



MEMBERS UPDATE

July 2023

Tuning It Up: AR-15 Upgrades You Need Right Now!

Must-Ask Questions Before Buying Rural Land

41 Ways To Become Self-Sufficient

**REACH OUT AND TOUCH YOUR TARGET:
TEN BEST RIFLE SCOPES FOR HUNTING**

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Tuning It Up: AR-15 Upgrades You Need Right Now!

By Eric Austgen



There is nothing that makes my heart swell with extreme joy more than the consistent wailing and gnashing of teeth of anti-gunners and their incessant attacks on the AR-15, a weapon turned into the poster child for everything wrong with 2A devotees. They think this firearm is scary enough as it is, straight from the factory. Just imagine what little gray matter they have exploding in outright terror over the many modifications and upgrades you can make to this feared defender of millions of Americans. As the title suggests, these are upgrades you need right now to keep your AR-15 running like a dream every round you cycle through it. All hyperboles aside, upgrades to any firearm can mean the difference between life and death, with the most prepared of gunfighters walking away after the dust settles. So, with that in mind, we will look at the upgrades needed to keep you the one walking away every time.



Triggers And Trigger Guards

The complaints shooters have about fresh-from-the-factory triggers on firearms is that they require a greater amount of force to squeeze off a round than they would like. The importance of having a crisp, easy squeeze on the trigger can not be reiterated enough; it will improve your accuracy and ability for rapid fire with any semi-auto.

The trigger upgrades you install should be constructed of high-quality materials that can withstand the most extreme of situations, from weather to a direct hit by a Mack truck. These triggers can be made from metal, impact-resistant composites, or a make-up of both. The trigger should also give your finger a comfortable amount of resistance, somewhere between a hair trigger and a heavy pull. However, you will be the ultimate judge of where your “sweet spot” is located. There are custom and stock drop-in kits available on the internet from many suppliers; these trigger kits should include a trigger, trigger spring, disconnect spring, disconnect, and J-Hook springed hammer.

Another decision you will need to make as to what trigger you drop in is how the weapon will be used. You may take your AR out for some competition shooting or keep it in reserve for home defense, with the occasional trip to the range. If you shoot mainly for bragging rights and shiny trophies, the two-stage trigger system is right up your alley. Home defense shooters should stick with a single-stage trigger. The two-stage triggers are ideal for sporters since the rear trigger helps to take the excess tension from the main trigger, allowing the shooter to line up a perfect bead on their target before firing, therefore freeing the shooter’s mind of any worry of missing the target because of a heavier trigger pull. The home defense side of things gets a bit more intense and expedient, and that is why the single-stage is perfect, since a round comes out the barrel every time you squeeze the trigger, and there isn’t another trigger getting in the way.

Another complaint, while we are in the trigger neighborhood, is that of AR-15 enthusiasts who shoot with gloves on, either professionally or for their own edification. Whatever the case, these folks

now have the option to modify their existing trigger guard with enlarged guards. I should also note that this is good news for all of you with larger hands who have a difficult time finding the right fit with any firearm. The benefit of having an enlarged guard is that one can easily engage a target without going through some sort of digital gymnastics to get a happy marriage between finger and trigger. And, like the trigger, the enlarged guard should be able to take a beating and ask for more.



Grips And Fore Grips

My fellow large hands, finding the right grip and practicing proper gun control has been a major thorn in our sides for far too long. Full disclosure, I have had to pass up some nice six shooters because the grips do not fit my hand correctly, and there is no conversion or upgrade available to satisfy me. Luckily, there is no end of grips for the AR on the market that one can easily find the one that does “it” for them.

Your comfort should be foremost in your mind when shopping for grips. There are grips made of rubber or polymer materials, so it will be up to you whether you want a firm grip or one that melts right into your hand. Once the material decision has been nailed down, you will want to consider if a plain grip is just fine for your needs or if you want to add some ergonomics into the mix. This can range from the weight of the grip to grooves and contours being incorporated into the mold. One can also choose textured grips to decrease the risk of the weapon slipping from their hands in moister conditions. These little extras go a long way to reduce stress and tension on the muscle groups involved in all shooting activities.

Although the majority of grips riding the waves of free enterprise are of a “stock” nature, the more discerning consumer may go the custom route to ensure the best fit possible. Some are angled and vertical foregrips, pistol grips, and mag well grips. If you want to get a really custom grip to make the weapon almost like it was a part of you, then you will be dealing with high-tech computer and scanning equipment, and that might be a bit pricey for some, but if you have the money to burn, go for it.

You will find that your muzzle climb will decline due to the grip absorbing more recoil when you switch out your factory grips for an upgrade. Your hands and wrists will not suffer the fatigue they used to experience with a grip the manufacturers dubbed “good enough for us.” Upgraded grips will not only improve your accuracy while firing, but will also allow for easier maneuverability to swing the weapon from whatever position you are in to quickly draw a bead on the target.



Optics And Sights

I must admit that I like to shoot certain weapons with the original iron sights and nothing else. Some of that is out of respect for tradition, and modern optics wouldn't work in any way, but also because it is an essential skill that any serious shooter or marksman should master before moving on to technological sighting marvels. I do recognize that time is of the essence in the circumstances of some people's lives, so I see no problem in getting an optical upgrade first, just as long as you promise to go back and practice with iron sights when you have a few moments. Ok? Great. Now that we have that out of the way, let's have a gander at some optics and sights to increase your artillery's accuracy.

