

The Ultimate 75 Item Checklist of Survival Skills



BACKDOOR
SURVIVAL

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A checklist of survival items and skills is useful because it allows you to figure out what you know, what you have, and what you need to learn or acquire.

That being said, some things on these lists may not apply to your situation. Remember that what you need and what skills are most important to you depend on your own unique situation. Thus it is good to have some general idea of what is needed and then change or add to the list to suit your needs. Some skills and gear are universal no matter where you are but you still may need more or less of something.



This list is lengthy but I will not say it is complete. I believe it is more comprehensive than many you will find but I guarantee you that I will be adding to and updating this list as I learn more and think about different situations. If after going over this list, you feel something is missing, please say what it is in the comments section or email me at samantha@backdoorsurvival.com.



Factors To Consider

- How close are you to town?
- What types of natural disasters are most likely where I live?
- How many people do I need to plan for? Think long and hard about this one. Do you have loved ones that may show up? Will they bring skills and supplies with them? If not you may want to talk to them about that now.
- What skills do I already know?
- What skills do others in my household know?
- Are there any special concerns?



Skills



<input type="checkbox"/>	Situation Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Entertaining
<input type="checkbox"/>	Moving with stealth and patience	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching
<input type="checkbox"/>	Defense and traps	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shooting
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hunting and trapping	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fishing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cooking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carpentry
<input type="checkbox"/>	Butchering	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medical Skills
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Preservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Edible Plant and Mushroom Identification
<input type="checkbox"/>	Starting a fire using different methods and under different conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rowing and steering different types of water craft	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sewing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Operate a motor boat	<input type="checkbox"/>	Safely use an axe or hatchet

<input type="checkbox"/>	Use and sharpen a pocket knife or other sharp edges	<input type="checkbox"/>	Select the best spot to build a shelter or for a camp. This means considering the direction that weather tends to come from and typical winds
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct a basic wilderness shelter for an unexpected night out and how to improve it if you must stay longer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Choosing a tree to climb and how to climb a tree safely
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identifying tracks and tracking other people and animals	<input type="checkbox"/>	How to find water in the wilderness
<input type="checkbox"/>	How to tie useful knots	<input type="checkbox"/>	How to sterilize water and build an emergency water filter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Map reading and navigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identification of common poisonous or toxic plants in your area and any areas or regions that you regularly spend time in. If you spend winters one place and summers in another region, know your way around the plants and animals in both
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communications Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Signaling with cloth, smoke, hands, and more
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you live in some areas, knowing a second language will be a very valuable survival and work skill to have.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tree identification is an important skill because it allows you to pick the best wood for a given purpose. Hardwoods are stronger than pine for example and they make much better firewood. Pine and softwoods make better kindling for starting fires or for when lightweight is desirable.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ham radio operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Concealment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Walkie talkie use	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caching supplies

<input type="checkbox"/>	Simple radio repairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	How to make a cache out of everyday items
<input type="checkbox"/>	Packing food items for long term storage	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use everyday objects for weapons
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make a weapon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof items using what you have on hand including pine resin or sap
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tie a tourniquet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Administer CPR
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make a solar still to purify water or desalinate water	<input type="checkbox"/>	Make glue and other adhesives
<input type="checkbox"/>	Build a comfortable place to sleep using materials on hand or those found in the wilderness. Sleep is important for health and survival during good times and bad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Render animal fats. Tallow comes from beef fat, lard from pig fat, and bear makes its own tallow like product that can be used for many things
<input type="checkbox"/>	Animal husbandry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Basic veterinary care skills





Mindset



☐ **Accepting the new reality**

I know that I am guilty of sometimes moping about what I should have done or how I could have changed the outcome of something. Well, that is a mistake and just wastes time. When you accept the new reality and figure out how to deal with it the best way you can, your chances of survival are greater. It can be very hard for people to admit that they do not have much control over major things in their life. In fact, this is a strong enough emotion that some people do simply give up on living during an emergency or SHTF moment. Mindset is so important to your survival.

☐ **Thinking before you speak**

Some things that come out of your mouth can be more damaging than you might realize. As someone that writes 40,000 words a month, I never know how far my words will go.

I have to consider the consequences of what I am saying. It can be impossible to totally undo the damage of some things you say. Consider if what you are saying is actually going to have the effect you want it too and if you are just speaking out of frustration or anger.

