

A person wearing a plaid shirt and a hat is sitting outdoors, reading a book. The background is a bright sunset with silhouettes of trees. The person has a backpack on their back.

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MEMBERS UPDATE

June 2020

Best Fiction for
Survivalists

Top 5 Best AR-10s

Prepping on a Budget

Top Handgun Training Gear

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Best Fiction for Survivalists

When it comes to self-reliance, there's no more important piece of equipment than the one between your ears. And while you might expect us to recommend a steady diet of step-by-step non-fiction, there's really no better way to understand the survival mindset than to get inside the greatest survival stories of all time.



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Top 5 AR-10s

While the AR-15 gets most of the headlines, there are lots of compelling reasons that the AR-10 is the ideal battle rifle for hunters, competition shooters, and preppers. These tack-driving rifles combine precision shooting capabilities with the tactical advantages of an auto-loader at prices that won't break the bank.



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Prepping on a Budget

We all know that we should have a comprehensive backup plan in place. But even if we have the time to put our plans into action, the question inevitably comes up: How do I pay for it? The answer is that having a solid plan, no matter how frugal, beats the pants off of perpetually putting things off until you finally have the funds.



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Best Handgun Training Gear

Training is the key to improving at any high-performance activity, and mastering the tactical handgun range is no different. The irony when it comes to handguns is that the best place to train is not the range. With the right tools and approach, you can improve much faster and still have a blast with dry-fire training.



Best Fiction for Survivalists: Novels That Speak to the Survivor in All of Us

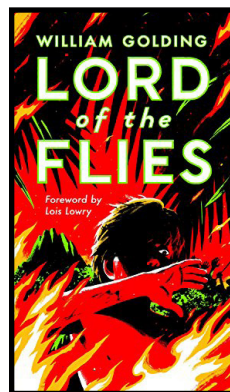
Many of us got our first taste of apocalyptic-like conditions by reading books such as 'Lord of the Flies' by William Golding. Fiction has always served an important role by not only entertaining us but also helping to prepare us for a number of worst case scenarios. In fact, this is how some survivalists came to the conclusion that prepping for when the SHTF was such a good idea.

In uncertain times, many feel drawn to entertainment that mirrors their current situation. This explains why 'Contagion' became one of the most rented on-demand titles in early 2020. It's also the reason there was a big uptick in the sales of fiction titles centered on pandemics, survival in the wild, and a long list of other apocalyptic situations.

With that in mind, we thought this would be the perfect time to look at some of the best fiction books ever written for the survivalist mindset. The following list is presented in no particular order. There's something for everyone here, which can help fill some of the extra time that so many of us have lately.

LORD OF THE FLIES BY WILLIAM GOLDING

2 Whether you somehow got through school without being assigned to read this classic or you're



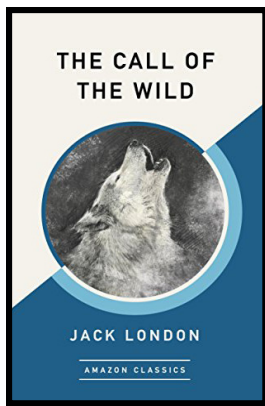
simply interested in reading it again, 'Lord of the Flies' is the perfect introduction to survivalist fiction for young adults and adults alike.

When a group of boys is stranded on an island, they initially band together to have fun and adventure. One of the most compelling aspects of this novel is the realism of how quickly the hastily built society falls apart. This provides a good look at how the people in our own lives who believe they'd be tough as nails during the apocalypse may actually act after a week or two.

As always, there's nothing more monstrous than the human imagination and the ability to inflict cruelty on others. 'Lord of the Flies' helps hammer this point home in a way that's been appealing to readers of all stripes for decades.

CALL OF THE WILD BY JACK LONDON

Although this book's main protagonist, Buck, is a St. Bernard-Scotch Collie mix, everyone who has ever wondered what they'd do in horrific wilderness situations will be able to relate to him. When the

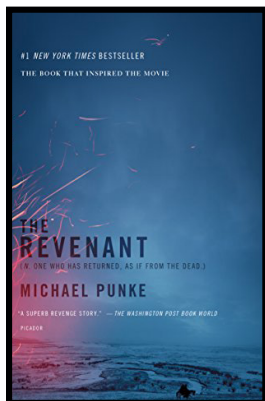


book begins, Buck has a very comfortable, pampered life, which is very similar to the world most of us know. But when he's stolen and sold to become a sled dog, Buck's entire world turns inside-out.

Through the scant pages of this beloved short story, Buck's situation grows increasingly worse. He's forced to labor in ways he would have never believed possible, and his connection to the wilderness continues to grow. By the time he finally meets a decent human being, Buck is more feral than domesticated. Without ruining the ending for those who've never read the book, Buck is forced to make a difficult choice between centuries of canine domestication and heeding the call of his wild ancestors.

Survivalists will be able to envision themselves in Buck's place. As you read this story, you'll be confronted with the reality of just how ready – or not ready, as the case may be – you actually are for your life to drastically change in a single instant. Could you truly allow your deepest, most savage instincts to come out in time to save your own life? And would you retain any loyalties as your situation worsened?

THE REVENANT BY MICHAEL PUNKE



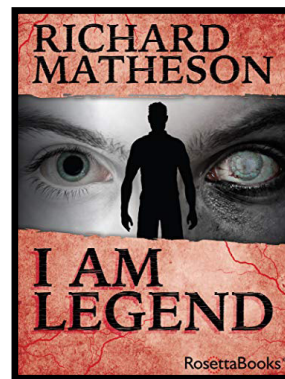
With a subtitle like 'A Novel of Revenge,' you know that 'The Revenant' is going to be riveting reading. Based on the true-life story of fur trapper Hugh Glass, this book inspired the movie of the same name, starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

Imagine you're already living a brutal life in the vast wilderness. Then, a case of bad luck pits you against an angry grizzly bear who wants nothing more than to maul you to death. The bear almost succeeds, yet you're hanging on to life by a thread. Two men are assigned to stay with

you, but they give you up for dead and move on. Would your desire for revenge against those who abandoned you burn strongly enough to help revive you from the edge of death? If your name was Hugh Glass, that's exactly what would happen.