Red dot and holographic sights are optimal for close-quarter situations like the sporadic 3 A.M. home invader, as they will allow for quick target acquisition with a “laser” dot. So will using a heads up display, the smaller cousin of the larger fighter aircraft type of gunsight. The red dot is created by a LED in the sight which is reflected onto a treated silvered piece of glass, resulting in the dot “floating” around until it is lined up with the target. Although red dot sights are more commonly used, holographic sights can be employed with great effect as well. The sight projects a reticle image with a laser to illuminate a holographic display. Scopes and hybrid sights are excellent for the gunner that likes long and short range shooting or must switch between the two at a moment’s notice.

Returning full swing to iron sights, it would be advisable to invest in backup sights in case your battery-operated sights fail at a crucial moment. Upright and off-set rear flip-up sights allow for better long range accuracy and switching to closer targets by flipping the sight leaf down. This sight is compact enough not to get in the way of other rail-mounted optics. One can choose to mount a spike style front sight to work in concert with a red dot sight or regular rear iron sights. These sights will have a luminescent strip of paint on them to assist in less-than-bright conditions.



Barrels And Muzzle Devices

The length of your barrel will come down to personal preference, which is closely associated with how you intend to use the weapon. Many people prefer a longer barrel for accuracy at long range, tight target groupings, and the heavier weight for stabilization purposes. Advocates for a shorter barrel would argue its versatility and maneuverability to deal with all the lethal crises one is faced with in life, not to mention that the lighter weight is also a selling point for them. However, if you are the odd duck out there that likes a happy medium, you should look into a barrel with a balanced and average weight and length. Just make sure all barrel lengths are within the limits of the laws the 2A

Carbon and stainless steel are the two main materials used in barrel manufacturing. These are a hardy, sturdy breed of barrel, with some even lined with chrome to assist in cleaning and keep corrosion to a minimum. It also helps to keep the wear and tear down when the trigger finger gets extra twitchy. I have seen barrels made of lighter-weight materials such as aluminum. However, you can only put a smaller .22LR through it; anything packing a bigger load than that, and all bets are off. I approach these types of materials with the same advice I was given an eon ago about brass framed revolvers and rifles; just don’t do it. Yes, it may seem like a plus to save all that weight and have a weapon you don’t need to clean as intensely, but if you’re eyeballing them, approach with caution and perform due diligence. Also, give the rifling of the barrel a look, since this will be a crucial deciding factor in your overall accuracy.

Once a barrel choice has been made, you should consider getting a muzzle break or compensator in order to counteract the effects of muzzle climb and recoil. This will keep your barrel steady without losing your target with each round, even during rapid-fire operations. The breaks basically redirect the gas through the side vents and forward to the break. Compensators vent the gas upward at the muzzle while pushing the barrel down, giving it vertical stability. In the same vein as muzzle breaks and compensators, we have flash suppressors to play with as well. As the name suggests, it keeps that bit of fire that comes out of the barrel from being so darn bright. It is like the compensator, but where it differs is in the equal placement of holes or vents in the device that disperses the gas outward so that it does not ignite, instead of holding on to it. This is an advantage for night hunters, homeowners, or those unfortunate souls trapped on the graveyard shift, as it will help to conceal your location and preserve your night vision. At the very least, it will not assault your purple rods with a blast of intense illumination. Of course, there are muzzle upgrades on the market that attempt to roll all three of these devices into one, and from all accounts I have heard, they are really crappy and not worth your time. However, if you like to test things for yourself, have at it.



Bolt Carrier Group

All parts of a firearm are subjected to some wear and tear, some more than others. The bolt carrier group sees a lot of action and, in some cases, very little lubrication. These two factors are the gremlins that cause quite a headache among AR-15 owners, so upgrading to a specially treated nickel boron or DLC bolt carrier would be ideal. The special treatment makes these guys slicker than a slip-and-slide with some Wessonality added to it. It helps to keep the weapon from jamming up in rapid-fire mode with less lubricant.

The lighter weight is another advantage for shooters due to the expediency of round cycling, resulting in an increase of shot speed. Other shooters have opted for the M-16 style bolt carriers. While they are not fully auto, they are heavy, which increases accuracy and cuts down on recoil.



Stocks And Handguards / Rail System

As I have touched on these subjects in previous articles, I won't belabor the point that having a stock of quality material and satisfactory weight that melds with you is paramount to your success and comfort as a shooter.

Handguards are either free-floating or drop-in types. Free floaters are independent of the barrel and are heavier due to the weight being supported only on one point of contact, whereas the drop-in has several along the barrel.

Rail systems can be attached anywhere on the weapon, as long as it doesn't interfere with normal operations. These can be used to attach optics, flashlights, laser sights, foregrips, and any other gadget one could think of mounting.



Extended, Ambidextrous, And Other Stuff

This is the parts drawer of the article, the little odds and ends to make your AR-15 just right. So hold onto your hats for this bit of news. The mag release, safety, and charging handle are all readily available in both extended and ambidextrous versions, at the very same time! Imagine what that would do to an anti-gunner when they find out you can operate that scary thing even with one arm incapacitated. The bolt release has an upgraded extension as well.

It would also be wise to get a couple of complete sets of replacement pins, the anti-rotational variety, so that you can switch out worn factory pins as they begin to fail or just switch them all at the same time. Hell, it's your gun, go hog wild.

Final Words

I think it goes without saying that having every part of your firearm working harmoniously together provides for a consistently fun shooting experience and a reliable shooter when the need arises. Upgrading your AR-15, or any other firearm for that matter, will greatly enhance your ability to come out of competitions and self-defense shootings victorious. What it boils down to is this, if you know that you have quality parts running in your firearm, coupled with its comfort and fit, you will be more focused on the task or threat at hand instead of worrying about whether or not your lead slinger will perform as advertised. So, until next time, dear reader, stay safe and let's be careful out there.

