

How to Survive

Three Parts: [Designing an Emergency Plan](#) [Learning Useful Skills](#) [Dealing With Unpredictable Disasters](#)

Hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, drought - the unpredictable effects of global warming and global conflict can disrupt thousands of lives in an instant. The smartest among us will be prepared to survive whatever disaster comes our way. Read on to learn how to take care of your basic needs and handle emergencies with intelligence and skill.

Part
1

Designing an Emergency Plan

1 Disaster-proof your home. Is your house sturdy enough to stand up to heavy winds, flooding, and extreme temperatures? Shelter is a basic survival need, so make sure yours is up to the task of keeping you and your family safe no matter what occurs. Take the following measures to ensure your home will protect you in the event of an emergency:

- If you live in an area where earthquakes might happen, make sure your home is **earthquake-proofed**. If you rent your house or live in an apartment building, talk to your landlord about taking this precaution.
- Have a **fire safety plan** in place. Make sure you won't get trapped in your house if a fire starts. The doors and windows should all open easily. Rooms on the top story of the building should either have an accessible fire escape or a portable fire escape ladder that can be attached to the window and let down to the ground.
- Check your home's insulation. Make sure there aren't cracks around the windows in doors that let drafts from the outside in. If the power goes out, you'll need to keep warm air in the house and cold air out, or vice versa.
- Consider getting a **generator** for backup electricity. This is especially prudent if you live in an area with very cold winters; you may need to heat your home when the temperature drops.

2 Create a secure storage area. Whether it's a cellar, a basement, an attic, or another type of storage area, you'll need a waterproof, sun proof, break-in proof room to store your survival supplies.

- Line your storage area with plastic waterproof tarps so your supplies don't get damp or moldy.
- Make sure there are no cracks or other entryways for bugs, mice, and other creatures to enter your storage area and get into your supplies.
- Have shelving in place to keep food and other supplies off of the ground, where they can get more easily damaged.
- Install a lock on the door to keep your supplies safe from intruders.

3 Fill your storage area with food and water supplies. When disaster strikes, you want to have enough food and water to tide you over until you can get fresh supplies. It's impossible to know how long that will be, so it's wise to have enough food and water to last for at least several months.

- Get enough gallons of water to sustain your entire family for a few months. Remember that you'll also need water for hygiene, cooking, and other purposes.^[1]
- Choose nonperishable food items that fill basic nutritional requirements. Canned meat, vegetables, fruits, beans, and soups are good choices. Dried flours, fruits, beans, pasta, rice, and so on will last a long time without spoiling.^[2]

4 Stock up on medical supplies. Go beyond just having a first aid kit and stock up on several months worth of supplies you might need in an emergency. Keep your medical supplies in a watertight, airtight container in your storage area. Make sure you have plenty of the following:^[3]

- Pain medication
- Bandages
- Rubbing alcohol and hydrogen peroxide

- A thermometer
- Supplies to make a splint
- Tweezers and scissors
- Antibiotic ointment

5 Have extra clothing, shoes and blankets. You'll need appropriate clothing for all types of weather. Stock up on clothing that is waterproof, boots that will protect your feet in the snow, and other clothing that is necessary for survival in your specific environment.

- Wool and other wicking fabric is better for survival purposes than cotton, which holds moisture against the skin.
- Keep several changes of clothes in your storage area.

6 Get your car ready. Make sure your car is always in good repair in case you have to leave the area. Have extra canisters of gas ready in the event that gas is inaccessible at stations. Keep your trunk stocked with a first aid kit, blankets, other other essential items you might need if you have to hit the road.

7 Talk with your family about a survival plan. Having a conversation with your family about what to do in the case of a disaster is one of the best ways to ensure survival. Come up with a plan that works for your area and takes into account the type of disasters you may face - hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, and so on.

- Figure out where you can get to safety if you ever have to leave the house in a hurry.
- Have a signal you can use to alert your family when it's time to take action. Make sure everyone knows their part to play, whether it's getting the pets to safety, making sure the windows are closed and sealed, filling jugs with water, and so on.
- Have a plan in place in case your family members get separated. Make sure people know where to go and how to find each other.

8 Make grab and go packs. In extreme cases you might have to leave your home to escape an emergency situation. You won't be able to bring all your stored items with you; you'll have to take what you can fit in a backpack. Prepare a "grab and go" pack for yourself, and one for each of your family members. Fill it with enough supplies to last a week or so.

- The pack should include a change of clothing, enough dried food to last a week, enough water to last a week, a small water filter, purification tablets, waterproof matches, a small first aid kit, a map of your area, emergency contact information, and a copy of your family's survival plan.
- Place the packs in easily accessible locations so that you and your family can grab them and run if you need to.

