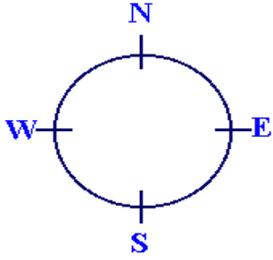


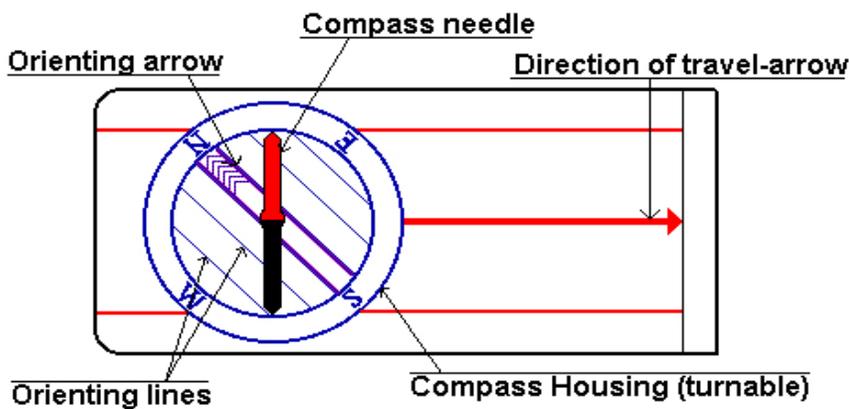
How to use a Compass without a Map

This is an easy way to understand how to use a compass. This is in no means the definitive guide in using a compass.



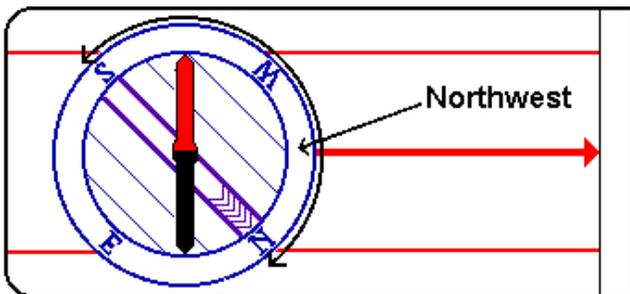
The first thing you need to learn, are the directions. North, South, East and West. Look at the figure and learn how they are. North is the most important.

There are several kinds of compasses. The most common and simplest instrument for measuring direction is the Lensatic Compass. The Lensatic Compass can come in many styles and sizes like the artillery M2 compass to the wrist/pocket compass, but they all have the same things in common. Let's take a look at it:

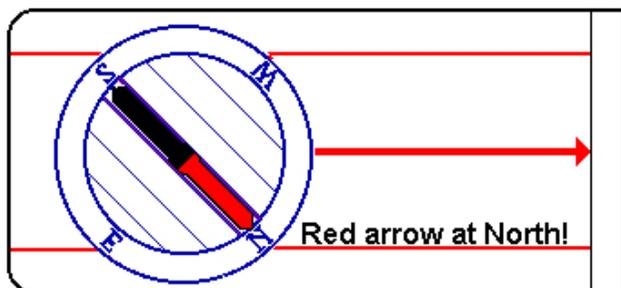


You see this red and black arrow? We call it the compass needle. Well, on some compasses it might be red and white for instance, but the point is, **the red part of it is always pointing towards the earth's magnetic north pole not the Earth's north pole.** That's basically what you need to know. It's as simple as that.

I know what you are thinking...If the compass always points to magnetic north, how do I go in different directions? Here is your answer. With the Lensatic compass, you have the ability to turn the compass housing. On the edge of the compass housing, you have a scale from 0 to 360 (some are 0 to 400). Those are the degrees or the **azimuth** (or you may also call it the bearing in some contexts) and you should have the letters N, S, W and E for North, South, West and East. If you would like to go in a direction just between North and West, you simply say: "I want to go Northwest".



Let's use the above as an example: You want to go northwest. What you need to do is find out where on the compass housing is northwest located. Northwest is located exactly between the north and west on the compass housing. Some compass housings have the northwest (NW) mark on it and some don't. Don't worry. Northwest is also 315 degrees on your compass housing. After finding northwest (315 degrees) you turn the compass housing so that northwest (315 degrees) on the housing comes exactly there where the large direction of travel-arrow meets the housing.



Now here is where we find out in which direction is northwest. Hold your compass as flat as possible in your hand so the compass needle can turn. Now turn yourself, your hand and the entire compass as one unit, making sure the compass housing doesn't turn, until the compass needle is aligned with the lines inside the compass housing.

It is **Extremely Important** that the red, north part of the compass needle points at north on the compass housing. So **Be Careful** and always take a second look to make sure you did it right! If the south part of the needle points to the north on the compass housing, you would be facing in the exact opposite direction of what you want to go. This mistake is very common among beginners.

A second problem could occur (other than reading the compass wrong) would be local magnetic attractions. If you are carrying something made of iron and/or have an item with a magnet in it, it might disturb the arrow and give you the wrong direction of magnetic north. Even some thing as small as a staple or paper clip on your map might be a problem. Make sure that there is nothing like this around your compass. There is a possibility for magnetic attractions in the soil as well, "magnetic deviation", but they are rarely seen.

When you are sure you've got it right, walk off in the direction that the travel-arrow is pointing. To help avoid getting off the course, make sure to look at the compass quite frequently, say about every fifty yards or so. Another technique to help you from getting off course is before you start walking in the direction you decided on, find an object in the distance that is in that direction and use it as a guide point to keep you on course and go there. For safety reasons, you should **Never** stare down on the compass while walking. You could trip on something on the ground or not see danger that might occur in front of you.

You only use this technique if you do not have a map and you don't know where you are, but you know that there is a road, trail, stream, river or something long and big that you can't miss if you go in the right direction and you know in at least approximately what direction you must go to get there. This technique is not very accurate in finding a cabin or tent, but you will be going in the right direction and won't be going around in circles. If you are taking a long hike in unfamiliar terrain, you should always carry a good map that covers the terrain, especially if you are leaving the trail. It is the interaction between the map and a compass, that the compass becomes really valuable.