



Beyond the Basics

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Seven Steps for Survival Success

Everyone's survival situation is different, so use these steps as a suggestion and modify them to fit your specific needs. The key is to never stop preparing. Start small and build until you consider preparedness and survival whenever you make your major decisions. Captain Dave's Survival Guide is intended as a map to guide you in this journey. Not surprisingly, the steps below follow the guide:

- Step 1: Identify the most severe threats likely to affect you, so that you can prepare for them first. (This is spelled out in [Chapter One](#).) Think of it as knowing your enemy.
- Step 2: Make evacuation plans and prepare a bugout kit for yourself and each member of your family. Not coincidentally, this is covered in [Chapter Two](#) of Captain Dave's Survival Guide.
- Step 3: Prepare a permanent survival kit for your car. This will serve you well if you need to bug out or if you are caught away from your home. There's an example of an automotive kit in [Chapter Three](#) under shelter.
- Step 4: Start building your food and water stash at home. (Food storage is discussed in depth in both the [food storage FAQ](#) and in the [food section of this guide](#). Techniques for saving money while buying food are covered below).
- Step 5: Start acquiring survival tools. These could be anything from a

plastic wrench to turn off the gas to a chainsaw. A [list of tools](#) is provided as a resource for you.

- Step 6: Start expanding your knowledge base through reading and taking courses. Build a survival library. You should review our list of [survival links](#) for online resources and visit [Captain Dave's Book Shelf](#) for some good reading.
- Step 7: When you make large purchases, such as your car and home, consider its application for survival and preparedness reasons. This means avoid hurricane prone areas and stay well away from the fault line.

Additional Steps

You should be adding to your survival skills or supplies every week. Sound hard? It doesn't have to be. It could be as simple as adding a few purchases during your weekly shopping trip. Or it could mean picking up a new magazine at the newsstand. Or you could rent or buying a book or video on a survival-related subject.

Your best weapon is your mind, and reading and practicing will help polish and improve your survival skills. Some skills, such as identifying and gathering foods in the wild, are obviously and directly survival-related. Others, such as learning to weld or repair small engines, may be more of a stretch. But who's to say your future survival situation might not require someone who can weld a water-storage tank or repair a generator?

Rehearsal

Planning is important, but rehearsal is when you will test your plan and identify flaws. Rehearsal is simply pretending you are in a survival situation and acting accordingly. Here are some survival examples to try:

- Try living for a weekend without electricity. You can do this the real way by shutting of the breaker (to prevent cheating) or the easy way by just "pretending." If you do the latter, you should fine each other for violating the rules. The exercise will teach you that boiling water over a camp stove or a fire in the back yard just to make you're morning coffee can really wreck your normal morning routine. But hopefully the experience will also help you identify missing supplies, bad ideas and develop a new, stronger plan.

- Try to evacuate your family to another location (anywhere from a friend or relatives to a motel 100 miles away). Give yourselves 20 minutes to pack. Once you've reached your destination make a list of everything you forgot and then add it to your bug out bag. Once you've settled in at your destination, take a minute to think how you would feel if everything you left behind was destroyed by a fire or if everything below the second floor was damaged or destroyed by a flood. Revise your storage and survival plans accordingly.
- Go for a drive one Saturday in the fall. Pull over in a remote area (if it's safe) and spend the night there with only the supplies on hand in your car.
- Try eating only your survival foods for a weekend or even a week. This is a good one if you're ready to rotate out some of your food. It also has the added benefit of letting you identify any dishes you can't stand or to realize you need to add some spices and a cook book to your stash.

Developing a Survival Mindset

Being mentally prepared is a key to successful survival. Just as athletes can improve their performance by mentally reviewing their actions before the big game, you can improve your performance in a survival situation by reviewing your options and plans before you need them. Play scenarios through your head and rehearse your options and actions. For example:

- If you are stuck in traffic, imagine what you would do if a large earthquake struck. Where would you go? What would you do? (If you're not in an earthquake-prone area, think what you would do if you saw a huge funnel cloud heading towards you.)
- In your work place, think what you would do if an ex-employee returned to work one day a bit drunk and verbally abusive. You know he owns guns, but you don't see one on him. How do you react?
- If you're traveling out of town or in any unfamiliar area, think about what you would do if you were stranded due to a breakdown or if the area was suddenly hit by a flash flood. What would you do to increase your chance of survival?
- You're in a convenience store picking up milk and as you turn around from the cooler, you see a man holding a gun on the cashier. What do you do?

(Maybe I am being cynical, but by expecting the worse, I am never disappointed and occasionally receive a pleasant surprise. After all, we're not practicing how to survive winning the lottery or getting a promotion and a big raise at work.)

Survival Awareness

Part of developing a survival mindset is being aware of your situation. The military developed a set of color codes which Col. Jeff Cooper (a respected firearms trainer) adapted for personal "street" survival by those who carry a firearm. Captain Dave has adapted and modified those again to pertain to survival in the broader sense:

Condition White An individual in Condition White is totally unaware that the world is an unpredictable (at best) place and that they could be put in danger by a man-made or natural disaster with little or no warning. They suffer from the misguided belief that the government will protect them and keep them safe.

Condition Yellow An individual in Condition Yellow has accepted responsibility for his or her personal survival. They have admitted that the veneer of civilization can be wiped away, catapulting us back to an era where our modern conveniences don't work. They realize that the police cannot protect them before a crime has been committed. They realize that while mankind can harness some of nature's powers, and predict some of her behavior, it cannot stand against her fury.

This individual has started making preparations to protect themselves and their loved ones from potential disasters. They monitor the news for weather-related danger or potential civil unrest. By reading this far into Captain Dave's Survival Guide, you are probably in condition Yellow.

Condition Orange You are in Condition Orange when you realize a dangerous event is on the horizon and looming closer. It could be a hurricane heading towards you, an impending snow storm or a gang of youths crossing the street on a course ready to intercept you. In condition Orange, you are preparing to survive an impending situation. This could mean filling improvised water tanks or bringing extra fire wood into the house to dry. It could be loading the car in preparation to evacuate or hanging hurricane shutters.

(Note, in some emergencies -- like an earthquake or terrorist bombing -- you may go straight from Condition Yellow to Condition Red or Black.)

Condition Red You are in a survival situation and the dangerous event is there NOW. This means the bullets are flying, or the water is rising or the wind is howling, the electricity is out and the snow is piling up. You're most important priority is to ride out the moment, to survive the immediate event. This probably means taking shelter or running or, depending on the situation, fighting back.

Condition Black In Captain Dave's version of the color code, Condition Black is after the catastrophic event, but before the situation has returned to normalcy. You still are depending on your survival stash and skills to survive, but the danger is longer term, not immediate.

Examples of condition black could be the earthquake that is over, but you can't return to your home. Or the river has crested, but it will be days before your can return home and longer before you are cleaned out. Or the riots have died down, but you dare not leave your house or neighborhood. Or the snow has stopped but the electricity has not been restored, and it will be a few days before the plows dig you out.

Think about your worst-case scenario and determine how long you might have to survive in condition black. Remember that in a catastrophic event, such as nuclear war, a terrible plague, a comet strike or an alien invasion (people have

been e-mailing me asking me why I haven't addressed the latter two) "normalcy" may only be in your memory.

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