

Apartment and condominium prepping

Prepping in tight spaces

You don't need to live on acreage to be a prepper! Families nationwide have learned to prep in small spaces and urban places. Apartment and condominium preppers can grow their own food in the city, [stockpile emergency food](#), store water and supplies, and plan for contingencies in their urban dwelling.

How to prep in an apartment or condominium

#1: Growing your own: apartment gardening.

A great resource for preppers who live in an apartment or condo is Amy Pennington's book, *Apartment Gardening, plants, projects and recipes for growing food in your urban home*, pictured immediate left. Apartment Gardening details how to start a garden in the heart of the city. You don't have to live in an apartment to appreciate this book. Growing food in an urban home is a delight thanks to this helpful guide. Learn how to grow cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, herbs, lettuce, sugar snap peas, squash, strawberries, and zucchini.

Preppers who live in an apartment or condominium can start an apartment garden to harvest windowsill squash, wine barrel arugula, asparagus in a milk crate or corn in a parking strip. Start small and gain confidence in gardening whether it's a sprouted seed project in the kitchen or growing corn in a large planter box, anyone can learn to grow.

From building a window box to planting seeds in jars on the counter, every space is plantable, and this book reveals that the DIY future is now by providing hands-on, accessible advice. What's more, apartment growers are among the happiest of Happy Preppers because these gardeners can harvest an array of fruits, vegetables and herbs without much nuisance from pests, such as aphids or slugs!

#2: Community gardening.

City dwelling preppers can also participate in community gardens to harvest vegetation and find like minded folks. In particular, preppers who have children should actively participate in school gardens, as it not only helps solidify the family position on the importance of self reliance, but it provides an invaluable skill set.

If no community garden exists, consider starting one! Lamanda Joy's *Start a community food Garden - the Essential Handbook*, pictured left, is a highly rated guide that covers every step of the process: including fundraising, community organizing, site sourcing, garden design and planning, finding and managing volunteers, and managing the garden through all four seasons. Most importantly, it offers tips for growing food. This is an invaluable [survival skill](#).

#3: Small spaces and finding places.

No matter where a prepper lives, finding places for stockpiling becomes an issue. It's just that apartment and condominiums are generally smaller in square footage and may have limited opportunities for storage. It's nothing that a little creativity can't solve. The first thing you must realize is that something has to go! Prepping is about decluttering to make room for the live-saving things you need. What you keep in the household is all a matter of priority.

- **More is less!** If you're new to apartment prepping, toss what you haven't used in a year and donate or sell it, particularly if it's clothing that's worn out, improperly sized or stained, or if it's books you haven't read and aren't planning to read. We all keep stuff out of guilt. If you live in an apartment, your priority as a prepper is to toss anything that's not a survival tool, a memory or a necessity of daily living. If it's not one of these things, it has little value in a small prepper's home.

- **Add shelving.** If you own the property create extra storage space by adding a second shelf in closets. Or ask the landlord if you can install extra shelves as these are invaluable for increasing your storage space.
- **Make do or do without.** There are many things you can do without. Do without an ironing board, for example. If you need to iron, use a towel on a washer dryer, table or counter top instead of storing an ironing board. Presto -- you now have more space!
- **Make one item do two things.** Another thing you must realize is that the most important preps you store in your home are the ones that have multiple uses and functions. For example, an end table can have storage, and function for your everyday use. A [Big Berkey water filter](#) can make you healthier today, minimize your dependency on bottled water and help you filter raw water in an emergency.
- **Compress your available space.** There are many conventions to help you find places to stash your stuff and help you take advantage of the space you have. Another favorite idea is a vacuum sealer, for example can help you compress items for storage, which gives you more space:

#4: Stranger danger (hiding your stuff).