Despite being so injured that he literally has to crawl for hundreds of miles, Hugh doesn't take the slight against him lightly. Instead, it becomes a burning obsession that helps him tackle conditions that even the hardest modern survivalist would shudder to contemplate. If you want to see just how badass – and absolutely stubborn – a human can be, invest some time into reading 'The Revenant.'

I AM LEGEND BY RICHARD MATHESON



A highly virulent pandemic sweeps the planet, killing all but one person. Although he's the lone human, he's far from the only survivor. Vampire bacteria is the cause of the plague, and every vampire on earth is gunning, or, more accurately, tooting for him.

Named the best vampire novel of the century by the Bram Stoker Lifetime Achievement Awards, Matheson's tale of a dystopian reality leaves protagonist Robert Neville in a world of hurt. Sure, he's survived the otherwise complete extinction of the human race. But to what end? Now, he spends his time scavenging, hiding, and slipping into the twin nightmares of addiction and depression.

This claustrophobic story is the perfect accompaniment to the days of self-isolation and social distancing. Readers are forced to face the possibility that survival at all costs may not be the most logical standpoint. After all, are you sure you'd really want to survive if it meant you'd never have contact with another person?

THE LAST ONE BY ALEXANDRA OLIVIA

In a story that could be ripped from today's headlines, a young woman (nicknamed Zoo)

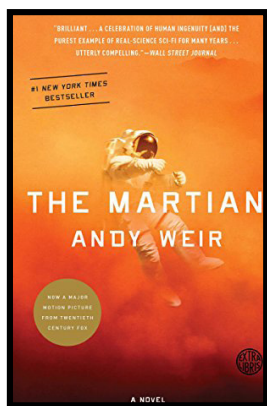


participates in a reality TV show without being aware that the world outside of the show has changed forever. News reports in March 2020 showed that this exact scenario was really being played out in multiple countries as ‘Big Brother’ contestants were kept in the dark about the COVID-19 pandemic.

In ‘The Last One,’ the lines become further blurred due to the particular concept of the reality show. Twelve people are taken deep into the woods and sent on an endurance trek that’s meant to push their survival instincts to the limits. Even as Zoo begins to see evidence of the global apocalypse, she remains convinced that it is has all been staged by the show’s producers in an attempt to get every last contestant to quit before anyone can win the game.

Her belief that horrific things such as hungry wolves are nothing more than very realistic looking animatronics helps her push forward. But will this also prevent her from discovering the truth before it’s far too late? This suspenseful survival thriller novel will ask you to face your perceptions about reality and how much they’re altered by the media.

THE MARTIAN BY ANDY WEIR



Before it was a New York Times #1 bestseller and a hit movie starring Matt Damon, ‘The Martian’ by Andy Weir was a self-published book listed on Amazon. Going from those rather inauspicious beginning to where things have ended up is a story of determination and survival all on its own,

as any author can attest to. But the story inside the book’s pages is far more compelling for survival-minded individuals.

4 Even though the main character, astronaut Mark Watney, is on Mars instead of stuck in the wilderness during an apocalyptic scenario on earth, his story

is extremely relatable. Much like the protagonist of ‘I Am Legend,’ Mark finds himself struggling to survive as the sole human left on an entire planet after he’s left behind during a horrific dust storm.

In order to survive, he’s going to have to repair as much equipment as possible and stretch his meager rations. And no matter how much he may have liked potatoes before his nightmare began, he’s going to end up getting very, very sick of them.

Will something as simple as repetitious food deplete his physical and mental energy to the point of giving up? Or will the survival instinct remain stronger than any desire to lie down and die? These are the themes explored in this survivalist book, along with the horror of being self-isolated for an extremely long time.

SINKHOLE BY APRIL A. TAYLOR



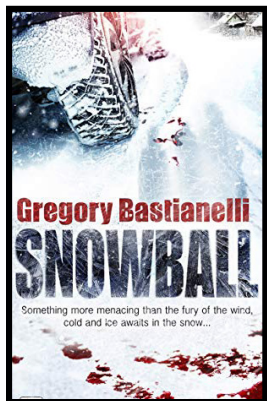
So far, we’ve looked at novels that have a major focus on isolation and surviving dystopian scenarios alone. But would it be even harder to have to try to survive while saddled with your worst enemy? This #1 Amazon bestseller was crowned one of the best horror books of 2019 by

Grit Daily, Medium, and the BuzzFeed Community.

‘Sinkhole’ also provides a ripped from the headlines look at multiple worldwide disasters. From sinkholes randomly appearing to normally docile animals suddenly turning on humans, it becomes immediately clear that all is not right with the world. Forced to flee for their lives, three people become linked together in a way they would never have imagined.

Meanwhile, other groups deal with the same nightmares amidst existing crises such as a failing marriage, alcoholism, and a cult leader’s pervasive influence. Can humanity pull it together in time to survive against a very angry Mother Nature? This book will definitely make you think twice about your bug out team.

SNOWBALL BY GREGORY BASTIANELLI



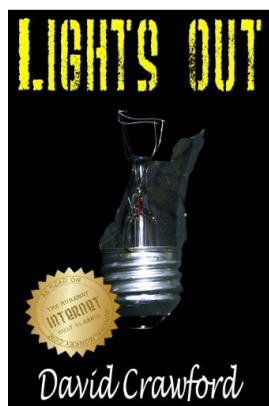
There's something extra exciting about a survival horror novel that's set in the middle of a huge snowstorm. As with 'Sinkhole,' the idea that nature could be plotting against us is always terrifying. Add to that the claustrophobia that comes with being stranded on a

highway during an intense blizzard, and you've got the basics of 'Snowball.'

This is no normal blizzard, though. Soon, the snow is literally waist high, there's no cellphone signal, and the sole plow truck that might have been able to help has been abandoned. On top of which, the main characters all have to decide if they should try to band together or go it alone. And if they do agree to join forces, can they really trust everyone else?

You'll never look at being stranded on a snow-covered road the same way again. You'll also be forced to assess your assumptions about how you would stay warm when you don't have any survival gear with you, the temperature keeps plummeting, and your supply of gasoline is dangerously low.

