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Tom Severin, 4x4 Coach, teaches 4WD owners how to confidently and safely use their vehicles to the fullest extent in difficult terrain and adverse driving conditions. Visit www.4x4training.com to develop or improve your driving skill.

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Over the decades I've amassed quite a collection of books devoted to 4 wheeling and other outdoor activities. Some of these are real gems. If you are serious about spending time outdoors, you owe it to yourself to begin building a library of reference materials. With perhaps hundreds of titles to choose from, the task can be challenging. Allow me to help you with this assignment.

The following list covers many aspects of outdoor activity, broken down by skill set. With these books you tap into the knowledge and experience of some of the top names in outdoor recreation.

True, there are a lot of books here. But unlike your typical novel, you will keep these for years and refer to them often. You don't need to buy all of them at once. If finances are tight, pick up one or two at a time. And hunt for bargains on eBay, Amazon, or at your local used-book store (when possible).

Happy reading and happy trails.

1. Driving: [4-Wheeler's Bible](#) by Jim Allen
2. Mechanical: Get the shop manual for your vehicle. Normally you need to contact a dealer for this, but check eBay. They are a bit pricey; expect to pay up to \$125.00. The shop manual is more detailed than a Chilton's book, because it is tailored to your make and model.
3. Navigation: [Staying Found: The Complete Map And Compass Handbook](#) by June Fleming.
4. Trail guides: You have several to choose from. Select the book that best describes the area(s) you will be visiting. This valuable resource helps you find trails in your area. Some of the passages have a little history about the trails, to make for interesting reading.
5. Camping: [The Complete Walker IV](#) by Colin Fletcher and Chip Rawlins.
6. Another great reference book is the Boy Scouts' [Field Book](#). I prefer the 3rd edition.

7. Cooking: A camping trip isn't the same without some great Dutch Oven cooking. [The Field Guide of Dutch Oven Cooking: From Novice to Champion](#) by the International Dutch Oven Society will turn you into a Dutch Oven pro. Or at least give you some bragging rights.
8. Knot tying: A must-have skill for outdoor life. [The Ashley Book of Knots](#) by Clifford Ashley is considered the definitive book on knots. It's huge, but you won't find a better reference guide.
9. Survival. Another important skill, especially if you like to head out to remote areas. [Tom Brown's Field Guide to Wilderness Survival](#) just may save your life if you're stuck in a difficult situation.
10. First aid: Medicine for the Outdoors: [The Essential Guide to Emergency Medical Procedures and First Aid](#) by Paul S. Auerbach, MD. Covers everything from basic injuries to life-threatening situations. Professional help could be hours away. This book will help you make sound decisions.
11. Communication: This is a more limited category. Ham **radio** operators will find a copy of [ARRL's Repeater Directory](#) useful. Repeater info can change, so make sure the directory is not more than three years old. Non-hams should make sure they have a list of emergency and non-emergency numbers on them before they leave home.
12. Leadership: This may sound strange, but leadership skills are important off road. That is especially true during crisis situations, but routine driving requires good management skills, as well. Pick up a copy of [Outdoor Leadership Theory and Practice](#) (Bruce Martin and others).
13. Plant identification: It can be fun identifying the various plants.

Rats. I know I promised only 12 books. Problem is, there are other great books to consider. These include:

- [Knots for Climbers](#) by Craig Luebbens
- [Wilderness Navigation](#) by Bob Burns and Mike Burns
- [Be Expert with Map & Compass: The Complete Orienteering Handbook](#) by Bjorn Kjellstrom
- [The Field Guide of Wilderness & Rescue Medicine](#) by Jim Morrissey, WEMT with David Johnson, MD. This is small enough to carry with you.
- [Camping & Woodcraft](#) by Horace Kephart. Written in 1917, it may be hard to find. Offers interesting information on how things were done at the turn of the century.
- [Fundamentals of Search & Rescue](#) from the National Association for Search & Rescue
- Having the right resource materials at your fingertips can make your outdoors experience a lot more enjoyable. Commit to building your

reference library based upon these suggestions. Along with all the valuable information they offer, you will discover some good summertime (and wintertime) reading.