

10 Ways Preppers Can Reuse Old Light Bulbs

Even though many countries are looking to end production of incandescent light bulbs, they are very useful to preppers. They act as ideal sources of heat, light, and can even function as resistors in an electronic circuit.

If you have [light bulbs in your stockpile](#), or still use them around the house, you may be wondering if they are of any value when they burn out. Here are easy ways to repurpose light bulbs and advance your prepping goals at the same time.

Preparing the Light Bulb for Reuse

Most of the things you can make with light bulbs require getting into the bulb itself and pulling out the parts that used to glow. If you have frosted or white light bulbs, you will also have to remove the coating in order to get the most from some of these ideas.

In order to take out the insides of a light bulb, follow these steps. Be sure to wear heavy work gloves and goggles. Cover your work area with newspaper or something else that can be easily discarded once you are done.

Never forget that light bulbs are made of thin glass, and as such can be very fragile. The last thing you will need now or in a survival situation is to wind up with slivers of glass in your hands, or worse yet your eyes. While these steps are very easy to follow, never underestimate the need for safety precautions.

- Use a pair of pliers to twist the solder contact in the bottom center of the bulb. Once the contact is loose enough, pull it out of the bulb. While you are pulling and twisting on the contacts, do not put pressure on the

glass parts of the bulb. You can grip the metal part of the bulb, or better yet, put it in a vice. Just don't clamp the vice too hard or you might break the glass part of the bulb that seals to the metal.

- Use a screwdriver to break the glass insulator and other parts inside the bulb. You will have to remove them in small pieces. Everything should come out of the bulb, including the tungsten element.
- Fill the bulb with water and empty it several times in order to remove any white powder from inside the bulb.
- Either let the inside of the bulb air dry, or use a screwdriver covered with a paper towel to dry it out.

A SERIES

A15 A17 A19 A20 A21 A23

PS SERIES

PS25 PS35

B SERIES

B8 B10 B11 B13

C SERIES

C6 C7 C9 C11 C15

CA SERIES

CA5 CA7 CA8 CA10 CA11

RP & S SERIES

RP11 S6 S8 S11 S14 ST18

F SERIES

F10 F15 F20

PRISM

PRISM

R SERIES

R12 R14 R16 R20 R25 R30 R40

MR SERIES

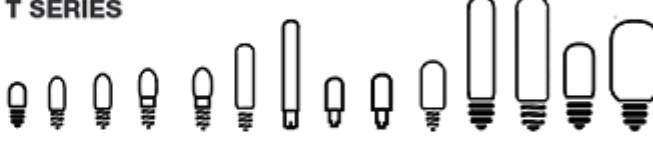
MR8 MR11 MR16 MR20

BR SERIES

BR25 BR30 BR38 BR40

G SERIES

G9 G11 G12 G16 G16½ G19 G25 G30 G40

T SERIES

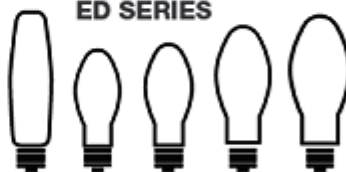
T3 T4 T4½ T5 T5½ T6 T6½ T7 T7½ T8 T9 T10 T14 T20

BT SERIES

BT15 BT28 BT37 BT56

E SERIES

E17 E18 E23½ E23 E37 E25

ED SERIES

ED17 ED18 ED23 ED23½ ED28 ED37

AR SERIES

AR70 AR111

PAR SERIES

PAR14 PAR16 PAR20 PAR30 Short Neck PAR30 Long Neck PAR36 PAR38 PAR46 PAR56 PAR64

SPECIALTY

JC Bi-Pin Wedge Festoon Rigid Loop

LINESTRA

T10

LINEAR FLUORESCENTS

T2 T4 T5 T8 T12

COMPACT FLUORESCENT COILS

T2 Coil T3 Coil T4 Coil

COMPACT FLUORESCENT PLUG IN LAMPS

Twin Tube Triple Tube Quad Tube

bulbs.com

Light Diffuser

Aside from housing gas that keeps the tungsten element from

burning up, light bulbs are also designed to diffuse light so that larger areas can be illuminated. You can use old, hollowed out light bulbs as light diffusers in chandeliers, or even as a means to increase illumination from LED arrays.