LIGHTS OUT BY DAVID CRAWFORD



'Lights Out' began life as an internet story, but it became so popular that it was eventually published as a paperback and eBook. And with more than 600 pages, this is a good thing for anyone who wants to pick it up in an easy to read format. With more than 3 million downloads, this ultra-realistic fiction tale examines what

would really happen after an EMP attack.

In light of recent "shelter in place" laws and everyone being encouraged to self-isolate at home nationwide (not to mention globally), 'Lights Out' brings up some very similar themes. The lights may not have gone out in response to COVID-19,

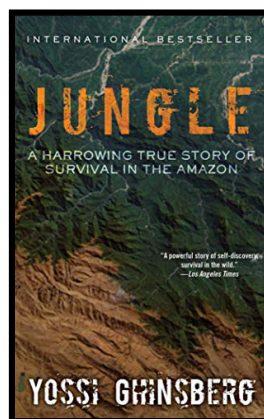
but supply issues have been a problem, along with the almost total disruption of our modern conveniences. Add to that the fictional problem of no running water and an almost complete lack of medication, and you have the world described inside 'Lights Out.'

Unlike many similar stories, the author chose to provide a more realistic approach, including many tips that could actually save each reader's life. Therefore, if you want to read some quality survivalist fiction while potentially learning something new, 'Lights Out' is an ideal choice.

BONUS: 3 NON-FICTION BOOKS SURVIVALISTS SIMPLY MUST READ

Fiction is a great way to work through the toughest potential scenarios in the world. But non-fiction stories about people who have actually fought back against these situations - and won - can provide the inspiration you need to survive when the SHTF. Here are a few must-reads from the world of survivalist non-fiction.

JUNGLE BY YOSSI GHINSBERG



'Jungle' is, by far, the best true story of survival in the Amazon. It's also arguably one of the best survival stories ever written. If you're not familiar with the mess that Yossi Ghinsberg found himself in back in 1981, then you owe it to yourself to find out. Anyone who thinks that they're well-prepared physically and mentally to handle getting lost in the jungle (or the woods) may form a new opinion by the last page of this book.

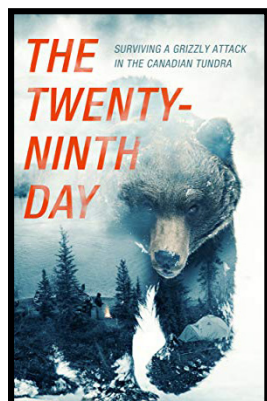
Yossi and two other travelers made the momentously unwise decision to enter the Amazon with a fourth man whom they didn't know. This man promised to be able to give them directions through the most remote part of the Amazon in a backpacking trip they'd never forget. The only part of his claim that came true was the part about never

being able to forget the experience, but that wasn't at all for good reasons.

As the situation deteriorated, Yossi eventually ended up stranded alone. Starving, hopelessly lost, and without any supplies, he had to fight against the elements and his despair in a desperate attempt to survive. Before long, his feet literally began to rot and he spent more time hallucinating than being in a lucid state.

As you contemplate the things Yossi did to survive, along with all the things he did wrong to put himself in such a horrifying situation, you'll be able to better prepare yourself for a SHTF situation.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY BY ALEX MESSENGER



In what could have easily become another 'The Revenant' for the modern age, the 'The Twenty-Ninth Day' recounts the ordeal that a 17-year-old faced after being mauled by a grizzly bear in the Canadian wilderness. What began as a dream vacation canoeing 600 miles with close friends

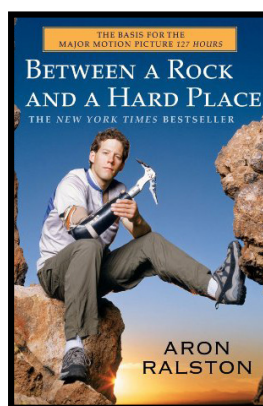
quickly turned into a fight for survival after author Alex Messenger was attacked while taking a solo hike.

As the title suggests, the mauling incident occurred on day 29 of the canoe trip. Unlike the jerks in the 'The Revenant,' though, Alex's five friends came through for him by tending his wounds and helping to keep him alive. They also all banded together to travel to a tiny remote village located 1,000 miles from the Canadian-US border.

While many of the other books in this article have made it clear that some people simply cannot be trusted, 'The Twenty-Ninth Day' looks at the counter lesson of just how important it can be to surround yourself with good people. If it weren't for the quick-thinking actions of his friends, Alex Messenger would almost certainly be dead, and his body may never even have been recovered.

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BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE BY ARON RALSTON



Most survivalists have heard the name Aron Ralston. Many of you have probably watched the movie '127 Hours,' which was based off of his book, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place.' Aron made the single biggest mistake that any wilderness lover can make by heading off on a solo hike without

telling anyone where he was going. He compounded this mistake by not having adequate extra supplies for any type of delay or issue, and he almost paid for it with his life.

Aron became stuck in a deep, narrow slot canyon after a boulder he was climbing down unexpectedly shifted. Before he could get out of the way, the shifting boulder trapped his right wrist and hand against the canyon wall. What followed was 127 hours of torture. Aron couldn't shift himself free, nor did he have the necessary supplies to stay properly hydrated and fed. He also lacked a jacket or any other extra exterior protection against the frigid nighttime conditions.

What would you do if you found yourself trapped 100-feet above the ground by an 800-pound boulder? The pain must have been astronomical, not to mention the panic and fear. But somehow, Aron retained his senses enough to make a life-altering decision. On day six of his ordeal, he used a dull multi-tool to amputate part of his right arm. Although this also could have killed him, it ended up leading to his survival and subsequent rescue.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Would you be able to amputate your own arm? Could you work together with your worst enemy? Would you vow revenge if someone left you behind in the woods to die? These fictional and non-fictional stories will lead you to examine your personal assumptions, along with your limits. Just remember: no matter how prepared you think you are, no one can ever truly know how they'll respond until they are actually faced with a life-threatening crisis.



BEST AR-10S FOR YOUR MONEY

We know the AR-15 seems to get all the attention these days. So much so that many shooters are barely aware of this extremely popular rifle's older brother: the AR-10. With the ability to handle longer action cartridges and specialize in long distance shooting, it's surprising how overlooked this weapon is.

