

Alternatives To Everyday Items When The Stores Are Empty

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 COLLAPSE SURVIVAL SITE

ALTERNATIVES TO EVERYDAY ITEMS



**WHEN THE STORES
ARE EMPTY**

In the prepper community, there are several sayings or mottos, such as, "Two is one and one is none." In other words, it's a good idea to have multiple backups of important items. Another prepper principle is to substitute singular items for ones that can be multipurpose. Why are we bringing this up? Because it has to do with today's topic of finding alternatives to everyday items.

Imagine if you will, that some big event has happened such as a pandemic or war, and it has affected the world supply chain or at least the supply chain of your country. In either case, the next time you go to the store you are confronted with empty shelves that used to be full of items that you use every day or almost every day. Items like candles, hygiene supplies, general cleaning supplies, or even toilet paper.

Don't think these very common and popular items will ever be scarce from the shelves of your local store? Well, you don't have to look back that far to see examples of this very thing happening. During and at the beginning of the 2019 pandemic, many products such as cleaning supplies, toilet paper, and other health-related products could not be found for quite some time.

Does this mean people stopped cleaning their homes or themselves simply because the products they normally use weren't on the shelves? No! They simply used alternative items or methods.

But what if this situation happened to you? What are you going to do? How are you going to get by?

The two best things a prepper can do to increase their survivability is to learn to adapt and gain knowledge. This means if you don't have a plan for what to do without your normal everyday items then you need to start thinking about that scenario today. Please keep reading because it is highly likely that you will find some very helpful solutions in the

list of alternatives we have put together.

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Alternatives To Everyday Items

With the ideas listed below you may find that you have some of the needed materials at your home post SHTF. Many of the items can also be easily scavenged from nearby areas or it might be a good idea to stock up on the materials beforehand so that you are always ready.

Keep in mind that while the items listed below may not be the greatest primary item to use for a task, they do work and are effective. By reading through the following alternatives you will have more solutions post-SHTF, and the more solutions you have, the better off you will be.

Candles

[Candles](#) are used to put a lovely fragrance in the air or as a light source but when SHTF you are probably going to use them as a light source. Finding yourself without a light source can be a dangerous situation but here are a few alternatives for when your traditional candles run out.

Regular [coloring crayons](#) are made primarily of wax, just like a candle. You can use a crayon like a stand-alone candle by first standing it on its flat end. Then rip the paper wrapper slightly so that the paper stands above the crayon and acts like a wick. A larger candle can be made by simply melting down all the crayons you have and adding a new [wick](#).

To see how to use a crayon as a candle, click [here](#).

Another option is to make a quick candle using cooking grease, or [fat](#), and a [paper towel](#). First, heat the grease or fat until it's liquid. Then, dip the towel into the liquid making sure

it becomes completely saturated. Lay the towel on a flat surface and starting at one of the edges, roll it into the shape of a [pencil](#). Once the towel has cooled and dried, one of the ends can be lit and the whole thing will act as a burning wick.

The last option is actually used more as an improvised stove but if you need a light source it will work as a candle. It's called a [tuna can](#) stove and all you need is a can of [tuna](#) (one with oil and not water) and a paper product like [toilet paper](#), [paper towels](#), or [cardboard](#). Open the can up and scoop out all of the meat but leave as much of the oil as possible in the can.

Next, stuff the inside of the can with the paper product so that it soaks up all the oil and the material is level with the top of the can. The paper material will act as a wick so all you have to do is ignite it with a [lighter](#) and you have yourself a wick. The great thing about this option is that it's reusable. All you need to do is cover the top of the can to snuff out the flame and relight it when you need it again.

To see how the tuna can candle is made, check out this [video](#). To see an alternative to the tuna can stove, click [here](#).

Matches

You are going to need a way to light your candle from the previous example but what if your box of [matches](#) is empty or your [lighter](#) has run out of fluid? Not to worry because here are two quick ways to build a match with simple household materials.

To make a battery match, you will need an [AA battery](#) and a small piece of [aluminum foil](#), like what you find with a gum wrapper. Fold the foil in half and cut away one of the corners so that it creates a thin middle section. Now, hold one end of the foil on the positive terminal of the battery and the other

end on the negative terminal. This will cause the middle of the foil to heat up and burst into flame.

To see how to make the battery match, check out this [video](#).

Another easy-to-make match is the [paper towel](#) match. For this match, you will need a piece of paper towel, some lint, and a way to make sparks, such as an empty [BiC lighter](#) or a [ferro rod](#). Roll or twist the paper towel into a cylindrical shape but leave one end slightly open. Now, stuff the open end with a bit of lint and throw some sparks on it.