Another aspect of where to hide your wares is that strangers may have more access to your home than if you lived in a house. The management of your building may need to access your home for maintenance, pest control, fire alarm inspection, plumbing, cable -- you name it. If you've filled every crevice of your home with preps it may become quickly apparent to the stranger that either you're a crazy hoarder needing intervention or you're a savvy prepper worth your weight in salt! In either scenario the stranger will register the memory to take advantage of you in crisis.

That's why it's important to disguise your preps so as not to cause a mental trigger. To that end, Bernie Carr author and owner of apartmentprepper.com offers [ways to hide your emergency supplies from strangers](#). The author offers a compact reference for your library: the prepper's pocket guide, pictured left.

There are many places with which to hide food and supplies:

- **Beds.** Money in the mattress is an old notion. Under the beds is today where prepper's find storage space for what's really valuable: food! Bed risers can raise the area available under your bed for even more storage.
- **Closet organizers.** Closet organizers can make more space for hanging clothes, so you can stash your prepping wares. Shoe organizers for example can hold loose food items, such as [food bars](#) or [ration bars](#), tablets for water purification, and more.
- **Ottomans and storage benches.** Instead of a coffee table, you can get an ottoman with storage to enable you to hide food there. It's out of site from all except maybe the nosey babysitter or housesitter.
- **Bean bag storage.** To find space and hide your wares, you can get a bean bag chair. The clever bean bag chair below is for clothing, however you could just as well store rice and beans in thick mylar bags or seal them up in a vacuum bag and hide them inside. Or use an ordinary bean bag chair. The sitter will never think of looking there.
- **Water bricks.** Possibly you can stow water bricks behind the couch or stack them and cover them to disguise them as furniture.
- **Diversion safes.** [Secret storage spaces](#) for guns, gold or silver, and cash is another area that preppers who live in small spaces need to consider. You don't necessarily need to buy a commercially produced diversion can. It's possible to make your own, such as a fake mayonnaise jar that looks almost empty by painting a clean jar and scraping it to look the part. The clever prepper also can cut and glue book spines onto storage boxes and return the hidden storage to the bookshelf. Another idea is to store heavy food in a box labeled "Grandma's China" and lighter freeze dried food in a box labeled "Christmas ornaments." The key to apartment prepping is creativity!

- **Storage units.** Many condominiums and apartments include garage spaces or storage lockers or closets, which a prepper can use creatively. Carefully organize this area and stow camping equipment in boxes labeled "Uncle John's books." Another idea is to stash freeze dried cans and buckets into boxes labeled "toys." This creates a necessary diversion and uses the space logically. In addition to such storage areas, it's wise to consider renting a small storage unit if one is within walking or biking distance.
- **Bikes.** To save on space for more preps, an apartment or condominium owner can get creative by owning a folding bike instead of a conventional bike. A bike is a good way to get out of the city to a bugout location and ultimate is a key consideration for apartment and condo preppers.
- **#5: Apartment Security.**
A home on the first floor is more vulnerable to intrusion than a home on the upper stories, but in any apartment or condominium, apartment security is a top concern. With so many people coming in and out of buildings, it's a high priority for an urban prepper to have a home defense plan that begins with securing access to your front door, deck, patio, porch and windows. There are so many products available to help you keep intruders out and your family safe inside, including:
 - anti-climb spikes
 - door jams
 - garage door locks
 - sliding glass door locks (even a wooden dowel can provide security)
 - window locks and stoppers

As well, you can enhance the security of your apartment or condo with a wireless alarm system. Here are more ideas on apartment home security:

#6: Plan for rioting and civil unrest.

Having [a plan for rioting](#) and civil unrest is especially important if you live in the city. Self reliance, [self defense](#) and [survival psychology](#) come into play on many levels.

- Stun guns offer a measure of protection for getting to your vehicle safely.
- Tasers are another option for urban living, particularly if you have over regulation of gun laws in your state.

#7: The great escape for a fire.

When you live on a second story, it's important to have a method of escaping fire. If your building doesn't have a fire escape, or the fire escape isn't accessible from every room, you should plan a contingency. The fire escape ladder, pictured right, is available for second or third story units. For units much higher in the sky, there is a parachute option. Another interesting prep for such buildings is an emergency escape hood oxygen mask respirator.