REACH OUT AND TOUCH YOUR TARGET: TEN BEST RIFLE SCOPES FOR HUNTING

BY ERIC AUSTGEN



I was flipping through the channels the other day when I happened upon the scene in “Quigley Down Under,” where Tom Selleck’s titular character was displaying his shooting prowess with a bucket perched on a distant hill. This got me thinking about how far the shooting world has come from precision tang-mounted sights to the modern-day holographic and multi-lens jobs that put the target right in your lap without actually doing it. So, I figured we would have a look at the ten best scopes on the market that will satisfy every shooter operating on a dynamic or fixed budget; in the interest of keeping a fresh supply of good, hearty meat in your freezers. They are not in any particular order, but rather grouped by maker, as there are a couple of manufacturers that produce multiple scopes of fine quality that will appeal to all types of shooters.

PRIMARY ARMS 1-6X ACSS RETICLE SCOPE

Anyone with even a passing knowledge of snipers is aware of the fact that they cart a spotter around with them. These guys are tasked with calculating elevation, bullet drop, windage, and covering the sniper’s six, should their area suddenly become “hot.”

Primary Arms has a fantastic scope on the market that will put you in the dual role of sniper/spotter. The 1-6X ACSS Reticle Scope has taken out all of the guesswork of shot placement and put it all into one neat little package. With this scope, it is easier to range a human-size target, lead the target, and compensate for bullet drop and windage.

The scope is 10.75 inches long, weighs 17.4 ounces, and is made from anodized 6063 aluminum. The fully coated multi lenses are waterproof and resistant to fogging. The scope does come with illumination capabilities, which will require batteries, but it also comes with a primary and spare battery, the spare being stored under the windage turret cap.

The Advanced Combined Sighting System (ACSS) lives up to its name by combining not only an accurate range finder into the reticle, but also joining the bullet drop compensator and range finding marks in wedded bliss. After that, all you need to do is match the target to the appropriate range mark, and give that trigger a gentle squeeze. Depending on



where you shop, these scopes can be had for under three hundred Americans.

PRIMARY ARMS SLX 3X32 GEN III



This particular scope was built for those just starting out in the shooting sports or the odd new scope for the veteran shooter's ever-expanding collection. It will also appeal to the budget-minded populace as well, since this scope won't hit you too hard in the wallet.

The SLx 3x32 is built tough like its aforementioned cousin, being constructed of Type II hardcoat hard-anodized, aircraft-grade aluminum topped off with a black anodized matte finish. It is also impervious, or darn near, to water, fog, and most monster truck rallies. The scope and mounts have been subjected to extreme field tests, some described as inhumane, and came out in the end with a glowing endorsement from the National Tactical Officers Association. Take that however you would like.

The set 3X magnification sight is actually a prism instead of the traditional lens scope system. This is helpful, in that prism optics deliver light to the ocular lens better than lens scopes do. It also sports the ACSS, so you will spend more time popping off rounds than popping off multiple math calculations in your head and trying to keep them all together and dynamic at the same time. I don't know about you, but I hate math, and I love anything that doesn't force me to do it. This scope doesn't force math on anyone, so it should be universally loved. Why wouldn't it be? With the quality of Primary Arms and the MSRP of \$289, ticker tape parades should be held in its honor.

PRIMARY ARMS PLX 6-30X56



This is another ACSS reticle offering from Primary Arms. It is constructed of the same materials as other products in the company line to provide consistent quality and lifetime service. The scope is designed for medium to extreme long-range shooting; we're talking out to 1000 yards or more. This is accomplished using the ACSS Athena BPR MIL reticle and a special type of glass from Japan with enhanced clarity. I can elaborate no further on that, as I'm sure many scope materials are company secrets.

The reticle is an inverted chevron that gives the shooter a precise aiming point without obstructing the target. It also has a grid system that assists with calculating long-distance ranges with plenty of aiming references on which to rely. This reticle allows for a set-and-forget feature for zeroing, but if you like to be assured that the scope is properly set, you can fiddle with the turret knobs all the livelong day to your heart's content as well, I dare say.

Expect to take a hit to the pocketbook on this guy, as the MSRP is sold at a solid \$1499, but I'm sure it has to do with not only the quality materials used in the construction, but also because it was made in Japan with that super duper glass of unequaled enhanced clarity, although I may be spitballing here.

VORTEX STRIKE EAGLE 4-24X50

The family of scopes this offering is a part of can trace its lineage all the way back to 2015. Although it is a relative newcomer to the shooting scene, this scope will find favor with those that like to quickly switch between short and long ranging shooting capabilities.



It is constructed of 30MM machined aircraft-grade aluminum that is filled with nitrogen and sealed with O-rings to combat the scope from fogging over or taking on water. It measures in at 14.9 inches and weighs 25.6 ounces. Due to its thickness, the internal adjustment range is increased, which, when coupled with the magnification range, makes shooting at targets near and far a breeze.

The multi-coated lenses are a large 50MM, which will facilitate a greater amount of light and clarity. The reticle is a glass-etched, second focal plane job that gives detailed hold points without taking the focus off the target. Second-focal plane reticles remain the same size no matter the magnification, while first-stage reticles adjust in size along with the magnification.