To see how to make a paper towel match, check out this [video](#).

Toothpaste

It's time to polish those pearly whites but when you reach for your store-bought tube of [paste](#), it's empty. What's a prepper to do? Well, there is actually a very easy and effective solution and all you need is some [baking soda](#).

Pour a tablespoon or two of baking soda into a small dish and add just enough [water](#) to turn the powder into a wet paste. Now, put the paste onto your [toothbrush](#) and start scrubbing away.

To learn more about baking soda toothpaste, check out this [video](#).

If you don't have any baking soda but you do have access to an outdoor fire then you do have another option for homemade organic toothpaste. Simply grab some [charcoal](#) that's been made from a recent fire, grind it up into a powder, and prepare it just like you would the baking soda.

To learn more about using charcoal as toothpaste, check out this [video](#).

Toothbrush

Keeping up with dental hygiene is extremely important and we've already covered toothpaste alternatives, but what if you find yourself without a [toothbrush](#)? Here are a few suggestions.

The simplest thing you can do is to put some paste on your index finger and move your finger around like you would a toothbrush. Just make sure your fingers are good and clean before sticking them in your mouth. A step up from this would be to put a piece of [clean cloth](#) over your finger and then put some paste on the cloth before brushing your teeth.

Does brushing your teeth with just a finger *actually* help clean your teeth? Check out this [video](#) to find out.

If you want something that feels a little more like your old toothbrush then you are going to need to head outside. Find yourself a short twig that is green and that is no thicker in diameter than a [pencil](#). A green twig is one that is fresh from the tree and not a dried-up one that has been sitting on the ground.

Take one end of the twig and chew it up or smash it between two hard surfaces many times. This will break up the wood fibers and create a section of "bristles" that look very similar to a toothbrush. The only difference is that you will have to hold the twig differently than how you would hold a toothbrush.

To see how to brush your teeth with a twig, check out this [video](#).

Shampoo

Rice water, or the rinse water from household rice, has some benefits when used as [shampoo](#). According to [MedicalNewsToday.com](#), the benefits of using rice water as

shampoo may include detangling hair, making hair smoother, increasing the shine, making hair stronger, and helping it to grow longer.

Making [rice](#) shampoo is pretty easy and if you want to try it out, follow these steps. Place a couple of cups of rice into a [bowl](#) and fill with water. Allow the rice to sit and soak for up to thirty minutes. Drain the rice in a [colander](#) but be sure to collect the rinse water and pour it into a separate bottle.

To learn more about using rice water as shampoo, check out this [video](#).

General Cleaning Supplies

It may be post SHTF but it's just as important to keep your living conditions as clean as possible. In fact, it's probably more important because if you get sick from dirty conditions, you may not be able to go to your family doctor for help.

When stores run out of your favorite pre-mixed scented [cleaners](#), some other household cleaning solutions are just as effective. [Vinegar](#) makes for a fantastic disinfectant and general cleaner due to its acidity. For best results, fill a [spray bottle](#) with half water and half vinegar and you have yourself a cleaning solution for wiping down countertops, sinks, showers, floors, and toilets, and it's even a great [pre wash](#) for fruits and vegetables.

To learn more about cleaning with vinegar, check out this [video](#).

Regular old [table salt](#) is another great homemade cleaning option. Just like vinegar, it can be mixed into a solution of water and put into a spray bottle. Once sprayed onto a surface, the salt water may have an adverse effect on some germs.

However, the best application for salt is as a scrubbing

agent. Add just enough water to salt to make a paste and you have a very effective abrasive that can be used on all types of surfaces and since it is food-grade material, it can be used on hard-to-clean [pots and pans](#).

To learn more about cleaning with salt, check out this [video](#).

[Baking soda](#) is another versatile cleaner that can be used in different ways. If you need a little more scrubbing power without being too abrasive, add a tablespoon or two of baking soda to the bottom side of a sponge with a little bit of water.

For something that is a bit more stubborn, sprinkle baking soda on the soiled surface, then spray vinegar onto the baking soda until it foams up. Let the mixture sit for five to ten minutes and wipe away with a [sponge](#) or [clean rag](#). Repeat this process as many times as needed.

To learn more about cleaning with baking soda, check out this [video](#).

Toilet Paper

We all know what [toilet paper](#) used for, and everybody needs it. Seeing that it's used every single day, it's not going to take long for you to run out when your local store doesn't get resupplied.

