Survival shelter/debris hut tips

Side 1

- **Importance of shelter**
  - Hypothermia is the leading killer in survival situations – shelter is critical!
  - In most survival situations, you will last long enough to get rescued so long as you can procure sufficient shelter.
  - Whether you are on the water, on a hike, and even if it's hot out (!) bring rain gear and survival blankets to keep dry and warm in case things go wrong. An ankle injury or other medical incident, getting lost, or sudden storms can all lead to unanticipated adventures.
  - As soon as you realize you are lost, or unable to escape the field, create a shelter strategy.
    - Get out of the wind, and look for a place where you can stay dry, and/or find/make insulation.
- **Tips for practice**
  - Until you actually build and sleep in some shelters, you won't know what you don't know!
  - Always have a back-up option to easily get warm in case your practice attempt fails.
  - Learn from your experiences – trouble-shoot, experiment and problem-solve!
- **Shelter site selection**
  - Most important – choose an area with lots of (preferably oak) leaves on the ground, and a minimum of obstacles to collection.
  - Leaves may be concentrated in drifts behind logs, in low spots, and at the base of steep slopes.
  - Look out for widow-makers (dead trees and branches overhead)
  - Find a level surface.
  - Avoid drainages – where will water go during heavy rains?
  - South-facing slopes have more leaves, warmer microclimate.
  - Avoid exposure to west and north winds. Use terrain, large logs, rocks, or other barriers to block wind.

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Side 2

- **Ridge pole**
  - Ideally ridgepole is straight and sturdy, 6 to 8 feet longer than you, and remains rigid when weighted from above.
  - Use a sturdy fork in a tree to hold branches and break them using leverage.
  - Support the ridgepole securely using Y-sticks or an elevated fallen log, etc.
- **Structure is stable, not likely to collapse.**
  - Ridge pole cannot slide forward or back easily. Push and pull test.
  - Entrance supports of ridge pole are stable, cannot slide out.
  - Ridgepole strong enough to hold your weight if you stand on it, with one end supported.
- **Bedding:**
  - 1–2 inch layer of dry wood against the ground as a base layer.
  - 3 or more inches of compressed leaves are on the bed. This may begin as a 2-foot thick layer of uncompressed leaves. Lay down on them to compress them. Or place a log 'dummy' on them.
- **Inner chamber:**
  - The inside of the shelter is so small you can barely wriggle into it.
  - With substantial effort - you CAN wriggle into your shelter.
  - If it's wet or snowy, try to line the inner cavity with dry wood (sometimes found in standing-dead, rotten trees), or dry twigs and leaves (from under big logs, etc.). Snow and wet leaves can insulate your shelter, but you don't want them touching you, conducting your heat away.
- **Ribs:**
  - The ribs of your shelter form an even, shallow layer.
  - The ribs, on average, are strong enough to support the weight of heavy wet leaves. (1/2 to 2 inches thick, not too rotten)
  - Gaps between ribs are 2 inches or less.
- **Leaf thickness:**
  - Leaves on top of shelter, above body, are at least 1.5 feet thick (minimum to keep you dry –assuming a somewhat dense layer of leaves).
  - Leaf layer is 2 feet in every direction from the surface of your body, warm to 40 - 50 degrees.
    - 3 feet thick for temperatures down to 35 –25.
    - 4 feet thick for temperatures down to 20