**Mountaineers Required Compass Features**

**Wilderness Navigation & Other Courses**

**Revised January 2022**

1.  **Adjustable declination**: This feature simplifies map and compass work. Most compasses with adjustable declination have an adjustment screw, usually brass or copper-colored, and a small key attached to the lanyard. Some have a ‘tool-less’, pinch-to-adjust feature.

* All students MUST have a compass with adjustable declination. The presence of a declination scale does not guarantee that it can be adjusted.
* Even if you already have a compass without adjustable declination, you may not use it in this course. Experience indicates that such compasses detract from the learning experience.

2. A **transparent rectangular base plate** with a direction of travel arrow or a sighting mirror.

* Transparency allows map features to be seen underneath the compass.
* A rectangular shape provides straight edges and square angles to plot on the map.

3.  A **0 to 360** **bezel** (the rotating housing) marked clockwise from 0 to 360 degrees in increments of two degrees or less. Bezels should be large to allow use with gloves - the larger size also improves accuracy. Do not get one marked in 0-90 degree quadrants OR one marked in O-6400 mils!

4. **Meridian lines**: Parallel 'meridian lines' on the interior bottom of the circular compass housing rotate with the bezel when it is turned. Longer lines are better. Meridian lines run parallel to the north-south axis of the bezel, however turned, for use with a topo map.

5.  A **ruler and/or gradient scale** engraved on one of the straight edges, used for measuring distances. In the U.S. 1:24000 scales (rather than 1:25000) are preferred. Both are acceptable.

6.  A **3 to 4-inch base plate**. A longer straight edge makes map work easier.

**Additional recommendations**

• A sighting mirror in the cover: May reduce error introduced when moving compass from eye-level after sighting to waist-level for reading the dial. Protects the bezel. May use as a signaling device.

• A liquid-filled housing: Reduces erratic needle movement (common on older compasses). In some cases, steadying the compass needle can be difficult. Don’t lanyard-swing a compass – a crash could start a leak.

• An inclinometer: A gravity driven arrow that allows you to measure slope angle.

**Current favorites:**  Suunto and Silva are favorites. Brunton also has adjustable declination. Quality and usability vary, so **keep any receipt**. We have unfortunately seen defective compasses in the past.

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| **Maker** | **Models** | **Features +** | **Features -** | **Vendors** | **Cost** |
| **Silva of Sweden**  **(Suzhou, China)** | Ranger 2.0  Explorer Pro | Clinometer, Luminous  No mirror, Bendable | Declination obscured  Slope card | Silva-USA, Online  Silva-USA, Online | *~$45-60*  *~$35-50* |
| **Suunto of Finland**  **(Finland)** | MC-2 Pro  M3-D Leader  MC-2G Navigator | Northern Hemisphere  Mirrorless  20 degree tilt margin | Lacks clinometer | REI, Online | *~$56*  *~$44*  *~$95* |
| **Brunton of Lander**  **(Riverton, Wyoming)** | TruArc15  TruArc 7 | Global needle, mirror  Global Needle, Fewer scales | Bezel may pop out  Skinny Mirror | Cabela’s, Online | *~$50-70*  *~$40-50* |

Expect continuing improvements and corrections in models. Model variations and designations proliferate – insist on features 1 to 6 above. Beware cheap knock-offs. Remove plastic from Suunto mirrors and Brunton bezels before use. Small bubbles are OK but will later turn into large bubbles that will interfere with the needle. ***(Rev 10Jan2022/ph bb)***