A FREE COMPANION TO THE ULTIMATE BUG OUT BAG GUIDE

Ready by the Door

Printable checklists for building, packing, checking and rehearsing a bug out bag that works when you have two minutes to leave.



RICHARD LOWE

How to Use These Checklists

Print them, check them, and keep a copy in the bag itself.

The Ultimate Bug Out Bag Guide explains the thinking behind every item: what it does, what it weighs, and when you can skip it. These pages turn that thinking into something you can hold a pen over. Use them for your first build, then again every six months when the clocks change.

1. **The bedside kit and the core five**, for the emergency that gives you no warning at all.
2. **The three-tier build**, so you spend money in the right order.
3. **The full bag checklist**, category by category.
4. **The medication kit** and its monthly log.
5. **Documents and the vehicle kit.**
6. **The maintenance log and drills**, so the bag still works the day you need it.

> *If you can't reach it in the dark, while the ground is shaking, while debris is falling, then it might as well not exist.*

Part 1: The First Three Minutes

Some emergencies give you no notice. What saves you is what is already within arm's reach.

Beside the bed

- [ ] Flashlight you can find without looking
- [ ] Shoes, to protect your feet from broken glass
- [ ] Clothes suited to the current season
- [ ] Keys
- [ ] A radio you can grab in the dark

On your person every day: the core five

- [ ] **Light:** a keychain or pocket LED light, separate from your phone
- [ ] **Cutting tool:** a small folding knife or multi-tool that is legal where you live and travel
- [ ] **Fire:** a basic lighter
- [ ] **Communication:** a charged phone with emergency contacts stored and offline maps downloaded
- [ ] **Cash:** a few small bills tucked away where you won't spend them casually

Optional small additions: a whistle on your keys, a length of paracord, purification tablets, a space blanket, a few bandages. The test for any item is whether you will carry it every single day, including inconvenient days.

Part 2: Build It in Three Tiers

Start with what kills unprepared people: no water, no light, no first aid, no way to signal for help.

Tier one: the immediate foundation (under $100)

- [ ] A decent backpack around 40 liters (used is fine if it's structurally sound)
- [ ] A case of water bottles plus a package of purification tablets
- [ ] Three days of calorie-dense, shelf-stable food: energy bars, nuts, jerky
- [ ] A reliable LED headlamp with spare batteries
- [ ] A basic first aid kit: bandages, gauze, medical tape, antiseptic, pain medication
- [ ] A pealess whistle
- [ ] A lighter and waterproof matches
- [ ] A written list of emergency contacts on waterproof paper
- [ ] Comfortable shoes by the bed

Tier two: the next three months ($150 to $300)

- [ ] A quality multi-tool
- [ ] A portable water filter as a backup to the tablets
- [ ] A rain jacket for your climate
- [ ] A power bank that can charge your phone twice
- [ ] A space blanket or emergency bivvy
- [ ] A signal mirror
- [ ] A cash reserve in small bills
- [ ] Copies of your most important documents

The book's suggestion: set a standing monthly budget of fifty dollars and treat it like any other recurring expense.

Tier three: refinement over time ($300 and up)

- [ ] A framed hiking pack with a hip belt
- [ ] Better footwear
- [ ] A canister stove system
- [ ] A sleeping bag and pad for your climate
- [ ] Two-way radios for the family
- [ ] A solar charging panel and a weather radio

Buy tier three only when tiers one and two are fully stocked and maintained. Sequence matters. Skip the pre-assembled kits from big box stores; the same money buys better components chosen one at a time.

Part 3: The Full Bag Checklist

Condensed from the Appendix of The Ultimate Bug Out Bag Guide. Loaded weight: no more than about 20 percent of your body weight.

