

Essential items you can salvage from abandoned cars

In every apocalyptic movie, we see the camera panning over highways packed with cars that are now useless set decoration items due to the nature of the disaster. However, in the real world, those cars will prove quite useful for the smart survivalist, and most of them will be picked out clean by those desperate to survive.

If you find yourself alone in the middle of a highway packed with cars with nothing but a backpack with some food and water, how about checking those vehicles? Or perhaps your car breaks down in the middle of nowhere, and you decide to take parts of it with you. Do you know what you can salvage?

Since the world is full of cars, the likelihood of coming across more abandoned cars during a disaster is high, and cannibalizing them for valuable survival items is recommended.

Cars full of stuff

If you stop and think about your car right now, I bet there's a lot of stuff in it that probably shouldn't be there, or you just forgot to take it out of the car weeks or months ago.



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For some folks, their car is a storage space for random stuff that accumulates over the years. But for you, a cluttered car is the Jackpot you've been waiting for in this post-

apocalyptic world.

There could be all sorts of helpful stuff in the trunk, glove box, under the seats, or perhaps in the center console or the door pockets. All you have to do is check these parts of the car and see what you can score.

If you can get into the trunk, you might find tools, jumper cables, blankets, flares, tire irons, a flashlight or two, and even some extra clothes. Who knows what people have stored in their trunks. Most cars are equipped with a first aid kit which can come in handy, and if you're lucky, you might even find some camping gear.

Moving to the glovebox and center console, chances are you may find napkins, lighters, a bottle or two of disinfectant, documents, and all sorts of papers you can use as kindling, and perhaps some snacks like protein bars or whatever. You can even find over-the-counter medicine or maybe some prescription drugs the car owner forgot about.

Maybe you'll find a car that just came back from a Walmart run, and now you have to figure out if you stay by this car or if you take the stuff back to your camp. If you decide to carry some stuff back to camp, make sure you protect the things you leave behind from hungry animals and other people. Mark the car and hide the supplies wherever you can if the trunk cannot be locked.

Fuel

After a civilization collapse event, most cars will be abandoned as they run out of fuel. However, you shouldn't assume that's the case for all vehicles since some vehicles may have broken down due to various reasons, while others were just parked before the brown stuff hit the fan.

Unless the cars have a siphon prevention system, you shouldn't

have any problem siphoning some fuel. Give the rear of the car a push and listen carefully if fluid is sloshing inside. If it does, Jackpot!

Now all you need is a simple length of hose, and I hope that the car doesn't have the siphon prevention system I've mentioned before. If it does, look for other vehicles and avoid puncturing the gas tank to drain the fuel since even the smallest of sparks could start a fire, and you may end up injuring yourself.

Battery

The battery is a valuable item to have in your shelter since it can be used to power a light, or you can make sparks using a jumper cable to start a fire. Some savvy folks can even rig a solar panel and keep it charged for a long time.

The problem with the battery is that carrying it back to camp is no easy task since it weighs about 40 pounds. Even more, after struggling to take it back to your shelter, you may realize it's dead since it sat around for a long time.

Wiring

Every car has a lot of wiring, and long strands of wires can be salvaged from just one vehicle. You can use wires to make animal snares and traps, or you can use them for tying down stuff or building structures in your shelter. Pieces of wiring can be used for sewing, or you can even improvise fishing hooks if you've got the correct type of wire. And lastly, you can use the salvaged wires for all your electrical projects.

However, when scavenging wires, you should avoid electric or hybrid cars because anything of electrical nature in such vehicles may carry a potentially fatal charge.

Seat belts

Seat belts are ideal for making straps for clothes, backpacks, and pretty much anything you need. The robust material used to make seat belts makes them suitable for securing loads or improvising a stretcher. To get the seatbelts, pull them out as much as possible and cut them at the base.

And once you get the seatbelts, don't forget to look for cargo nets in the vehicle's rear. Most modern SUVs and trucks have these cargo nets in the back and are often used to secure groceries or other loads.

You could use these nets to improvise a backpack or as a fishing net. In some cases, the holes will not be small enough to trap fish, but you can use some of that salvaged wiring to make the holes smaller. It may take some time, but it will be worth it.

Mirrors

Most folks will get the mirrors thinking they can use them to start a fire, but the mirrors designed for cars are useless for such tasks since they are convex to allow a field of view as wide as possible. To start a fire, you would need a concave mirror that directs light to a point.