For some reason that has never been sufficiently explained, this scope was discontinued by the manufacturer. However, that doesn't mean one can not be purchased from various web dealers. Owing to that fact, you need to budget generously if you really want one, as they range in price from three to five hundred bucks. You will also need to factor in the price of rings and mounts, as they were never issued with them in the first place.

VORTEX VIPER PST GEN II 5-25



Even though this is not in the bank-breaking top-tier scope category, it features some very fine qualities that put it close to that tier without moths taking up residence in your wallet.

The 26.3-ounce scope is a 12.64-inch single-piece of machined T6 aluminum, coated in a matte black finish, the 30MM tube filled with either argon or nitrogen, sealed with O-rings to prevent moisture from entering to fog the lenses, and it's also shockproof.

The lenses are 50MM XR coated XD glass affairs that give the shooter a clearer, crisper, target image with higher color resolution. Unlike the Strike Eagle, the Viper is a first-focal plane reticle. Having the reticle stay constant aids the shooter in making adjustments if the shot is off without having any scaling problems.

The \$1399 price tag may be a deal breaker for some people, but this sight is worth a look if you are interested in having quality products without the guilt of feeling too cheap or spending recklessly.

VORTEX VMX-3T



If you are searching for a magnifier for your red dot sight system, look no further than this bad boy. Adding this to your existing red dot will enhance your accuracy and precision shooting skills.

It is a scant 4.3 inches, weighing only 11.6 ounces, so it will stay out of your way, and will not add excess weight to your shooter. The matte-black-finished, machined anodized aluminum body is fully sealed for water tightness and fog resistance, which helps keep the fixed 3x magnification sharp and clear in any weather condition.

The nice thing about this scope is that you can go from short-range shooting with the red dot to flipping on this sight and nailing targets at distances

greater than 100 yards. Granted, you will be sporting two different sights on your weapon, but if you don't want the fuss or bulk of a tube scope along for the ride, this would be a perfect scope to ponder. These scopes are priced at \$250, which is a decent price to pay just to try out a scope to see if it works for you. If it doesn't, you won't feel cheated, and you could probably unload it on someone in your shooting circle that has been eyeballing it since you first brought it to the range. You know who I'm talking about; there is one in every bunch.

LEUPOLD 3-9X40 VX FREEDOM



This lightweight scope is constructed of the same materials and to the basic specifications of other sights on the market. What sets this apart from many other scopes is the scratch-resistant coating on the lenses and the 3:1 zoom erector system, which aids in smooth and repeatable reticle adjustment in any situation.

Turning to reticles, the scopes are available with Duplex Reticle CDS, Huntplex, and Tri-MOA CDS reticles. The duplex reticle can be made clearer by adjusting a textured lock ring. The Duplex also incorporates a low-light management system which helps to maximize low-light imaging for hunting purposes in the first and last 15-30 minutes of the day.

It is nominally priced at \$300, and with a lifetime warranty, it would be an excellent scope for hunting in the most extreme of places.

LEUPOLD VX FREEDOM SCOUT 1.5- 4X28

Being that this is in the same line as the previous scope and shares many of the same attributes, except for magnification strength, it bears mentioning. This is because, as the name implies, it is geared toward scout rifles, guide guns, mountain



guns, and carbines. Most firearms have either comfort and portability or firepower as their core functions, but don't be fooled into thinking that one can not achieve both. Quite the contrary, the Marlin lever-action Alaska guide gun is chambered for the heavy .45/70 cartridge, but it is light and compact enough to fit into any space. It is also a hell of a lot of fun to shoot. If you happen to own any one of these types of guns, then this scope is worth a once or a couple of lookovers to see if it will work out for you. And, for a scope designed for this type of firearm, it is definitely worth the \$350 sticker price.

SIG SAUER BRAVO 5



The Bravo 5 is the first wide-field battle sight that increases the field of view by 42%. Not too shabby. That is why AR fans and tactical practitioners would be interested in checking out this puppy.

The scope has a lightweight, sturdy aluminum housing, is waterproof, and is totally anti-fog. Contained within its compact size is a Megaview system with an advanced prism and ocular design, which is what increases the field of view over the other battle sights on the market. This is due to the Low Dispersion glass and aspherical lens, which creates a flat, distortion-free image with clarity from edge to edge. The scope also has a motion-activated illumination system that powers up when it senses motion and powers down when things are quiet. A nice feature to have to save battery life and for operational safety.

The scope retails for \$482, but that's a drop in the bucket for those whose career demands a reliable sight or AR owners who will stop at nothing to get the best for their baby, no matter the cost. I have known a few of these types over the years. Nice folks, but not seriously budget minded, unlike you, dear reader.

TRIJICON 6X48 ACOG



The Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight (ACOG) was developed for use with the M-16 variety of firearms. It also was designed specifically to increase hit potential in all lighting conditions without the use of a battery. They have a roof prism design to enhance reliability and optical precision, can be internally adjusted, and have tritium-illuminated sights for low light conditions.

This is another scope that is excellent for switching between long and short range shooting with great ease. The large exit pupil and illuminated reticles are well suited for faster target acquisition at all light levels, especially at close range. The scope is also operated on the Bindon Aiming Concept, named after the founder of the company, who espoused the concept of shooting with both eyes open, which gives the shooter a greater sense of balance and a wider field of vision. Throw in a Trijicon ACOG, and you will be the most thoroughly equipped combatant to take on all comers near and far. That is, if you have two grand burning a hole in your pocket, which many do not these days, so an acceptable substitute will have to suffice until the proper capital resides in the ole gun fund.

