A little more ready.

A practical checklist for power cuts, water problems, severe weather and other disruptions. Walk through your home, tick what you have, then fill the gaps.

> An independent checklist based on UK government Be Ready guidance. Not an official government publication.

Start with **3 days**, as recommended by UK guidance. Choose 7 days if you want to build a larger buffer. This is a planning tool, not a warning of an imminent event.

Our household: ___ people × ___ days × 3 litres = ___ litres of drinking water

The basics at a glance

Check these nine areas first. Use what you own, then add missing items gradually.

Water

Bottled drinking water

Store 3 litres per person per day. Add water for cooking, washing and pets.

Food

Meals you can eat cold

Familiar long-life food, snacks and a manual tin opener. Check dietary needs.

Warmth

Bedding and warm layers

Blankets or suitable sleeping bags, warm clothes and somewhere safe to go.

Light & phone power

Torches and a charged power bank

Add matching spare batteries and charging cables. Test everything.

Radio & communication

Battery FM radio and paper contacts

Tune a local station now. Agree how to check on family if phones fail.

Money & documents

A little cash and essential copies

Small notes and coins within your means. Keep documents and cash secure.

Medicines & first aid

Usual treatment and a checked kit

Plan repeats with your pharmacy. Add an outage plan for medical equipment.

Hygiene & toilets

Soap, toilet roll and waste bags

Add toiletries and a plan for washing and toilet use if water stops.

A household plan

Contacts, a grab bag and a review date

Know where to go, who needs help and where supplies are. Check alarms.

> **Make it fit your household.** Add baby, pregnancy, disability, care and pet supplies where relevant. You do not need every optional item. Start with three days; build towards seven if useful.

A practical overview based on UK Be Ready guidance and the detailed sources below.

Interactive version: https://a-little-more-ready.pages.dev/

Interactive version: https://a-little-more-ready.pages.dev/

Plan quantities for your own household

The rules below apply to each person and each day you plan for. Include extra water for cooking, washing and pets. Plan babies' feeds and individual medical needs separately.

Household checklist

Water

Start here. Drinking water is separate from water for washing, cooking and pets.

- [ ] **Sealed drinking water**
  3 litres per person per day
  Start with supermarket bottles in sizes you can lift. Add more for heat, illness and individual needs.
- [ ] **Extra water for cooking and washing**
  Additional to the drinking total
  Include handwashing, dishes and any hot meals. Estimate your household's use; do not spend the drinking reserve on flushing.
- [ ] **Food-safe water containers**
  1 or 2 manageable containers
  Useful for collecting an emergency supply. Clean and fill as directed by your water company; an empty container is not stored water.
- [ ] **Refillable drinking bottles or cups**
  1 per person
  Use what you own. Label bottles if that makes sharing and ration tracking easier.

> Follow your water supplier's notice exactly. A "do not drink" or "do not use" notice is different from a boil-water notice. Do not assume a camping filter or boiling will make any contaminated water safe.
>
> UK government: Be Ready · Drinking Water Inspectorate: water notices

Household checklist

Food without a cooker

Choose familiar food you can eat cold. Protein, fruit and vegetables below are ingredients for your meals, not extra meals to buy. Check allergies, dietary needs and pack instructions.

- [ ] **Breakfasts**
  1 breakfast per person per day
  For example, cereal with small UHT cartons, or oatcakes and a suitable spread. Adjust portions to appetite.
- [ ] **Lunches and dinners**
  2 main meals per person per day
  Combine ready-to-eat tins or pouches with bread, crackers or another ready-to-eat starch. A small soup tin alone may not make a filling meal.
- [ ] **Ready-to-eat protein**
  Enough for your planned meals
  Examples: beans, chickpeas, lentils, fish or meat in tins. Choose vegetarian, halal or other suitable options as needed.

- [ ] **Fruit and vegetables**
  Enough for each day
  Choose tinned fruit, vegetables and suitable dried fruit; include them in meals rather than counting them as complete meals.
- [ ] **Snacks and extra energy**
  Daily portions for each person
  Choose familiar snacks suitable for allergies and swallowing needs. Do not give whole nuts to children under five. Allow enough for appetite.
- [ ] **Long-life drinks or milk alternatives**
  Small packs for planned use
  UHT products often need refrigeration once opened. Choose pack sizes you can finish safely.
- [ ] **Manual tin opener**
  1 working opener
  Check it opens your chosen tins, even if most have ring pulls.
- [ ] **Bowls, cups and cutlery**
  1 set per person
  Existing reusable items are fine. A small supply of paper plates can reduce washing when water is limited.
- [ ] **Fridge / freezer thermometer**
  1 for each appliance you rely on
  Keep doors closed during an outage. Check the food-safety note below before using chilled food.

