

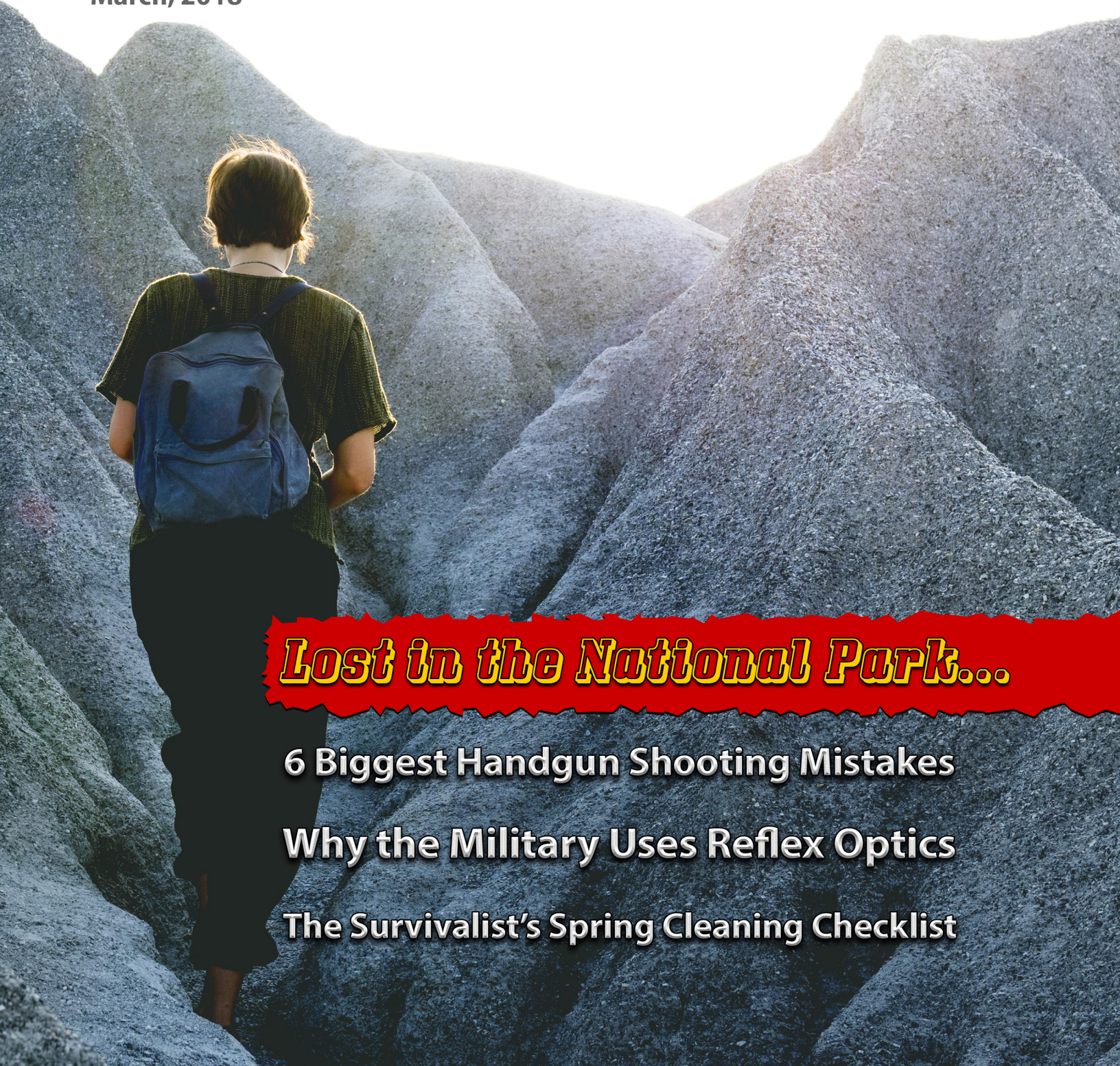


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# MEMBERS UPDATE

March, 2018



## *Lost in the National Park...*

**6 Biggest Handgun Shooting Mistakes**

**Why the Military Uses Reflex Optics**

**The Survivalist's Spring Cleaning Checklist**

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# CONTENT



**02**

## Lost in the Park

Did you know that over 1,100 people have disappeared without a trace in our National Parks? These vast wilderness areas constitute much of what remains of America's frontier. These 3 survival sagas show just how quickly a walk in the park can become a fight for your life.



**07**

## 6 Biggest Handgun Shooting Mistakes

If you think the techniques you learned as a kid apply to today's handguns, it's high time you take a second look. Some of the most frustrating "mistakes" plaguing your shooting aren't even mistakes, if you're shooting a rifle. It's time to take your handgun skills to the next level.



**14**

## Why the Military Uses Reflex Optics

The craze that's currently sweeping through the handgun market just finished revolutionizing the world of tactical carbines. Funny thing is, the technology isn't as new as you might think. It is, however, making drastic improvements in accuracy and shooting speed.



**18**

## Prepper's Spring Cleaning Checklist

The key to any good backup plan is that it works when you need it most. Unfortunately, devising an ingenious backup plan alone isn't enough; it still requires maintenance. This checklist will help you ensure that if you ever need it, your emergency plan is 100% good to go.



# Lost in the Park

According to the National Park Service, approximately 331 million people visit a National Park in the U.S. every year. Most of these trips provide people with lots of happy memories and beautiful snapshots. However, going to a National Park can be risky, especially if you don't take the necessary precautions.

More than 1,100 people are known to have disappeared without a trace in our National Parks. There are also several stories of people whose bodies were eventually recovered, although this often takes a very, very long time. For example, four German tourists disappeared in Death Valley National Park in 1996 during an extreme heatwave. Their remains were found 13 years later.

Another famous National Park incident occurred in the Siskiyou Mountains (part of the Siskiyou National Forest). In 1974, an entire family disappeared while camping over Labor Day weekend. It took more than eight months for police to find them – even though one of their bodies was tied up a mere 100 feet from their campsite. The family was murdered, but to this day, no one has been arrested for the crime.