Even so, you can still get the mirrors and use them for other purposes such as signaling or all your grooming tasks. You can place them inside your shelter to reflect light from small light sources, or you can use them to make a reflective trail around camp.

Headlights and light lenses

Shards of lenses from the headlights can be used as an improvised knife, or you can use them to make traps or

improvise all sorts of perimeter defense items using those sharp pieces. You can even use a piece of the clear lens as a magnifying glass to ignite some tinder. And the whole lens may be used as a drinking vessel.

If you plan to do some night hunting where low light is needed to avoid spooking the prey, you can use a piece from a brake light lens as a filter for your flashlight. You will be able to improvise a red light and increase your visibility at night while staying somehow undetected.

Hubcaps

Some older cars have removable metal hubcaps, compared to newer models, which have plastic ones. The metal hubcaps can be used as bowls or cooking pans. You can clean a dish-shaped hubcap and turn it into a reliable skillet in no time.

Upholstery

There is a lot of upholstery in pretty much every car these days, and it may come in handy for your survival needs. You can get large upholstery pieces, and you could fashion them into shoes, leggings, and whatever else you might need. You can even improvise a backpack to carry the items you scavenged.

The upholstery and the foam inside the seats, and the large bench can be used to fashion a pillow or a mattress to make your shelter more comfortable. You can also use the foam and pieces of upholstery to make padding for your improvised backpack or your clothes. These materials can also be used as insulation for your shelter to protect you from the elements.

The headliners are usually made from a large piece of material, and if you manage to cut it or tear it out, you can use it for various purposes. You can use it to fashion

clothes, you can use it as a ground cover in your shelter or when making traps, or use it for roofing. The same goes for the carpet, and you are limited only by your imagination when trying to find a use for it.

As for the rubber mats, you can use these to improvise funnels to collect rainwater, you can use them to make sandals, or you can use them to insulate your shelter.

Tires

The tires aren't of much use unless you have some proper cutting tools. If that's the case, you can use the tires to make soles for your sandals, or you can cut them into various pieces and make roof shingles for your shelter. Use some of that salvaged wire to sew rubber pieces together, and you can make a ground cover or floor mat.

Whatever you do, don't burn the tires since the black smoke coming from burned tires is highly toxic, and there are other, safer ways to create a smoke signal.

Body parts

The body parts of the average vehicle can be salvaged, but due to their heavy and construction nature, you will need some excellent tools to undo bolts or cut connecting parts. If you have the tools and time to work on the body panels, you could quickly turn the hood, trunk, and windows into panels for your shelter.

You can even improvise a sled using the hood and the seatbelts as straps and use it to haul the resources you find. In case needed, you can even improvise a stretcher from the hood.

Tools you may need

If you want to get as many resources as possible from a vehicle, you will need some tools. The following tools will help you salvage items from various cars, and it pays to carry them with you.

Wrenches

You can bring along a set of wrenches to cover all sizes, or you can bring an adjustable crescent wrench. Both will do a good job, but the adjustable crescent wrench will take longer to complete a task.

Screwdrivers and pry bars

A pry bar can help you open pretty much anything using brute force. You can even use it for smashing the windows if you're in a hurry or for popping the trunk. However, screwdrivers will help you with the more delicate tasks of preserving and salvaging items without damaging them. You can use them to remove screws from headlights and taillights and from pretty much everywhere. And in some cases, you can even use the screwdrivers to pry up things.

Wire cutters and tin snips

A pair of wire cutters will help you salvage the wiring from the car, and even the most straightforward pair of wire cutters you have in your home will cut through any size of wire used in today's cars. On the other hand, a tin snip will help cut through metal, and you will be able to use it to improvise various items from sheet metal.

Hose

You will need a decent length of hose to siphon fuel from abandoned vehicles. Make sure the hose you pick is small enough to pass the gate under the filler cap. Also, the hose should be long enough to reach the bottom of the gas tank and touch the ground to keep the flow going as you start siphoning the fuel.

Concluding

Scavenging items from cars is not complicated if you have the right mindset and the proper tools for the job. However, it would help ensure the vehicle is abandoned and that no other parties are interested in it. Even in a survival situation, taking something that isn't yours can have dire consequences.

If there's no one in sight and the abandoned vehicles are yours for the taking, you can get to work and take whatever you need. The things you can find in a car are as varied as your level of necessity, and the more time you spend investigating a vehicle, the more you increase your chances of hitting the Jackpot.



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