

To **make your own fire starters**, turn a small Ziploc baggie inside out and scoop out about a tablespoon of any 100% petroleum jelly...doesn't have to be Vaseline to work...but going to stick with the term Vaseline.

Now turn the baggie right side out, with the Vaseline inside, and add a handful of large cotton balls. (Make sure they are *100% cotton*—synthetic fibers don't light well. And dryer lint, though popular in some crowds, tends to have synthetic fibers in it.)

Mush the cotton balls and Vaseline together. You want to get as much Vaseline into the cotton balls as possible, without totally saturating them. You need to have some dry cotton in the middle to be able to light the cotton ball easily. If you only add a light amount of Vaseline to the cotton balls, they will ignite well, but there won't be enough fuel in them to burn very long. If you add too much Vaseline, you'll have to work harder to find cotton fibers to light with a spark. *Vaseline is extremely stable and cannot be lighted with a match.* Need a wisp, thread, of cotton ball. Add more cotton balls or Vaseline as needed.

Before packing these little gems away, you should really try a few out to make sure you've done them right and they are going to do their job when you need them.

Pull one ball out and tease out some dry fibers from the middle. Set it on some foil in a pan and light the cotton fibers. **The fire starters should light with the first match and burn for at least four minutes.**

If it worked, then squeeze the air out of the baggie and seal it. Store the fire starters in your camping gear and emergency kits. If your fire starters didn't burn long enough, work in more Vaseline. If they were difficult to light, store a dry cotton ball or two with your starters so that you can add some cotton fibers to the starters to facilitate ignition.