

PREPPING ON A BUDGET

INTRODUCTION

We've all seen the pictures of families sitting comfortably in their underground bunkers with big smiles on their faces. Their living space might be a tad cramped, but it looks like they have several years' worth of bottled water, non-perishable food and a variety of other items at their fingertips. Not to mention every form of entertainment imaginable.

I'm guessing these families did not do their prepping on a tight budget.

I've heard people say, "I wish I could prepare for an emergency, but I can't afford it. I live paycheck to paycheck." Unfortunately, many Americans do live paycheck to paycheck, but proper budgeting would enable many of them to have at least a small amount of income available to prepare for an uncertain future. And it's not like it all has to be done at once. It's an ongoing process. Slow but steady progress will get the job done.

After one month of gathering inexpensive supplies, you might feel like you don't have much stockpiled yet. But after the second month, you'll realize you have more than you used to. Six months into it, you'll be amazed at the supplies you've been able to stockpile, and after a year you'll start wondering where you're going to put everything you've gathered.



The great thing is, it doesn't cost an arm and a leg to do this. For those of us who don't have an unlimited amount of cash to spend on preparing for a potential doomsday scenario, I'm glad there are some simple – and inexpensive – things we can do to get ready for it.

Stockpiling healthy, nutritious food with a long shelf life, plus clean drinking water and water purifiers, is job one. Keep in mind that you might not be able to keep your food cold or frozen following an emergency because it's likely the electrical grid will not be functioning properly, if at all.

Now food, water and water purifiers cost money, which is why I always encourage people to acquire and store these crucial items a little bit at a time. It's much more affordable that way, and you'll be able to track your progress over time.

But once you've put those essentials in place, it's time to start thinking about what you have sitting around your home that you could use for survival, as well as what kind of items you can make for yourself out of cheap materials. In fact, you may already have much of what you need to produce these items sitting around your garage or basement.

Starting on the next page is a list of the “free” stuff that you probably already have around your home, or that you can pick up from your local dollar store. You may be surprised at how many items you can include in a survival stockpile that you've already purchased and that otherwise might never get used. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list by any means. I'm sure



there are a number of other items you'll want to include to fit your individual needs and tastes.

But just before we get to this list, I want to go over something very important. If you're not already in budget mode, you need to get there. And that means always thinking about how you can spend less and save more. Among the philosophies that must become

part of your daily life are:

- Never pay full price for anything. Always look for bargains. You're better off spending time than money.
- Buy items in bulk at places such as Sam's Club or Costco, or when they're on sale in regular stores.
- Cut and use coupons.
- Find and use in-store-only offers.
- Grow your own food and preserve it. There is tremendous savings in growing fruits and vegetables, and storing some of them for the colder months of the year.
- Don't purchase items shortly after an emergency. Prices are generally higher at that time.
- Visit Goodwill and thrift stores to see what they have to offer.
- Let family and friends know what you're doing so they can let you look at stuff before they throw it away or give it away.



How to Make a Nightlight out of a Milk Jug

Take an empty plastic one-gallon milk container and fill it with water. Strap a headlamp on the container's side pointing inward. The soft light it produces is ideal for illuminating the indoors or outdoors. It could be used indoors during a blackout or inside a vehicle, or outside resting on a picnic table while you are working at night or just discussing your survival strategy with family and friends.

- Watch for the best deals on websites such as Amazon and eBay. They could have exactly what you're looking for, for much less than what you'd spend at a local store.
- Check out local flea markets, garage sales and pawnshops, as they could also be great resources as you accumulate the many things you want to include in your stockpile.
- Buy stuff secondhand. Used items – or as car dealership folks like to say, “previously owned” – are often just as reliable as new items, but cost considerably less.

OK, now to that list I promised. After reading it, make your own list and then prioritize it so that you can acquire the items that are most important to you sooner than others.

Duct Tape. You knew I'd mention this one pretty quickly, didn't you? It may be the single most versatile item ever invented. Ways you can use it include fashioning a temporary version of sandals, visors and gloves; holding a cotton ball or sterile cloth over an infected area; fixing leaks in boats or buckets; binding an enemy; making a clothesline; marking your trail; taping an ankle or wrist sprain; waterproofing a wound; protecting skin from frostbite; insulating boots and gloves; and patching a sleeping bag.