IN CONCLUSION

As you might have surmised, this is not a detailed account of each scope. I would have loved to give more detailed accounts. However, to fully explain the intricacies of each would take up an entire

the best bits of each to spur you on to your own investigations as to what type of sight or scope will be the best compliment to you, your shooter, and the application for which it will be employed. Whatever you end up buying, ensure that it is reliable overall and well maintained. This includes keeping a fresh supply of batteries on hand because there is nothing more frustrating than anything powered by batteries crapping out just when you need it. Although this may be more Murphy than an oversight on your part, but just for your own piece of mind, take good care of the things that will be paramount for your extended survival. So, until next time, dear reader, stay safe and let's be careful out there.





41 WAYS TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT

No one is born with a lot of self-sufficiency, which means that you have to go out there and make it happen! Look around your home for a minute. Do you have the tools needed to leave the rest of the world behind? Or are you beholden to your local grocery store to keep you alive?

The truth is that there are many different ways to become self-sufficient, but we're going to focus primarily on the methods that will help you disconnect yourself from society and still survive. And what better place to begin than with livestock?

RAISE LIVESTOCK TO MEET YOUR NEED FOR EGGS, DAIRY, & MEAT

1. Backyard Chickens!

If you can legally keep chickens in your backyard, you should definitely go for it. Not only will they provide breakfast each day, but they'll also provide you with a bit of company. It's truly a win-win!

2. Start Hunting

Learning how to hunt provides a fantastic resource for padding your food stores. Remember: don't kill just to kill. Instead, choose your targets carefully and take them down with a clean shot.

3. Learn How To Butcher Animals

Knowing how to butcher animals will put you far ahead of most other people. There is an art to this skill, so practice on the animals you kill until you get it just right. As an added bonus, you'll always know exactly where your meat came from, rather than being in the dark about this important part of the process.

4. Learn To Catch & Clean Fish

Another technique that you can use to feed your family is fishing. This is quite different from hunting and butchering animals, so be sure to pay close attention when you're first learning how to do it. Fishing can also give you the chance to breathe and get lost in your thoughts.

5. Raise Rabbits To Eat

As long as you have three rabbits (two females, one male), you've got a successful recipe for having lots of rabbit meat. In fact, once they get going, you should have enough rabbits to eat one per week for an entire year! Rabbits may be cute and cuddly, but they're also a good source of food.

6. Join A Farm Share

If you happen to live somewhere where you can't raise your own livestock, joining a farm share will give you the ability to have some anyway! This isn't as good as raising your own livestock in your backyard, but it's much better than nothing.

7. Raise A Dairy Animal

Even if you only have the room for one dairy goat, it's wise to get one. This animal will not serve as your dinner (at least not anytime soon), but it will provide you with milk. And, since it'll live on your property for a long time, it can also become your companion.

8. Make Cheese, Yogurt, & Butter

You've got a dairy animal, so why not attempt to bring some cheese, yogurt, and butter into your situation? Butter is the easiest item to make, so start there. After you gain some confidence with the butter, you can move on to one of the trickier foods.

9. Raise Bees!

In case you haven't noticed, bees are beginning to die out around the world. This absolutely can't be allowed to happen, or else all human life will also cease to exist. You can help by raising some bees on your property. They'll pay you back with sweet, sweet honey. This is critical because up to 76% of the honey available in your local grocery store is not real. Yes, you read that right! Take back your right to eat clean, unprocessed food!

10. Rendering Fat Will Pay You Back

Another thing that most people no longer know how to do is render fat. In fact, we've been told for years that animal fat is bad for us, but do you want

to know a secret? It turns out there are actually many reasons that eating animal fat is good for you. Help your brain by giving it this fat and also by reducing how much vegetable oil you consume.

11. Tan A Hide

Do you want to get as much as possible from each animal kill? Take a lesson from the Native Americans and many other cultures by learning how to tan a hide. Soft, handmade leather like this will be a luxury, and you should be able to barter with it.

GROW YOUR OWN VEGETABLES AND FRUIT



12. Put Your Kitchen To Use With An Herb Garden

Raising your own herbs in your kitchen is a fantastic way to get some free food, regardless of where you live. Even if you're in an apartment, you can bring herbs to life. Even better, they need very little water and maintenance to stay alive.

13. Grow A Planter Garden

Again, this one is perfect for apartment dwellers. If there's someone standing in your way of digging up the lawn, plant your vegetables in a planter garden instead!

14. Join A Community Garden

If, like Bob Belcher from Bob's Burgers, you feel like a gardener stuck living without enough room to garden, you've got to check out a community garden. Joining one should earn you at least one plot, so you can become more self-sufficient while you live in a rented house or apartment.

15. Grow An Edible Lawn

Until 1806, pretty much every American lawn was covered with food. This changed when the then U.S. President Thomas Jefferson decided to eschew the food lawn for a grass lawn. At that time, most middle-class and lower-class households kept their food, but they had mostly given up on this by the 1880s.

Go back in time and recreate your lawn as a resource for edible food. Grass lawns are nothing more than a status symbol, and they're not necessary.

16. Vermicomposting Works Great For Small Spaces

Even if you live in a studio apartment, you can begin vermicomposting today! So, what exactly is vermicomposting? Put simply, it's having lots of worms available to break down your food waste and turn it into fertilizer.

17. Use A Compost Pile

If you've got more space, why not build a compost pile? You can use your compost pile to feed your edible lawn. Talk about making waste into something good!

LEARN OLD-FASHIONED SKILLS



18. Learn To Sew

This is an extremely helpful, but definitely underutilized, skill. It will take some practice to feel competent, but stick with it because this is going to make a heck of a bartering tool. Whether you teach

yourself to sew by hand or machine, this will be one of the most useful skills you'll ever learn.