No matter how you arrange the light bulbs, they will provide a steady glow that works better than just the original light source by itself. For example, you can take one bulb that actually works, and then surround it with five or six bulbs that are burned out and cleaned.

You can also use the light diffuser properties of burned out bulbs to increase illumination from candles, oil lamps, and many other sources. Just make sure that when you join the light bulbs together, you do not use flammable materials. Stick to metal wire or anything else that will not start an unwanted fire.

Candles, oil lamps, and any other flame will always carry with it the risk of making sparks. It is not worth the risk to use rope or other more “visually attractive” accents for the diffuser.

Build an Electroscope

An electroscope is used to detect static electricity, and can also be used to detect the presence of nuclear, or ionized radiation. Even though the most optimized Kearny Fallout Meters are made from other simple materials, you can still use a light bulb in an emergency.

There are two ways to construct the inner part of the electroscope:

- You can use the traditional design which calls for two gold foil (or aluminum) attached to an electrical conductor. The insulative properties of the glass will help maintain the static charge, which serves to keep the thin metal leaves separated. (If ionizing radiation

is present, the leaves will droop or come closer together.) Since UV light can also act as ionizing radiation, you may want to keep the meter in a dark place, or put a black coating on the bulb. Just make sure you leave a peek hole so that you can see in and observe the metal leaves.

Video first seen on [RimstarOrg](#).

- A spinning electroscope tends to be more sensitive than a metal leaf design. This type of electroscope may not need charging as often, and it may also detect more subtle levels of radiation.

When operating a nuclear fallout electroscope, remember that you will have to “charge up” the device periodically with static electricity. This does not necessarily mean that ionizing radiation is, or was present. That being said, if you charge the device up and the leaves droop very quickly in a darkened room, then you may tentatively conclude that high levels of ionic radiation are present

Spice Dispensers

[Salt, pepper, sugar, flour, and other spice](#) shakers may seem to last forever. On the other hand if you are bugging out, must evacuate, or these dispensers get broken, you may have a harder time than expected replacing them. Simply make a new cap with holes in it for the light bulb, and you will have an ideal spice shaker. If you want the shaker to stand upright, just put it on a platform or suspend from a wire hanger system.

You can also use light bulbs to store herbs on a longer term basis. They can also be easily assembled to sit on spice racks or even on counter stands. If you do decide to use light bulbs to store herbs, remember that they will not be completely air tight, and that you should always make sure the spices are

stored in a cool, dry location for optimal shelf life.

Housing for Edible Insects

If you are successful in surviving a major crisis, there is every chance that one of your primary food sources will wind up being edible insects. You may also wind up in in a situation where you have to evacuate quickly, and there will neither be time nor room to move larger insect farms.

Rather than lose all of your hard work, you can keep a miniature bug farm for each insect stocked with enough reproducing insects so that you can start over again in a new location. Light bulbs are ideal because they are easy to keep clean and you can put several of them in a small box for transport.

Molds for Cement

Light bulbs that fit in a conventional lamp tend to be very easy to grip and hold onto. As such, the bulb itself makes an excellent mold for [cement and other materials](#) that can be used to make a number of useful objects. This includes:

- Nail and screw type wall hooks. While the cement is wet, just leave some of the sharp end of the nail or screw sticking out of the cement. Once the cement is dry, you can leave the glass in place or break it away from the cement. These hooks can be used as clothes pegs, hanging container gardens, and many other purposes. Just make sure that they are nailed or screwed into wall studs so that there is enough support for the hook and anything you may decide to suspend from it.
- Doorknobs and other items can also be made from cement or other materials that can be poured into molds. Just make sure that you add the appropriate hardware before the item dries out.
- Try filling two empty light bulbs with cement, and then stick the ends of rope or chain into the cement while it

is still wet. You can create everything from hobbles to weapons using this construction method.