Cordage. You should have at least one and maybe two spools of nylon string in your bug-out bag. There may be times when you need thin cordage that is stronger than nylon string, so carry a 20-foot coil of raw steel wire. The single most important usage for rope in the wilderness is dragging heavy items back to your campsite, including game you may have killed. Paracord is a lightweight but very strong cord that will pull heavier objects than rope will.



Cutting Tools. A survival knife is one of the most important items to have in a survival situation, but it shouldn't be the only cutting tool among your supplies. Others include a medium-size lock blade folding knife, a multi-tool, a small or medium Swiss Army knife, sterile-packed disposal scalpels, and an ax, hatchet or folding camp saw.

Emergency Radio. When the grid goes down, it's likely that normal communications will be disrupted as well. Having an emergency radio is essential. It might be your only source for news, and could also be very helpful in terms of learning where assistance is available and which areas to avoid.

Garbage Bags. Sure, you can use them to keep your trash confined both at home and in the wild, but they have plenty of other uses as well. Cut a hole for your head and suddenly you have rain gear that will keep your other clothes dry.

How to Make Survival Knives for \$1 Each

Purchase one or more reciprocating saw blades, also known as Sawzall blades. You can probably find one for \$2 or \$3, but you should be able to find a dozen for \$12. Choose demolition grade blades that will cut through metal, plaster, wood, wire, etc. With a Sharpie, draw the basic design you want on the blade and then grind out the metal to fit the design. Clean it up with a wire wheel and drill holes for handle scales. To temper it, put it in a toaster oven at 350 degrees for an hour. Find some wood or plastic to make your handle, then attach it.



Garden Hose. You don't need a full length, but what you pack could end up helping you not only move water from one place to another, but also siphon gas from an abandoned vehicle.

Canned Food. Some folks aren't too crazy about the taste of canned food, but if you're hungry enough, it will do just fine. Fruits, vegetables and even meat can be eaten directly out of a can, which will keep you going when you're on the run.

Toilet Paper. On the plus side, it's light. On the downside, it's bulky. But as soon as you start thinking about life without it, you'll figure out a way to cram as much of it as possible into a bug-out bag and/or your car trunk.

Towels. You probably have some old towels you rarely use anymore. If you're wet out in the wild, you'll appreciate any kind of towel. In a pinch, you could also stitch some towels together to form a blanket. Add some rolls of paper towels while you're at it.

Hygiene Supplies. If you forget any of these, you will probably regret it. So, pack toothpaste and brushes, soap and shampoo, hand lotion, razors, tissues, sunscreen, combs and brushes.

Feminine Products. In addition to their best-known use, tampons could stop someone from bleeding to death, and could be used as tinder to start a fire. Birth control pills or devices will come in handy because in a post-apocalypse situation, getting pregnant might not be very convenient.



First-Aid Kit. What should be included? The answer is, anything you can fit that you might end up needing. That could include acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil), Benadryl, Imodium, Neosporin, aspirin, hydrocortisone cream, thermometer, cough drops, nail clippers, scissors, cotton balls, adhesive tape, gauze pads, regular and ace bandages, hand sanitizer and iodine.

Weapons. This is going to come down to the weapons with which you are familiar and comfortable. The suggestion here is that each person in your group should have at least a handgun, a rifle and a survival knife. Beyond that, some people may want to have a bow and arrow, while others might prefer to carry a sword, spear or club.

How to Turn a Beverage Can Into a Stove

Take an empty aluminum can and remove the top by cutting around the inside lid. Cut the can in half horizontally, then use a scissors to eliminate frayed edges and trim the length of the vertical sides so the upper part of the can is slightly taller than the bottom half. Use a knife to create a vertical groove along the side of the upper portion of the can, without cutting the aluminum, and stop where the can starts to taper. Do this again around the can to create striations spaced a finger's width apart. Tuck the upper part of the can into the lower part to assemble the stove, then puncture a hole inside the tapered neck of the can below the rim. Fill the can's central cavity with denatured alcohol. Hold a flame to the liquid to ignite. Cookware can then be placed directly on top of your burning stove. When finished cooking, the flame can be extinguished by placing an upside down bowl or cup over the stove. Then pour the alcohol back into its original container.