Fortunately, not every story of getting lost in the National Parks has such a dismal or inconclusive ending. Several stories have ended in inspiring and heroic tales of survival, including Aron Ralston, who we covered in a previous newsletter. His choice

to self-amputate saved his life after he spent 127 hours pinned in the Blue John Canyon within the Canyonlands National Park.

Let's take a look at a few other inspiring stories and see what they can teach us about preparedness and survival against great odds! These three tales of survival all involve extreme temperatures, which made it even harder to survive.

## 1. Ed Rosenthal Survived Six Horrific Days in Joshua Tree National Park



Ed Rosenthal's ordeal in the Joshua Tree National Park makes it clear that getting lost is always possible, no matter how familiar you are with your hiking

grounds. In fact, Rosenthal had hiked the exact same trail with locals at least five times in the past before attempting to tackle it on his own.

Despite this familiarity and experience, one miscalculation sent him spiraling into six days of hell.



According to Rosenthal, he was only attempting a short hike. When he turned back toward his car, though, he realized he'd made one wrong turn somewhere along the way. This might seem like something that could be easily corrected, but it's very easy to get disoriented in the massive landscape of a national park. His efforts to find his vehicle pushed him 20 miles off course.

A few supplies he had with him helped make all the difference. In a press conference held in October 2010, Rosenthal attributed his survival to a hiking stick, his hat, a pen, six little antiseptic sheets, and the "friendship" of a horsefly that hung around him for an entire day.

What he didn't have on his side was food, water, or any type of emergency shelter supplies. However, he was able to keep his mind sharp by writing messages to his family on his hat.

Rosenthal wandered around looking for help or an exit from the park. In those six days, he lost an astounding 20 pounds and tried to drink his own urine (which is a commonly stated survival technique that absolutely doesn't work – DON'T do this). In his words, "I tried to drink urine. Forget it."



On the brink of dying from dehydration, a rescue copter spotted the lost hiker and took him to safety. Therefore, this story has a happy ending. Recently, another story out of the Joshua Tree National Park ended very differently when a couple was found dead in an apparent mercy murder-suicide.

Between these two tales of getting lost in Joshua Tree, it's abundantly clear that having the necessary supplies with you at all times is a must, even if you think you're just going to be hiking for only a short time period. Don't make the same mistake these other hikers did. Being prepared will drastically reduce your risk of dying in Joshua Tree National Park.

## **2. Lt. Leon Crane Was Lost in the Alaskan Wilderness for 84 Days**

Flying over what is now known as the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve probably felt like just another day on duty for the team of five American troops who were simply conducting a test flight on December 21, 1943. Unfortunately, fate had other things in mind. The B-24 Liberator that carried the team crashed into the side of a mountain that overlooks the Charley River.

The fiery wreckage had only one survivor, but he may have wished at times that he hadn't lived during the 84-day ordeal between crashing and finding help. Lt. Leon Crane jumped clear of the crashing plane, and his parachute saved his life. Lt. Crane landed in snow up to his hips and was immediately hit by the paralyzingly low temperatures. It was still daytime, and the temperature was already a deadly forty degrees below zero.

Lt. Crane only had three useful things with him – the silk parachute, a Boy Scouts knife, and two packs of matches. He wrapped his body in the parachute before beginning an epic descent to the river below. After a short time, he came upon a spruce tree where he could make an improvised campsite.

He spent the next nine days huddled there, but all of his efforts at hunting squirrels with makeshift weapons and tools resulted in exactly zero food. By this point, he realized a rescue crew wasn't coming and made the life-saving decision to follow the river north through deep snow that hindered his efforts.

On the tenth day of his ordeal, Lt. Crane came upon something beautiful: an abandoned, snow-covered trapper cabin. Even better, after he forced his way inside, he found food, a rifle, canvas tents, and mittens. His first choice after 10 days without any sustenance? Drinking a hot cup of cocoa.

He now had shelter, but he also had frostbitten feet and hands, and he still had no idea how to find civilization. He spent the next month recovering, but it soon became apparent that his newfound supplies weren't going to last until spring.

With no other choice, he constructed a sled, loaded it with food and supplies, and then set off back into the woods. Unfortunately, his makeshift sled was so heavy and unwieldy that he had to abandon it, along with many of his supplies. Snowstorms and brutally cold conditions pushed him forward, as did each unexpected dunk into the freezing water due to thin ice breaking beneath him.



He eventually found a sled trail, which led him to another trapper cabin. In a stroke of good luck, trapper Albert Ames and his family were inside. Lt.

Crane has stated that he “looked like some strange species of historic man” on that happy day. He had a black, two-inch beard, matted and long hair, and skin that was windburned, dirty, and sunburned.

The Ames family took him in, gave him moose steaks and pancakes, and provided a place to rest for two days. After which, Ames helped Lt. Crane get to the Woodchopper mining camp. From there, he was able to board a plane that took him back to his commanding officer at Ladd Field.



In October 1944, Lt. Crane returned to the scene of the accident in a bid to find the remains of his deceased crew members. Two of the four bodies were found and brought back to their families for a proper burial. More than 60 years later, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command sent a team back to the crash site. One more person's remains were recovered, but there's still no sign of the fifth crew member.

### **3. GPS Led Three Women Hundreds of Miles Off Track in Death Valley**

GPS units are a good investment, especially the handheld satellite radio variety. However, it is not wise to rely solely on this method of gathering directions, especially if you're going somewhere as deadly as Death Valley National Park.

In July 2010, three women – 62-year-old Donna Cooper, 17-year-old Gina Cooper, and 19-year-old Jenny Leung (who was visiting from Hong Kong) – headed into Death Valley to visit Scotty's Castle. The trip in went smoothly, and despite the temperatures soaring past 125 degrees, the trio spent two hours checking out the castle.



Next, they came to a fateful crossroad: they could either return the way they came or follow a sign to Racetrack. This dry lake bed is a tourist attraction that local resident Donna Cooper had never seen before. After conferring with the two teenagers, the group decided to head toward Racetrack before going home.

