

# How to Build a One Person Emergency Shelter

Community  
Tested

Two Methods: [Building a Shelter in the Wilderness](#) [Preparing for Disasters](#)

Whether you are stranded in the wilderness or preparing for a tornado, a safe place to stay could save your life. In any disaster situation, advance preparation is always more effective than improvisation. Stock your car or basement with emergency supplies now, and learn how to seek shelter before you're forced to.

Method  
1

## Building a Shelter in the Wilderness

- 1 Pack a one person tent.** A lightweight, portable tent takes up little room in your car. Setting one up is much easier and faster than building a shelter from scratch, if you end up lost or caught in a storm.
  - This is also a good solution if you may need to leave your home at a moment's notice. Keep food, water, and fuel in the car as well, or in a handheld pack as portable as you can make it.
- 2 Build a shelter from branches or debris.** Even flimsy material can greatly increase your odds of survival in stormy or wintry conditions. Refer to the linked article for full instructions, or follow this quick checklist:
  - Clear a patch of relatively dry ground. Insulate it with a layer of branches or dry clothing. A good rule of thumb to have is 0.91 metres (3 ft 0 in) or more of debris in autumn and fall and about 0.30–0.91 metres (1 ft 0 in–3 ft 0 in) of insulation in warmer weather and 0.61 metres (2 ft 0 in) in rainy weather.
  - Cover this with a simple lean-to structure. If you have time and rope, lean branches against together and tie them together. If not, just lean branches, cardboard, or anything else against a tree trunk or boulder.
  - Cover the structure with branches or other debris as well as you can for insulation (or a tarp if available). Pine branches with the needles facing down trap additional air pockets for insulation. A top layer of leaves or trash increases rain resistance.
- 3 Build a snow cave.** Even a bare field of snow can provide shelter if you are able to put in a few hours' work, and the snow is packed enough to form a structure. Pile up the snow into a hillock large enough to fit you, leave it two hours to harden, then dig out a tunnel into the interior.
  - Pack a compact snow shovel to make this more feasible in emergency situations.
  - If the snow is too powdery or if temperatures are too high (which could cause a collapse), dig a trench in the snow instead and cover it with a tarp.
- 4 Keep shelters small if it's cold.** Whichever type of shelter you use, it should be just large enough to fit you. The less space there is, the faster your body heat will warm it. In warm conditions, you want a big shelter so it will keep you protected and cooler than a shelter that is a few centimeters/inches from your face.

Method  
2

## Preparing for Disasters

- 1 Identify hurricane or tornado shelters.** No quickly constructed shelter will help you from winds at this strength. Instead, go to a basement, or failing that to a room near the center of a building with no windows.
- 2 Come up with an earthquake plan.** A shelter is usually not the best option for an earthquake, although you can [prepare in other ways](#). [Earthquake survival](#) is based on two main strategies:
  - If the tremor is mild and there is a relatively open space outside (no tall buildings), walk to it through the nearest exit. Do not use elevators.
  - If the tremor is violent or you cannot reach an open space safely, drop under or next to sturdy furniture and hold

on.

**3 Construct a long-lasting shelter.** If you own a house and are committed to disaster preparation, [dig out a basement](#) or [dig a bunker](#). Stock this with emergency supplies in case ordinary services are disrupted. You can also get a FRS or ham radio (you need a license though) for communication.

**4 Learn how to survive nuclear fallout.** An [underground bunker](#) is your best bet for protecting yourself from radioactive fallout. In general, the safest areas are indoors, with as many walls and thick furniture between you and the outdoors as possible. Insulating the walls with as much dense material as you can find will protect you further. Seal all vents using duct tape and try to close all doors.

## Community Q&A

### What should I keep in my bug out bag?

 You should have food, water, weapons, first aid, hygiene products, clothes and tools in your bug out bag.  
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### What if I am lost in the wilderness and have no resources?

 You can still use rocks and branches for your shelter. Sharp stones can be used to cut wood. Plant fibers will tie logs together.  
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### Can you answer these readers' questions?

 Refresh

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What is the time frame for completing the contractors class and exam for a general building contractor license?

Your answer...

Reply

On [How to Start a Group Home](#), a reader asks:

Can I have a group home in an apartment?

Your answer...

Reply

On [How to Write a Letter to the District Attorney](#), a reader asks:

How do you write a letter to the DA for acceptance into the ARD program for 1st offenders?

Your answer...

Reply

## Tips

- In cold weather, remove wet clothing as soon as you get inside the shelter. Staying dry is vital for preventing hypothermia.
- Build your shelter on high ground if you are near a creek bed or river.
- Don't build a shelter too close to the ocean because tides can rise.
- Try not to sleep directly on the ground, lay down debris or even build your shelter on top of a compost pile, since they are

warm.

- Even a plain rubberized tarp can be made into a tent for less of a monetary investment.

### **Made Recently**

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