19. Don't Use Your Dryer Machine

When the SHTF, a dryer isn't going to do anyone much good. But what about right now? They're convenient, right? Although this is true, they also cause your clothes to get torn up. Yes, that's right; using a dryer every time you wash your clothes will result in clothing that needs to be replaced or repaired more often. Start drying your clothes on a drying rack instead.

20. Get Rid Of TV

The human brain can do all sorts of things, both good and bad. One of the bad things it does is make people become borderline addicted to TV. It's all a simple matter of the brain releasing dopamine as you watch your favorite programs. Learn to get that dopamine from doing something that won't sap your energy and turn you into a couch potato.

21. Learn To Crochet Or Knit

Once you've learned to sew, why not make some time to learn one (or both) of these skills as well? Before you know it, you'll be making hats, gloves, and blankets, all of which will be very useful after the SHTF.

22. Create Your Own Candles

Whether you choose to work with soy, beeswax, coconut wax, or animal fat, it's relatively easy to bring a candle to life. Once you've got several candles, you can start burning them in the evenings instead of relying on electricity.

23. Make Some Soap

Once you learn how to make soap, it'll be a breeze to go with some melt-and-pour types. The resulting soap will be cheaper, will clean better, and you'll know exactly what's in it!

24. Make Some DIY Cleaners

Do you have some citrus fruit and a bottle of vinegar? Then you've got everything you need to make DIY cleaners! Plus, they'll smell nice without having all the chemicals of some cleaners. This is a true win-win!

25. Learn The Proper Way To Build A Fire

It's critical that you learn how to build a fire. And believe me when I say that it's not as easy as it seems. Keep working at it until you can start a fire without putting in a huge effort.

26. Tap Some Trees



Are there any maple trees nearby? If so, you'll want to learn how to tap them. Even though you may not get a lot of maple syrup from them, you will still get a burst of sugary flavor.

27. Can Your Food

Did you know that you can learn how to put almost any grocery item in a can? This homesteading skill used to be regularly passed down, but a lot of people don't know how to do it anymore. Make sure you're not one of them, as canning your food will make it last much longer.

28. Make Food From Scratch

You're probably used to getting all of your food from the local grocery store. But do you know how to make food from scratch? Can you bring a loaf of bread to life? Learning this skill is essential!

29. Be Sure You Can Build A Basic Structure

Do you know what the building blocks are for a basic structure? You should be able to build one. This will make it easier to build an emergency shelter or put up a small outbuilding.

30. Fermenting Food Is Key

Fermenting some of your food will ensure that you develop a healthy flora. Without this, you won't live your healthiest life. Take care of yourself by going straight to the gut.

31. Foraging Is Super Helpful

If you haven't gone foraging yet, then put this article down and go try it! There is an abundance of edible weeds out there, including dandelions. Make sure you get a good book that will help you identify what you can eat versus what you can't.

32. Study The Medicinal Usage Of Plants

Is there an herb you can grow that will help you if you get sick? Yes, depending on what's wrong with you! There are a ton of medicinal usages for plants. Learn about them and then plant accordingly. Learn what plants are most helpful and go with them.

33. DIY Remedies, Salves, And Tinctures

Now that you know what to do with various medicinal plants, it's time to put them to use! You can create a whole host of different plants to help you with a wide variety of medical issues.

34. Build A Root Cellar

Your root cellar can be big or small. Decide on the size based on what you're going to store and how large your garden is.

35. Find Out Where You Can Source Healthy Food From

The reality is that you're most likely going to need to barter with another person at some point. Find out which of your neighbors are raising their own food, and what type. That way, it'll be easy to know what neighbor to go to for each of your needs.

36. Learn To Make Do With Less

We've already looked at getting rid of TV, and now it's time to look at the rest of your collection. Are you holding onto clothes that don't fit anymore? Do you have more than a week's worth of

underwear? Do you have duplicate items in your kitchen? How about your child's old toys that they haven't played with in months?

The basic idea here is to minimize your stuff. By choosing only the best items to keep around, you'll find it much easier to bug out.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

37. Read, Then Read Some More!

If you can find a book on self-sufficiency, you should definitely read it. Remember – every single skill you learn will make you more self-sufficient! You can also consider reading to take the edge off of the boredom after the SHTF.

38. Exercise Regularly



How many survivalists do you know who probably can't walk down the block, let alone keep their family alive? We know that talking about exercising isn't exactly fun, but unless you begin working out now, you're going to be in a world of trouble after society collapses. Even if you just go for a 20-minute walk every day, this will make you much more able to deal with everything.

39. Install Rain Barrels

If you don't have an asphalt roof, then you should immediately get one and install a couple of rain barrels. You can use the barrels to provide water to your plants, livestock, etc. If necessary, you can even sanitize the water for personal use.

40. Install A Greywater System

Choosing natural cleaners also opens up the ability to use a greywater system. Stop wasting all your water by literally pouring it down the drain. You'll never have to think about huge water waste again once a greywater system is installed!

41. Ask For Help If It's Needed

This may be hard for you if you're the type who won't pull over and ask for directions. Regardless, if you really want to take care of things properly, you can't be afraid to ask for help. Every human will have different skills and will remember different things. Therefore, never be embarrassed to ask for some help, and pay close attention when you receive assistance. This may prevent you from needing to ask again in the future.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Every person alive will need help from time to time. However, if you can master this list, you'll be in the very enviable position of showing others what to do. Make yourself as useful as possible, both to help out others and to be able to take care of yourself.

