



Once upon a time I was a novice prepper and there are days that I still feel that way. Having chosen the prepper lifestyle, I always find myself in search of that next greatest thing - whether it is a piece of gear, a new type of freeze dried food, a fabulous new prepping book or a DIY survival skill. No matter what it is, there always seems to be something out there to capture my attention.

While I do believe that it is worthwhile to be looking forward, it is also good to reflect on past prepping mistakes, to learn from them, and to move forward with a new sense of resolve. Today I am going to share some common prepper mistakes. Many of these - especially those at the top of the list - I have made myself. Others - through luck or planning - I have managed to avoid.

Whatever your personal situation, take some time to review this list and if you find an area where you are remiss, consider the past a learning experience and do what I do - make adjustments and move forward.

The 9 Mistakes Typically Made by Preppers

1. Failing to inventory stored food supplies.

Guilty as charged. It is easy to amass a sizable supply of food in a short period of time. This is especially true if you tend to purchase a little bit extra each time you shop. Before you know it,

you have a closet or pantry full of stuff but no clue as to what is inside. In my case, I have some well-marked buckets of food but no master list. I know I have 30 pounds of coffee beans - or is it 40? And #10 tins of freeze-dried meats, fruits and veggies? They are packed away in carton boxes and I know I have lots of cartons but just exactly what and how much?

I have been storing food for so long that I cannot rely on memory alone to know what I already have and what is still needed. This is my number one mistake and one that I plan to remedy in two ways. First of all, everything new that I purchase will be inventoried right away. This is what I call my going forward plan. Then, as time allows, I will methodically inventory everything else.

The key, of course, is not to co-mingle the old with the new. Sure, I may end up with some duplicates but that is better than being so overwhelmed than to do nothing at all. Your plan may be different given the dynamics of your space and your time. All I can say is that if you are fairly new to prepping, don't let this one slip by. Keep track of what you have from the get go and save yourself a lot of grief down the road.

2. Identifying the most likely risks and prepping for those first.

When I first started, I went off willy-nilly preparing for all sorts of calamities. Earthquakes, terrorist attacks, pandemics, nuclear melt-downs, civil disobedience - you name it, I tried to prepare for it all. These days, I recommend that one of the very first steps that you take when prepping is to evaluate the most likely risks in your area and within your personal domestic situation.

Most if not all city, county and state governments will have emergency management websites that will help you sort through the most likely disasters to occur in your area. Add to this an assessment of your location. Are you in a city where gangs, mobs or terrorist attacks are likely? Do you live in a remote area where the failure of transportations systems or the lack of fuel will cut off you off from supplies from the rest of the world? Is your employment situation tenuous requiring that you build up some cash reserves to get you by just in case the job goes away?

Clearly, at the beginning, some choices will need to be made regarding the best use of your prepping budget. Just remember that food, water and first aid supplies should be at the top of everyone's list. After that, assess the most likely risks and plan accordingly. A good place to

start is [12 Months of Prepping – The First Year](#) which is a recap of monthly supplies, skills and tasks to get you starting on the road to preparedness.

3. Preparing mostly to bug out rather than bugging in.

We all talk about having a [bug-out-bag](#) and without question, having your most basic survival items in a pack that you can grab and go if you need to get out of dodge in a hurry is important. But beyond that, over and over I see people acquire all sorts of gear for surviving on the run - perhaps in the woods or bush in a remote location.

I know that in own case and also with the majority of the readers on [Backdoor Survival](#) , hunkering down and bugging in will always be preferred to taking off into the unknown with our stuff. For many, the choice to bug in has to do with family, health concerns or financial considerations. That, plus the availability of stored supplies makes bugging in - or staying at home - the choice when a disaster strikes.

At the end of the day, take care of your bugging in needs first and foremost. Plan for outdoor cooking facilities (perhaps an existing charcoal grill?), supplemental lighting, stored water, and a portable generator now. Later, down the road, you can expand your supplies to include the essentials for truly bugging out.

That said, pay attention to mistake number 4.

4. Failure to evacuate at just the right time.

When the storm of the century is heading your way, know that it is time to evacuate. Load up your vehicle and go. As much as you feel that you are better off in your own home, if the authorities tell you to leave - and even if they do not - get out of harm's way as a precautionary measure. Do so while you still have the ability to load up your vehicle with supplies and fill the tank with gas.

Sticking around when there is at least a 50% chance of a disaster occurring (hurricane, flood, landslides, tsunami, wildfire) is just plain silly. Remember mistake number 2 - failure to evaluate the risks? Part of your planning should be to determine the trigger point for evacuation as well as identification of an evacuation site and a route to get there. Better yet, plan an alternate route as well.