An hour passed before they reached another intersection. When they got there, the signage about Racetrack was unclear. Faced with a decision to make, Gina turned left. Approximately 10 miles later, it became clear she'd made the wrong choice. Even though she attempted to turn around and go back the way they'd come, the trio ended up climbing into the area's high country instead.

Donna took over the driving duties and asked her GPS – whom she'd named Nell – to direct them back to Scotty's Castle. The electronic voice immediately told them to turn left on an unnamed road. It seemed to know what it was doing initially, but directions such as "Turn right. Turn left. Recalculating. Do a U-turn," soon made it clear that even Nell the GPS unit was clueless about where they were.



On a side note, Donna did have a road atlas in the car, so she tried to be as prepared as possible. Unfortunately, the map the atlas contained of Death Valley only showed main roads. Let this serve as a reminder to ensure that you have high quality maps of the specific area you're headed to before you go on any trip. The car also had a first aid kit, a tool kit, extra shoes, sweaters, and blankets.

The GPS continued to mislead them, and they had no way of knowing what else to do. Although they had set off that day with water and snacks, they were down to their last bottle of water. Even the air conditioning inside the car couldn't protect them enough from the harsh conditions, and they were quickly dehydrated.

As the sun began to set, they found what appeared to be a main road. As a result, they didn't stop when they saw signs of a potential settlement because Donna was convinced they could make it out with their last quarter of a tank of gas.



By 10 p.m. they were almost out of gas and had driven more than 200 miles without finding a way out. Donna declared they needed to camp for the night, and they stayed in the car with the windows rolled up. They also ate the last of their food that night.

Eight hours later, they were awake and the car wouldn't start. For a tense three-hour stretch, they wandered around the nearby area and used the sun's reflection off of the back of a CD to attempt to hail a helicopter pilot. They also tried to find a cactus with drinkable liquid. None of these attempts succeeded.

Gina asked Donna to try starting the car again. Perhaps she should have found work as a psychic because it started instantly this time. Although the

gas tank was almost dry, they managed to make it 30 miles to the area of potential civilization they had spotted the night before.

After crawling under a locked gate, they discovered abandoned trailers. As they walked toward them, the sun was so hot that their feet burned from the contact with the ground, even though they were wearing shoes.

The trailers were all locked and empty. But they weren't completely out of luck; a garden hose was hooked up to the back of a trailer. The water was hot, but it helped them rehydrate. Exhausted, they took a nap on the porch of a trailer.



Later, they walked back to the car to retrieve the tool kit (always have tools on hand!). It took some grunt work, but they were able to break a padlock free of one of the small trailer doors. It wasn't much, but there was some food inside, along with a lot of beer.

The trailer was stiflingly hot, though, so they pulled mattresses onto the porch. That night they slept there with a signal fire built several feet away. Even though it was nighttime, the temperature was still so high that they almost overheated several times. If it wasn't for the garden hose, they probably would have all suffered from severe heatstroke.

Breaking into another trailer led them to a CB radio, but they couldn't get anything but static. Near the end of their collective rope, they wrote "Help, Call Police" in the dust on their car and used branches to make a large cross that they hoped could be seen from above.

6 On the third day of their ordeal, a helicopter came into view again. This time, Jenny used the underside

of an emergency blanket to get attention. They were finally found, but the rescue wouldn't be quick. Faced with the choice between being flown out individually or getting gasoline brought to them, along with directions to the highway, they chose to wait for the fuel.

How many of you would be gutsy enough to try driving through Death Valley yet again with nothing more than some written directions? These ladies may have made a mistake by turning the wrong way in the first place, but they did have food, water, and emergency supplies, along with enough knowledge to be able to put them all to good use. They also made their way out safely after everything they went through with nothing more than a few gallons of gasoline, some directions, and a couple of encouraging words.

## How to Stay Safe in a National Park

All three of these stories began differently, but they could have had the same bad ending. The three women in Death Valley were by far the most prepared for any potential emergencies, and Lt. Crane definitely deserves the award for the most stamina and willpower under extreme conditions.

You can't know for sure when an emergency will happen. You could get lost tomorrow in a National Park, even if you've been there hundreds of times before. What you can control is always taking precautions by having emergency supplies with you at all times, including a high-quality print map of the area. That way, if something does happen, you'll have the best possible odds of survival.





So, you've got a brand-new handgun burning a hole in your range bag and you're feeling motivated to improve your overall shooting technique? Well, there's never been a better time to start brushing up on your skillset than right now. We really mean that.

Rapid improvement in your pistol shooting proficiency is more than just attainable; it's highly likely. Even if you've been shooting for many years (particularly if you have, actually), chances are good that you can see rapid results. In some ways, the more experience you have, the more useful these tips can be.

Please don't take this the wrong way, but most shooters don't begin with a very solid foundation for their technique. Humor us for a moment while we describe a common shooting background and see if this sounds familiar.

You began your pistol shooting experience without a lick of training. You simply picked up a handgun, loaded the magazine, and started shooting that sucker until you were out of ammo. It was love at first shot.

Maybe you started out shooting a family member's 1911, then you purchased a handgun or three of your own. In many respects, you're a veritable expert on the weapons themselves, handling them, field stripping them, and cleaning them.

But there's one hard truth you've been doing your best to avoid up until now: Despite how much time you've put in, your groups haven't really got any tighter... in years.

It might even be fair to say that, with little or no advanced instruction, you've developed a few, uhh...

# 6

## Biggest Mistakes Handgun Shooters Make



unique and interesting shooting habits. Maybe it's even started to seem like you're having to work harder and harder with each trip to the range to overcome some of your worst shooting tendencies.

Don't worry. Believe it or not, almost all of the best marksmen in the world felt this way at one time or another in their shooting career. Even if you don't aim to have a shooting "career" at all, the good news is that overcoming poor shooting habits is relatively easy and will make your favorite pastime a lot more fun. Not to mention, it's a hell of a lot more fun than correcting most other bad habits in life.