Water and hydration

- ☐ Four 16 oz water bottles
- ☐ Two collapsible 1 L containers
- ☐ Purification tablets (two bottles)
- ☐ Pump or squeeze filter
- ☐ Purification drops (backup)
- ☐ UV sterilization pen (optional)

Food and cooking

- ☐ 6 to 9 energy bars, heat tested
- ☐ 1 to 2 lbs nuts or trail mix
- ☐ 4 to 8 oz jerky or dried protein
- ☐ 3 to 4 packets instant oatmeal
- ☐ Three MREs or freeze-dried meals
- ☐ Hard candy or comfort food
- ☐ Coffee or tea if you depend on caffeine
- ☐ Dietary-specific items
- ☐ Canister stove (outdoors only)
- ☐ Two small fuel canisters
- ☐ 900 ml pot with lid
- ☐ Folding windscreen
- ☐ Long-handled spoon
- ☐ 12 solid fuel tablets

Power, light, communication and maps

- ☐ Headlamp with red mode, spare batteries
- ☐ Backup flashlight, keychain lights, solar lantern
- ☐ 10,000 and 20,000 mAh power banks
- ☐ Foldout solar panel
- ☐ AM/FM/NOAA weather radio
- ☐ Pair of FRS two-way radios
- ☐ Charging cables plus backups
- ☐ Paper local map and road atlas
- ☐ Compass; offline maps on phone

Shelter, sleep and clothing

- ☐ Three space blankets, hand warmers
- ☐ Emergency bivvy sack
- ☐ Lightweight tarp
- ☐ Closed-cell foam pad
- ☐ Bag liner or light sleeping bag
- ☐ 50 ft paracord, four carabiners
- ☐ Broken-in boots or trail shoes
- ☐ Three pairs wool or synthetic socks
- ☐ Two base layer tops and bottoms
- ☐ Fleece or synthetic insulating layer
- ☐ Rain jacket, spare hiking pants
- ☐ Work gloves, knit hat, sun hat

Tools, fire and signaling

- ☐ Multi-tool and small fixed blade
- ☐ Duct tape, electrical tape
- ☐ 20 cable ties, 2 tubes super glue
- ☐ Wire, sewing kit, 4 bungee cords
- ☐ Two lighters, waterproof matches
- ☐ Ferro rod; petroleum jelly cotton balls
- ☐ Whistle clipped outside the bag
- ☐ Signal mirror; 4 chemical light sticks

Health, hygiene and morale

- ☐ Bandages, gauze, tape, wraps, antiseptic
- ☐ Ibuprofen, acetaminophen, aspirin
- ☐ Antihistamine, anti-diarrheal
- ☐ Tourniquet and pressure bandage
- ☐ Medical information card, thermometer
- ☐ Body wipes, toothbrush, sanitizer
- ☐ Toilet paper, sunscreen, insect repellent
- ☐ Book, cards, journal, a familiar item

Prescription medications do not go in this bag. They live in their own kit (Part 4).

Part 4: The Medication Kit

It lives in its own labeled box in a kitchen cupboard. When you leave, grab the bag with one hand and the kit with the other.

- [ ] Hard-sided waterproof case with a gasket seal, labeled MEDICATIONS and your name
- [ ] A 30-day supply of every prescription where you can manage it; never less than one week
- [ ] Prescriptions in original labeled bottles (controlled substances always stay in the pharmacy bottle)
- [ ] Over-the-counter: ibuprofen, acetaminophen, antihistamine, anti-diarrheal, antacid, decongestant, throat lozenges, antibiotic ointment
- [ ] Printed medication list on top, in a waterproof sleeve, plus a desiccant packet
- [ ] Second copy of the list in the bag's document pouch; third copy in your wallet
- [ ] Everyone who might evacuate with you knows where the kit is

My medication list

MEDICATION	DOSE	HOW OFTEN	WHAT IT TREATS	PRESCRIBER AND PHONE

Pharmacy and phone: _____

The monthly check (first of every month, under five minutes)

Check three things: expiration dates, quantity, condition. Anything expiring within sixty days rotates into daily use and gets replaced from your next fill. Anything discolored, odd smelling or in damaged packaging gets replaced regardless of date.

