

Skills My Grandfather Taught Me

You're a lucky person if you had a grandfather to help raise you. Grandparents can teach you things your own parents can't. It's a special gift for a kid to get the gift of 50 years of master from someone.

That was my experience. My grandfather was a farmer and a sailor and a river-man almost all of his life. He passing this week has jogged my memory as to all of the cool skills he taught me when I was a wee lad:

- **How to row a rowboat:** His old wooden rowboat has featured heavily in family photos, family races, and moments of punishing physical exercise.
- **How to use a pocket knife:** I guess this started when he would pare off chunks of apple for sharing using his Swiss Army Knife. He must have given a lot of those knives away to grandchildren over the years.
- **How to find historical artifacts:** We had a big farm with a lot of buried Civil War bullets and artillery shells. He and I combed over our farm with our metal detector looking for treasures.
- **How to pick oysters:** This was muddy business, and I often hated it, but I should have stopped to appreciate how cool it was to be able to get fresh oysters from a riverbank right across from our house.
- **How to throw a cast net:** If you're going to catch shrimp and other river baitfish, you'd better know how to cast a good round net. Thanks to my grandfather's patient teaching, I can.
- **How to roughhouse:** Wrestling matches at my grandfather's house definitely helped to teach me how to throw my own weight around
- **How to set a crab trap:** Essential low-country skill. I'd watch my grandfather stuff a trap full of chicken necks, lower it into the water, and raise it out a few days later teeming with blue crabs.
- **How to sail a sailboat:** Catching the wind in your sail and feeling the danger and power is one of the best feelings in the world. Tipping over and bailing out can also be fun. I learned both from my grandfather.
- **How to drive a tractor:** This distinction goes primarily to my own father, but I'm pretty sure I remember spending a good bit of time riding in my grandfather's lap or by his side as he plowed and/or planted.

I really look forward to being a grandfather. I'm going to do my best to be as good as he was. But I'll be hard pressed to pass on skills as interesting and practical.