We must warn you, though; correcting these habits requires going to the gun range regularly, handling your favorite firearms, and firing hundreds of rounds until your hands are filthy with the glorious residue of spent gunpowder. We know, we know... can it get any more unpleasant?

### Getting Over the Plateau

All joking aside, one of the most common

complaints amongst handgun enthusiasts is that their skill level has simply hit a plateau. It happens much faster and earlier than most beginners would ever expect. Some shooters can get there after just a month of going to the range regularly. And getting over the hump, so to speak, can be very frustrating.

Like any other sport, the speed of improvement tends to increase in direct proportion to the adoption of good techniques. The opposite is also true. Think about it; most shooters tend to simply grip the pistol however it seems natural to them, aim, squeeze, and stand the same way. In short, almost zero study is put into shooting technique, best practices, etc.

For many, simply the act of focusing on some of these fundamentals helps tremendously. Others need more of a rules-based approach of do's and don'ts.

No matter what you're focusing on, education and repetition are key, which is why focusing on sound techniques will make major improvements in your shooting consistency. This is true even if you're not adopting the "best" cutting-edge techniques (many of which change every few years).

With that said, even being a stickler for good technique will only get you so far. No matter how conscientious a shooter you are, you will inevitably develop any number of bad habits. Everyone does.

A lot of this has to do with being a human who is trying to focus on several things at once. And then there's the whole anticipating a loud explosion in your hands thing, which can make it hard to concentrate. We'll look at some ways to practice focusing that will help you tune out the shock of gunfire (both yours and the guy's in the next lane).

Correcting bad habits within these 6 areas will drastically improve your accuracy, stamina, and general enjoyment level and quickly too.

So, without further ado, let's get to work.

## **Jerking or Flinching**

Simply put, having your sights trained on exactly the point where you want your bullet to strike the

target, at exactly the moment your weapon's hammer or striker contacts the primer, dictates your accuracy. It's not how you're standing, whether you close one eye, or if you're holding your mouth just right. Heck, it's not even what type of gun you're shooting.



The fact is, our natural human impulse is to flinch a little or dip the muzzle a tad in anticipation of the explosion that's about to take place literally in your hand.

You may think you don't flinch, but chances are you actually do. Usually, we don't notice it because it's hidden by the muzzle blast. If you want to test yourself, shoot a group with your handgun then try a different pistol with a longer trigger pull. Somewhere along the way, you'll probably reach the break-over point you're accustomed to and have to keep pulling. When this happens, 99% of shooters "flinch."

So, what exercises can help correct this? One of the best ways to work on this is to practice dry firing, but not in exactly the way you're probably thinking. Instead, think wet/dry firing.

One of the most effective ways to correct flinching is to load 3-5 dry-fire rounds into your magazine, mixed in with your live rounds at the range. Then, focus on your sight picture and trigger pull as you fire your weapon.

Every few shots, you'll be surprised by a click instead of a bang. The test is, did you flinch or not?

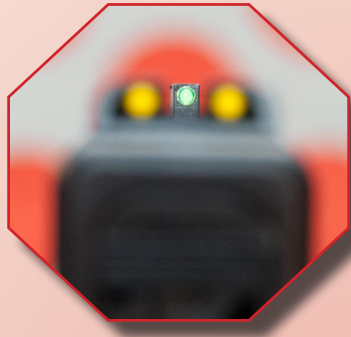
This strategy works best when you combine it with "pure" dry fire training outside of a range environment. You can simply put up a target in your garage and practice your fundamentals as you pull the trigger time after time. The point is to build and drill a smooth, no flinching trigger pull into your muscle memory.

Think of it like this: each habit is a combination

of movements in your brain, often referred to as a “neural pathway.” Currently, one of those movements in your combo is your “flinch.” Your goal is to create a new combination that is smooth and doesn’t contain the flinch.

## Unknown POA: Accuracy DOA

Here’s something they typically don’t tell you when you buy a new handgun: Where to hold your sights. You may think it’s self-explanatory or really not a big deal, but it can actually be a major frustration point.



Manufacturers rigorously design and test their weapon’s point of impact in relation to their factory installed sights. The thing is, the discussion about this rarely makes it out to the actual shooters purchasing their products.

For shooters who are either inexperienced or are breaking in a new pistol, this unknown variable can have a large impact on where the bullets are, well, impacting the target (to be fair, some manufacturers do disclose this information in the manual).

Here’s what typically happens: Your shots are grouping fairly well, but you’ve noticed they’re hitting higher or lower than where you intended.

Diagnosis: This may be happening because your weapon was designed for a different point of aim (POA) than you’re currently assuming.

Fixed sight handguns have different POAs from manufacturer to manufacturer. For example, Glocks are typically considered to have a 6 o’clock hold, meaning when you hold on a bullseye, the front sight should sit at the bottom of the circle in order to place your shot in the center.

To use a different analogy, you might think of the lower-case letter “i” with the vertical line being your front sight blade and the dot being the bullet hole.

Other manufacturers are set up for a dead-on point of aim, meaning your shot will theoretically hit the target exactly where the top of your front sight is positioned.

While the POA is not adjustable without replacing the sights on most popular semiautomatic pistols, you can correct your shot placement by simply changing your approach. The solution is to determine which type of alignment suits your weapon.

You can Google the name of your weapon (e.g. “M&P 9MM POA”) and probably find a fair amount of discussion that may or may not help you. Ideally, we suggest that you simply shoot at a paper target at 15 feet and try a dead-on target hold. If your points of impact are higher than expected, try a 6 o’clock hold. If your shots are grouping low, try a dead-on hold.

## Inconsistent Trigger Pull

Trigger pull is a popular topic for technique gurus to harp on, but we find that most recommendations don’t properly address the problem when it comes to semi-automatic handguns. Most likely, this is because most shooters are taught their trigger pull basics using a rifle. This is how they learned and what they’re used to. You know, simply squeeze with your whole hand until the firing pin does its thing and Bang!