In a world of "caliber envy" and Chris Kyle-inspired precision shooting aficionados, you'd think the AR-10 would be a natural frontrunner. Still, the .30 caliber cartridge is considered by most shooters to be solely the domain of the trusty bolt-action rifle.

When it comes to deer hunting, the bolt-action is sure hard to beat. When it comes to tactical shooting, defensive shooting, and even competition target shooting, an autoloader is often the way to go.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The AR in the names of these legendary rifles does not stand for "assault rifle," as many Americans have been led to believe (as they work equally well in a defensive context). Instead, these initials reference the company that initially designed these excellent weapons, ArmaLite Rifle. Though it was plagued by an impressive streak of bad luck, several of the most influential rifles of the 20th Century bear the designer's name.

The AR-10 was developed under the direction of the legendary Eugene Stoner, who was tasked with building a prototype for the rifle that would replace the M1 Garand. Designed to fire the standardized 7.62X51mm NATO cartridge, the AR-10 eventually lost the out on that juicy defense contract to a rifle that proved to be far less capable, the Springfield M14, in 1957.

Not willing to give up the fight just yet, the fellas at ArmaLite decided to develop another model that was very similar to the AR-10, this time designed to fire the 5.56mm NATO, aka the AR-15. This excellent rifle was once again eventually rejected by the Dept of Defense for a rifle that proved to be inferior in accuracy and adaptability.



Ultimately, after that string of bad luck, ArmaLite shut its doors and sold its innovative designs to Colt, who had better luck in getting these weapons adopted by the US Armed Forces.

WHAT MAKES THESE AR-10S GREAT?

Today's AR-10s are somewhat true to the original, though more often are scaled up versions of the AR-15, chambered for long action centerfire ammunition. However you prefer to think of it, the modern AR-10 is a heavy duty tack driver that is plenty capable of replacing your bolt action hunter or even precision rifle; sometimes at a considerable savings.

If you're hunting large game such as hogs, for instance, or hiking for miles to take a 400-yard shot at a trophy Aoudad, precision and stopping power are key considerations that may push you in the direction of the .308 Win or several other available calibers.

That's why we're taking our trademark NSRA approach to guiding you toward the best AR-10 rifles for your hard-earned dollars. Any of these 5 rifles will serve you quite well. In terms of construction, features, and quality, these weapons are each worthy of their space in your gun safe. The differences that will guide your decisions are largely personal preference, i.e. how much customization suits you.

PALMETTO STATE ARMORY'S PA-10



The PA-10 is no stranger to the NSRA's "buy" list. The standard options on this weapon are an incredible value, plus it has enough configurations to suit your specific tastes and needs. Available in both .308Win and 6.5 Creedmoor chamberings, this rifle can be decked out in a lightweight, short-barrel format for more mobile applications, or longer barreled long distance formats.

Let's discuss exactly what features make the PA-10 such a solid platform in a field of many other excellent candidates. Now in its 3rd generation, the PA-10 has a refined set of components that have been upgraded over the rifle's product lifespan.

The soft rubberized grip, 2-stage nickel boron trigger, and the M-Lok free floating handguard are all parts that make this gun such a great value for those looking to get into the AR-10 class of rifles. With a standard 20-round magazine, the PA-10 packs a lot of fire power and really allows shooters to reach out to 300 yards with excellent accuracy.

What sets this rifle apart for us is the excellent reliability, features, and (the big one) value for your money. The people at Palmetto State Armory just get it. The PA-10 is the complete package for several hundred dollars less than many other battle rifle candidates that are quite simply not at all better.

RETAIL: \$900

SPRINGFIELD SAINT VICTOR



A little late to the AR party, Springfield's Saint series is actually worth your attention no matter if you're looking for a 5.56mm or you're in the market for a .308/7.62mm AR-10. If the latter is the case, then you'd be looking at the Saint's Victor sub-model,

decked out in some very nice ergonomic furniture that makes this package a very good deal versus trying to build a similar model piecemeal.

The Saint Victor features a 16" barrel in a chromoly vanadium coated in Melonite for maximum durability, no matter what type of ammunition you're putting through the barrel's 1:8 twist rifling.

The receivers are both forged from upgraded aircraft-grade 7075 T6 aluminum and are joined using Springfield's Accu-Tite system. They're also protected from the elements by a Type III hard coat anodized finish.

As we alluded to earlier, the handguard and buttstock that come standard on this weapon are what really make it a standout. The handguard is an aluminum free-floater with MLOK compatibility. The butt stock is a high-quality Bravo Company 6-position with an excellent check weld. The Bravo Company grip is very nice as well, with a more straight up and down position.

The optics-ready Saint Victor has all of the features you'd want in an AR-10. Add to those the forged receivers, upgraded furniture, plus the Melonite-coated barrel, and you've got yourself a pretty screaming deal.

RETAIL: \$1250

DPMS ORACLE .308



You may have heard a dirty rumor that DPMS (as well as Bushmaster) is being shuttered as part of Remington's restructuring process. Well, we're here to tell you, it's all true, sadly.

Still, there are a number of these new-in-box rifles floating around out there in the retail world and many more in the barely used category in your favorite gun classifieds. Since this is a dying breed, we'll skip right down to why this barebones classic is on our list.

For reasons we never quite understood, DPMS Panther seemed to use very high-quality components to produce high-quality rifles that they then would turn around and sell for rock bottom prices. Perhaps that's part of why they are going defunct. The Oracle 308 is outfitted with a lightweight, yet very durable 16-inch 4140 chromoly barrel with that coveted 1:10 twist.



The upper receiver is milled from 7029 T6 aircraft grade aluminum, a material that stands out for its excellent durability versus weight ratio. The lower receiver is constructed of 6061-T6 aluminum, which is also excellent. And both are Mil-Spec, so there's tons of aftermarket compatibility. Another nice touch for this rifle is that both receivers feature a hand coat anodized finish, preventing scratches and rust.

The Oracle is "optics ready" with a low profile Picatinny rail system atop the upper receiver, an A2 flash hider, and an A2 style pistol grip. This is a pretty standard AR configuration, but with a dust cover, forward assist, and a Pardus 6-position stock, it's not missing anything. Priced at under \$800, this is easily a best buy entry level AR-10 that's going to hold up as well as some rifles twice the price.

