

Prepping 101....



The 7 Worst Rookie Prepping Mistakes

By some estimates, *3 million Americans consider themselves “preppers,” and [Joel Skousen](#) estimates that for every one prepping, ten are thinking about it. If you’re one of those ten, you need to avoid these common mistakes I’ve seen new preppers make (and admittedly some of which I’ve made myself).

*(*The estimates I have are based on what I consider to be reliable information. Trade groups have conducted research to determine the market influence of the self-described “active prepper” demographic. I have not seen these proprietary reports, but I have spoken with individuals who wish to remain anonymous and who claim to have first-hand knowledge of them.)*



1. Obsessing About Doomsday

If a nuclear strike is your primary concern where you live, move. With that exception, the first step in preparing for emergencies is **not** to quit your job, sell the house, and move to Utah. The first thing you need to do is prepare for **likely** emergencies. It does you no good to sell the house and move into an off-grid, radiation-shielded bunker if you don’t even know how much food to store in it, how to filter your water, or how to escape your rat hole if it’s ever compromised. I’m not saying you’ll never need a fallout shelter; I’m saying power outages happen every year and sometimes last several days or weeks, and nuclear attacks are a little more rare.

Assess the risks in your area and be ready for them. The most common risk is interruption of public utilities by any number of natural causes, so prepare to eat, drink, shelter yourself, and administer first aid for at least two weeks before you start digging that fallout shelter.

2. Relying on Gadgets Instead of Skills

Tools are useful, but only if you know how to use them. I do product reviews, so I have a lot of gear lying around, most of which adds some measure of convenience, but very little of it is truly essential. Skills, on the other hand, are definitely essential. For example, I have several types of compact camp stoves that use available fuels like twigs and pine cones to boil a quart or so of water in just a few minutes. Are they handy? You bet. But before you buy any of them, know how to do without them, and spend that money getting your food and water stock up to par.

As another example, I have water bottles with an integrated filter ([Berkey Sport](#)) so I can dip water out of a roadside ditch and safely drink it. But before I ever owned one of those, I knew how to make a filter with moss, grass, a shirt sleeve, and homemade charcoal.

3. Obsessing About “Bugging Out”

If you live in the urban jungle and a hurricane or Nor’easter is bearing down, you might be wise to leave well ahead of time. But what if you can’t? What if your family is scattered around town, and by the time they all get home the escape routes are hopelessly snarled? You can’t risk running out of gas on the highway, so you decide you’re better off remaining at the house. If that’s the case, it had better be ready for you to “bug in.”

4. Not Having an Evacuation Plan

This is the flip side of the previous point — you might live in a relatively secure rural location and your primary strategy is to hunker down in the event of some sort of disaster. You’re ready to bug in until the second coming. That’s great, but what if you have to leave? What if you’re overrun with mobs from the city? What if your place burns? What if it’s confiscated? Your primary location might be compromised any number of ways, so you need a contingency plan for that. It might be a hunting cabin in the next state, or the “old home place” your grandparents passed down, or maybe an arrangement with a friend or family member where you mutually serve each other as a secondary safe retreat. Whatever the case, you need someplace to go and some way to get there, all of which are worked out in advance. Don’t try to set this up while the hurricane is bearing down.

5. Putting All Your Eggs in One Basket

The previous point illustrates a principle that should apply in all aspects of preparation — contingency planning. You need plan A *and* plan B. Don’t store all your food in one room — it might burn, get flooded, or get stolen. Same with your guns, water, money, clothes, tools... Don’t plan just one evacuation route. Don’t have just one flashlight. Make sure your car has a spare tire, a small gas can, and a siphon hose.

Now apply this principle to everything you do by way of emergency preparation.

6. Not Having a Support and Communications Network

This comes from yet another obsession; this one about OPSEC, or Operational Security, which is being extremely secretive about your emergency planning. By all means, be wise about sharing your plans, but no man is an island — you need a support and communications network. Our grandparents called this network “community,” and the people who constituted it were known as “neighbors,” but people hardly know their neighbors anymore. Everybody’s watching TV or playing Black Ops (I can’t tell you how much goofy advice I get from people who’ve only ever handled a First Person Shooter gun). Dependency on the state destroys community (and society in general); we need to rebuild community again.

But back to the point: Yes, you need to be smart about how much and whom you tell, but when unreliable government services go down (they’re always the first thing to go), your neighbors will suddenly be very valuable again — unless they didn’t prepare, in which case they could suddenly become your most immediate threat.

The network is not completely incompatible with operational security. Everybody knows I prep, and a good many people know some of my stock locations, but almost no one knows even half of them, or what is there. So go ahead, develop mutually beneficial relationships and help everyone get ready. When your neighbor preps, it doesn't just help him; it helps you too. And vice versa.

