

12 Basic Tips for Getting Started Being a Prepper

Listed by order of importance:

1. Get your paperwork together. Make copies of your driver's license, passport, employee ID and any other ID's you carry. Have these hard copies stored in a document protector and keep a copy with you, a spare copy with a trusted friend or relative whom you can retrieve it from quickly and an extra copy somewhere completely different, like an out of state relative or secure location in another town or state. No matter how much you insist you are who you say you are, no one will be able to do much for you without some kind of proof. Next, copy your insurance paperwork, bank account statements, copies of your utility bills, or just use past bills and copies of your credit cards, front and back. If you do anything online with your accounts, record the logins and passwords for the accounts as well. Keep all of this together with your copied ID's in the document protector. Keep a copy of all of this in your 72-hour kit. Having all of this together is critical when trying to recover from a disaster and you are dealing with insurance companies and Federal relief agencies. Lastly, an inventory of your possessions will be very helpful for recovering property after a disaster or filing claims with your insurance company.

2. Develop a family plan of where to meet and how to communicate in an emergency if people are at work, school or away from home. Have phone numbers written down and with everyone at all times. Have more than one location in case that specific area is not available. An example would be to meet at the neighborhood park or a friend's or family member's house. An alternate would be to meet at a fire station, community building, work location or an easy to get to landmark. Practice this plan twice a year. Make sure the family can meet at the designated location during different times and under different circumstances and can quickly find each other. Remember that normal communication systems may be overloaded or not working in an emergency so have other plans in place to communicate with each other such as radios or by leaving notes or markers in specific locations. Include your pets in your plans and make sure your chosen location will allow them to be with you if bring them.

3. Put a 72-hour kit together. A 72-hour kit is a kit of food, water, first aid kit and medicines, hygiene and sanitation items, clothing, cooking items and general comfort items pre-packed and ready in case of an emergency. This kit can be kept in a convenient duffle bag or storage box. Imagine if you had to stay at home with no electricity, water and heat because of an earthquake or major storm then this kit would keep you and your family supplied for 3 days in that situation. Assume 3 meals per person per day at 1200 to 2000 calories a day and 1 gallon of water per day. Choose food that is easy to prepare. You can and really should add more water to have available for washing and special hygiene needs such as for an infant, the very young or elderly or those that have medical conditions and require extra water or sanitation. Remember to include bathroom sanitation needs. Add some games to break up the boredom and some comfort items such as candy to help with the stress and add a special toy for the kids to help aid in the psychological aspect of a natural disaster or emergency.

4. Put together a Get Home bag for those who work or travel out of town or work too far away to walk back home in a short amount of time in times of a disaster. Include the items necessary for those that might become stranded out of town and have to stay over an extra day or two. Include the items necessary to deal with a vehicle breakdown or becoming lost and having to stay out overnight in inhospitable conditions such as snowstorms and desert environments. Include hygiene items, good walking shoes, spare socks and cold and wet weather clothing. Include a good first aid kit. Add some cash in small bills.

5. Put together a Grab and Go bag, often called a bug out bag in the off chance you have to evacuate your home due to an emergency. A 72-hour kit that is portable can easily accomplish this task. Plan on staying at a location from 3 days to up to a week away from your home and include the extra items you will need for that amount of time. Pack clothing, medicines, sleeping bags and a shelter if planning on staying outdoors. Include an individual and specific bag for your pets. Make sure the bag has all of your important documents included. Add some cash in small bills. Keep this bag packed and put it in a hall closet or other convenient location so you can grab it and go in a hurry.

6. Develop an evacuation plan for yourself and your family. Know where you can go to wait out an emergency in safety and know multiple ways to get there. Make sure your family knows this plan and practice it at least twice a year. If you have the means, have the items you will need stored at the location if possible. Your location may be a friend's house, a remote property or depending on your situation, a hotel room in another part of town or a nearby area. Have a backup location in mind though in case the primary location can't be accessed. Preppers follow the rules of three where one is none, two is one and three is just right.

7. Learn first aid skills. Learn the basics of first aid and CPR for yourself and each of your family members. Once you have a good working knowledge of how to handle a medical emergency, put together a home first aid kit that accommodates the number of people in your family and each of their specific pre-existing medical conditions if necessary. Add to an off the shelf kit to get what you need to better support you. Don't forget to include the first aid needs of your pets. Include a first aid kit for each of your vehicles.

8. Develop a security plan that best suits your individual philosophies and learn how not to be a victim of crime. The safety of yourself and family in a multitude of situations requires a different bit of thought. Learn to make your home more secure from break ins. Install and use better locks on entrance points, add security film to your accessible windows and overall make your home difficult to gain access to. Install smoke alarms in every room, have fire extinguishers readily available and invest in a carbon monoxide detector if you have gas appliances in the home. Learn the basics of vehicle security to avoid issues while on the road. Learn basic self-defense for yourself and your family members. If you choose to include

firearms or other weapons in your plans then make sure you get the training for the firearms or weapons you want to include. This would include less than lethal weapons as well. You have to train with them to be proficient enough to use them during times of stress.

9. Add a few extra meals worth of food to your grocery list each time you go shopping to help build up your food storage. Include a means to store water for your family and pets such as water jugs or a Water Bob for your bathtub or have a means to get fresh drinking water. Work to the levels you feel most comfortable with for your particular situation. Generally, most Preppers try to have 3 months' worth of food and water on hand. This not only serves you in times of emergency but also in times when things don't quite work out as you plan and someone loses a job or an income dries up. It becomes your safety net. Eat the food you buy and rotate what you have. Remember the Prepper rules of three.

10. Add an emergency road kit to each of your vehicles to help you handle roadside emergencies. Start keeping your gas tank at least half full all times. Never let it get below half a tank in case you have to evacuate due to an emergency. Keep up on your vehicle's maintenance and learn to check fluid, belts, tire pressure and wear including the spare on your own to know when to take it in before a more expensive problem develops. Keep a fire extinguisher in your vehicle as well.

11. Learn to do basic home and mechanical repairs on your own. Get the illustrated 'How To' books and basic tools necessary to fix minor problems even if ultimately you have to hire a professional for the bigger items. Although a simple home repair book will cover most everything you will generally encounter and they are simple to understand and follow. As an example, it's easy and cost effective to have the tools and knowledge necessary to stop a water leak on your own instead of having to wait on a plumber to arrive. Each of your family members should learn these skills in case the primary fixit person isn't home when a problem happens. You don't have to know how to rebuild an appliance but you can save yourself a lot of time and money if you know how to change a belt or fix a door.

12. Learn to grow food from a simple potted vegetable to a full backyard garden. If your philosophy supports it, learn to raise animals for food, such as chickens for eggs, goats for milk and fish or livestock for food. These skills will serve you in becoming a self-reliant person and that really is what being a Prepper is all about.