5. Having the gear but not knowing how to use it.

I am guilty of this one as well. I have a Kaito emergency radio as well as some Midland FRS radios. Sure, I know how basically to use them but what if I needed to use some of the more esoteric features? My bad. I also have a hand held compass - a nice one at that - and yet in these days of GPS navigation, would I know how to use it? Get out the gear two or three times a year and put it through its paces. Not only do you need to know how to use it, but you need to make sure your gear is in good working order. Blades need to be sharpened, batteries need to be charged and skills need to be refreshed.

6. Underestimating other humans as a threat.

In a perfect world, we would all get along and go about our business in a mild-mannered way, not bothering anyone or causing others harm. Alas, as humans this has never been the case. From biblical times forward, man has opposed man. There have been and still are warriors, and armies, soldiers and dictators, enemies and foes.

As recent mass shootings have revealed, mental illness or drugs can make good people go bad. Add the uncertainty and chaos created by an unstable society and the potential for human threat because a major cause for concern.

Whether you embrace firearms or shun them, you still need a way to defend yourself, your family and your property. Consider pepper sprays, martial arts, and other defensive mechanisms in addition to traditional firearms. It is foolhardy to believe that having some means of defense is not needed because "there is no one out to get you". Desperate people are dangerous people. And the lack of food, water and supplies will turn ordinary people into desperate people in a heartbeat.

7. Buying stuff while ignoring the need to develop skills.

Buying stuff is easy. Save up your money, select your merchandise and go to your local outdoor emporium or Amazon and make a purchase. On the other hand, learning new skills (or practicing old ones) takes time, patience and bit of study. Do you know how to start a fire without matches or a butane lighter? Do you know how to take advantage of [nature's bounty](#) by knowing how to fish or hunt? And what about growing your own food? Could you do it?

Developing skills to become self-sufficient are every bit as important as having a closet full of the best gear money can buy.

8. Lacking the knowledge to properly store your food supplies. There are [six enemies of food storage](#) :
Temperature, Moisture, Oxygen, Light, Pests and Time.

Okay, some might say there is a sixth enemy: namely the two legged type that gets into the tastier items (such a cans of brownie mix) and eats them without telling anyone.

Seriously though, storing food for the long term - meaning five years or longer - does take some care. Brush up on the basics of food storage and set up an active rotation program. You don't necessarily have to store food for 10 years or longer but what you do store - even for a year or two - should be protected to the best of your ability.

One thing to keep in mind that except for the problem with pests, most food will still be edible even if it is not stored at optimal temperatures in a moisture and oxygen-free environment. But why not learn proper storage methods to insure maximum taste and nutrition. Here on Backdoor Survival, the following articles will help educate and there are plenty of others elsewhere on the internet including YouTube. A few hours of your time is all that it will take to make you a food storage expert.

[Food storage and Beans: Using Mylar bags and a Food Saver](#)

[Food Storage Part I: A Primer on Oxygen Absorbers](#)

[Food Storage Part II: Unraveling the Mystique of Mylar Bags](#)

[Food Storage Part III: Food Grade Buckets, Lids and Gamma Seals](#)

Food Storage Mistakes and Goofs

9. Relying only on yourself and ignoring like-minded members of your community.

When I first started prepping, I did not mention my new little “hobby” to anyone. You know, [OP](#)
[SEC](#)

and all that. But about a year into it, I realized that I could not do it all on my own. There were things I was having trouble grasping on my own and I needed help. As I tip toed around the edges of my community, I found some like-minded people and much to my surprise, I found that I had skills and knowledge that they lacked.

The mutual exchange of skills and knowledge ensued along with some informal agreements to team up if circumstances required us to be on our own for any period of time. This included teaming up for shelter and food as well as defense.

The importance of having a peer group of like-minded comrades in my own community was strengthened as I read R. P. Ruggiero’s *Brushfire Plague* and continues as I explore other truer than life survival stories,. How you decide to expand your community contacts is up to you but be advised that when it comes to survival 1 plus 1 will definitely add up to more than 2.

The Final Word

These days I feel fortunate that I have come so far with my prepping activities. Moving beyond obsession, the prepping way of life is now a part of my core. It is “what I do” as well as being a hobby and a passion.

Indeed, I have made some mistakes along the way and many of them are listed above. There will surely be others down the road but I know that will be okay since they will afford me an opportunity to learn and grow. At the end of the day, life is all about growth, opportunity and the ability to take care of oneself physically, mentally and spiritually. To me, that is what prepping is all about - mistakes and all.