7. Failing to Practice

Would you build a car and sell it without test-driving it? No. Would you serve a soup without tasting it? Of course not. So don't put your family at the mercy of an emergency plan that has never seen a drill. The day your house burns is not the day to learn how to escape a burning house; the day you have to evacuate is not the day to chart your route; and the day the blizzard strikes is not the day to stock up on food and water.

And Here Are a Few More Typical Prepper Mistakes

1. **Failing to Make Preparation a Part of Everyday Routine.** It's easy to integrate basic readiness into your everyday routine. Buy meat by the case and trim it yourself, and use the trimmings somehow. Ditch the lighter fluid and figure out some other way to light that charcoal grill. In fact, make your own charcoal. Check the first aid kit in your car. Change the spare tire, just for practice. Learn a new knot. Plant a garden and tend it... then harvest it! Those skills and the mindset undergirding them have been lost, but you can regain them and teach them to the next generation.
2. **Leaving Your EDC Behind.** It's called an "everyday carry" kit because you're supposed to carry it everyday. If it's too bulky and inconvenient, trim it back or alter your carry method.
3. **Obsession With Prepping.** Let's be clear; a healthy, happy family is more important than extending your food stock another month. Everything in the family begins with the husband-wife relationship. Make sure that's solid above all else, and everything else will fall into place.

Conclusion

Our grandparents didn't have a name for "prepping;" they just called it "living." My grandparents never ate a chicken they hadn't raised themselves. They had a garden and "put up" food every year. They mended clothes. They made scarves out of worn out sweaters.

It's not practical to completely alter your way of life and return to the way your grandparents lived (back then, 90% of the population was rural; now 90% is urban or suburban). But you don't have to do that in order to be ready for emergencies. The only thing that has to change fundamentally is this: You need to regain a certain degree of self-reliance and reliance on **reliable** resources. Your family can't count on FEMA; they have to count on you. Don't disappoint them.



Gear

One of the biggest obstacles Preppers may face is their dependency on technology, gear and equipment. The objective for any Prepper should be to survive for an extended period with limited to no technology at all and limited gear and equipment.

Technology can save lives but you cannot depend on it during a crisis. Technology needs power sources,

maintenance and a skilled person to operate/use the equipment.

The problem for some is that they want to live as well during the crisis as they did before so they begin to gather the gear and equipment to try to make it happen. Survival is gritty and hard work and you will be either too hot or too cold most of the time. Survival requires attention to detail, and some of the details may not mean much until confronted with a catastrophe and then it may be too late.

A long-term crisis can have psychological effects on people as well. Attitudes change quickly and some of you will find that the gadgets you thought you needed will be so much clutter underfoot during a catastrophe.

Surviving long-term is not just about replacing an electrical toaster you plug into the wall with a solar powered one that can be used in the back of your pickup. Prepping and survival is about meeting the immediate needs of you and your family until you can develop alternatives if the crisis is an extended one. Regardless of the situation, your priorities will always be a secure shelter, water, energy and nutrition.

You cannot go from dependency on your local municipality for all of your electrical, water and gas needs to total dependency on your gear and other equipment during a crisis. This is not to say however, you do not need gear, tools and other materials during a crisis. You need to rely on your knowledge and skill as well.

There are no “magic bullets”. Do not get “gear or gadget obsessed” to the point you could not survive without certain things. Survival comes down to common sense, training, certain skill sets and knowledge.

You need to ask yourself what happens if my gear is stolen or damaged or otherwise fails to function.

Survival is not only about having knowledge but can you put that knowledge into practical use.

Water

One mistake that can be made is not having enough water stockpiled because you assumed you could gather water from a nearby lake, stream or river. You need an ample supply and then a reliable and renewable source for long-term, that does not include so-called public water sources. Without water, there is nothing else and life will cease, despite all the gear, guns and ammo.

You need a private well, spring, pond, or seep that you control. Assuming a lake or river nearby can be used as a water supply can have dire consequences. Everyone else will be using the same source and the local, state or even federal government can block or control any source for rationing. Public sources can become unintentionally contaminated or deliberately poisoned or criminal elements can take them over to sell the water back to local residents. Whatever source you settle on, you need a good [Berkey](#) pour over water filter.

Self-Defense

[Guns](#) and ammo in most experts’ minds are to be used during a crisis to protect what you have and that is your family and supplies. Some, let us call them inexperienced Preppers, may assume if they have a firearm then they can take what they need from others.

What you see in movies about the apocalypse, zombies and the government is just imagination. Very little of what is depicted is based on reality, because no one has lived through a so-called end of the world disaster nor has anyone fought zombies.