> Fridge: normally aim for 5°C or below. During a power cut, a closed fridge should stay cold for up to 4 hours; food in a full freezer should stay frozen for up to 48 hours, or 24 hours if half full. These are estimates. Perishable food held at 8°C or above for 4 hours should be discarded. If the time or temperature is uncertain, do not taste food to test it. Instant soup and noodles need hot water; dry rice and pasta need cooking, so keep them in addition to the no-cook meals.
>
> Food Standards Agency: food in a power cut · British Red Cross: emergency kit · NHS: foods to avoid for young children

Household checklist

Light and phone power

Enough light to move safely, and a way to keep essential phones charged.

- [ ] **LED torch or headtorch**
  At least 1; ideally 1 per adult
  Keep one easy to reach at night. A headtorch leaves both hands free.
- [ ] **LED room lantern**
  1 for your main room
  A stable lantern is useful for eating and moving around together. Avoid relying on candles.
- [ ] **Matching spare batteries**
  Suggested: 2 full replacement sets
  Check the actual AA / AAA / other sizes. Store in packaging or a case so loose terminals cannot short.
- [ ] **Charged power bank**
  At least 1, matched to your phones
  A reputable 10,000 to 20,000 mAh unit is a useful starting point. Test real charges; the printed capacity is not all delivered to the phone.

- [ ] **Charging leads and wall charger**

  A compatible lead for each device type

  Keep one set with the kit. Check your phone, lamp, radio and power bank connectors.

- [ ] **A non-rechargeable lighting backup**

  1 battery-powered light, if all others use USB

  This can be the same torch already listed. Tiny solar panels and crank handles should not be your main charging plan.

> Charge and test new equipment before storing it. A power bank can keep a phone on, but cannot restore a failed mobile network. Ordinary phone power banks will not run electric heaters, kettles or a boiler.
>
> British Red Cross: emergency kit · Ofcom: staying connected in severe weather

Household checklist

Warmth and clothing

Use your bedding and layers first. Most central heating also needs electricity.

- [ ] **Warm blankets or suitable sleeping bags**

  A warm sleeping setup for each person

  Check what you own before buying. For sleeping bags, use the comfort temperature, not just “four season” marketing.

- [ ] **Warm layers, socks and hats**

  1 accessible set per person

  Add dry spare socks and underwear. Babies should not wear hats indoors; use suitable baby bedding and follow safer-sleep advice.

- [ ] **Waterproof coats and practical shoes**

  1 set per person

  Keep them reachable if you need to leave in bad weather.

- [ ] **Room thermometer**

  1

  Useful when deciding whether the home is becoming too cold or too hot for someone’s needs.

- [ ] **A warmer place to go**

  Agree with family, friends or support services

  Plan transport and accessibility before an outage. Do not wait for a medical problem if home conditions become unsafe.

> Choose one room to spend time in, close curtains and reduce draughts without blocking ventilation. Never heat a room with a camping stove, barbecue or oven. Use a fireplace or wood burner only if it is installed, maintained and safe to use with its approved fuel.
>
> NHS: carbon monoxide · British Red Cross: preparing for 72 hours · The Lullaby Trust: babies in cold weather

Household checklist

Medicines and first aid

Your usual treatment and a practical first-aid kit matter more than a large box of unfamiliar products.

- [ ] **Regular medicines and essential supplies**

  Enough for your chosen period, agreed with your pharmacy

  Include inhalers and any prescribed emergency medicines. Request repeats in good time; do not change doses or build unsafe stockpiles.

- [ ] **Printed medicine and allergy list**

  1 up-to-date copy

  Include doses, prescription details and the relevant GP / pharmacy contacts. Store privately.

- [ ] **First-aid supplies**

  1 checked kit

  Plasters, sterile dressings, bandages, tape, disposable gloves and scissors. Replace used or expired items.

- [ ] **Digital thermometer**

  1 working thermometer

  Check the battery and keep the instructions.