☐ Teaching Kids and Teens

Very young kids can learn some skills. Children and teens learn at different rates based on natural ability, interest, opportunity, and quality of instruction and supplies. Start with basic things and see how it goes. If a kid or teen catches on fast and shows interest, you may be able to move faster or learn faster together than you expected.



☐ **Temper control**

Some people get set off quicker than others. Having a fiery temper doesn't make you a bad person or even unpleasant most of the time but over time it can have a big impact on your life. In a survival situation, things can be very stressful so it can be hard to control your anger, especially if you are scared, tired, hurt, or mourning over a variety of things. Extreme loss of temper can lead to severe consequences that cannot be undone and lead to lost opportunities. People may not want to help you that much in a survival situation and you may get a reputation for acting on your feelings and for your own personal gain more often than not.

☐ **Looking at both sides of an issue regardless of your own beliefs**

I am putting this here because it is important to know both sides in order to make good decisions and understand your own stance a lot better. It also shows others that you don't just care about your own opinions and values and you have respect for them as human beings even if you have entirely different opinions on almost everything. This is an increasingly rare skill to see in practice in modern society. If you are in a leadership role in a group in a survival or SHTF situation, it is even more important if you want to be the best leader you can be. You may have to work with people that are not 100% like you during a major situation.

☐ **Sleeping under unusual circumstances**

This is a skill that I really need to learn to do better. If you are like me and the least little thing wakes you or you have a hard time getting to sleep, now is the time to develop a strategy to get used to sleeping with some level of noise or discomfort. This can be very hard if you have PTSD or other trauma that makes you more paranoid or on guard. While a healthy level of paranoia and being on guard can help at times during an emergency, everyone needs to get some level of quality rest in order to stay healthy and on top of things. Some studies show that going without sleep for even a night or getting very little sleep in a night can have the same mental effect as being intoxicated.



☐ **Planning before acting**

Even just thinking and planning for a few seconds or minutes can make all the difference in many cases. Having a clear strategy or possibly even an alternative plan can be a good idea.



Urban Survival Skills



- ☐ **Moving in crowds**
- ☐ **Keeping as much distance as possible in crowds**
- ☐ **Finding food from non-traditional sources**

When regular supplies run out would you know how to source wildlife in an urban environment and prepare it for consumption?

- ☐ **Shooting a handgun or shotgun**

Handguns require practice to use with accuracy. Shotguns are a popular urban defense weapon because the shot is not as likely to travel far enough to hurt people in the apartment or room next door.

☐ Growing food in an urban environment

If you get stuck in a city or plan on riding out a long emergency, you will be better off if you can grow some food. Any additional calories and nutrition you can add is a good thing.



☐ Being patient and stealthy when you move

Selco talks about how it could take hours to accomplish a journey that would have taken 10-15 minutes during good times. You will need to practice how to be silent and patient. If you don't then you are an easy target for your enemies.

☐ Scavenging for supplies

The most obvious places will get looted for supplies first. At the same time, it is amazing how much people will leave behind at the beginning of the situation.

Think outside the box when it comes to scavenging. You may be able to put together something highly useful out of things you gather.

During times of war or major SHTF, there will be homes that are abandoned that contain a lot of stuff. At some point, they are going to get looted. While you don't want to go around just stealing and breaking into people's homes, there is a point where it is inevitable that someone is going to do it.



☐ Assessing threats and scouting out dangers

When scavenging or traveling you need to make the most use of your time and you want to avoid conflict and confrontations with others if at all possible. During a major situation, there will be times when people become very desperate for some things and they will be willing to do more for them. They will also be on guard to the point of acting first and thinking later if you surprise them.

- ☐ **At least know how to avoid standing out even if you like to dress a certain way or look a certain way most of the time.**

I know that some people say that they are always in Gray Man mode. Personally I don't think that is a realistic or even healthy way to live all the time. You also cannot expect kids and teens to embrace this philosophy all the time. That being said, you should think about how much you stand out compared to everyone else.

Also if times start getting weird or tougher, it may be time to adopt more of that Gray Man philosophy. Have some nondescript clothing and if you like to have bright neon hair, have a way to change it to a natural color if SHTF.

How to check things off this list without being overwhelmed or spending too much.