RETAIL: \$750

M & P10



Once again with the M&P10, Smith & Wesson showcases that it really knows how to put together a quality firearm that greatly exceeds expectations. They also manage to deliver superb value with their M&P lineup, as several of the firearms in this class are among the best performing weapons in their respective categories.

It may surprise some of you, but the M&P10 is not just a bang for your buck weapon, it's a top performer in terms of precision semi-auto rifles. Part of that is a product of the high quality Melonite-coated 1:10 twist barrel with 5R rifling. For a battle rifle like the M&P10, the 18" barrel is perhaps the perfect length. Do some research and you'll find this rifle has no problem grouping at distances over 500 yards!

Now, how about the furniture? It's fine, but nothing fancy. The polymer handguard isn't free-floated, nor is it MLOK compatible. The 6-position stock is perfectly adequate, yet nothing to write home about.

The 7075 TG aluminum receiver isn't Mil-Spec, neither is the mid-length gas system. Aside from the ambidextrous mag release and safety, the receivers are pretty much standard ho-hum. Yet, this weapon has it where it counts. And while it may sound like we're trash talking some of this weapons features, the impressive thing is what's inside.



The accuracy and reliability of the M&P10 is what you're paying for, not a bunch of cool furniture. Thus, it depends on what exactly you value in a rifle as to whether this really excites you or not. But of course, the thing that should excite you about an AR-10 is long range precision capability and durability. There's a lot that you can easily customize with the AR-10 platform, but an extremely well-crafted rifle with a lifetime service policy is something that's very hard to achieve piecemeal.

RETAIL: \$1375

WINDHAM R18FSFST 308



If you're not aware of the name Windham Weaponry, don't worry. Though the brand has only been around for 9 years, the pedigree for this manufacturer includes founder Richard Dyke, also the founder of now-defunct Bushmaster. He sold Bushmaster to a big conglomerate which quickly closed the plant in Windham, Maine.

Seeing this as an opportunity, Dyke and company decided they'd be back in the game... and have now outlasted his former brainchild. Hopefully, you found that brief history lesson entertaining. If not, it should at least give you some confidence in the company that builds the outstanding SRC-308.

As usual, we like to start with the business end of the AR-10. In the case of the R18FSFST-308, you get a nice and thick 18" chrome-lined, 11595E steel barrel with an A2 flash suppressor. The profile on this barrel is very nice with fluting to shed a little weight, and the chrome lining makes it extra durable in case you're going to compete with this rifle extensively. The A2 device is a little overmatched by the .308 Win, so that's a minor deduction.

As you can see from the nearby image, the handguard is a very nice Midwest Industries Key

Mod that's very securely fastened to the receiver. The receiver is forged 7075 T6 Aluminum and very well done in a black anodized finish. The flat top upper receiver is optics-ready, with no iron sights at all. In an AR-10, we like this choice because it's a near certainty that users will mount an optic.

The over-molded Hogue grips are nice and ergonomic, and the 6-position butt stock is just a standard AR style piece but lacking nothing. So, you might be asking, what is so great about this Windham SRC-308? For starters, reliability for this model is excellent, even if you are using a suppressor. This direct impingement system just doesn't miss a beat. The accuracy out of the 18" barrel is also top-notch, just a smidge below the M&P10. This weapon, similar to the SAINT, is just an exemplary package overall.

RETAIL: \$1,300

TAKEAWAY



If a semi-automatic precision rifle is on your shopping list, as well it should be, then you can't go wrong with any of the contenders on this list. Each of these weapons group tightly around the sweet spot of performance, reliability, and bang for your buck excellence.

One of the primary questions you must ask yourself when deciding which of these AR-10s fit your needs is, ultimately, how much customization do you want to do? If you want a fully decked out weapon, the SAINT Victor is clearly the most complete in terms of furniture. If core capability is

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Survivalist 101: How to Prepare When Money Is Tight

Preppers with large amounts of disposable income may think that they will have a distinct advantage when the SHTF, but they might be in for a rude surprise if that fateful day ever does arrive. People with lots of money often prepare by amassing expensive gadgets and cutting-edge gear instead of learning crucial survival skills. Which is a mistake, as knowledge will be far more useful than equipment, in a post-abundance world.

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention, and those of us with more modest means should embrace this philosophy as we prepare. We should also be thankful that our situations have taught us to use our brains to tackle tough problems instead of our wallets.

A Little Perspective

Doctors, paramedics, hunters, and engineers will have an edge if society falls, and so will those who have learned to make do with what they have in tough situations. People who are used to struggle and sacrifice will be far more prepared for a world **12** ravaged by war, pandemics, or economic collapse

because they have weathered storms in the past and are less susceptible to panic and despair. They are also accustomed to overcoming challenges by using ingenuity and marshalling the few resources they do have.



The breakdown of society will likely give rise to a period of extreme violence, and expensive neighborhoods are likely to be swarmed by mobs of desperate people looking for items of value that can be traded for food and other necessities. This means a rich prepper holed up in a six-figure bunker is less likely to make it through the first six months of chaos than an average Joe hiding out in his basement.

Training the Mind and Body



We all know that the best things in life are free, but less prosperous preppers often forget this as they browse survivalist stores or catalogues and then lament over all the useful gear they cannot afford. Knowing what plants can be eaten safely will be far more useful when food supplies run out and hunger strikes than a backpack full of the latest equipment.

Moreover, a fit and healthy survivor with a bargain firearm will be a far more effective hunter than an out of shape prepper with a top-of-the-line rifle. Getting the mind and body ready for whatever life throws at us can be done by hiring personal trainers, consulting nutritionists, and joining an expensive gym, but it can also be accomplished at home on a shoestring budget.

Most people fail when they attempt to lose weight or get into shape because they go about it the wrong way. That is, they look at a workout regimen or a diet as a temporary phase that must be endured to reach a given goal. They also tend to follow plans that experts say are effective instead of thinking about what would work for them. This leads them to embark on journeys that they do not enjoy and cannot stick with. Running is a more effective exercise than walking. However, walking a few miles a day every day for the rest of your life will produce far more in the way of results than running five miles each day for two weeks.

Here are some tips to help you prepare your mind and body for anything that life may bring.