Trigger pull technique is substantially more dynamic when it comes to a semi-automatic rifle, even more so with a handgun. This is because the follow-through stage becomes amplified when firing a semiautomatic handgun.

Consistent follow-through impacts both the current shot and the approach to the following shot. What tends to happen to semi-automatic shooters is that trigger pulls become sloppy and haphazard because we’re anticipating the next shot, not fully focusing on the current one.

There are a number of ways to work on this. One way is to fire one round at a time, holstering your weapon or at least bringing it to your side between shots. Another way is to fire your weapon slowly one-handed, focusing on your trigger pull as much as possible.

Our favorite method is to pull the trigger all the way back with each shot, then releasing slowly as you try to feel the trigger reset. This method helps solidify the idea of approaching each shot as an independent movement, instead of thinking of each magazine as a string of shots.

## Lacking Focus

First, let's define the problem. Focusing your vision on your pistol's sights presents a real conundrum that you've probably noticed, i.e. there are three planes which you are trying to make your eyes decode and align in order to aim your pistol.



Depending on your eyesight, you may have trouble getting any of these to appear with much clarity, much less aligning all three with any real precision. In fact, we find that “aligning” our sights is fairly difficult and awkward. Sure, it makes perfect sense... until you try it.

Should you focus on the front sight, front and rear sight, or the target? As you can imagine, the age-old debate is raging as hot as ever. The introduction of the now common 3-dot sights may have actually made it worse... the focus dilemma.

This problem is really tricky, since it stems from a double meaning. Mental focus is, of course, extremely important to accurate shooting. The fact is, because you're using your eyes to align your pistol, you need intense mental and visual focus.

And that visual and mental focus, mind you, should be intensely directed upon the front sight. There are many schools of thought when it comes to sight

Here's the thing: mental and visual focus not only go hand in hand, but they tend to come easiest when you are relaxed. And feeling relaxed is easier when you simplify a task, instead of making it more complex.

This is why, instead of lining things up, we suggest simply practicing focusing only on your front sight. Retired Navy SEAL Chris Sajnog teaches this technique and has excellent results. He even recommends customizing your front sight specifically for this purpose with a small speck of bright appliance paint and a toothpick. According to Sajnog, even the white dot on the front sight of many handguns is too large to promote the level of focus he recommends.

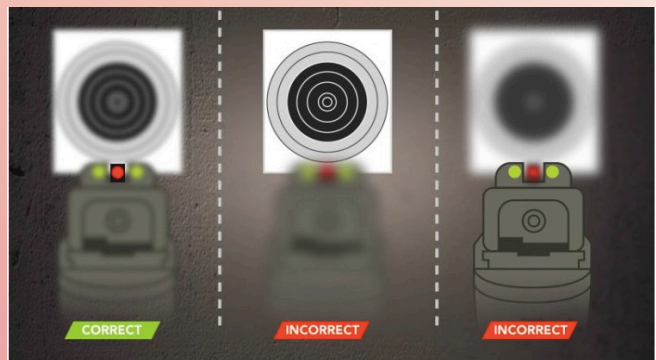


Image Courtesy of NRA.org



Front sight focus is effective largely because it's quick and simple. Aligning sights, for many shooters, is just distracting and slow. Just as “multitasking” is neurologically impossible, focusing on multiple fields of view at the same time is just counterproductive.

By focusing intently on the tiny speck of paint on your front sight and keeping the target in

your periphery, your groups will tighten almost immediately. In fact, Sajnog goes so far as to say that if your shots are not grouping in the center of your target, you're actually not focusing on your front sight... you just think you are.

Of course, this does take practice. This is not always easy at a shooting range, where there's someone over in the next booth wailing away with an AR-15. That's why we recommend exercising your focus skills regularly at your home, in your garage, or wherever you can comfortably practice dry fire training.

Here's the key: The tighter you can focus your sight picture around your front sight, the tighter your groups will be. It's one of those things that's "simple," but not exactly "easy." This is why even dry fire training is so important. The best part is that the more you practice your front sight focus, the more you're also training you mind to switch into focus mode. Each time you practice, focusing intently becomes a little easier and quicker.

## Improper Grip

Here's the truth: You can pull the trigger adequately using almost any grip technique (or even without any). Heck, we've even watched guys shoot their pistols upside down and they were able to have perfectly adequate trigger control. Of course, they had to pay a very high level of attention to pull it off.



Our goal is to help you push your trigger control and technique well beyond a simply "adequate" level. And a key part of this process is turning your technique into a habit that works for you essentially on autopilot. Thus, eliminating one of the most common problems shooters develop is essential in taking that next step.

The pitfall you want to avoid here is inconsistency. You don't want to have to "think" about your grip technique when you're shooting, and you certainly

don't want your pistol to align with your hand differently each time you level it at a target. Instead, you want your grip to become like second nature, a part of a neurological sequence that you don't have to be especially conscious of.

Select a grip technique that feels right, or makes sense, or that you believe helps you in some way and practice, practice, practice. Good news: Like most other technical tweaks we've discussed in this article, you don't need to go to the range to work on grip technique. Dry fire drills in your garage are more than ample.

You're really just working on muscle memory, building a familiarity that takes controlling this variable off your mind's plate, so to speak, when you are shooting. Practice pulling your weapon out of the holster or picking it up off the table with the proper technique. This will help drill your chosen grip technique in to the point where it becomes complete autopilot.

While we do recommend a tactical thumb over thumb grip, that's primarily for tactical shooting speed, not accuracy. Any firm and safe grip that feels comfortable to you is fine as long as it's consistent and simple to execute.

**TIP:** A firm tactical grip limits the oscillation of your pistol's recoil and allows you to keep your point of aim steady on the target throughout the shot. A tactical grip, in which you push with your dominant hand and pull a bit with your supporting hand, can help accelerate your accuracy improvements. You'll be able to more clearly see your shot placement and make mental adjustments in real time.



