

GOLD PANNING CHECKLIST

33 Field Secrets

ALASKA GOLD PAYDIRT

Practical quick-reference guide for field prospecting, paydirt testing, and home gold panning

How to use this checklist: Print it, keep it with your gold panning kit, and check off techniques as you develop them. Use the notes column to record what worked and what you want to test next.

✓	SECRET TECHNIQUE	NOTES / RESULTS
☐	1. Start With the Right Material Observe source, particle size, clay, black sand, and suitability before processing.	
☐	2. Classify Before You Pan Screen oversized material so the pan handles a more uniform feed.	
☐	3. Saturate the Material Completely Soak dry material thoroughly and allow water to penetrate the sediment.	
☐	4. Break Up Every Clay Clump Disintegrate clay underwater so gold is not trapped in compacted lumps.	
☐	5. Load the Pan for Efficiency Use a manageable amount and leave room for water and sediment to move.	
☐	6. Master the Stratifying Swirl Use controlled circular agitation to encourage dense particles downward.	
☐	7. Learn the Gold-Pan Tilt Adjust pan angle gradually to wash lighter material away.	
☐	8. Let Water Do the Heavy Work Favor controlled water movement over aggressive hand motion.	
☐	9. Understand What the Riffles Are Doing Use riffles early, then gentler technique for final cleanup.	
☐	10. Slow Down When the Gold Gets Close Reduce speed and intensity as the concentrate becomes heavier.	
☐	11. Keep Your Movements Deliberate Practice a repeatable sequence: stratify, pause, tilt, wash, reset.	
☐	12. Learn to Read Black Sand Recognize heavy minerals as clues and as material requiring careful cleanup.	
☐	13. Recognize Gold by Shape and Behavior Consider color, luster, shape, density, and behavior - not color alone.	
☐	14. Master the Snuffer Bottle Use controlled suction to recover flakes and small pieces.	
☐	15. Create a Clean Gold-Recovery Area Keep recovered gold, concentrates, tools, and water-management materials organized.	
☐	16. Re-Pan the Tailings Test representative tailings to evaluate recovery technique.	

✓	SECRET TECHNIQUE	NOTES / RESULTS
☐	17. Use Known Gold to Test Your Technique A controlled test sample can reveal processing efficiency.	
☐	18. Measure Recovery Instead of Guessing Record known starting gold and recovered gold; recovery % = recovered ÷ starting × 100.	
☐	19. Process Paydirt Samples Separately Keep representative samples separate to evaluate distribution and recovery.	
☐	20. Use Replicate Tests Several comparable samples provide more confidence than one pan.	
☐	21. Match Technique to Gold Size Adjust water flow and finishing technique for coarse, flaky, fine, or very fine gold.	
☐	22. Use Magnification During Final Cleanup Inspect concentrates for fine gold hiding among black sand.	
☐	23. Keep Working Water Visibility High Clearer water makes sediment behavior and gold easier to observe.	
☐	24. Build an Efficient Gold Panning Kit Core tools: pan, classifier, snuffer bottle, and vial; add tools as needed.	
☐	25. Change One Variable at a Time When testing technique, alter one factor so results can be interpreted.	
☐	26. Develop a Repeatable Panning Motion Practice until the controlled sequence becomes natural and consistent.	
☐	27. Know When to Upgrade Equipment Upgrade to solve a specific processing problem.	
☐	28. Match Your Gold Panning Kit to Your Goal Small paydirt batches, field sampling, and bulk processing need different workflows.	
☐	29. Keep a Prospecting Log Record source, weight, classification, conditions, gold size, recovery, and observations.	
☐	30. Treat Every Pan as a Geological Sample Observe minerals, grain size, rounding, black sand, and gold morphology.	
☐	31. Separate Bulk Recovery From Final Cleanup Process bulk material efficiently, then clean concentrates slowly and precisely.	
☐	32. Protect and Document Your Gold Store recovered gold securely and label source, date, and test information.	
☐	33. Chase Skill, Not Speed Aim for controlled, repeatable recovery rather than simply processing faster.	

ALASKA GOLD PAYDIRT

ALASKA GOLD PAYDIRT

FIELD TESTING & RECOVERY LOG

Date	Location / Material	Starting Weight	Recovered Gold	Recovery %

Recovery formula: $\text{Recovered Gold} \div \text{Known Starting Gold} \times 100$. Example: 0.47 g recovered from 0.50 g known starting gold = 94% measured recovery.

QUICK FIELD REMINDERS:

- ☐ Classify intelligently.
- ☐ Keep material saturated.
- ☐ Stratify before washing.
- ☐ Use controlled water flow.
- ☐ Slow down during final cleanup.
- ☐ Inspect representative tailings.
- ☐ Change one variable at a time when testing.
- ☐ Record results rather than relying on memory.
- ☐ Protect recovered gold and label samples.
- ☐ Enjoy the process - the skill is part of the treasure.