- For simple, lightweight anchors, you can use one or many cement filled bulbs to anchor rope or other items into the water or into the ground.

Decoys

When it comes to hunting gear, there are more than a few places where decoys can be used to draw a predatory animal to a desired location, or even encourage it to move into a waiting trap. There may also be times when you want to ensure that an animal will avoid a predator and move into your territory instead.

Even though it may take some work to add feathers and other materials to light bulbs, they can still act as excellent decoys. If you look into crafty ways to decorate light bulbs, you are sure to find many useful ideas.

Fishing Flotation Devices

If you do not have plastic bobs or other flotation devices, a sealed up light bulb may suit your needs. You can use light bulbs on individual [fishing lines, fish nets](#), and any other area where buoyance is needed. Just remember that a glass bulb is not as sturdy as a plastic bottle, so try to limit the weight load as much as possible.

Infusora Hatchery

Well prepared survivors will more than likely look to cultivate animal, plant, and fish resources. No matter whether you [grow your own fish in an aquaponics system](#) or start with pairs captured in the wild, it is very important to make sure that you can raise successive generations of fish. In most cases, egg laying fish will eat their own eggs after fertilization, or they will do nothing whatsoever to take care of the fry after they hatch.

Typically, newly hatched fry feed on infusora (tiny micro organisms that grow on rotting organic matter suspended in water). A light bulb can be used in an emergency to house infusorans and also get them to propagate. If you must use a larger container to get them started, the smaller light bulb can still be used as an emergency vessel that can be transported from one location to another.

Video first seen on [Kailey Francis](#).

Fish Egg Hatchery

Contrary to popular belief, a light bulb will never meet the water quality and space needs of a fish. Even if you have to transport fish during a bug out or evacuation proceeding, use some other container that has a wide mouth and will also allow for the operation of an air stone.

Remember that when fish are stressed, they will release huge amounts of ammonia. Even a single fish will be dead in a matter of hours if you try to house or transport it in a clean, hollowed out light bulb.

Light bulbs can, however, can be used as temporary nurseries for newly fertilize fish eggs. If you happen to be dealing with a species of fish that consume the eggs after spawning, simply remove the eggs and let them hatch in a light bulb nursery. Just remember that the fry will need to stay in the nursery for at least 2 or 3 days while they consume the yolk sack after hatching. Once they are ready to eat infusora, you can move them into a bigger container and start feeding them.

A light bulb makes in ideal hatching container because it is much easier to keep track of the eggs and watch them hatch. If you are not sure if the fry are alive, do not tap the bulb or make loud noises. Even newly hatched fry will respond to light from a flashlight and will move around immediately if they can.

Vases and Micro Planters



During the process of expanding on your survival skills, it is likely that you will develop an interest in wild herbs and their cultivation.

Empty light bulbs can be used for cutting vases, and also as covers that will increase humidity for small plants.

This is especially important if you need to root cuttings in soil, and need to preserve a good bit of moisture so that the plant can take it in through the leaves.

Light bulbs offer a perfect reusable solution that will last for years on end.

If you have very limited amounts of space to work with, light bulb vases can easily be suspended from wire tree frames, from walls, and even overhead ceiling hangers.

While you can also use simple stands to keep the bulbs from tipping over, the hanging options can help you take advantage of window lighting with ease.

Many people view burned out light bulbs as completely useless. It should come as no surprise that they make up a significant portion of landfill waste, and are often viewed as useless even in those industries. On the other hand, as a prepper, there are many ways that you can use burned out light bulbs to your advantage in an emergency situation.

Learn how to hollow them out, clean them, and work with them safely. No doubt, once you start using burned out light bulbs in prepper applications, you will come up with all kinds of useful and creative options.

*This article has been written by **Carmela Tyrell** for [Survivopedia](#).*