

A Long-Term Survival Guide - How To Make Toggle Traps:

Toggle traps are traps which use a trigger mechanism made from just one part, a small toggle, and some cordage. Toggles can be used as the trigger for just about any type of trap, including snares, deadfalls, bow traps, box traps, net traps, and many others. The toggle trap trigger can be used to activate anything from an alarm to an explosive charge, much like a lever trap trigger.

Toggles can be made from common items such as nails, or sections of metal rod, or they can be carved from sticks, or bone, but the best toggles are tapered and slightly curved, making them look like teeth. The taper and the curve both make it easier for the cordage to slip free from the toggle.



This bone toggle holds the left cord in place, until the lower cord is disturbed, activating the trap.

The trigger principle is simple. A cord (which runs to the actual trap) is looped around the toggle, which is secured to an anchor point by two more cords; the upper one to a hole in the toggle, and the lower one looped around the tapered end. The lower cord will slip off the toggle very easily, if disturbed, releasing the cord to the actual trap. There are several ways to set how the lower cord will be disturbed (usually depending on what type of trap will be activated), but the most common ways are to tie bait to this cord, or to tie a trip-wire to this cord, or to connect a treadle to this cord.



Common nails can be shortened, and used as toggle triggers.



Small bolts (with an unthreaded area) can be used as toggle triggers, by cutting off the threads.



Solid metal rod can be cut into sections and have a lanyard hole drilled, for use as toggle triggers.



The handles of small metal sewing scissors, or surgical scissors, make good toggle triggers.

In general, the straight types of toggles are used for traps where you don't want any accidental triggerings, such as for very dangerous traps, like bow traps, set guns, and explosive booby-traps. The curved type of toggle triggers (below) are best for snares, lighter deadfalls, and live-catch box or net traps. But once you have made a few, you will get a feel for which type to use, for what trap.



Pieces of bone can be carved, ground, or sanded, to make tooth-shaped toggle triggers.



Tooth-shaped toggle triggers can also be whittled from wood.



Toggle triggers can even be made from actual animal teeth (left), or the tips of antlers (right).

Now that you know what a toggle trigger is, here are some examples of basic traps made with the toggles. Note that the normal camouflage, which would always be added to disguise the traps, has been left off, so that you can see the examples clearly. But when you make these traps, remember to add plenty of leaves and / or vegetation, to make them blend in better with the local terrain.



Deadfall: The toggle is positioned under the deadfall, with bait on the lower cord.

I like to set my deadfalls up against a small tree. The two cords to the toggle are tied to the base of the tree, and run under the deadfall, and the third cord, which holds the deadfall up, is tied a few feet up the tree trunk, and run over the upper end of the deadfall, and then looped over the toggle.



View of the trigger and bait (a piece of beef stick) under the deadfall.



Box Trap: The toggle is positioned under the box trap, with bait on the lower cord.

I make my box traps just like my deadfalls, using a small tree as support for the cordage. The box shown is an old medical sterilization box (I also use them as river fridge boxes, to keep food cold).



View of toggle trigger, and beef stick bait, under the live-catch box trap.



Other ways to make a box for the box trap include this stick cage (above), and this frame (below). The frame is finished by covering it with netting, cloth, or animal hide, to make an enclosed box. These variations are good traps for pheasants, quail, and even ducks, when used with a treadle.





Here a treadle board with birdseed is tied to the lower cord of the trigger, to trap birds.



Close-up of treadle board, and toggle trigger. Elmers glue keeps the seeds on the slanted board.



Here is a basic bow trap, made with a toggle trigger, and a tripwire activator.



A short length of cordage is tied to the bowstring in a U shape, and hooks to the toggle.



The straight styles of toggle are better for dangerous traps, like bow traps, since they slip less.



The trip-wire cord is tied to the lower cord of the toggle trigger, then run down to a hooked stake, and across the game trail, to an anchor point. The trip-wire is disguised with a layer of leaves, pine needles, or forest duff; whatever type of cover is already in the local area, so that it blends in well.



The height of the tripwire can be adjusted using stones, or forked stakes.



The tripwire crosses the game trail, and ends at a sturdy anchor point.



Deadly traps such as bow traps are completed and set first, and the arrow is added last.

Many traps are illegal, in different areas, so use these techniques for survival situations only.