of purchased magnesium. One works well, the other will not light. It is best if you learn how to produce good shavings from the magnesium block rather than rely on something you have no control over.



The magnesium burns very hot and very fast. Since it does not burn for long it cannot help start large pieces of wood such as kindling size. The magnesium is useful only for helping to start difficult tinder. Your tinder must be placed with the magnesium so it will catch fire after the magnesium lights.



Once your tinder catches fire, slowly add small sticks being careful to not smother your fire.

Magnesium is also good to use in damp conditions but still has limitations. I can't stress this enough; you must practice.

Many survival experts regard the magnesium fire starter as a valuable means of starting fire. Buy one for yourself and practice with it. Have fun and be safe.



About the author:

Steve Dykeman is an experienced outdoorsman and survivalist. He has written many articles and produced many videos on subjects relating to outdoors and survival. He has been a course director and instructor to both youth and adults. He has also been a technical consultant to manufacturing companies relating to outdoor gear. He has over 40 years of experience working with space and defense related electronics. He brings his advanced technical abilities to the outdoors, exposing the many myths and fallacies.

In recent days he is educating people to survive into our uncertain future.