This brings up another mistake some people may make and that is assuming threats during a crisis will come from strangers and even from the government. In reality, the biggest threat aside from the crisis itself is people just like you, except they had not prepared, so they are desperate.

Parents with sick and hungry children will do anything to provide for their children and violence is by no means out of the questions for desperate parents. Friend's neighbors and strangers will turn violent if the crisis is an extended one. You know when a stranger is lurking around it may mean danger, but seeing a neighbor walking up to the door may not raise any concerns until they demand what you have at gunpoint. People you know will react differently during a crisis and you have no idea how they will react until it is too late. EVERYONE sooner or later will decide to kill you for what you have.

Unbelievably some people are convinced that once disaster strikes rules and laws go out the window. This is where common sense comes in. In most cases the ones with anything worth taking will be Preppers and they will be armed, so assuming just because you have a firearm means you will have what you need is just folly and dangerous thinking. Preppers will not just give up their supplies because someone comes knocking.

The point is that weaponry is not a crutch and it is not the cure-all. Do not obsess over your firearms to the point that you begin to believe that is all you need. Firearms are just one piece of equipment or even call them tools used for survival.

Food

One mistake made is stockpiling foods no one likes just because it was on sale or has a longer shelf life. Chopped and canned spinach may be on sale but it is not much of a bargain when it comes to sitting down to a hot meal.

Food must be carefully planned for and it has to be foods you and everyone one else likes. It must meet the daily nutrition requirements so you need proteins, fruits and vegetables. Beef jerky and Slim Jims may be fine for a couple of days but for long-term you need nutritious foods and it must be what you and your family would consider normal food for real meals.

A crisis can be an adventure for the first several days in some peoples mind but after that, it becomes serious and only those that have seriously prepared will survive. Believe me, you really don't want to be using those recipes for 'long pig' unless you absolutely have to.

Shelter

People tend to assume that damage only happens to other people's homes during a crisis and simply do not prepare for it. If you cannot leave your home and it is damaged you must have the means to make emergency repairs. You may not be able to jump in the car to go looking for the nearest motel and there is no one to call to come make repairs, it is all up to you. You need to shelter in place and it must be a secure and safe place.

Shelter in place, you hear that a lot when talking about survival and the reason you hear the term a lot is because it is important. Shelter is as important as water, food and protection. Without shelter and a place to store supplies your chances of surviving are low. You should have emergency repairs in mind when prepping. Consider plywood sheeting, plastic, and tarps along with nails, hammers, brooms, shovels and so forth.

You may need to fortify your home during s crisis and this means covering all glass openings and hardening some entrances against intrusion.

Considerations

For most, Prepping means being ready for anything, any type of situation whether it is manmade or natural. Preparing for just one type of disaster or obsessing over gear and gadgets may mean you are not prepared for everything. Stick to the basics and you will always be ready.

A **Bug out bag** or B.O.B is a bag that contains all of the necessities you would need to survive for several days, to several weeks after a disaster. The idea is to have your **BOB** packed and ready to go, so you can grab the bag quickly and get out of dodge should a disaster occur. A BOB can also be used as a Bug In Bag.

Most experts agree that your bug out bag should contain enough supplies to last you at least 72 hours. Since most major disasters can interrupt services and normal way of living for longer than 72 hours, I think it is a good idea to have a bag that will allow you survive for an unspecified amount of time.

Make sure you build your bug out bag to fit your specific needs. Some people may require items that are not listed below. Remember these are just some general recommendations to help you get your bag together, or to be used as a starting point. When putting your bag together take into consideration any special needs or items that you or your loved ones might need, including medications, spare eye glasses, etc.



Below are listed some of the items that you may want to include in your Bug Out Bags, as well as some items that will last if the shtf.

When picking out a pack for your *bug out bag* make sure you pick out a color that is low profile like black or earth tone colors like olive drab. Because in a true SHFT scenario your going to want to stay as low key as possible. Also consider choosing a pack that can hold a Camelbak reservoir. The [Eberlestock Gunslinger II](#) pack will allow you to carry a rifle or shotgun easily should you ever have to (*personal preference: [Ruger 10/22](#) + three 25 round [Ruger BX25 magazines](#), and a [Ruger SR22](#) handgun + [belt holster](#) + two spare 10 round magazines + 300 to 500 rounds of [CCI Velocitors](#) + small cleaning kit*). There are dozens of great packs on the market that will serve as well.

A Disaster Plan - This should include emergency locations, multiple evacuation routes, maps of the area, including trail maps. An Army survival manual or equivalent. Also have cash, silver coins & copies of all your important documents (Gun, Fishing, Hunting, passport, Driver License, medical, SS Card, etc.) keep all of the above in ziplock bags to protect from water.