Pet Supplies. Among the items you should have in a pet bug-out bag are a large bag of the food they normally eat, chew toys, medications, extra collars, leashes and carrying cages, and papers proving they are current with their shots. You should also have a list of pet-friendly hotels in your area, just in case. Websites that feature information about them include BringFido.com, PetsWelcome.com and PetTravel.com.

Survival Seeds. If the crisis goes on for an extended period of time, you're going to need to grow your own food. A nice variety of non-GMO heirloom seeds will do the trick, so acquire and pack a substantial seed vault.

Others: Other items include, in no particular order, a shelter tent, sleeping bags, aluminum foil, bleach, flashlights, batteries, Bic lighters, sunscreen, notepads/pens, super glue, glow sticks, Mylar blankets, gloves, hats, thermal underwear, a whistle on a lanyard, can

opener, dust masks, poncho, safety goggles, sewing kit, toys, games and comfort foods.

Knowledge Is Free, But Not Easy

Not everything about prepping on a budget is about stuff. Knowing what to do and when to do it during a crisis could save the lives of you and your family members. So, take time now to store up as much knowledge as possible regarding survival techniques. You can gain considerable knowledge without a monetary investment, if you're willing to put the time into it.

The examples I've listed below are knowing how to purify water in the outdoors and putting together a family emergency plan that involves your children or grandchildren. In addition, find inexpensive books on survival and read them.

WATER PURIFICATION

If you are out in the wild and do not have a portable water purification bottle, you can use the sun to make your water safe to drink. Here's how:

- Use clean, clear plastic PET bottles or soda pop bottles no larger than 2-liter size. PET bottles are usually marked with the recycling symbol and the numeral '1'. Remove all wrapping and packaging.
- Fill them with water and close the caps tightly.
- Lay them out for maximum sun exposure. A rack tilted at the sun is best, but a flat surface with a good amount of sunshine is fine, assuming the bottles don't roll away.

- Expose the bottles for at least six sunny hours, preferably more, or for two full cloudy days.
- Do not overuse any of the bottles, as you will be ingesting the plastic material over time. Keep your bottles fresh.
- Do not treat too much water at once. The depth of the water is key, as the UV rays from the sun kill bacteria.

The longer you 'cook' the water in sunlight, the less bacteria there will be. The best practice is to refill bottles as soon as they're empty and then let them bake in the sun for as long as possible.

How to Make a Fireless Cooker

Find an old ice chest and several small comforters or foam pillows. Line the bottom of the chest with the comforters or pillows, allowing room for a pot in the middle. Toss your favorite soup ingredients in a pot and bring it to a boil. Put the pot in the middle of the ice chest and then line the sides and the top of the chest with comforters or pillows. Cover the top of the pot, close the ice chest and let it sit (cook) for up to eight hours. The pot will still be hot when you remove it from the chest, so use oven mitts.



CREATE A FAMILY PLAN

It's important that everyone in the family, including children and grandchildren, be on board with an emergency plan. Following are a few tips for parents who have chosen to talk to their kids about being prepared for a crisis:

- Include your children in family preparedness discussions, answering their questions honestly.
- Have your kids memorize their personal information, including their names, parents' names, address and phone numbers.
- Learn the disaster response policies of your kids' school or day care center and have a back-up plan in place for someone to pick them up if you can't.
- Have at least two pre-arranged meeting places for your family and make sure the kids know where they are, as returning to your home in a crisis might not be possible.
- Establish an out-of-state contact known by your children and their school or day care center, in case local lines are down and only long distance circuits are functioning.
- Teach your kids how to use 911 and rehearse what they should say to a dispatcher.
- Make sure your kids know to stay away from downed power lines, utility poles and trees.
- Practice evacuation routes and strategies as a family.
- Place copies of your kids' birth certificates, recent photos and kids' comfort foods in your bug-out bag.



How to Build a Survival Kit for \$10.

Spend \$1 on a cigarette lighter. It sure beats rubbing two sticks together for 30 minutes. Spend \$2.50 on a space blanket. It'll keep you warm enough until you can find some real shelter. Spend \$2.50 on a metal cup, which you can use to disinfect whatever water you find and also use to cook small items and make tea. Spend \$2 on a multi-purpose survival tool. Finally, spend \$1 on a roll of duct tape, which can be used for a variety of activities.

