

BUDGET PREPPING STARTER CHECKLIST

Use what you have - Fill the gaps - Upgrade later

Start before you shop. Check what you already own, organize useful supplies, then spend only where a real preparedness gap remains.

STEP 1 - SPEND \$0: SHOP YOUR HOUSE

- Identify the emergencies most likely to affect your area
- Gather working flashlights and check their batteries
- Find backpacks, duffel bags or storage totes you already own
- Inventory blankets, rain gear, sturdy shoes and work gloves
- Check pantry food that is shelf-stable and familiar to your household
- Gather basic first-aid and hygiene supplies; check expiration dates
- Locate phone chargers, battery banks, basic tools, coolers and tarps
- Write important phone numbers and choose an out-of-area contact
- Locate household water, gas and electrical shutoffs

STEP 2 - COVER THREE DAYS OF BASICS

- Store drinking water for each household member
- Add familiar food requiring little or no cooking
- Set aside necessary medications and household medical supplies
- Make sure you have dependable battery-powered lighting
- Keep basic first-aid supplies organized and accessible
- Include hygiene items, trash bags and a manual can opener
- Plan for pets, infants, older adults and other household-specific needs

STEP 3 - SPEND ON THE BIGGEST GAPS FIRST

- Water storage or appropriate backup water treatment
- Reliable lighting if existing flashlights are inadequate
- Missing first-aid supplies
- Backup phone charging if you do not already have it
- A way to receive emergency information if communications fail
- Vehicle maintenance or basic vehicle emergency supplies
- Extra food, hygiene products or pet supplies you already use

STEP 4 - BUILD FROM 3 DAYS TO 1-2 WEEKS

- Buy one or two extra pantry items during normal grocery trips
- Rotate stored food instead of creating a forgotten emergency stash
- Increase stored water as space and budget allow
- Add batteries, hygiene supplies and medications as appropriate

- Review evacuation routes and transportation options
- Practice using emergency equipment before you need it

BEFORE BUYING SURVIVAL GEAR, ASK

- Do I already own something that performs this job?
- What problem does this purchase solve?
- Is this more important than water, food, medication or household safety?
- Would an ordinary household, camping, hardware or automotive item work?
- What happens if this item fails during an emergency?
- Will I actually use, maintain, rotate or practice with it?

GOOD PLACES TO SAVE MONEY

- Use an existing backpack before buying a tactical bag
- Buy extra food your household already eats instead of specialty survival food
- Consider used backpacks, hand tools, coolers, shelving and camping cookware
- Use ordinary household storage containers where appropriate
- Build first-aid supplies over time if you already have a useful base kit
- Learn practical skills before buying specialized equipment

REVIEW TWICE A YEAR

- Food and water rotation
- Flashlights and batteries
- First-aid supplies and medications
- Emergency contacts and meeting locations
- Pet and household-specific supplies
- Vehicle supplies and maintenance
- Evacuation routes
- Any new gaps created by changes in your household

REMEMBER: Preparedness is not about owning the most gear. Use what you have, organize it, cover the essentials, fill real gaps, and upgrade only when it adds useful capability.