The 72-Hour Survival Checklist

Everything a household needs for the first three days. Gather first, shop once, finish this weekend.

How to use it: find the column for your household, tick what you already have, and buy only the rest. Most of this costs about $50 for two people.

Water

One gallon per person per day[1], for 3 days[2].

- [ ] **Drinking water.** 1 person: 3 gal. For 2: 6 gal. For 4: 12 gal.
- [ ] **Free option:** clean 2-liter bottles filled from the tap. 6 bottles per person. Write the date and refill every 6 months[3].
- [ ] **Plain unscented bleach,** 1 bottle per home, with a dropper.

Food (no cooking needed)

- [ ] **Ready-to-eat canned meals** (chili, soup, beans, pasta). 1 person: 6 cans. For 2: 12. For 4: 24.
- [ ] **Canned protein** (tuna, chicken). 1 person: 2 cans. For 2: 4. For 4: 8.
- [ ] **Peanut butter** or another nut or seed butter. 1 jar per home.
- [ ] **Crackers or shelf-stable tortillas.** 1 person: 1 box. For 2: 2. For 4: 4.
- [ ] **Snack bars.** 1 person: 6. For 2: 12. For 4: 24.
- [ ] **Manual can opener.** 1 per home.
- [ ] Baby food, formula or pet food for 3 days, if you need it.

Never cook with a grill or camp stove indoors[4].

Light and power

- [ ] **LED flashlight.** 1 per person. For 2: 2. For 4: 4.
- [ ] **Spare batteries** that fit them. 1 pack per home.
- [ ] **Phone power bank,** charged. 1 per home to start.
- [ ] **Carbon monoxide alarm** with battery power. At least 1, near where you sleep[5].
- [ ] **Battery or hand-crank radio.** 1 per home.

Health and hygiene

- [ ] **First-aid kit.** 1 per home.
- [ ] **Prescription medicines.** Ask your pharmacist about keeping extra on hand. The Red Cross lists a 7-day supply[6].
- [ ] **Soap and hand sanitizer.** 1 each per home.
- [ ] **Toilet paper.** 1 person: 2 rolls. For 2: 4. For 4: 8.
- [ ] **Heavy trash bags.** 1 box per home.
- [ ] Glasses, hearing-aid batteries and hygiene supplies you use every day.

Papers and cash

- [ ] **Cash in small bills.** ATMs and cards may not work[7].
- [ ] **Copies of key documents** (ID, insurance, bank records) in a zip bag[8].
- [ ] **A written contact card** in every wallet and backpack.

Before you shop, and your 3 numbers

Two more steps that cost nothing and matter as much as the supplies.

Gather from home first

Walk your home with this list. Put what you find in one box or closet shelf.

- [ ] Clean 2-liter soda or juice bottles
- [ ] Canned food and peanut butter already in the pantry
- [ ] A manual can opener
- [ ] Flashlights, and batteries that still work
- [ ] Phone chargers and any power bank
- [ ] Unscented bleach
- [ ] First-aid supplies from around the house
- [ ] Soap, toilet paper, trash bags
- [ ] Blankets and a warm layer for each person
- [ ] A backpack for each person
- [ ] Sturdy shoes by each bed

Check these today

- [ ] Smoke alarms work
- [ ] Emergency alerts are on in every phone
- [ ] Car has at least half a tank

Your 3 numbers

Decide these tonight. Say them out loud at dinner.

1. Our out-of-town contact. Everyone texts this person first.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

2. Our meeting place. If we cannot get home or reach each other, we go here.

Near home: _____

Outside our neighborhood: _____

3. Our cash. Small bills, kept at home.

We have $ _____ today. Our target is $ _____

Finished on: _____

Do This Today

What next? This list is Rung 1 of the Ready Ladder. The full Simple Survival Guide takes you to 2 weeks and beyond, with budget lists from $50, plans for staying and leaving, and a fillable family workbook. Find your weak spots with the free Ready Score quiz at simplesurvivalguide.com.

Sources: 1 Ready.gov, Water. 2 American Red Cross, Survival Kit Supplies. 3 Ready.gov, Water. 4 CDC, power outage safety. 5 CPSC and EPA, carbon monoxide alarms. 6 American Red Cross, kit medications. 7 Ready.gov, cash guidance. 8 Ready.gov, documents. Educational information only. Follow local authorities in any emergency. Published by DJV Enterprises, 2108 N St #16422, Sacramento, CA 95816.