- [ ] **Usual suitable non-prescription medicines**

  Only products appropriate for your household

  Ask a pharmacist about suitability, especially for children, pregnancy, interactions and existing health conditions.

- [ ] **Spare glasses / hearing-aid supplies**

  As used

  Include hearing-aid batteries or charging arrangements, lens supplies and other daily aids.

> Keep medicines in original packaging at their labelled storage temperature, out of children's reach. If you depend on refrigerated medicine, a medical device, oxygen or a care alarm, complete the additional support section below.
>
> UK government: Be Ready · Ready Scotland: emergency kit

Household checklist

Washing and toilet supplies

Base quantities on what your household normally uses over the selected number of days.

- [ ] **Soap and hand sanitiser**

  1 soap supply and 1 sanitiser bottle

  Use soap and safe water whenever possible, especially after using the toilet and before preparing food.

- [ ] **Toilet roll and tissues**

  Normal use for each day you plan for plus a small buffer

  Check the cupboard first.

- [ ] **Wet wipes, flannels and towels**

  Enough for basic washing

  Wipes go in the bin, not the toilet. They do not replace handwashing.

- [ ] **Toothbrushes, toothpaste and toiletries**

  Usual household supply

  Add menstrual products, incontinence products and skin-care items where needed.

- [ ] **Strong rubbish bags and cleaning gloves**

  1 roll of bags and suitable gloves

  Keep waste separate from food, water and medicines.

- [ ] **Washing-up liquid and cleaning supplies**

  Small normal household supply

  Use products as labelled. Never mix cleaning chemicals.

- [ ] **A plan if the toilet cannot be used**

  Consider a purpose-made emergency toilet and liners

  Useful for a prolonged water or sewage failure. Follow the toilet instructions and council advice for waste disposal; do not put bagged waste into drains.

> If sewers are backing up or your supplier tells you not to flush, stop using the toilet. Ask the water company or local council about sanitation arrangements. A plunger cannot fix a failed sewer network.
>
> UK government: Be Ready · British Red Cross: emergency kit

Household checklist

Information, money and documents

Have a way to get updates and a simple plan that still makes sense without the internet.

- [ ] **Battery-powered FM radio**

  1 per household, plus its batteries

  Tune it now. Write down a local news station and its frequency; reception varies by location.

- [ ] **Paper contact sheet**

  1 copy with the kit; another in a wallet

  Family, trusted neighbours, GP, pharmacy, utilities and an out-of-area contact.

- [ ] **A modest cash reserve**

  Small notes and coins within your means

  Allow for a few essential purchases if card payments fail. Keep it secure; do not publish the amount or location.

- [ ] **Essential documents in a waterproof pouch**

  Copies relevant to your household

  ID, insurance, medical information and useful account references. Keep originals and sensitive copies secure.

- [ ] **Pen, paper and spare keys**

  1 small set

  Use a labelled pouch; avoid labels that reveal an address if keys are lost.

- [ ] **Offline map and travel plan**

  Your local area and agreed destination

  Download a map in advance or keep a printed one. Include accessible travel options if needed.

A battery radio does not need your home's power or broadband, although broadcasts and networks can still be disrupted. Digital landlines and care alarms may need backup power: check with the provider. Keep official emergency alerts enabled on compatible phones.

Ready Scotland: emergency kit · Ofcom: staying connected in severe weather · British Red Cross: household planning

If relevant

Optional cooking equipment

Only add this if you have a suitable, safe outdoor place and can store fuel correctly.

- [ ] **A reputable camping stove**
  1, only if suitable for your home
  Read the manual before buying. Keep the no-cook food supply even if you own a stove.
- [ ] **Exactly compatible fuel cartridges**
  Amount based on tested use and safe storage
  Buy the stove first. Match its specified cartridge and fuel, including cold-weather limits. Do not improvise adapters.
- [ ] **Suitable pan with lid / kettle**
  1, within the stove's stated size limit
  An oversized pan or makeshift windshield can overheat a gas cartridge.
- [ ] **Lighter or matches, and heat protection**
  As the stove instructions require
  Store away from children. Keep spare fuel away from the cooking area.
- [ ] **Insulated flask**
  1 if useful
  Retains heat from safely boiled water. Existing equipment is fine.