Start out a little at a time.

Trying to learn too much at once can not only be overwhelming but can lead to not learning any skill adequately. It is better to take the time to learn how to do things well then try to do too many at once and feel like you are failing.

Add gear as you can afford it and don't get caught up in thinking you have to spend a fortune.

While buying really cheap or off-brand gear is not a good idea, it is important to understand that the sky is the limit when it comes to survival and what to buy. We live in a world where people are spending over a million dollars for someone else to outfit a survival condo for them.

A good rule of thumb is to not buy the cheapest but don't buy the most expensive version either. A good mid-priced piece of gear is a good idea. If your budget is small, then save what you can until you have enough to buy mid-priced gear.

I just cannot advise people to buy cheap stuff when it comes to items that their life or that of their family may be dependent on, nor can I recommend using resources to buy a ton of expensive gear.

Consider if you really need something or not.



Hey, I get it, there is so much cool survival gear out there that I would love to test out. Sometimes I even get sent some gear to review so I get some things that I normally would not buy due to how much they cost and me considering what Matt and I really need the most at the time.

It may be that it is an item that I would plan on buying later but not right at that moment. I just want to say this so readers understand that when they see me with things like high-end solar panels or power centers, that it is a perk of my job, not because I am spending a lot.

Keeping yourself entertained is a skill that you can practice with what you have on hand. Take your test to a different level by seeing how long you can stay entertained without the internet and major social interaction.

A lot of us are used to being entertained via electronic devices. You need to learn how to provide yourself and your family with some means of entertainment even during hard times.





While it may seem like that is the last thing to worry about, morale and a positive mindset are incredibly important during a long emergency or SHTF scenario. Small simple electronics like an e-reader may be possible to keep going during an emergency but you should plan some entertainment options that do not rely on electricity just in case.

Practice the art of staying in place.

This may sound extreme but there are plenty of people that go a little nutty when they have to stay at home or not be social. Learning how to deal with that during good times is better than being thrown into it.

Practice your skills occasionally even if you are really good at them.

It is easy to get out of practice when it comes to some skills. Shooting guns is a good example. I know that if I do not do that for a while it takes a few magazines to get into the groove again. If I am not feeling 100% or really tired it can be more challenging.

To work with others and survive you are going to have to give up a little of yourself and realize that some things just have to be done. It is not all about you.

People are too caught up on gender. Yes, I said it. The truth is that things have to be done and that may mean that some folks have to do things that they either don't want to do or find "beneath them". In a survival situation tasks need to be divided based on who is the best person for the job. If someone else is going out to get supplies, you may have to do a little cooking, cleaning, or standing guard.

Learning Skills

One of the advantages of the internet age is that we have easy access to a lot of different ways to learn. Another bonus is that these skills and classes are more affordable than you might realize. Here is a list of resources for learning skills.

- Community colleges or centers
- Private Special Interest Groups such as Hiking Groups
- Libraries- My local library system has a ton of courses that you can take online free of charge whenever your schedule allows.
- Preparedness Events such as Prepper Camp or Heritage Life Skills. These offer a good value and the opportunity to meet others that want to learn too.



Test out your survival gear and your skills before you experience a long emergency.

The concept of the “dry run”.

If you want to test out what it would be like at your house in a grid-down situation, consider doing a dry-run where you shut off the power for a weekend. I am not saying that you should do this without preparing but it is a good chance to get your preps in order and then see how it goes.

Everyone in your house should take notes on what was the hardest and what went well. It is better to notice during regular times what you are lacking in the various areas of preparedness and survival so you can take steps now to correct them.

After a dry run, you may look at your list and be disheartened if it is long or if it seems like people didn't handle it so well. You should not allow yourself or others to feel that way. No one gets everything right or knows everything. We learn by experience and by practicing now, you are showing more foresight and willingness to be prepared than most people ever achieve.



Take a look at your list and start making improvements one at a time. Talk to the other people in your household as you plan out how to achieve these new goals. If everyone is on the same page it will go smoother.

You may find that your family is willing to make some cuts in some areas to achieve goals faster and you will have time to discuss the skills and strengths that everyone brings to the table. This can be very encouraging. At the same time, it is crucial to offer constructive criticism too. Just be sure to not just concentrate on what everyone did wrong and barely mention what people did quite well.