

Natural Disasters - Terrorist Attacks - Food Shortages
Pandemic - Economic Collapse - Social Unrest
SurvivalistsSite.com
and many other situations threaten us

Getting Started - Survival Basics

If you are new to survival or emergency preparedness you are probably a bit overwhelmed at all of the information out there. You're probably also wondering if there is a "Dummies Guide" or a single resource for what you will need to know. Although there isn't a Dummies Guide there are a few good books for people who are just starting out. There are also lots and lots of sites on the web with loads and loads of information and ideas.

On the book front the two main books are the US Army Survival Manual FM 21-76 available from Barnes & Noble for about \$9.00, \$10 in hard cover. There is a new/current version of the US Army Survival Manual FM 3-05.70 that I have only seen in online versions, a PDF version is available in the Downloads Section of the SurvivalistsSite.com Message Forums (Members only).

The second book is the SAS Survival Survival Guide, with the Collins Gem pocket size being the most preferred due to its small size. The Collins Gem version of the SAS Survival Guide will have a new edition available at the end of February 2006, ISBN 006084982, and is about \$8.00. Most people in the survival community list these as the two best survival books out there, along with older versions of the Scouting books.

Next on my list is Dare to Prepare by Holly Deyo. Dare to Prepare is a huge 500+ page 8.5x11 inch format book that is written for the average person. It is available directly from Stan and Holly Deyo for about \$40.00. I call Dare to Prepare the book of lists, it has lists for everything and lots of basic information on emergency preparedness and survival. If you go to www.standeyo.com you can see the table of contents and just how extensive it is.

I have copies of the US Army Survival Manual, the SAS Survival Guide (Collins Gem edition) and Dare to Prepare. If I have to bug out my copies of the US Army Survival Manual and the SAS Survival Guide will be going with me, they are packed in my BOB (Bug Out Bag), Dare to Prepare will go with me if I remember to grab it off the shelf next to my gear. I really can't recommend the SAS Survival Guide enough, I have owned a copy for years and just pre-ordered two copies of the new Collins Gem edition... and I'm thinking of adding a third to the pre-order. I won't recommend something unless I own it and find it useful... or it receives lots of really good reviews... or it is on my need to get list.

Well there you have it, the basic books that are most often recommended and the one I think is probably the best place for new people to start out with.

Now for some practice background information to get you started. What comes next is my thoughts on survival basics, the things that are common to just about every possible emergency, and from which comes everything else. When learning any new skill there are a few key areas that form the core of the skill, the basics. Below are what I consider the basics, enough to serve you well in any situation and enough to get you started. Once you understand the basics and the thought processes involved you will be comfortable with other concepts or areas of survivalism.

There are four main sections to survival or emergency preparedness - Food, Water, Shelter and Planning. There are other sections to survival, but these four are the basics. I will touch on the other more advanced areas near the end.

Food

Without food you will die, it is as simple as that. You need to eat. You need to have food on hand in case an emergency happens. People in the survival community usually talk about "rotation" or "rotating" when they talk about food you have stored. This means eating the food you have stored before it goes bad and replacing what you have eaten with new items. What food you choose to store, and for how long is a personal choice. Having at least enough for one or two weeks is the

minimum suggested amount. Some people store enough food for a year or several years. For more information on food storage see [Food & Water Storage](#).

Water

Again, without water you will die. You need water to cook with, to clean with and to wash with. Most people in the survival community suggest 3 gallons per person per day, I suggest 5 gallons per person per day to allow for extras and for the ease of calculating how much you need. There are lots of ways to store water, or purify water, etc. See [Food & Water Storage](#).

Shelter

Without shelter you will die. This "without x you will die" is really starting to get old, isn't it? The simple fact of the matter is that it really is true. You need shelter from the elements, just as you need food and water. What your shelter happens to be in a survival situation is going to depend on a lot of factors. If you always have your own shelter with you then you will never have to worry about keeping the rain off your head or having a dry place to sleep. Shelter can be anything from your house, a travel trailer, a tent, to a cabin or cave. A small tent or a couple of tarps and some rope will give you shelter when you need it and do not weigh much.

Planning

Planning is the big part. You have to know what kinds of emergencies may happen to you. Every town and geographic area has its very own potential emergencies. From weather and natural disasters to chemical spills and other man made hazards there are at least three facing any one of us. We usually don't think about them, but under the right circumstances what we don't think about can and will kill us. The first thing we have to do is perform a "threat analysis" and see what potential emergencies there are for us in our area. Then we have to plan what food and equipment we will need to survive those emergencies.

In some cases we will be able to remain in our homes to ride out the emergencies. In others we will have to evacuate our homes, this is where having portable gear is a must - you need to be able to get on the road and get out as fast as possible, there is no time for getting everything from the grocery and department stores. A portable kit is usually called a BOB (Bug Out Bag), for more information on BOBs see [BOB Basics](#). If you don't have what you need then it is too late. Stopping at a grocery or department store to get extra supplies is one thing, waiting until the last minute to get basic supplies can get you killed.

If you need to evacuate you will need to know what routes out of your city or town there are. You will want to have multiple routes to take depending on where you are going and in what direction. You may have to take a round about way to avoid traffic jams, etc. You will want to know interstates, state highways, back roads, etc so that you have every option open to you. Mark these on maps you keep with your gear; you want local, state and national maps; and you want to at least drive the routes out of your city or town for a few miles so that you don't have to look at your maps in the event you have to evacuate or bug out.

Advanced

The more advanced aspects of survivalism include having a dedicated BOV (Bug Out Vehicle) and/or trailer that is kept loaded and ready to go; for more information on BOVs see [BOV Basics](#). Some people have survival retreats that they intend to go to in the event that they need to evacuate or bug out. Some people store seeds and gardening/farming tools so that they can grow their own food in the event of a long term emergency or survival situation. In most cases people store what are called "heirloom" seeds, these are older non-hybrid varieties of seeds that produce fertile seeds that can be used year after year versus many hybrid seeds in which the crop does not produce fertile seeds.

Many people start gardens where they live now, plant fruit trees, etc. Some plant fruit trees at their retreats and/or gardens in addition to the ones at their homes. Usually retreats are a country cabin, in some cases it may be land as far away from civilization as possible and includes a hidden shelter (cave, buried house, etc) and buried or "cached" supplies. Some people also bury caches of gear along the route or routes they are likely to take to get to their retreat or bug out destination.

Some people practice what is called homesteading, which are small farms that are as self sufficient as possible. Many people live "off grid" which means they live without electricity in some cases but usually means they have some means to produce their own electricity or use alternatives to electrical appliances. Wood burning stoves and water heaters are often installed in houses to provide cooking, heating and hot water. Gas, diesel and propane powered generators are often installed to provide electricity when the power goes out.

Some people store lots of guns and ammunition. Some people learn to make their own bows and arrows along with other older skills that are not common in today's world. Most experienced survivalists use a number of the skills and ideas without going to extremes.

Most survivalists have more in common with our parents, grandparents and great grandparents in their daily lives than they do with modern families. They raise at least some of their own food and then can it, they have pantries full of food, have firewood split and ready to burn, and are ready in the event that anything does happen. They can get along just fine without having to run to the grocery store everyday or going to a fast food joint, and find power outages inconvenient at most. They are prepared to stay at home in the event of an emergency while also being ready and able to leave their homes if that is what is required.

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