Ready, Set, Ready

This page is three steps, and each one is named for what it actually does: get **ready** to know where you stand, **set** your first real target, and come out the other side genuinely **ready** to use the rest of this site instead of drowning in it. If you'd rather trade depth for speed, First 14 Days is the other direction: a bare-minimum floor across everything at once instead of real depth in one topic. Don't want to pick your own order at all? Zero to Ready walks all 17 categories start to finish, one recommended sequence instead of a choice.

If you've had this site open in a tab for a while and haven't started, that's not a character flaw, it's a documented, near-universal pattern. Psychologists call it normalcy bias (assuming tomorrow will resemble every ordinary day before it) and optimism bias (assuming bad things happen to other households, not yours), and both are simply how human judgment works under uncertainty, not a personal failing. You haven't started yet. That's a fact about today, not a verdict, and it's fixable in the next ten minutes.

Ready: a 10-minute honest assessment

Not reading, just checking. Each item below is something to confirm about your own household, not a task to complete yet. These stay checked in your browser if you come back later.

0 of 5 done

Saved in this browser only — clearing your browsing data, or switching devices, resets it.

- [ ] I know exactly how many people, and pets, are in my household during an emergency, not a rough guess.
- [ ] I know whether anyone in my household depends on medication, mobility equipment, or a device that needs power to work.
- [ ] I know whether my state has specific risks, like wildfire zones, hurricane exposure, or fault lines, beyond generic advice. Not sure? See By State.
- [ ] I know, as an actual count and not a guess, how many days of water and food I currently have on hand. Don't know how to count it? See Auditing Your Food Supply.

- [ ] I've identified the one thing that would hurt most first if the power went out tonight.

You don't need to fix anything yet. You need an honest list, and now you have one. That's the first thing a reliable household actually has, most people never get this far.

Prefer pen and paper? The printable Household Preparedness Assessment covers the same ground with room to write down actual numbers: names, ages, gallons on hand, days of food, phone numbers. Download it as a PDF and fill it out by hand.

Prefer a conversation? AI Prep Coach is a free prompt for ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini that interviews you and builds a plan from this site's actual pages.

Set: close your first gap, not all seventeen

The single biggest reason this stalls out is trying to do all 17 categories at once. Pick one. If you don't know which, use this order, the same cheapest-and-fastest-first logic used throughout this site: get the free ones done before spending anything.

1. Communication, free, one conversation
2. Documents, cheap, protects everything you build after it
3. Water, usually the most-flagged gap once people actually count
4. Whichever topic the assessment above flagged as your household's biggest risk, see Skill Guides for that topic's guide

Write your own plan, in one sentence

Knowing what to do and actually doing it are two different things, and the gap between them closes when the plan is specific and written down, not just understood. Finish this sentence with your own topic and your own trigger:

"When *the power's been out 2 hours* , I will *check the freezer* ."

If you have 15 minutes tonight

Pick one task from your chosen topic and do only that, its skill guide (linked above) usually opens with the fastest, cheapest step to try first. A few examples of what that looks like: write down one out-of-town contact, count

If you have a weekend

Open the skill guide for your chosen topic and build the real short-term version: a working plan, a kit that actually exists in a bag rather than in your head. See Go-Bags & 72-Hour Kits for what actually belongs in that bag.

your actual water bottles, or find where your first aid kit is and check one expiration date. Small and finished beats big and abandoned.

Success here looks small on purpose: one topic, genuinely finished at a basic level, beats seventeen topics half-started. You can always come back for the next one. This is what a household people can count on actually looks like from the inside, one real thing at a time, not everything at once.

The 24 skills that are genuinely just "prepare"

Most of this site's 79 skill guides are deeper self-sufficiency projects, growing food, building an off-grid energy system, that matter more once the basics are solid. These 24 are different: things worth knowing or setting up now, once, regardless of what eventually happens. Here they are, grouped the same way the rest of the site is, so you can scan for the ones your assessment above already flagged.

Community

- Finding Your Local Prep Community

Planning & Assessment

- Go-Bags & 72-Hour Kits
- Using AI to Plan Your Preparedness
- Preparing Without Relying on Official Systems

Water

- Storing Water Correctly
- Legal Rainwater Harvesting in Utah

Food

- Auditing Your Food Supply
- Sealing Bulk Food for Long-Term Storage

Communication

- Family Communication Plan & Emergency Radio
- Ham Radio Licensing & Off-Grid Mesh Networking

Digital Data & Documents

- Document Go-Bag & Digital Backup
- Wills, Power of Attorney & Guardianship

Economic & Financial

- Financial Preparedness Basics

Medical Care

- Medical Kits: What Actually Goes in Each One

Mental Health

- Safety Planning When Home Isn't Safe

Transportation

- Vehicle Emergency Kit & Roadside Basics

Shelter & Structural Safety

- Securing Your Home Against Earthquake Damage
- Basic Knots

Access & Functional Needs

- Backup Power for Medical Equipment & Caregiving
- Home Accessibility Modifications