MONTH	DATES OK	QUANTITY OK	TO REPLACE OR REFILL

When a disaster is declared, many states relax the usual refill rules for a time. Refill as soon as you can safely reach a pharmacy, while you still have some left. The book's Chapter 21 explains the Florida statutes and the federal EPAP program.

Part 5: Documents and the Vehicle Kit

Copies in the bag, originals in a fireproof safe at home, encrypted scans in the cloud.

Document pouch

- [ ] Driver's license or state ID
- [ ] Passport
- [ ] Social Security card
- [ ] Birth certificate
- [ ] Insurance policies and cards
- [ ] Financial account information
- [ ] Medical records, prescription list
- [ ] Property documents and photos
- [ ] Will, power of attorney
- [ ] Contact list on waterproof paper
- [ ] Encrypted USB drive of copies
- [ ] Cash spread through the bag
- [ ] Critical passwords, stored securely
- [ ] Medical alert card in your wallet

Contacts to write down

WHO	NAME	PHONE AND OTHER WAYS TO REACH THEM
Out-of-area contact (communication hub)		
Primary meeting place, near home		
Secondary meeting place, outside the neighborhood		
Doctor and pharmacy		
Local emergency management office		

Lives in the car

- [ ] Window breaker and seatbelt cutter on the visor or door pocket
- [ ] Tank (or battery) never below half in hurricane season
- [ ] Full-size spare if it fits; know your spare's limits
- [ ] Charged lithium jump starter
- [ ] One gallon of water per regular rider, rotated every three months
- [ ] Heat-stable food that survived a summer in the trunk
- [ ] Three LED road flares
- [ ] Vehicle flashlight within reach of the driver's seat
- [ ] Crank or solar radio in the glove compartment
- [ ] First aid kit with tourniquet, pressure bandage, hemostatic gauze
- [ ] Blanket and a sealed change of clothes
- [ ] Tow strap, folding shovel, motor oil, coolant
- [ ] Part of the kit in the passenger compartment, not all in the trunk
- [ ] No cash, expensive gear or controlled drugs left in the car

Part 6: Keep It Working

The confidence that matters in an emergency comes from handling the gear, not owning it.

Every six months, when the clocks change

- [ ] Empty the bag and inspect every item
- [ ] Test every battery and electronic device
- [ ] Rotate food into regular meals; replace
- [ ] Replace stored water
- [ ] Swap seasonal clothing
- [ ] Check dates: first aid meds, tablets, sunscreen, chem lights
- [ ] Test zippers, buckles and moving parts
- [ ] Update documents and contacts

Every year

- [ ] Replace all batteries
- [ ] Replace anything structurally worn
- [ ] Verify and replenish the cash
- [ ] Review routes and meeting places

Drills worth running

- [ ] Time yourself grabbing the bag and the medication kit and getting out the door
- [ ] Do it again in the dark, and again from a different room
- [ ] Walk the neighborhood for 30 minutes wearing the loaded bag
- [ ] Cook one meal outdoors on the emergency stove and purify one batch of water
- [ ] Practice the family communication plan and drive both evacuation routes

Maintenance log

DATE	CHECKED BY	REPLACED, ADDED OR STILL NEEDED

The Whole Story

These checklists tell you what to pack. The Ultimate Bug Out Bag Guide tells you why: the trade-offs behind every item, how to adjust for your region, your family and your health, and what the Northridge earthquake, a mountain wildfire and Hurricane Milton taught Richard Lowe about being ready.



The Ultimate Bug Out Bag Guide: What Goes In, and Why
Prepared, Not Paranoid

Get the full book

thewritingking.com/library/the-ultimate-bug-out-bag-guide/

More free books: free.coolauthor.com

Copyright © 2026 by Richard Lowe. You may print and share this checklist for personal, noncommercial use.