Part 2

Learning Useful Skills

1 Learn how to filter and purify water. You can only store so much water in preparation for a disaster; eventually, you may have to procure your own clean supplies. Fresh water from streams, rivers, creeks and lakes almost always contains pollutants in this day and age, so knowing how to filter and purify water is a very useful and crucial survival skill.

- If you don't have a water filter, you can [make one using charcoal, pebbles and sand](#).
- When you run out of water purification tablets, boil all of your drinking water.

2 Know how to identify natural food sources. Learn what wild plants, berries, tubers, and other natural food sources are available in your area. Take a class from a naturalist in your region, or go to the library and learn about the rich resources in the woods, wetlands or other natural areas near you. Learn about animal food sources as well. ^[4]

- Learn how to catch, clean and cook [fish](#).
- Learn which insects are healthy to eat.
- Learn how to hunt [squirrels](#), [rabbit](#), and [deer](#). Knowing how to [field dress](#) animals you hunt is also essential.

3 Practice building fires. You'll need to know how to find dry moss or bark that will catch fire, lay kindling around it to get it burning hot, and build the fire up with pieces of slow-burning wood. Knowing how to build a fire is a basic survival skill you'll need for keeping warm, cooking, sanitizing supplies, and many other purposes.

4 Know basic first aid skills. In a survival situation, you might find yourself in the position of providing medical care to someone in need. You'll have more confidence if you take classes and get certified in basic first aid and more advanced procedures.

- Know how to [administer CPR to adults, children and babies](#).
- Know the proper way to [treat shock](#).
- Know how to [treat hypothermia](#).
- Know how to [save someone from drowning](#).

5 Learn how to fix your car. You're not going to be able to make an appointment with a mechanic if you're on the run from some kind of disaster, so it's a good idea to have some basic mechanic skills under your belt. When your car breaks down, there will be no one but you to figure out how to fix it.

- Learn how to [fix a stalled car](#).
- Know how to [stop an engine from overheating](#).
- Review your specific car model and get familiar with how your engine operates.

6 Stay physically fit. Surviving an emergency situation may put you in the position of needing to hike long distances, carry a very heavy load, endure extreme temperatures, perform manual labor, and stay healthy without a lot of food and water to keep up your strength. Keeping physically fit before disaster strikes will put you in the best position to survive.

- Build endurance by taking time to walk or run long distances several times per week. Practice taking steep hills and exercising in very hot and cold weather.
- Work on [building muscle](#) so you'll be able to lift heavy objects and walk long distances with a pack on your back.
- Knowing [how to swim](#) is also an important skill to have if you're going to be near water.

Part 3 Dealing With Unpredictable Disasters

1 Know your environment. Every region in the world has a different type of threat to take into consideration. What sort of disaster is likely to threaten safety in your area? It's important to know what disaster preparedness measures are recommended by your local officials.

- Make sure you know what to do if you hear a warning siren go off. Depending on your region, it may mean that you need to take shelter, move to a secure location, or take some other type of action.
- If the weather seems threatening, turn on the radio and follow any instructions you might hear.
- If officials are advising that you evacuate the area, get to a safe location as fast as you can.

2 Learn how to handle severe storms. The severity of storms across the world is escalating. Knowing what safety measures to take in the event a severe storm strikes greatly increases your chances of survival.

- In the [event of a tornado](#), take shelter. Get to a secure underground or windowless location; don't go out driving.
- If a [hurricane](#) strikes, you might need to evacuate to get to a secure, safe place.
- To [survive an earthquake](#), drop to the floor, cover your head, and hold on tight until it's over.

3 Know how to survive extreme natural situations. If you end up having to face the elements without secure shelter, you'll need to know how to survive exposure to extreme cold, heat, and other natural occurrences. Do your best to be prepared for the following situations:

- If you're in a snowy place, you'll need to know how to survive in the snow and [deal with an avalanche](#). Remember that snow is itself an effective insulator, so making a snow cave to ride out the worst of the snowy

weather is a good way to survive.

- If you find yourself in a cold body of water, don't use up all your energy swimming; stay still and find something to keep you afloat until someone else comes to your rescue.
- **Protect yourself from dust and sand** by wetting a piece of cloth and holding it over your face.
- **Protect yourself from the sun** to prevent getting heatstroke.
- Know how to protect yourself from animal attacks in case you encounter **sharks, bears, wild dogs, bees**, or other animals that might threaten you.

Tips

- Read books on local flora and fauna so you'll become more familiar with your region.
- Go on backpacking and camping trips to get comfortable surviving outside.

Sources and Citations

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2. <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/f&web.pdf>
3. <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family/get-kit/anatomy>

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