Camping stoves and barbecues are for outdoors, never inside a home, garage, tent or enclosed shelter. A CO alarm or open window does not make indoor use safe. Follow the manual for ventilation, clearances, fuel storage and changing cartridges. If weather prevents safe use, eat the no-cook food.

Scouts: using stoves safely · NHS: carbon monoxide

If relevant

Babies, children and pregnancy

Add only what applies. Feeding needs and safe sleep arrangements are individual.

- [ ] **Infant feeding supplies and a safe feeding plan**
  Usual feeds for each day you plan for
  If formula feeding, suitable ready-to-feed liquid milk in small packs avoids needing to prepare powder during an outage. Check special formula needs with your care team.
- [ ] **Clean, sterilised feeding equipment**
  As needed for every feed
  Ready-to-feed milk is sterile until opened; bottles and teats still need cleaning and sterilising. Plan a safe method if there is no power or water.

- [ ] **Nappies, wipes and disposal bags**
  Daily use for each day you plan for, plus a buffer
  Add age-appropriate food, clothing and prescribed medicines.
- [ ] **A familiar comfort item and activities**
  A small selection
  Books, colouring or a simple game can help children manage disruption.
- [ ] **Pregnancy / maternity essentials**
  Usual medicines, supplements and maternity contacts
  Keep maternity notes accessible if used. Near the due date, prepare the hospital bag and transport plan.
- [ ] **Childcare and family meeting arrangements**
  Confirm with carers or school
  Make sure emergency contact and collection details are current.

> Do not dilute formula or use homemade substitutes. Powdered formula is not sterile and needs preparation with water at least 70°C following NHS instructions. Safe drinking-water storage figures here are not feeding instructions for babies; include infant feeding needs separately. Seek feeding advice early if usual supplies cannot be used safely.
>
> NHS: preparing infant formula · NHS: bottle feeding and ready-to-feed milk · British Red Cross: preparing for 72 hours

If relevant

Medical, mobility and care needs

For anyone who depends on equipment, carers or extra help. Make this plan before a disruption.

- [ ] **A medical-device outage plan**
  Agree with the clinical team and equipment provider
  Record safe backup power, how long it lasts, who to call and when to relocate. A normal power bank may be unsuitable.
- [ ] **A refrigerated-medicine plan**
  Specific to the medicine
  Ask your pharmacist about permitted temperatures, monitoring and transport. A cool bag alone is not a guaranteed solution.
- [ ] **Care alarm / communication backup**
  Check with the alarm and telephone providers
  Test what still works without mains power or broadband, and arrange an alternative way to get help.
- [ ] **Mobility and personal-care supplies**
  Usual aids, chargers and consumables for each day you plan for
  Include a safe assisted evacuation plan. Avoid relying on lifts during a power failure.
- [ ] **Priority Services Register checks**
  Energy supplier / network and water provider
  Check eligibility and register where appropriate. Extra support is not a guarantee of uninterrupted service. In Northern Ireland, check the electricity and water providers' care registers: NI care registers.
- [ ] **A named helper and backup helper**
  Agree contact and visiting arrangements
  Include carers, accessible transport and a place that can meet the person's needs.

If losing power or treatment creates an immediate threat to life, call 999. Do not wait for the checklist or supplies to solve a medical emergency.

Ofgem: Priority Services Register · Ofcom: staying connected in severe weather · British Red Cross: preparing for 72 hours

If relevant

Pets and assistance animals

Keep their normal routine and supplies where possible.

- [ ] **Usual food and separate drinking water**
  For every animal, for each day you plan for
  Use normal portions and their usual water needs. Human water totals above do not include animals.
- [ ] **Medication and vet contacts**
  Usual supply and out-of-hours number
  Include records, prescriptions and any special storage requirements.
- [ ] **Carrier, lead or harness, and bowls**
  Suitable equipment for each animal
  Make sure you can transport them safely. Know where they can stay with you.
- [ ] **Litter, waste bags and bedding**
  Normal use for each day you plan for
  Keep a familiar blanket or toy to help with unfamiliar surroundings.
- [ ] **Identification and pet records**
  Current details in a waterproof pouch
  Keep a photo, microchip details and vaccination information available.

Plan for all species, including animals that need heating, filtration or specialist diets. Get species-specific advice from your vet if their care depends on electricity.

RSPCA: planning for pets

Household checklist

If you need to leave home

Use an existing backpack. Keep it light enough for its owner to carry.