Gather information: Public libraries and the Internet are treasure troves of useful information, and just about all of it is free. In addition to reading books and articles about health, fitness, nutrition, and survival, you can watch videos, listen to podcasts, and even join online prepping communities. While wealthy preppers will be deciding what type of concrete to use in their bunkers, you will be acquiring valuable skills and reading accounts written by people who have survived enormous hardships.

Build your body: Life will be hard when the conveniences of modern society are a dim and distant memory, and the strong will likely survive the longest. Survivors will have to make perilous journeys over rough terrain while carrying heavy burdens. This activity will require both cardiovascular fitness and physical strength.

Start small: Take baby steps instead of throwing yourself into a brutal exercise regimen. Start by going for a walk and performing some light calisthenics, and then build up gradually from there. It is much better to do a little each day consistently than a lot for just a month or two.

Eat natural: Switching from processed to whole foods will improve your health, prompt you to develop culinary skills, and save you money. It will also make it easier for you to transition to a SHTF world.

Dump the meds: Many people take a cocktail of prescription drugs each day to treat lifestyle-related conditions like soaring cholesterol levels or high blood pressure. Unfortunately, these medications will not be available for long when the local drug store has closed its doors for good. The good news is that people who follow a fitness and health regimen are usually able to toss their pills after just a few months (please note that you shouldn't quit taking prescription medication without consulting with your doctor first).

Preparing to Prepare



Once your mind is focused and your body is trained, you can turn your attention to acquiring the items you will need to face the challenges a new paradigm will bring. The first step is to take stock of what you already own, so you can determine what you will need to acquire. This will prevent you from wasting money on things that you already have or may not really need. A home inventory could also uncover items that you no longer use that could be sold off to raise additional funds. Once you have your survival list complete, you can go about gathering the supplies you will need.

Do your research: Carefully curate your list so that it only includes items that offer exceptional bang for the buck. Avoid anything esoteric as you will likely find yourself scouring abandoned buildings for spares sooner or later. Militaries choose weapons and equipment with interchangeable parts so units in the field can make repairs on the go. You should take the same approach when prepping.

Look for preowned items: Many people buy things that they do not really need because spending money makes the work that they do seem worthwhile. This means that items that cost a small fortune new can often be purchased used for a fraction of their original price. Websites like eBay and Craigslist are especially good for snagging bargains.

Be flexible: While having a plan is good, being an opportunist is even better. Vow to only purchase the items you need when they are on sale, and be prepared to pounce when you see a good deal.

Be an extreme and savvy couponer: In other words, buy when it's on sale and also utilize those coupons like mad.

Practice Makes Perfect



Gear may be good, but skills are great. You could spend several thousand dollars on a precision hunting rifle, or you could buy something perfectly good for far less and then dedicate yourself to honing your skills at the range. If you or one of your loved ones is injured and needs surgery, would you want them treated by a skilled surgeon with a butter knife or a rank amateur with a scalpel? When preparing for the apocalypse, developing survival skills is just as important as gathering supplies and drawing up plans. Abilities that you should consider developing include:

Foraging: Preppers who are able to live off the land will likely survive far longer than those who cannot. Learn about the flora and fauna native to all of the areas you may be traveling across, and you will likely never go hungry. You will also find out about the plants that should be avoided and how to deal with animals that could ruin your whole day.

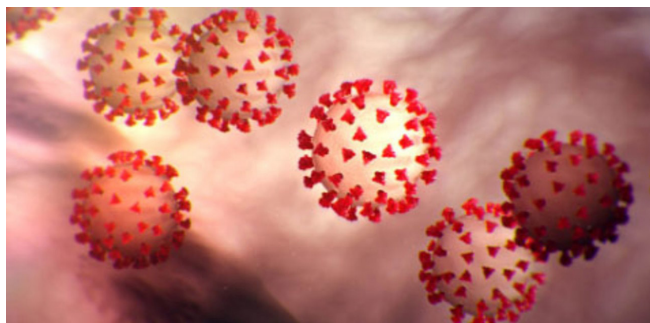
Shooting: Set aside a few hours at the shooting range every month and you will be a competent shot in no time. Strip your weapons and become familiar with every part, and try to find opportunities to shoot at moving targets if you can.

Orienteering: You probably rely on a GPS device of some sort to help you get from A to B, but there may be no Garmin or Internet when the

SHTF. Knowing how to read maps, understanding topography, and being able to decipher the night sky are the skills that will separate preppers who stride confidently toward their destinations from those who wander aimlessly in the woods.

Administering First Aid: Even the most prepared survivalist can twist an ankle, lacerate an arm, or crack their head on a rock. When emergency rooms have been consigned to the ash heap of history, tending to injuries will become a life or death skill. Knowing how to dress wounds and treat common ailments will also make you welcome in just about any community you encounter on your travels.

Preparedness and Pandemics



As of this writing, the Novel Coronavirus, AKA COVID 19, is rapidly spreading across the globe. COVID-19 has officially been classified as a pandemic, meaning that there are concerns about its spread across the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a pandemic is declared when a new disease, for which people do not have immunity, spreads around the world beyond expectations.

WHO also stated that they declared the virus a pandemic because countries were not taking enough “urgent and aggressive action.” So, how does that tie into self-reliance and prepping when you’re cash-strapped? After all, many of us are living paycheck to paycheck, right? Here’s the connection: many folks out there don’t have enough food and supplies to stick it out if they’re stuck in their home for two weeks, much less if they have to try to make it for an indefinite period of time.

Whether it’s a dangerous virus or your garden variety apocalypse, you’ll want to be prepared ahead of time if people start emptying shelves in a panic.

Preparing: What Not to Do



Jesse Colombo is an economic analyst who lives in Texas. Colombo has experience stockpiling food and says he’s amassed enough of it to last him for years. He went on to say that it often frustrates him when people say they want to begin prepping and only “buy an extra bag of rice.” In his estimation, that equates to people severely underestimating how much food they actually need.

Colombo said he started prepping by stockpiling beans and rice, which translates perfectly into prepping on a budget since they are inexpensive staples compared to most. Later the Texan said that he graduated into canned meats and freeze-dried foods.

Preparing: What to Do Instead



As COVID 19 continues to spread like wildfire, shoppers are hitting stores in droves and piling cans of food and other supplies high in their grocery carts. What’s more, the average consumer

is beginning to think more like a survivalist. In fact, Google searches by Americans for the keyword “prepping” were the highest they have ever been.