#8: Risk of carbon monoxide.

Did you know that during an ordinary blackout one of the major causes of death is carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning? Apartments are particularly vulnerable because of the occupancy, which increases the odds.

For this reason, you may need to remind your neighbors to:

- Never use portable flameless chemical heaters indoors!
- Never use a generator indoors either.
- Make sure the owner vents the gas appliances properly.
- Never patch a vent pipe with tape, gum, or something else as this will cause a build up of CO.

Everyone is at risk for CO poisoning, but in particular babies and the elderly are high at risk as are people with anemia, asthma or other breathing problems and chronic heart disease. Common symptoms of CO poisoning include chest pain,

confusion and dizziness, headache, weakness, and vomiting or stomach upset.

Know the symptoms and make sure to install a carbon monoxide detector in your home to keep everyone alerted.

#9: Go off grid with solar.

Because you won't be able to use a generator inside your apartment, you'll need to come up with an alternative backup power source. Solar is an ideal solution for apartments and condos. [Solar generators are available and affordable solutions.](#)

Pictured immediate left is Great generator for apartments because you can use it indoors and most apartments don't allow gas generators. The huge benefit of a solar generator is that it's silent and safe with no noise or fumes! A noisy generator would otherwise attract too much attention of human predators in an extreme situation.

#10: Plan on bartering.

When you live in an apartment or condominium, one thing you'll quickly realize as a prepper is that you won't be able to stockpile everything you need for a worst-case scenario. In planning for uncertain items, you'll need to be clever. For example, you can stockpile small bartering items, so that you can still get what you need down the line. BIC lighters are

#11: Setting up a sanitation station

Having an alternate means of going to the bathroom is important where ever you live. Fortunately, you can [plan your sanitation needs](#) very easily with a simple honey bucket solution, as with a Luggable Loo, pictured right. Store your new Luggable Loo with sanitation bags, toilet paper, wet wipes, ration bars and other supplies, ready for the day when you might need it. You can also set up a simple bidet system instead of toilet paper. A bidet irrigates the area with a small amount of water to cleanse. It's a solution for [when the toilet paper runs out.](#)

#12: Doing laundry.

[Doing laundry without electricity](#) is possible in any home. Drying the laundry is perhaps more of a challenge in an apartment or condominium because hanging the clothes out to

dry may invade living spaces. In old apartment buildings, before regulations about such things happened, people would hang their clothes to dry between the buildings in the city. Using an easement building owners would reciprocate a line pulley and tenants between the two buildings could hang their clothes out to dry manipulating the pulley through a window.

You don't often find such an arrangement today, as ordinances have come about because of the visual pollution. What's more, the advent of commercial dryers also eliminated the need.

What is a prepper to do in case the grid goes down?

Clean clothing may not be the most important aspect of prepping for urban preppers, but it is something to consider for short term grid down scenarios and conveniences. Thankfully some modern solutions exist to make things easier. Preppers need only to look to how owners of recreational vehicles handle the situation.

The convention of manual spin dryers and washing machines is something that doesn't require a generator. If there is proper ventilation for a generator then an urban dweller can take advantage of those conventions.

A final word on renting...

If you are not a homeowner, you are either renting someone else's property or living in someone else's property for free. In either circumstance you are not in control of the property and are at the mercy of the landlord or in limited protection with tenancy laws. That's a long way of saying that this shelter isn't really yours! You are paying for a service and not entitled to it.

Your ability to stay in the shelter is directly tied to your cash resources. With this in mind, a reserve of money should be at the top of your priority! Aim to have a six month reserve, but start with the goal of one month at a time. Who knows, you may some day have enough money to own a bugout location or a home you can truly call your own.

Happy endings...

Planning for contingencies in urban environments may require thinking, but there are plenty of resources and conventions to make the job easier as a prepper.