

Surviving Blackout: 12 Survival Alternatives To Candles

The electric is out and you're digging frantically through the drawer trying to find the candles. Or maybe you've already used all of your candles and still need alternative light.

Well, the good news is that you have plenty of options and most of these are readily available in most homes.

Before we talk about makeshift candles, we need to talk about wicks and containers for a minute.

If you don't have any candle wicks at home, you can make one using:

- A shoestring with the plastic end cut off (which, by the way, is called an aglet!)
- A strip of cotton cloth from a shirt, towel, sock, etc.
- A piece of rope from a mop
- Para cord
- Candle wicks, which can be bought online individually or by the roll or at craft store.

Unless you're using actual candle wicks that aren't coated in wax, prime the wick by dipping it into whatever you're using as a candle. Good containers include:

- Mason jars
- Sturdy used food jars
- Tin vegetable/fruit cans
- Sea shells
- Empty tuna cans
- Altoids tins
- Teacups/coffee cups

- Metal lids
- Aluminum foil shaped into a cup/bowl
- Beer/soda cans
- Birch bark

Crayons

Crayons: those magical wax sticks that allow your 4-year-old to express his artistic side on your wall. Well guess what? They're flammable and can serve as a candle in a pinch. Granted, you won't get much light from a single crayon, but it's better than nothing and one crayon will burn up to 30 minutes.

Before you light the tip, heat the bottom a little bit, then stick it to a solid surface. Put it on something that you don't mind getting wax on. Then all you need to do is light the tip.

You can also create a longer-burning candle by taping 3 crayons together around a wick, then lighting a wick, or go big and make a pillar candle in the same manner using as many crayons as you want, along with a couple extra wicks.

Video first seen on [DaveHax](#).

Crisco

A single can of Crisco can light your nights for a month. That's right – just one can will burn for 8 hours a day for a month. Just stick a wick down the center of it, push the Crisco back around it, and light it.

If you'd like more light, put more than one wick in it. If you want to spread the light around into different rooms, put some Crisco and a wick in a few smaller containers such as jars or cans.

Bacon Grease

Do you keep a cup of bacon grease in the fridge? I still do! If the lights go out and you don't have candles, stick a wick down the center of your bacon grease just like you would with Crisco. If you don't have bacon grease, don't worry!

If you have bacon in the fridge, you need to use it before it goes bad anyway. Pull off the fatty pieces and wrap it around a wick, put it in a container, and you have a candle. Plus ... it smells like bacon!

Canned Fish

Cans of tuna, salmon and sardines, which we've already suggested that you [stockpile](#), are some of the canned foods that are packed in oil. Now remember: some are packed in water, which is what many people prefer, so this idea won't work – the meat has to be packed in oil.

Either drain the oil out of the meat into another container, or just poke a hole in the top of the can, push the wick in, and burn off the oil. Don't forget to prime the wick. The meat is still edible after you burn the oil out of it. With sardines that you eat right out of the can, you can just eat them and then put a wick in the oil.

Cooking Oil

Just about any cooking oil – vegetable, corn, olive, coconut – will work as fuel for a candle. Pour it into a jar or can (a jar works better because you can put a lid on it and poke a hole in it for the wick. If you use a can, just hold the wick up with a clothes pin or something. It's doubly important that you prime the wick.

Butter

Yup, you heard it. Cut a wedge of butter in half, stand it on end on a plate, and stick a wick in it. You'll get about an hour per tablespoon, which means 8 hours per stick. If you've

canned butter as we've discussed [here](#), you have an instant candle just by adding a wick.

Video first seen on [Grant Thompson – “The King of Random”](#).

Lard

Lard was actually what was originally used to make lamp oil and candles, so it's tried and tested. The reason that I mention it separately from Crisco is because this is something that you can [make at home](#). If you've already canned it, just pop the top, stick a wick in it, and you have a candle. You can also divide it into smaller containers to divide between rooms.

Cheese Wax

If you've [turned some of your extra milk](#) into stored cheese, or bought waxed-cheese, then use the wax off your cheese – or any extra wax that you have stored back – to make a candle. Shape the wax around the wick and you have an instant candle. The more wax you use, the bigger the candle.

Petroleum Jelly

We all know that cotton swabs dipped in petroleum jelly make great [fire starters](#). It makes an excellent candle replacement, too. It's not a good idea to use the plastic container that it comes in, so dip it out into another container, add a wick, and you've got a candle.

You can also dip a cotton ball into the Vaseline, then fold it up into foil. Cut a small x in the foil, pull a bit of the cotton swab through, and light it. It will burn for about 30 minutes.

Old Candles

Chances are good that you have candles that you've burned

down, but didn't use all the wax. Get that out of the jars by warming up the jar or gently using a butter knife to crack it into pieces to get it out of the old containers.

Melt the wax together. Place a wick with a weight on it, either the little piece of metal if it came with it, or even a little rock so that it stays in the bottom, then carefully pour the wax in. Let it set and you've got a brand new candle.

Lip Balm

These are nearly always made from either petroleum or from natural oils such as coconut oil or jojoba oil, all of which are flammable. Especially if you buy the little tins of lip balm, you've already got your own little candle, just add wick. If it's in a plastic tube, just roll it clear up and squish it into a container that you can burn it in and add a wick.

Bonus Cooking Candles

This is a great way to warm up a can of soup or even cook something. It's like a home-made Sterno, sort of. Use a tuna can, a sardine can, or some other short metal container. Cut a strip of cardboard that is as wide as the can is high. Wrap or fold it so that it fits tightly into the container. Pour wax or enough oil to saturate the cardboard over the cardboard and light it. You have a [mini-stove](#)!

Make a Candle Out of an Orange

You don't even need a wick for this one! Cut the orange in half and clean out the pulp, leaving the center pith. Fill the peel with wax or oil and you have a candle!

So what's the lesson of the day? Be creative and keep multipurpose items in your stockpile! Can you think of anything else that will work as a makeshift candle? If so, please share it with us in the comments section below.

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*This article has been written by **Theresa Crouse** for
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