Even if you pick only one or two things off of this list to learn, you'll have increased your knowledge and worth. Both of these things will be in high demand once the SHTF, and you'll be so glad that you dedicated some time to increasing what you know and how to apply it.





MUST-ASK QUESTIONS BEFORE BUYING RURAL LAND

So, you've been looking at rural land, and you think you might have found the perfect place? Whether you're simply looking for an area to build your SHTF shelter or you're planning to move and tend to the land, you've got a fantastic idea. Of course, it's not as simple as that, as you'll soon find out. Or, at least, it's not as simple as that, except you do your due diligence, which is something you'll thank yourself for later on.

First, you must decide if rural life is really for you. While it can help you after the SHTF, what about right now? Think long and hard about what you'll be gaining versus what you'll be giving up. Secondly, the only people who have a say in where you'll be moving are the people who are moving with you. In other words, it doesn't matter what your mom thinks or whether your dad believes you're getting a good deal. As long as you're happy with it, that's all that truly matters.

For the purposes of this article, let's pretend that you've decided to move forward with purchasing a rural property. Furthermore, let's pretend you're going to move there right away. Doing so will make you feel better, as long as you remember to ask pertinent questions before you sign any agreements.

Whatever you do, don't get yourself stuck living on a piece of land that's worthless. Make sure the area can grow food and is good for livestock. You should also ask several more questions to ensure you're getting the right place for you and your family.

QUESTIONS YOU MUST ASK BEFORE BUYING RURAL LAND



PART ONE: QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Am I relocating somewhere I know nothing about, or do I have previous experience in this area?

It's certainly possible to do either. However, you'll find it easier to settle in if you're at least somewhat familiar with the area.

2. What is the general attitude of the population like?

This one is important. You don't want to move into an area that looks at you like you're the enemy because you have different methods of doing things.

3. How about the climate and native food resources?

Does the land offer a climate that you can get used to, or is it unbelievably hard? Do you like the native food? How easy is it to find and/or grow?

4. What problem insects are there?

If you're talking about a few spiders and miscellaneous bugs, that should be fine. But if you're talking about scorpions or any other such thing, you may need to second-guess yourself.

5. How long is the driveway?

This might seem like a silly question, but put your winter thinking cap on. Is the driveway unusually long? Are you willing to keep it cleared of snow?

6. What storms/natural disasters are most common? Can I handle them?

The difference between deciding on rural land in Michigan or California will most likely come down to which disaster you're best equipped to handle. Would you prefer to deal with tornadoes or earthquakes and wildfires?

7. Is the closest skyscraper at least one hour away?

This might seem like an odd question, but the reality is that property is constantly changing. If you're too close to big city life, it may soon begin to encroach on your rural escape.

8. How far away is a good vet who can treat your animals?

This may not mean the closest vet, either. Carefully consider the type of animals you're planning to get and compare them against the area's ability to provide a solid vet for them.

9. Find out if the vet you've selected will travel to you.

Sometimes, animals need a vet to come to them. Find out what circumstances must exist for this to happen, along with how much a vet will charge you for a house call.

10. Does the fire department provide service to my location?

It's uncommon to find this situation, but there are some rural locations that are not serviced by the fire department.

11. How long will medical help take to arrive?

Have you considered what will happen if someone in your household has a medical emergency? It may not matter much once the SHTF, but for now, you'll still want to receive relatively quick assistance when you call 911. This means that finding a house where an ambulance will take an hour to arrive isn't a good idea.

12. Will my location deter police, tax assessors, etc.?

If you're like most survivalists, the last thing you want to see is a tax assessor or police officer stepping onto your property. The more rural you go, though, the less likely you are to see either.

13. How close am I to a major urban center?

Sure, you want to move far away from everyone, but what exactly does that mean to you? If you want to get everything you need without making it way too hard, ensure that you live within two hours of a major urban center.

14. How close am I to my family?

This can cause some problems when it's time to move. Assess your relationships and how often you need to see your family and friends. Then move accordingly.

15. What will the neighbors be like?

Even if you say it doesn't matter, the reality is that your neighbors can make a huge difference in your

enjoyment level of a rural property. Try to find out whether they're welcoming, indifferent, or hostile.

16. Can I walk to my closest neighbor's house within 30 minutes?

You might be surprised by how important it is to socialize with someone, but once you're in a rural community, you'll really notice how quiet and lonely it can be.

17. Can I barter with any nearby residents?

Bartering is going to become the new economy after the SHTF. What do you have available to barter with? What do your neighbors have? Try to find an area where bartering will benefit you.



PART TWO: QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR REALTOR

18. How much of the land is cleared and usable?

This is where you will have to leave real estate ads behind you and go look at the property. Let's face it, realtors make money by getting you to make a purchase. Ask them how much usable space you'll have.

19. Is the land suitable for pasture?

If you're planning to have livestock, you'll need to know the answer to this question. The area should be covered with grass and/or other plants that are suitable for livestock.

20. Is there a south-facing place where food can grow?

Check out the property at several different times per day. Does a south-facing area stay relevant, or

is your property shaded? If it's currently shaded, can you remove enough trees to make it possible to grow food?

21. Can I place barns and other outbuildings near the house?

The property might not have any outbuildings on it right now, but does it provide enough room for them? This is vital because you'll probably want some outbuildings to store everything.

22. Can I do recreational activities in the yard?

Having a lot of land won't do you much good if a lot of it can't actually be used. Is there a spot that you can designate for recreational activities?