Not to worry though as there are several available options for cleaning your backside that don't involve going to the store.

The first option is to make your own. One way of doing this is by mixing [newspaper](#) and water in a [bucket](#) to create a slurry. The slurry can then be dried and shaped into toilet paper-like sheets. To see how to make toilet paper like this, check out this [video](#).

The second option is to simply use any paper product that you

can find, like newspapers. Cut the paper into squares that are several inches long per side so that they're easier to use, or you can use the whole sheets.

To see how to prepare a newspaper for this purpose, check out this [video](#).

If you have access to an abundance of clean water you can easily make yourself some reusable toilet paper. To do this you are going to need some old [t-shirts](#), preferably all cotton. Once you've gathered them up, use a pair of [scissors](#) to cut out squares that are several inches per side. When you're done, put a stack of these next to your toilet and they are ready to go.

Since these cannot, or should not, be flushed down a toilet, you're going to need a container to put the soiled squares into. Get yourself any kind of container or [bucket](#) but make sure it has a lid. Once the container is full or you need more toilet paper, wash the soiled squares and the container and they're ready to go again and again and again.

Nail Clipper

This suggestion will be short and to the point. When you need to trim your nails but there aren't any [nail clippers](#) around, [scissors](#) are a darn good substitute and are much safer than trying to use a knife. Small [facial hair scissors](#) tend to work the best.

To see how to cut your nails with scissors, check out this [video](#).

Kleenex

Here's another short suggestion for an alternative to [Kleenex](#). Get yourself a [handkerchief](#). If you can't get one of those then you can easily make one from an old [kitchen towel](#) or you can cut one out from an old shirt.

To see how to make your own handkerchief, check out this [video](#).

Stove

During a big event, electricity or gas may not be available for indoor stoves but you still gotta cook and eat. Luckily, you have several options available to you. There's the tuna can stove that was mentioned earlier in the article, which again, can be viewed by clicking [here](#).

Or you can gather up some simple materials such as [cardboard](#), [wood](#), and [aluminum foil](#) and make yourself a [solar oven](#). These are incredibly [simple ovens to make](#) and on a hot, sunny day, they are quite effective. Of course, they only work on sunny days, so if you choose to have a solar oven, you may want to have another stove option for cooking, such as a [backyard fire pit](#) or [patio grill](#).

In the absence of a backyard fire pit or a patio grill, you can always make yourself a hobo can stove. A hobo stove is a small stove made from simple materials using simple tools. Not only can it be constructed in a very short period, but the materials needed for the project can be scavenged from your home or garage.

All you need is an [aluminum can](#), [tin snips](#), a [permanent marker](#), and an [awl](#) or large nail. Since the sides of cut aluminum are razor sharp, we recommend using a quality pair of [work gloves](#) to help protect your hands.

To learn more about making your very own hobo stove, check out this [video](#).

Washing Machine

You may not use your [washing machine](#) every single day but it is an important appliance that we all use often and keeping our clothes clean is an important step in keeping our bodies

clean and healthy. In the event that utilities are shut off or you can't get a needed spare part for your machine, you can still get your clothes clean by using the following methods.

A bathtub or deep enough sink can be used as an improvised washtub but we warned that this is going to require some elbow grease! First, add enough water to soak and cover your clothes. Then add your normal amount of [laundry soap](#). Now, it's time to get to work and use your arm as the impromptu agitator! Or if you don't feel like soaking your arm for that long, you could stand above the tub and use a [broom handle](#) instead.

If you want to take the agitator out of the equation, you can use a large [cutting board](#) by placing it at an angle in the sink and using it as an improvised washboard. Of course, you could also just get yourself a [cheap washboard](#) before SHTF happens.

Another option is to build a simple but effective [manual washing machine](#). All you need is a [five gallon bucket](#) with a lid, a [toilet plunger](#), and a [cutting tool](#) to cut a hole in the top of the bucket lid. A cutting tool like a [utility knife](#) can be used, but a [power drill](#) with some bits works much better. To see how to make one of these manual washers with some really cool and effective upgrades, check out this [video](#).

Conclusion

It's easy to become stuck in a rut of thinking, actions, or only being able to use one type of product, but continuing that as a prepper is beyond detrimental. Adaptability and knowledge are incredibly important to being a successful prepper and your survival.

Just because one product is not available doesn't mean there isn't an alternative way or item that can do the same job, and sometimes an even better job. All you need to be extra

prepared is the knowledge of the products at the store and in your home that can be used in a variety of ways.

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