This particular Google search happened during the last week of February, and may have much to do with fears about the virus’s impact. The reality of possible food shortages is beginning to soak in with many, and the fact that they may have to stay in their homes for an extended period of time is also beginning to hit home.

So, it’s not all bad news as the world straps in for the ride that’s the Novel Coronavirus. We can think of it as a dress rehearsal for survival and even for segueing into prepping on a budget. Therefore, it’s probably best to get in the mindset of prepping as a type of insurance policy, starting with what’s commonly known as mystery meat.

Mystery Meat Basics

Although some of us have grown out of it, many Americans do love their mystery meat. Of course, if you can get around the fact that they have questionable nutritional value, nitrates and are loaded with salt, they are relatively inexpensive and should be a penny-pinching prepper’s go to for stocking the shelves.

First up, let’s talk a little bit about SPAM.



SPAM: If you’re unfamiliar with SPAM, it’s a canned meat that was developed by Hormel in 1937 to help feed the Army. The acronym SPAM stands for spiced ham, and it’s made primarily of ham pork shoulder and nitrates. And, since most men under 50

need to take in about 2,200 to 2,400 calories a day, eating SPAM can help you meet this requirement. Reading the classic SPAM can, you can see that there are 180 calories per serving, and there are six servings in it. In a nutshell, if you eat SPAM for three squares daily, it means that seven cans would last you roughly two weeks if you ate it with beans, rice, or pasta.

Vienna Sausages: Fans of Vienna sausage knows that this cocktail weenie-like food can be pretty good, especially when you’re famished. Several small containers of it also fit perfectly in your prepper’s pantry. Made from chicken, beef, and pork in broth, Vienna sausages are also cheap to buy and a good source of protein. Did we forget to mention that Vienna sausages come in different varieties such as barbecue, hot and spicy, and jalapeno-flavored? That fact, teamed with their handy flip top lid, means that you don’t even have to use a can opener to get inside. And unlike SPAM, you don’t even have to cook them. You’ll need to take in fat in as part of your diet, and Vienna sausages and spam last indefinitely. Furthermore, they are one of the few fat sources that have long shelf lives.



Fish and Vegetables

One thing to consider is that more than half of the population of the United States could benefit from losing a few pounds. If you are one of the ones who, when the SHTF, has to constantly stay on the move, you’ll probably lose your spare tire quickly. However, if you are hunkered down inside a shelter or bunker, your physical activities will probably be limited. In that case, it’s advisable that you stock up on frozen and canned fish, seafood, and vegetables,

especially canned vegetables, which are some of lowest priced canned goods you can find.

Canned and frozen fish and seafood might be a little more expensive but should still fit within your budget. As an added bonus, eating canned fare like sardines in green chilies and octopus in sunflower and olive oil will mix things up in your prepper pantry a bit and make you feel like a gourmet during hard times.

Pâté and Caviar: Speaking of feeling like a gourmet, you'll probably want to have a few items on your shelf that you break out for those special occasions, or to maybe even break up the monotony of the constant mystery meat dining experience. That's where Pâté and caviar come in.

Pâté, for the uninitiated, is a spread of puréed or finely minced and seasoned forced meat that, at the very least, contains liver. Most brands of it have a delicate taste that's good on crackers, bread, and cooked into dishes like Beef Wellington. Keep in mind if you are not into cruelty going into the making of your food, that forced means that they force-fed the animal until its liver swelled up to grotesque proportions. Variations of pâté include ground pork, fish, seafood, beef, and poultry. The word pâté originates from French, and goose liver pate (pâté de foie gras) was created in 1765 by Jean Joseph Clause, a notable chef from Normandy.

Some Pâté choices are thrifty ones such as Podravka Jetrena Pasteta 3.5 Oz Liver Pate that comes in a pack of 2 for \$6.99 on Amazon. On the other end of the spectrum, you have 1.1 lbs of Marky's Caviar Duck Foie Gras on Amazon, as well, that costs \$110.95. The latter will definitely break your bank.

Caviar, which is sturgeon roe, has a mild, fishy, salty taste. Any other roe, such as paddlefish roe, cannot properly be called caviar. In those cases, it's just known as plain roe. This poor man's caviar might be the one to stock since you can find some pretty cheap ones on the Internet and on grocery store shelves. Caviar has about the same extreme price range as Pâté, depending on the rarity and quality of it. Caviar and roe tastes delicious on top of baked potatoes, and they can be used in place of fish on crackers, bread, and rice.

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Getting Started



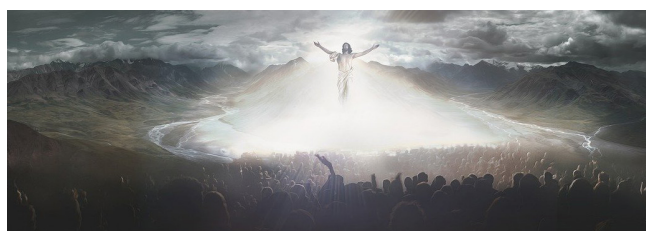
The aforementioned list and tips we've shared should give you an excellent jumping off point to begin your prepping on a budget journey. Just take a look at any household item or crucial staple, and imagine what you could replace them with if the

grid went down or some other catastrophe prevented you from obtaining them. Then imagine how you could replace them without spending a lot of cash.

Think about it; you might even have something in your household that could already replace something else when you apply a little ingenuity. Take glasses or tumblers that you enjoy a beverage or pour a shot of your favorite cocktail in, for example. Now, look around your kitchen at all the glass jars that contain products such as salsa, jelly, pickles, and more. Washing and reusing all those glass jars for drinking glasses could keep you from ever having to buy a set of fancy ones again. Plus, they are built to last and won't break as easily as drinking glasses and tumblers.

The Last Shall Be First

A university education, good job, and nice house are the badges of success in the modern world, but the day may soon arrive when knowing how to dress a deer will be far more useful than understanding the intricacies of promissory estoppel. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says that in the world yet to come "The last shall be first and the first last." While you may or may not be religious, you should consider these words and make them your credo as you prepare.





