

72-HOUR BUG-OUT BAG

— CHECKLIST + FIELD GUIDE —

ESSENTIAL GEAR.
REAL PREPAREDNESS.
NO WASTED WEIGHT.



WATER



FOOD



SHELTER



FIRE



FIRST
AID



NAVIGATION



TOOLS



CLOTHING



SECURITY



& MORE



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Field-testing gear before I trust my life to it.

WHY THIS GUIDE EXISTS

Most bug-out lists online are copy-pasted from each other, padded with things that sound good but rarely get used. This one is organized the way I actually think about it: ten categories, in the order they matter, with the reasoning included — not just a list of nouns.

72 hours is the standard planning window because it's roughly how long it takes emergency services to reach everyone in a widespread disruption — a storm, an evacuation, a grid outage. This bag isn't about doomsday. It's about not being caught flat-footed for three days.

Work through each category. Check off what you already own. For what's missing, that's your shopping list — start with Water and Fire, since those two categories cause the most trouble the fastest when they're missing.

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02 FOOD



03 SHELTER



04 FIRE



05 FIRST AID



06 NAVIGATION



07 TOOLS



08 CLOTHING



09 SECURITY



10 & MORE



01 · WATER

You can go three weeks without food but only about three days without water — and that clock moves faster if you're exerting yourself, stressed, or in hot weather. Water is also heavy, so most bug-out plans rely on the ability to find and purify it along the way rather than carrying it all.

FIELD NOTE: *Priority #1: don't rely on a single method. Filter + tablets, always.*

■ Water filter or purification straw

Your #1 priority — you can survive weeks without food, days without water.

■ Collapsible water bottle or bladder (1-2L)

■ Water purification tablets (backup)

Redundancy matters — never rely on one method.

■ Small container for boiling/collecting



02 · FOOD

Food matters less urgently than water but more than people expect — low blood sugar makes every other decision worse. The goal for 72 hours isn't gourmet, it's calorie density and zero prep time for at least some of it.

FIELD NOTE: Rotate your food stock every 6-12 months — expired bars are a bad surprise mid-hike.

■ 3 days of calorie-dense food

Bars, freeze-dried meals, or trail mix.

■ Small backpacking stove + fuel

■ Lightweight cookware / cup



03 · SHELTER

Exposure is one of the fastest ways a bad situation turns dangerous — hypothermia can set in at temperatures well above freezing if you're wet and exposed to wind. Shelter isn't just a tent; it's anything that keeps you dry, insulated, and out of the wind.

FIELD NOTE: Practice pitching your shelter at home once — first-time setup in bad weather is a bad time to learn.

■ Emergency bivy or space blanket

■ Paracord (100 ft minimum)

Shelter building, gear repair, dozens of uses.

■ Compact tarp

■ Extra socks (seriously)

Wet feet end trips faster than almost anything else.



04 · FIRE

Fire does more than keep you warm. It purifies water, cooks food, dries out wet gear, signals for help, and does a lot for morale when things aren't going well. The mistake most people make is packing exactly one way to start it.

FIELD NOTE: Carry three fire-starting methods. If one gets wet or lost, you're not stuck.

■ **Ferro rod / fire starter**

Works wet or dry — more reliable than matches long-term.

■ **Waterproof matches or lighter**

■ **Tinder (cotton balls, fire starter cubes)**

■ **Small folding saw or hatchet**

For processing wood, not just show.



05 · FIRST AID

Most bug-out injuries are boring — blisters, cuts, twisted ankles — not dramatic. A kit built for the injuries you're actually likely to get is worth more than a huge kit stuffed with things you'll never use.

FIELD NOTE: *If you take daily medication, this category isn't optional — build in a 3-day buffer.*



Compact first aid kit

Build or buy — just make sure it's actually stocked.



Any personal medications (3-day supply)



Blister care / moleskin



Tweezers + small multitool



06 · NAVIGATION

Phones are useful right up until they aren't — dead battery, no signal, cracked screen. A paper map and compass don't care about any of that, and knowing how to use them is a skill worth practicing before you need it.

FIELD NOTE: *A compass is useless if you've never practiced with it. Spend 20 minutes learning the basics.*

■ Physical map of your area

Phones die. Paper doesn't.

■ Compass

■ Whistle (signaling beats shouting)

■ Power bank (solar if possible)



07 · TOOLS

This is the category you'll use daily, disaster or not, which is exactly why it deserves real testing rather than an impulse buy. A knife or multitool that feels fine in your hand at home can fail fast under actual use.

FIELD NOTE: *Test any new tool at home before it goes in your bag — don't let the bag be the first field test.*

■ Fixed blade or quality folding knife

The one tool you'll reach for constantly.

■ Multitool

■ Headlamp + backup batteries

Hands-free light beats a flashlight every time.

■ Small roll of duct tape (wrapped flat)



08 · CLOTHING

Clothing is shelter you wear. Layering matters more than any single expensive piece — a base layer, insulating layer, and weatherproof shell will outperform one heavy coat in almost every condition.

FIELD NOTE: *Cotton kills — it holds moisture and pulls heat from your body. Wool or synthetic only.*

- **Weather-appropriate base layer**

- **Insulating mid-layer (fleece or wool)**

- **Weatherproof outer shell**

- **Extra socks + gloves**

Small items, big impact on comfort and safety.



09 · SECURITY

An often-skipped category. Security here isn't about being tactical for its own sake — it's about protecting your documents, your camp, and your ability to keep moving if a situation turns unpredictable.

FIELD NOTE: *A simple door wedge or motion alarm weighs nothing and buys you real warning time.*

■ **Copies of ID / important documents (waterproof)**

■ **Small amount of cash, small bills**

Card readers need power. Cash doesn't.

■ **Personal alarm or whistle**

■ **Basic lock for your bag/gear**



10 · & MORE

The category for everything that doesn't fit neatly elsewhere but still matters — the small items that get forgotten until the exact moment you need them.

FIELD NOTE: *Keep a written contact list on paper — a dead phone shouldn't mean losing every number you know.*

■ Emergency contact list (physical copy)

■ Notepad + pencil

Works in any weather, no batteries needed.

■ Duct tape, zip ties, safety pins

Repair kit for gear, clothing, or shelter.

■ Comfort item (tea, snack, photo)

Morale matters more than people expect.

BUILD YOUR BAG IN 15 MINUTES

Don't have time to shop yet? Here's what to grab from around your house right now to cover the basics until you can fill in the gaps.

1

Grab a backpack or duffel

Anything you're not currently using — this is your container, not your final gear list.

2

Raid your kitchen

A lighter, a few bars or canned food, a water bottle, a knife.

3

Raid your bathroom

Basic meds, any prescriptions, a small first aid kit if you have one.

4

Raid your closet

One warm layer, one rain layer, a spare pair of socks.

5

Grab cash and copies

Whatever cash is on hand, plus a photo of your ID on your phone as a backup.

YOU'RE READY.

This guide covers the core of any 72-hour bag — but gear is only as good as the testing behind it.

I post real field tests every week — what held up, what failed, and what I'd actually pack again. No sponsored fluff, just what works when it matters.



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