Security & Self-Defense

Energy & Heat

Fitness

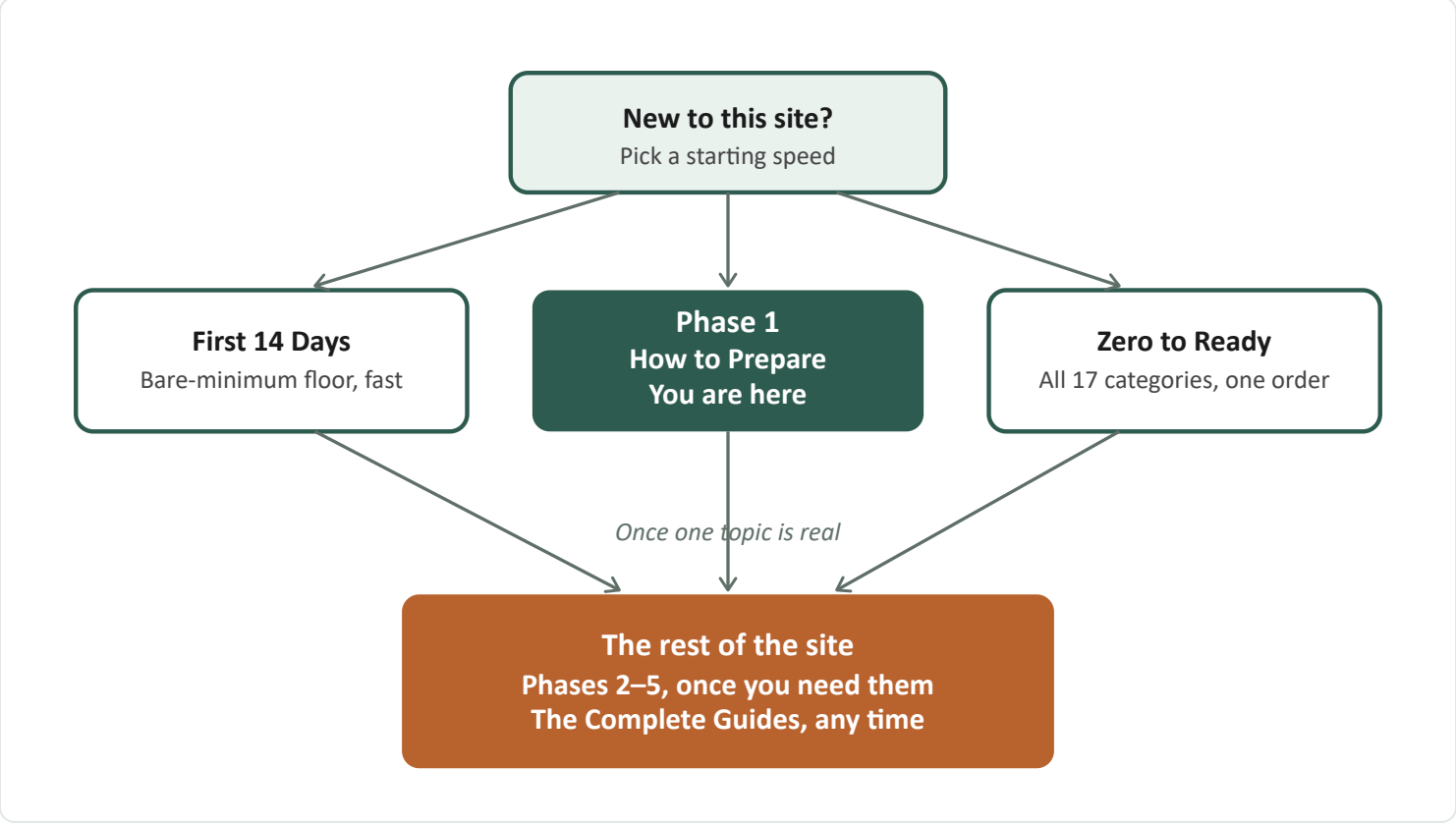
- Firearm Safety, Storage & Self-Defense Basics
- Sizing a Solar Array & Battery System
- Sizing a Fuel-Powered Generator
- Physical Readiness for Emergencies

Already comfortable with all of these? A lot of the site's deeper skill guides, growing your own food, building an off-grid energy system, composting toilets, are things worth starting now too, not just once circumstances force the issue. Skill Guides covers all 79, organized the same way.

Ready: now the rest of the site makes sense

Once one topic is real, the rest of this site stops being overwhelming and starts being a map you already know how to read. This page is **Phase 1, How to Prepare**, the first of five phases the whole site is organized around. The other four pick up from here, in the order a real event actually moves through: Phase 2, How to Not Die, Phase 3, How to Survive Immediately After, Phase 4, How to Survive When No Help Is Coming, and Phase 5, How to Thrive If No Help Ever Comes. Worth knowing they exist now, even if you never need them today.

Everything else below is reference material: what to **own and know**, one topic at a time, not organized by phase at all.



- **Skill Guides**, the hands-on how-to layer, what you just used for your first topic. Seventy-nine of these: one core guide per topic, plus guides that go deeper, each on its own page.
- **The Readiness Ledger**, every purchase and every skill guide merged into one checkable list, in the same priority order as this page, for tracking progress across every topic at once instead of one at a time.
- **Your state's pages**, in By State, worth reading in full now that you're not starting from zero: the laws, local agencies, and specific risks that apply where you actually live.
- **Preparing**, the full reference from quick fixes to long-term self-sufficiency, worth opening once the basics are genuinely solid in your first topic, not before.
- **The Addenda**, real depth and self-sufficiency-level skill, a later stop for whichever topic you end up caring most about.
- **The Case for Preparedness**, the documented "why" behind all of this, worth reading any time, including before you've done anything else.
- **National Patterns**, a genuine rabbit hole once you're curious what all 50 states' pages show side by side.

Repeat the Set step for the next topic whenever you're ready for it. That's the whole method: one honest assessment, one real thing at a time.

Know someone who'd benefit from doing this too? Being the person who's ready includes being the person who says something.

Send them this page ›