## Tactical Grip Basics:

- Place the back strap of the pistol firmly in to the webbing between your thumb and index finger as high on the back strap as you can comfortably do so. This shortens the distance between the barrel (pivot point) and the top of your grip hand, giving you more leverage over the recoil's oscillation effect.
- To further control recoil, place your support hand around your shooting hand, both thumbs pointing at the target with the support thumb underneath. For added recoil dampening, try placing your index finger around the front of the trigger guard, putting pressure on it back into your hand.
- This creates a bit of a push-pull tension that will help keep your sight picture as stable as possible through your shots.

## Poor Shooting Stance

Shooting stance gets short shrift in most circles, because it's not particularly flashy or fun. The good news is, shooting stance is the quickest and easiest part of your technique to fix.



When you watch a first-time shooter, you'll likely notice that they often tend to lean back, probably to get their head as far away from the muzzle blast as possible. The result is that the recoil pushes them off-balance, either a tiny bit or sometimes even moving their body visibly.

Not only is this dangerous, but it cascades into several other bad habits like flinching, poor follow-through, and major sight picture issues. Now your stance is probably nowhere near that bad, but the same principles apply.

Some shooters will dismiss any coaching related to their stance. They like the way they stand and it feels comfortable to them. Usually the question we ask them is: but how is it really working for you?

The ideal stance is one that give you an advantage, i.e. it gives you the best combination of stability, visibility, and freedom of movement. This allows you to see how you're grouping in real time (which helps with improving accuracy) and allows for a faster follow-up shot.



For any shooter interested in tactical shooting, possibly for competition, we recommend forward facing stance (with your toes pointing toward the target) such as the isosceles. This stance is taught by many tactical and law enforcement instructors for primarily two reasons. First, it allows the shooter to pivot from side to side free and easily to acquire targets to the right and left. Second, for those wearing a Kevlar vest or body armor, it keeps your armor facing toward a potential threat.

The proper isosceles starts with your feet pointing toward the target, shoulder width apart, knees over your feet, shoulders over your knees, with your arms stretched out forward presenting the pistol. If it feels weird or uncomfortable to you, modify it.

Recently, we heard an explanation we liked that melds a bit of the isosceles with a more personalized approach. Imagine you're casually walking on a sidewalk when a threat unexpectedly pops out of nowhere. Whatever defensive stance you naturally take, in terms of foot placement and weight distribution, use it. Then, simply present your weapon in an isosceles triangle.

## The Biggest Mistake Shooters Make

Ultimately, the worst thing you can do for your shooting progress is allow yourself to fall prey to frustration, malaise, and resignation. Improving your accuracy isn't difficult, but it does require making adjustments and drilling those adjustments into your mechanics.

The good news is that it's actually fun once you get started. If this is the thing that opens your eyes up to dry fire training, then all the better. You'll make so much more progress practicing in your own chosen space than at the range with all of its distractions.

In fact, while we're on the topic, let's tackle a couple common misconceptions about dry fire training. First off, rather than being less effective than live fire training, it's vastly more effective for most shooters. Consider the fact that your mechanics, your stance, front sight focus, grip technique, and trigger control should all be unaffected by the muzzle blast. The best way to drill these techniques is to eliminate the recoil variable and maximize repetition.

Second, you don't actually need to use dry fire "dummy rounds." The vast majority of modern firearms won't be damaged by simply dry firing them, especially any striker fired weapons. The old "never dry fire your weapon" adage is simply outdated. Dry firing will cause significantly less wear and tear than live fire.

Reminder: Safety is absolutely critical, which is why you must run safety checks throughout your dry-fire training. Store all live ammo in another room, apart from where you drill.

After working on your fundamentals and drilling until it becomes automatic, you'll actually be able to see improvements in your technique before you even shoot a live round. It sounds crazy, but it's true.

You'll know that you've improved because you will execute quicker, with better technique, than before and you won't even have to think about your grip or your stance or your POA. Then the next time you shoot live rounds, you'll notice how much more comfortable you are with your mechanics, allowing you to focus your attention where it belongs... on your front sight.





## WHY THE MILITARY USES REFLEX RED DOT OPTICS

Introduced to the US Armed Forces in 2000, reflex optics quickly became the go-to sighting choice for small arms, starting with the M4 family of rifles and branching out quickly. In fact, the SEAL responsible for dispatching Osama bin Laden used one to place 3 rounds through the most wanted man in history's forehead.

With the adoption of the Sig Sauer P320 as the USAF's primary sidearm last year, there's a good chance that many military handguns will also incorporate a mini-reflex optic (one of the civilian P320's distinguishing features). So, what's the story with these optics?

The interesting thing is that reflex sights are really not particularly new or cutting edge. Built on the optical principle that a point at the focus of a

curved lens will appear to the viewer at infinity, the first patent on this type of reflector sight was registered in 1900 by telescope designer Howard Grubb. Fighter aircrafts have used reflex sights in one form or another starting as early as 1918.





The advantages to this type of sight are obvious immediately upon the first use, chiefly the simplicity. Pilots, in specific, could use this highly accurate sighting tech while flying a plane... during a dogfight. That speaks volumes in itself.

Since the military's adoption of this technology, reflex sights have spread like wildfire throughout law enforcement, security, and hobby shooting alike. For many, reflex sighting technology has been a revelation, a driving force in the rise of the tactical carbine. And as this shooting trend, unlike most, has shown it has some serious staying power, advances in technology and production have made it very accessible and inexpensive.

One of the primary advantages to this type of optic, versus other conventional sights, is that it eliminates much of the margin for error posed by open sights. Since the aim point displays at the same exact spot regardless of the shooter's eye position, getting your eye lined up precisely with an iron sight or scope tube isn't necessary.

In addition, reflex users won't have their field of view limited by a scope tube. In fact, many shooters use reflex sights with both eyes open. Cross-dominant eye shooters typically find reflex sights to be ideal.



As you know already, open sights create several challenges to the shooter, such as multiple planes to focus on, as well as the interpretation of the aim point. You must line up the sights, focus on the front post, and acquire your target. It takes work to

make this process happen smoothly and efficiently. Plus, the aiming mechanism you're using literally obstructs your view of the target. Had you ever considered that?