Water & Purification:

- Emergency water ration minimums are a liter per day per person, enough to get you by until you can find a clean source. Your going to want a way to filter your water ([Sport Berkey](#), Life Straw, Purification tablets, Katadyn, etc.) You're also going to want a stainless steel [canteen cup](#) / [bottle](#)

(used for boiling water). When choosing a filter it is a good idea to get information on the filter's micron rating:

Some Contaminants & Their Size In Microns:

Giardia lamblia 8 – 12 Microns • Cryptosporidium parvum 4 – 6 Microns

Bacteria (Salmonella – E.coli) .2 – 4 Microns • Viruses .004 – .1 Microns

Fire & Cooking:

- A good [fire steel](#) and [magnesium stick](#) for starting fires. You'll also want [waterproof matches](#) and a good [stormproof lighter](#), as well as Tinder / Char Cloth. You should always have at least three ways to start a fire.
- Cotton balls with Vaseline on them. Cotton balls make an excellent ignition source to get your fire going quickly and the vaseline will let them burn longer to do so. Keep them in a zip lock bag. You can also use pine tree sap, tinder fungus and fat wood when you find it on your way.
- (**Optional**) Camp stove. I recommend the [Biolite](#) Camp Stove – This is a great stove you don't need to carry fuel for it because it burns sticks, leaves, and pine cones that can be found along the way. This stove is also capable of charging any usb devices like your smartphone, flashlights or batteries.
- Mess kit ([GSI Halulite Ketalist](#))
- [Fishing Kit](#) - small bobbers, hooks, fishing line, bank line, a few lures, some sinkers and a [yo yo trap](#).
- Edible – poisonous plant guide and a knot tying card. (unless you're a pro)
- [Snare wire](#), Rat Traps – Drill a hole in the rat trap and carry a nail or a screw with it for fastening the trap to a tree or stake.
- Three days worth of [MRE's](#) or [freeze dried meals](#), energy bars and/or high energy snacks. Peanut butter. Hard candy. Tea. Broth / bullion packets / cubes.
- Twelve individual Gator-aid / electrolyte drink mixes.
- Sugar / Salt / Pepper / Seasonings

Shelter:

- Tarps (2) Recommend the heavy duty all weather space type
- 0-20 degree sleeping bag, a good wool blanket, or better yet a [modular sleep system](#). All will fit securely tied on the outside of your pack.
- [Ponchos](#) to protect from rain
- [Duct Tape](#)
- Cordage ([paracord](#), bankline, etc.)

Tools:

- A [survival knife](#) ([Mora](#) fixed blade) and a multi-tool (Leatherman [Wave](#) / Charge). Small sharpening stone. Machete.
- A [Sling Bow](#). This is a great tool for hunting
- A [folding saw](#) and shovel. I have the shovel this is a great multi tool
- [Hatchet](#)
- [Crank style flashlight](#). A small flashlight and extra batteries.
- Compass
- Emergency Whistle
- Binoculars
- Signal Mirror
- Gun(s) & Ammo
- Hand & foot warmers

- Glow sticks

Hygiene:

- Toothpaste, toothbrush, wet wipes, soap and a wash cloth, also keep some baking soda you can use it as a deodorant. Don't forget toilet paper.
- **Clothing**, choose your clothes for the climate in your area.
- Socks. One pair thermal type they will keep your feet warm in up to zero degree weather and a good pair of warm gloves.
- A pair of good hiking boots or hiking shoes
- A pair of long pants. I prefer military camo pants they are lighter in weight so if they get wet they dry quicker, they are also ripstop. Make sure you don't get the cheap ones made in China.
- A pair thermal underwear, pants and shirt.
- 2 shirts
- Bandanas – they have multiple uses in a survival situation
- A good hat, and wool cap
- Mosquito net
- Underwear

Medical Kit: I recommend you build your own or buy a basic kit and add to it when you can.

- Allergy medicine • OTC pain meds • OTC nausea / diarrhea / allergy meds
- Prescription medicine
- Band-Aids
- Gauze Pads/Gauze tape
- Alcohol pads (Lots. Cleanup, sterilization, and fire starting)
- Benadryl
- Sling
- Finger splints
- Rubber gloves
- Instant cold compress
- Ace bandage
- First aid guide
- Neosporin
- Burn cream
- Tweezers • Scalpel
- Q-tips
- Antibiotics ([Fish Antibiotics](#) can be used in a shtf situation)
- K-103 tabs
- [CELOX](#) First Aid Temporary Traumatic Wound Treatment
- [Surgical Skin Stapler](#)
- [Sawyer Extractor Pump Kit](#)
- Krazy Glue

Misc.

- Deck of cards (survival / knots / plants / anything educational)
- Food, water, meds, and first aid for pets
- Sunglasses
- [Basic sewing kit](#)