

Creating a preparedness kit (often referred to as a go-bag) is one of the most crucial aspects of emergency planning. Whether you need to evacuate or shelter in place, having a go-bag packed and ready ensures you and your family can leave quickly without scrambling for essentials.

Here's some tips for packing an effective go-bag, organized by essential categories:

1. Water & Hydration

- a. Water (1 gallon per person per day):
 - i. Ensure you have enough water to last at least 3 days.
 - ii. Consider water purification tablets or a filter (e.g., LifeStraw) in case you run out of water or need to source it from nearby.
- b. Water bottle: A reusable bottle that you can refill, preferably insulated for keeping drinks cool or warm.

2. Food & Nutrition

- a. Non-perishable food: Choose foods that are easy to prepare and require no refrigeration. Some good options include:
 - i. Canned goods (tuna, beans, vegetables, fruit)
 - ii. Energy bars (granola, protein bars)
 - iii. Dried fruit, nuts, or trail mix
 - iv. Freeze-dried meals (lightweight and can be rehydrated with water)
 - v. MREs (Meals Ready to Eat, if you're looking for something more substantial)
- b. Can opener: If you include canned foods, make sure you have a manual can opener.

3. Clothing & Protection

- a. Change of clothes: Pack clothes that are weather-appropriate (including rain gear, lightweight jacket, or thermal wear in colder months).
- b. Sturdy shoes/boots (preferably waterproof, for walking long distances)
- c. Socks, underwear, and extra layers
- d. Hat, gloves, and sunglasses for sun protection
- e. Poncho or emergency rain gear
- f. Bandana or scarf: Multipurpose, can be used for first aid, covering the mouth/nose, or as a makeshift towel

4. First Aid & Health

- a. First-aid kit: Include the basics, like bandages, antiseptic wipes, gauze, tweezers, and medical tape.
- b. Expand the kit to include:
 - i. Pain relievers (Advil, Tylenol)
 - ii. Antihistamines (for allergies)
 - iii. Personal prescription medications (7-14 day supply, if needed)
 - iv. Anti-diarrheal medication
 - v. Antibiotic ointment
 - vi. Thermometer
 - vii. Eye drops (for dust or irritation)
- c. Face masks for dust or infection prevention
- d. Hand sanitizer or disinfectant wipes
- e. Gloves: Disposable gloves in case of injury or to handle potentially contaminated materials.

5. Communication & Navigation

- a. Cell phone and charger: Ideally, a solar charger or a portable power bank in case of a power outage. Consider a battery-operated phone charger for longer trips.
- b. Emergency radio: A battery-powered or solar-powered NOAA weather radio is essential for receiving updates on storm conditions, evacuations, and emergency alerts.
- c. Whistle: If you need to signal for help.
- d. Local / regional maps (physical maps, not just on your phone) and compass should mobile maps become unavailable (e.g., phone battery failure, bandwidth failure or overload, etc).
- e. Notepad & pen: For jotting down important information.

6. Important Documents

- a. Identification: Copies of IDs, passports, and driver's licenses stored in a waterproof bag.
- b. Medical information: Copies of medical records for all family members, including prescriptions and any special health conditions.
- c. Insurance information: Health, home, and auto insurance policies.
- d. Bank & credit card information: Keep in a sealed plastic bag for protection.
- e. Emergency contact list: Include names, phone numbers, and addresses.

7. Tools & Equipment

- a. Multi-tool or knife: A good multi-tool (e.g., Leatherman) or a sturdy pocketknife will help you perform a variety of tasks.
- b. Duct tape: Can be used for everything from sealing bags to temporary repairs.
- c. Bungee cords or paracord: Useful for securing items or creating makeshift shelters.
- d. Flashlight (LED) and extra batteries: Preferably a headlamp for hands-free use.
- e. Firestarter: Waterproof matches, a lighter, or a firesteel for warmth and cooking.

8. Hygiene & Comfort

- a. Toiletries: Toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, and toilet paper. Consider wet wipes for cleaning up if there's no access to running water.
- b. Tissues and sanitary napkins
- c. Portable toilet or toilet bags (for long-term or more isolated scenarios)
- d. Personal hygiene items: Feminine products, shaving supplies, etc.
- e. Towel: A small microfiber towel that dries quickly.

9. Lighting & Fire

- a. Flashlights (with extra batteries) or a headlamp
- b. Candles or tea lights (if you have the ability to safely burn them)
- c. Glow sticks (for signaling or low-level lighting)
- d. Fire starter kit: Waterproof matches, lighters, firesteel, or magnesium fire starter.

10. Extra Items for Specific Needs

- a. For babies or small children:
 - i. Diapers, wipes, formula, and baby food
 - ii. Pacifiers, comfort toys, and a favorite blanket
- b. For elderly family members:
 - i. Incontinence products, hearing aids, or mobility devices
 - ii. Specialized medications or equipment
- c. For pets:
 - i. Pet food, bowls, leash, and medications
 - ii. Pet carrier or transport bag

11. Money & Financial Preparedness

- a. Cash: At least \$200 in small bills (ATM systems may be down during an emergency).
- b. Emergency credit cards or gift cards: Load them with emergency funds.

Packing Tips for Your Go-Bag:

- Use waterproof bags: Protect electronics, documents, and sensitive items by packing them in waterproof pouches or Ziploc bags.
- Pack light but smart: You should be able to carry the bag easily. Think of the most critical items you'll need if you need to leave quickly.
- Add a personal touch: Small items that help comfort you in stressful situations (family photos, favorite snacks, etc.)
- Check and update regularly: Review and rotate the contents of your go-bag every 6 months to ensure everything is still in working order (e.g., replace batteries, food, medications).