With a red dot, you simply focus on the target itself. The reticle simply appears to be superimposed on top of your target. That is, it only requires you to focus upon one visual plane, your target. As you can imagine, this simplicity works wonders for accuracy and speed at close to middle ranges.



For tactical shooters, military applications, and law enforcement, reflex sights support a more heads up, dynamic type of shooting. In an environment where being completely aware of your surrounding is critical, reflex sights are ideal. The shooter doesn't have to put their head down on the stock as they would with a magnified riflescope or iron sights, they don't even have to be perfectly aligned with their optic.

At any angle where the reticle is visible, it will be accurate with the correct aim point because of the curved lens infinite focal point principle. This makes reflex sights ideal not just for accuracy, but accuracy combined with speed. Acquiring a bullseye is as simple as looking through a pair of corrective lenses.



# Self-Reliance Spring Cleaning Tips

Spring cleaning is a tradition that dates back thousands of years. According to researchers, it most likely has its roots in the early Chinese and Jewish cultures. There are also many who believe that spring cleaning is a natural result of increased sunlight causing our bodies to produce less melatonin. In other words, we tend to feel more energetic in the spring, which leads to the desire to clean up our environment.

Spring cleaning may be something we all have in common, but that doesn't mean we all do it the same way. For example, the self-reliance movement makes many notable changes to the typical formula. If you haven't altered your routines yet, this is the perfect year to consider incorporating the survivalist mindset while you spring clean.

Another thing to keep in mind is that it's better for self-reliant individuals and households to perform the following checklist twice a year: once in the spring and again in autumn. We're going to closely examine the best steps for you to take in this article, including things that aren't necessarily cleaning related but should still be done twice a year. At the end, we'll provide you with an easy checklist that you can keep on hand to ensure nothing vital gets missed.

## 1. Clean Up the Clutter

One thing that all spring cleaners get right is the necessity to purge their home (and vehicles) of any unnecessary junk. If you're into self-reliance, though, you'll probably need to take this a few steps further. Do you have a bugout shelter? Do you have a shed or garage that stores your stock of supplies? Or perhaps you do some homesteading and have chicken coops? Anything of this type should be added into the decluttering process.



Please note: it would be easy to simply throw everything away, but that's not the best course of action. Donate, recycle and upcycle whatever you can. This will not only reduce waste but it can also help others in the self-reliance community who may need some of the items you no longer want.

## 2. Rotate Your Emergency Food Supplies

You have a pantry full of emergency supplies, right? Canned goods, cleaning supplies, and much more can be found in your stash, but when was the last time you checked the expiration dates?



One big mistake that some people make is investing in a large quantity of emergency supplies and then forgetting to maintain it. Imagine how awful it would be to need those supplies and find out that they're expired and spoiled. You can avoid this heartbreaking and potentially deadly situation by using the spring and autumn seasons to rotate your stock.

What exactly does that mean? When you stack your canned and boxed goods in place, you should organize them so that the items with the soonest expiration dates are in front. As you get within six months of those dates, start incorporating those supplies into your daily meals and purchase replacements.

Make sure the new supplies are placed in the back and the older items come to the front. Doing this will give you the best possible chance to have a pantry full of fresh, useable food when an emergency happens.

If you have food stored in other places – such as your bugout cabin – be sure to do the same thing there at least twice a year. If it's too difficult to do both in the same season, you could perform spring and autumn cleaning at home, then do winter and summer cleaning at the cabin (or vice versa).

## 3. Rotate Your Emergency Medication

We're big proponents of stocking up on more than just basic first aid supplies, especially if you take any prescription medication. Whenever possible, put aside extra pills so that you aren't immediately screwed during a natural disaster or other emergency.

It's also smart to have cold and flu medication on hand. Remember the lesson of *The Walking Dead* – the flu or another similar type of illness could end up claiming more lives than whatever causes society to crumble. There are often increased cases of illness in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters, too.

Of course, medication usually expires within a year. This doesn't mean you absolutely can't use it, but it is going to lose its effectiveness. Avoid this problem by rotating your meds twice a year. Show your first aid kit some love during this rotation as well. Older bandages and gauze may lose their effectiveness over time. Keep them fresh for the best possible results.

## 4. Check Your Bug Out Bag

Just like your emergency food and meds, you must ensure that your bug out bag is always ready to go. Take everything out and inspect it. Do you have anything that will be expiring within the next six months? Has anything become damaged? Does the bag itself need any repairs or need to be replaced?



Rotate new items into the bag as needed. Take a moment to put the bag over your shoulders to make sure that you can still carry it. If there have been any changes in your life that haven't been incorporated into the bag yet (such as a new prescription, a new pet, or a baby), take this opportunity to do so.

Take it from us, though; the last thing you want to do is wait until your spring or autumn cleaning to update your bug out bag accordingly. Failure to perform timely updates could lead to a devastating situation if the SHTF.

## 5. Inspect Your Vehicle

This may not seem like a spring cleaning topic, but there's no reason not to use the routine aspects of this time of year to check on other vital things, too. For example, performing a visual inspection of your vehicle and having it checked out by a professional can alleviate any performance issues when it matters the most.



Always follow-up with any recommended repairs and keep your tires in good shape. You don't want to have a tire pop or your car break down while you're trying to head to your cabin.

## 6. Rotate Your Gasoline Supplies

Gasoline can typically be stored with a fuel additive for up to one year. There are plenty of anecdotal stories of fuel lasting longer than this, but you don't want to take any unnecessary risks with your safety. Therefore, it's wise to start using the older gas when you perform your spring and autumn cleaning.



Make sure to replace it right away so that you don't get caught in an emergency with low fuel supplies.

## 7. Rotate Your Water

There's a big difference between your drinking and cleaning water. Any water you plan to use for cleaning, watering plants, flushing your toilet, etc. can be stored indefinitely as long as you keep it sealed up tight and inspect the containers once every six months for any signs of damage or leaking.