- [ ] **An accessible grab bag**
  1 manageable bag per person, or shared bags
  Pack clothing, toiletries, a torch, water, ready-to-eat snacks and a small first-aid kit. Reuse items above where practical.
- [ ] **A last-minute essentials card**
  Keep beside the bag
  Phone, medication, keys, documents, glasses, chargers and any baby or pet supplies.
- [ ] **A safe destination and transport plan**
  Main option plus an alternative
  Include family members who cannot walk far, and places that accept pets.

- [ ] **A small car kit, if you drive**

  Torch, warm layer, water, snacks and charger

  Add high-visibility clothing and seasonal equipment. Maintain useful fuel or charge rather than running very low.

- [ ] **Local weather and flood checks**

  Know the official alert services for your area

  Keep emergency items above likely floodwater and know how to leave safely.

> Follow emergency services' instructions about leaving or sheltering indoors. Leave immediately if there is a fire; do not delay to collect a bag. Never walk or drive through floodwater.
>
> UK government: prepare for flooding · Ready Scotland: emergency kit · British Red Cross: household planning

Household checklist

Keep it ready

These are jobs, not extra shopping. Tick when done and review regularly.

- [ ] **Test smoke alarms at least once a month**

  Test carbon monoxide alarms to the manufacturer's instructions

  Check battery / sensor replacement dates and that everyone can hear or otherwise receive the alarm.

- [ ] **Show everyone where essentials are**

  One short household walkthrough

  Locate torches, first aid, water and the grab bag. Keep exits and access routes clear.

- [ ] **Know the water, gas and electricity shutoffs**

  Identify them in advance

  Only operate them when safe and appropriate. Never touch electrical equipment while standing in water.

- [ ] **Agree how to check on each other**

  Include nearby relatives and neighbours

  Choose meeting points and an out-of-area contact. Keep each home's basic supplies there, rather than assuming roads will be usable.

- [ ] **Store supplies sensibly**

  Cool, dry, labelled and accessible

  Keep heavy water low down; protect it from freezing, heat and contamination. Keep food away from chemicals and fuel.

- [ ] **Rotate food, water and medicines**

  Use oldest suitable items first

  Follow date labels and storage instructions. Replace used items as part of normal shopping.

- [ ] **Charge and test backup equipment**

  Follow maker's advice; check before forecast disruption

  Try the radio, torches and power bank. Store batteries safely and check for damage or leaks.

- [ ] **Book a kit review**

  Every 6 months, and after using it

  Recheck quantities, expiry dates, household needs, contacts and seasonal supplies.

- [ ] **Try one meal without mains electricity**

  A short practice at home

  Use the no-cook food and lights. Notice missing items and whether portions are enough.

Build gradually. First use what you own, then fill gaps in water, food, medicines, light and communication. A full checklist is a prompt to review your plan, not a guarantee of safety.

UK government: Be Ready · British Red Cross: household planning

Keep these numbers on paper

In an immediate emergency, call **999 or 112**. Follow instructions from emergency services, your council and your utility providers. These numbers depend on a working connection.

Immediate danger or life-threatening illness

999

Across the UK; 112 also reaches emergency services.

Power cut: England, Scotland and Wales

105

Northern Ireland: **03457 643 643**

Gas emergency: Great Britain

0800 111 999

Northern Ireland: **0800 002 001**

Write down your local contacts

Water company · GP / out-of-hours service · pharmacy · council · trusted person · vet, if relevant

If you smell gas, avoid flames and electrical switches. Get to a safe place and call the gas emergency service. If you suspect carbon monoxide, get outside and seek medical advice promptly; call 999 for serious symptoms. Do not re-enter until advised it is safe.

UK government: power cuts and contacts · National Gas: emergency contacts · NI Direct: utility emergencies · NHS: carbon monoxide

Notes and review

Interactive version: https://a-little-more-ready.pages.dev/

Tick a box when the item is ready or the task is done. Cross out anything that does not apply.

Reviewed on: _____ Next review: _____

Water company: _____ Emergency contact: _____

Printed from the UK household emergency checklist, guidance reviewed 6 November 2026. Main guidance: beready.campaign.gov.uk and redcross.org.uk/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies. Check current local instructions during an incident.

Share with family, friends and neighbours.

Independent UK household checklist.
Guidance reviewed 6 November 2026.