THE TOP 5 BEST DRY FIRE TOYS

As we've recommended time and again, the best place to tune up your shooting techniques is inside your "Dry Fire Facility" (AKA your garage, shed, spare bedroom). The more convenient the location is for you, the better. That's because you don't need a huge investment of time; just 15 minutes, a couple of times a week, can really make a difference.

To keep things interesting in the dry fire facility, we highly recommend you invest in a couple training accessories, maybe even periodically. We all like new toys because we're excited to mess around with them and learn how they work. But the best part is that these can really help you engage with your training in a new way. Heck, we'll come right out and say it, these things are fun to play around with.

DRY FIRE CARDS

18 Let's start at the beginning. One of the hardest things when it comes to dry fire training is getting

started. By the time you get your gear and your space all set up, the mind tends to go blank. "What do I do?" is the most common dry fire training question we get. It's true, once you work through a few of the basics, it's hard to come up with new and engaging ways to train.



If that sounds like you, these cards are a great solution. The drills listed on these cards are literally plucked from the US military and competitive shooting programs. So, not only are they exciting but they're very apt for anyone looking to advance their self-defense or competitive shooting skills.

The beauty of the cards is that, if and when your mind goes blank during your training, you can simply draw a new card and get back in the game. Plus, they really help you build a well-rounded training regimen.

BARRELBLOK TRAINING SYSTEM



One of the most common complaints we hear from shooters who want to train with their actual CCW is that they are constantly feeling the need to do redundant safety checks. Again, this is a very good impulse safety-wise, but a bit of a constant drag on your training. It makes it a lot harder to get in “the zone.”

One excellent way to overcome this is the Barrel Blok system. This system, as we’ll call it (it’s actually just a few pieces of polyurethane), allows you to do a couple of things with your dry fire weapon. First, there’s a bright colored plug that fits inside your pistol’s chamber, blocking (or is it bloking?) any chance of a live round feeding in. Attached to the plug is a flag that sticks out of the barrel, letting the operator know that the gun is totally safe.

The second piece of the system goes into your magazine. This bushing actually creates the pressure of another round in the magazine, tricking your slide and allowing you to rack it freely as if the weapon is loaded. This allows you to practice speed magazine changes, malfunction drills, and reset the firing pin as you might in live fire tactical shooting drill.

Another nice thing about the Blok system is price. It’s much less expensive than buying a training pistol or laser system. For under \$20, you can practice with a very high degree of realism, using your actual firearm, and avoid any disassembly.

SIRT TRAINING PISTOL



Next Level Training’s SIRT Pistol (Shot Indicating Resetting Trigger) is probably the most popular

choice among the gear fanboys. And the concept behind this laser training pistol ties in perfectly with many of the brain training fundamentals that are critical to your progress.

In short, these laser guns provide a completely safe, lifelike experience that users can run dry fire drills with and get a high degree of feedback from the comfort of home. The SIRT Performer models indicate both trigger uptake, engaging a red laser when you take the slack out of the trigger, and a green laser to simulate your shot. The combination is an excellent recipe for focusing on trigger control mechanics.

Most of us don’t get much feedback on our hold, only sight picture and the actual shot placement on a target. Let us tell you, watching a laser bounce around all over a target during your supposedly “rock-steady” target hold is enlightening, if not a little unnerving. The greater value though is training yourself to adopt a slow trigger release where you can feel a reset, rather than just releasing it all at once.

And that’s good, because one area where the SIRT really shines is the excellent trigger feel and reset. These pistols do a great job mimicking the real thing and have a nice reset “click” as well. The high quality of these training pistols is a pleasant surprise for most users. They come with weighted magazines for running quick change drills, and those have a really nice and realistic feel as well.

There are only two notable downsides with the SIRT, from our perspective. First off, it’s missing a couple of features we’d like to see, i.e. some kind of dots/markings on the open sights and a working blowback slide. The other downside is price. We’ll just come out and say it, these things ain’t cheap. The base models start at around \$279.

Currently, Next Level Training offers several models, including faithful reproductions of two very popular platforms, the Glock 17 and the full-size Smith & Wesson M&P. They also carry a generic “Pocket Pistol” intended to replicate compact carry pistols.

LASERLYTE LASER TRAINER REVOLVER



If your primary handgun happens to be a revolver, you've probably been shaking your head. None of the aforementioned training systems even pay lip service to this classic and still very popular segment. The LaserLyte system stands alone here, which is another way of saying it's your only choice.

The good news here is that this pistol, designed to model the S&W J-Frame dimensions, is arguably the best training pistol LaserLyte makes. One of the biggest complaints we hear about the LaserLyte semi-automatic trainers is a ridiculously long trigger pull and reset. The same trigger, when placed in a double-action revolver replica, is actually very true to life.

Another bonus with the LaserLyte system is that the laser activates for 1/10th of a second, unlike the SIRT, which remains on as long as you hold the trigger. That comes in handy if you are using an interactive target system of some kind, of which LaserLyte offers several. If you use a SIRT and hold the trigger down, it can cause these systems to malfunction, registering multiple shots, etc.

Perhaps the best news regarding the LaserLyte is that it's not anywhere near as expensive as buying an actual firearm, unlike the SIRT. As of this writing, the LaserLyte revolver is listed at \$40 on Amazon, and you can get the full "shooting gallery" package with the revolver plus 3 interactive targets for \$200.

Truth be told, the LaserLyte trainer pistols are no match for SIRT in the quality department. But they are substantially more affordable. At SIRT prices, it's tough for most gun nuts not to just buy a real semiauto.

MANTISX



Here's something for those who like to mix their shooting with their smartphone, but not the way you're probably thinking. The actual product here is an accessory that fits on your handgun's rail system, much like a laser sight. Rather than projecting light toward your target, this gizmo tracks the movement of your firearm during your trigger pull.

The data, analysis, and recommendations are all delivered through a smartphone app that communicates with the device on your pistol's rail. If you like apps, smartphones, and technology in general, this might be a winner for you.

You can use the MantisX during dry fire or live fire target practice, and it will score your technique and give you information about what you are actually doing as your trigger breaks. As we've discussed before, it's surprisingly difficult to self-diagnose some shooting issues, even during dry fire drills. The MantisX software will tell you if you're slapping the trigger, flinching, etc. The software even tells you which direction you are moving the muzzle as you pull the trigger.

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