PART THREE: GROWING SEASON

23. How many growing days happen per year?

If you aren't overly familiar with the land, it's going to be even more important to get an answer to this question. What can you expect in terms of growth? Is the land a good choice for you based on how many growing days there are?

24. Can I grow a year's worth of food on the land?

Once the SHTF, you're going to need to be able to take care of your own needs. Is the land large enough to plant and grow a year's worth of food? If not, you might want to keep looking.

25. What condition is the soil in?

Buying land isn't nearly as simple as you might think. In fact, you could purchase some land right now, but what happens when you find out that the soil is depleted and nothing will grow there? Be sure to get an answer to this question before you move forward.



PART FOUR: WATER

26. Is there a well that can provide for the property?

As long as you've got access to water, you've also got one of the building blocks of life. If the property uses well water, make sure that the well is large enough to provide for your entire property.

27. Is it a drilled well or a dug well?

You should be able to get an easy answer to this question. Simply check the lid that's covering your well. Alternatively, contact the local health department's EPA division by calling (800) 426-4791.

28. How much water per minute does the well offer?

For the well to pass an inspection, it'll have to offer up at least three gallons of water per minute. More recent wells must provide five gallons per minute. Double-check what you'll need, and then make sure you've got it.

29. When did a reputable lab last check the water?

Well water - just like any other water that you take from the outside - has the potential to be contaminated. Therefore, it's imperative that your water be checked no less frequently than at least once per year. And while you're at it, find out how much these tests will cost you.

30. Can I access other sources of water without a vehicle?

This question mostly goes to those purchasing a property that doesn't contain a large enough well to meet your needs. Where else is water available? Can it be brought back to your property without using a vehicle?

31. Does the property lie in a flood zone?

As you can imagine, living in a flood zone after the SHTF will be highly dangerous. Everything you've worked for could be ruined in a matter of seconds. Again, this goes back to making sure you know the pros and cons of the property.

PART FIVE: SEPTIC SYSTEM QUESTIONS

32. Is there a septic system?

If the land has a real, honest-to-goodness septic system, consider yourself lucky. And if it doesn't, what would it take to install one?

33. Has the septic system been cleaned recently?

Asking the seller about the septic system should give you some idea of how well it has been maintained. Keep in mind, however, that not everyone is trustworthy. Therefore, you'll also want to see proof, which shouldn't be hard for the seller to give you.

34. Is the leach field old?

If the leach field dates back to the '60s or before, it is most likely not up to modern standards.

35. Can I afford to install a new septic system?

Before you answer this question, consider that it can easily cost as much as \$15,000. Heck, the design of the septic system alone costs around \$1,000. It's worth it, by the way, but can you afford it?



PART SIX: WHICH BUILDINGS EXIST ON THE PROPERTY?

36. Does a house already exist?

Whether or not you need a house to already be on the land will be determined by how quickly you need to move to your property. For instance, if you can

afford to stay in your current home while your land is brought up to your standards, then you can wait for a house to be built. If you can't, though, this will present massive questions for you.

37. Does the house have enough insulation to make it a good homestead all year long?

Many second residences are not built to provide shelter during the winter. These are referred to as "three-season" houses, and you will be absolutely miserable if you try to survive a winter in one. If the house doesn't have enough insulation, how much will it cost to add it?

38. What are the necessary repairs, and can I afford them?

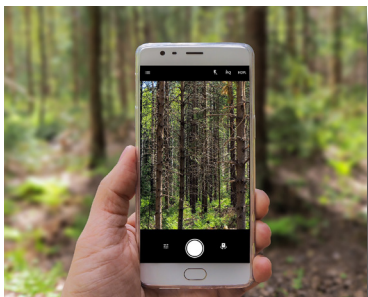
When you have the house inspected, you're going to discover some unsatisfactory things that may not have stood out when you first viewed the home. That's why it's so important to go through the inspection process. Now, the second question is whether you can fix what's wrong. Be brutally honest with yourself on this step because it could make or break your property.

39. Does a chicken coop come with the property?

If you want to raise chickens, you're going to need a coop. If the property doesn't have one, can you wait to raise chickens until one is built? And can you afford to do so?

40. Does it come with a barn?

Did you know that it can cost approximately \$200,000 to build a barn? Therefore, if you need a barn, you might want to hold out for a property that already has one.



PART SIX: AVAILABLE SERVICES

41. Does a cell phone work?

Most people are obsessed with their smartphones and have left landlines behind them. So, keeping this in mind, does a cell phone work on the property? Can a cell phone booster make it better? If you can't get cell service at home, can you get it within a 5- to 10-minute walk?

42. Can I get internet access?

Even if it's by satellite, it still counts.

43. Is electricity and gas available?

Depending on where you choose to move, utilities can be easy or very, very hard to access. If you can't get electricity and/or gas delivered to your home, do you know how to compensate?

44. Is there a school bus that comes to the area?

If you've got any children, then you'll have to think about their schooling needs. Is there an easy way to get them to school? Or are there no school buses in the area?

45. How far away are the commonly used places?

Living rurally has some advantages, but it can also become a nightmare when you need to go to your bank, a post office, or the grocery store. Be sure that the pros of the property outweigh the cons.

FINAL THOUGHTS

There are, of course, hundreds of more questions that you need to ask. However, this list of 45 questions will give you a massive head start and should be considered very carefully. Other things you'll need to find an answer to include the local laws, taxes, and any unique problems that affect the land.

Finally, ask yourself the biggest question of all – Can you afford the land? How about if you didn't take out a mortgage? Once you can answer these questions, you'll be ready to move forward with rural living!

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