Drinking water, though, is a completely different story. This water is supposed to be stored for no more than a year, and it also can't be kept in really hot or cold temperatures. It's much more affordable to invest in large, high grade water containers that you fill from your tap. However, if you've purchased bottled water, you'll need to rotate that stock as well.

Bottled water should be consumed before it begins to go bad. Stored tap water, on the other hand, can either be rotated into your cleaning supply or used to water your garden. Once a year, you should completely empty the containers, clean them, and then refill them.

Do you have rainwater barrels? Inspect them for any signs of issues such as a bug infestation. If you're planning to use that water for drinking, you should also consider emptying the containers, cleaning them, and refilling them once per year. Of course, you should also have a filtering plan in place because it's not smart to drink rainwater straight from a barrel.

## 8. Clean Your Guns and Sharpen Your Knives

When was the last time you cleaned all of your self-defense weapons and sharpened your survival knives? Although you should be doing this as needed – including after each visit to the gun range – you can also use the spring and autumn cleaning rituals to give each weapon some much-needed love.



Doing this will reduce the risk of misfires and other issues. It will also help ensure that you know how to quickly take your guns apart and reassemble them, which could become very important when the SHTF.

Are you the primary shooter in your family? These twice per year cleanings are a good time to involve other family members so that they can learn what to do during an emergency.

## 9. Inspect Your Weapons for Proper Workability

In addition to cleaning your weapons, you should inspect them and test them out. For example, all guns should be taken to the range where you can fire a few rounds to make sure they're working properly. If you see any issues or experience any problems during the testing phase, make sure that you get your weapon fixed or replaced immediately.



## 10. Double-Check Everyone's Knowledge of Your Weapons

It's not uncommon for one person in the family to be the primary gun user. If your spouse or teen usually steers clear of weapons, you may want to use the spring and autumn cleaning sessions to help them become more familiar with the guns and knives in your house.

Taking them to the range twice a year isn't as good as having them go regularly, but if they're really not into it, twice annually is much better than nothing and can provide a good compromise.

Make sure everyone knows which bullets go with which gun, how to load a clip, safe shooting techniques, and where to find a weapon in the home during an emergency.

## 11. Inspect Your Home and Cabin for Maintenance Issues

Having a remote cabin that's well-stocked with emergency supplies is only part of the process when it comes to setting yourself up with a shelter. Head out there at least twice a year to inspect the cabin and look for developing maintenance issues that could make it less habitable.



Check more than just the basics; look at the well (or other water source), check for signs of rodents, inspect the roof and plumbing for any leaks, look at the foundation, make sure all windows shut and lock properly, etc. Any issues should be addressed right away so that your shelter doesn't make things even worse after the SHTF.

Your home needs the same type of TLC at least twice per year. Even if you're planning to bug out and head to your cabin, this may not be possible. Always be prepared to shelter in place.

## 12. Clean and Inspect All Emergency Equipment

Your generator needs to be clean and in proper working condition at all times. As does any other emergency equipment you have, including backup solar panels and batteries.

This is also the ideal time to check other necessary emergency supplies such as wood, hammers, nails, screws, electric screwdrivers, plastic sheeting, etc. If you live in an area that's prone to hurricanes, inspect your steel shutters or any other materials you use to protect your windows.

## 13. Double-Check Your Emergency Plans

Sit your entire family down and discuss your emergency contingency plans. Does anything need to be changed? Has technology changed to the point where items you intended to rely upon are no longer useful? Make adjustments as needed.

This also presents a great opportunity to run emergency drills. See how quickly everyone can grab their bug out bags and get to the car. Double-check your ability to grab a weapon and navigate a dark home if an intruder breaks in.

Update everyone’s cell phone with emergency details. Those of you with an iPhone can set up an emergency ID so that medical professionals are able to access your basic health details and emergency contacts.

If you share passwords, you can also use the “Find my iPhone” feature to get a general idea of where a missing family member is. This all requires working cell towers, of course, so also take steps to have a backup plan in place if cell phone usage isn’t possible.

## 14. Perform All Basic Spring Cleaning Tasks

Many people check or change their smoke detector batteries while doing their spring cleaning. Others change filters, chop new firewood, etc. Whatever makes the most sense for your lifestyle should be incorporated into your new spring cleaning routine.

Remember: the purpose of spring cleaning is much more than just tidying your environment. It’s also the perfect time to inspect everything, make necessary replacements and repairs, and ensure that your basic safety systems are all still in place.

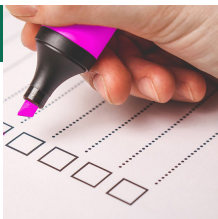
## 15. Make a List of Anything You Need

As you go through your checklist, you’re likely to find items that either need to be repaired or replaced. It’s also common for self-reliant individuals to discover the need to make brand new purchases after they inspect everything.

Make a list of the new supplies that must be purchased. Put them in order of priority. In other words, if you don’t have enough food, water, and first aid items, that goes first, followed by gasoline, emergency generators, weapons, and home repairs.

## Get Ready to Spring Clean the Self-Reliance Way!

Now that you have a better idea of how to spring clean the self-reliance way, it’s time to go through your checklist! Don’t forget to tweak this checklist as needed to fit your specific needs. We’ve added a few extra lines specifically for this purpose.



### SELF-RELIANCE SPRING CLEANING CHECKLIST

TASK	COMPLETION DATE
Clean up the clutter	
Rotate your emergency food	
Rotate your emergency meds	
Restock your first aid kit	
Check your bug out bag	
Inspect your vehicles	
Rotate your gasoline supplies	
Rotate your water	
Clean your guns & knives	
Sharpen your knives	

TASK	COMPLETION DATE
Inspect your weapons	
Check family’s weapons knowledge	
Inspect your home	
Inspect your cabin/shelter	
Clean & inspect emergency equip.	
Double-check emergency plans	
Perform spring cleaning basics	
Make a list of things you need	
Do any necessary repairs	
Buy everything on your list	



     
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