

18 Survival Uses For Plastic Bags

They're lightweight, they're multi-purpose, they're inexpensive and they don't take up hardly any space; a plastic bag fits all of the criteria for being an ideal survival item.

Since they're so readily available, you should have some in several different sizes just so that you can be prepared for even MORE scenarios!

Here are just a few survival uses for plastic bags – we promise not to state the obvious use of carrying things!

1. Maintaining Body Heat

Garbage bags or yard bags are plenty large enough to use as make-shift windbreakers. They're waterproof and keep out the cold wind while keeping your body heat trapped inside where you need it. You can make a jacket or leg coverings from big ones and you can use small ones for your feet, hands and head.

2. Bandages and Bandage Covers

A fabulous survival use of plastic bags is to keep bandages clean and dry for short periods of time.

You can also use them to cover sucking chest wounds long enough to get the patient somewhere for treatment. Just tape the bag securely over the wound so that no air can get in around the edges.

3. Ice Packs

Since they're waterproof, the ice won't melt and leak out all over the place. To avoid damaging your skin, wrap the ice bag in a rag and remove it every so often just long enough for the skin to warm back up.

4. Keeping Areas Sanitary

As long as the bags don't have any holes, you can use them to store hazardous medical waste such as bloody bandages or bodily fluids.

You can also use them to line your waste bucket, then just tie it shut until you can get it outside. The odor and bacteria will be trapped mostly inside and will help prevent the spread of disease.

5. Water Collection

You can fill the bag up with water to carry back to camp or you can hang it up when it's raining so that water collects in the bag.

You can also use a plastic bag to make a water collection unit as described in another article.

6. Securing Food Supply When Camping

Though the bears and raccoons love it when you leave your food down, you may not be as happy with the results. To keep animals from raiding your food supply (which can also be dangerous!), place your food in a garbage bag, tie it shut and hang it from a tree limb several feet off the ground.



Growing Beans in a Plastic Bag

7. Building a Shelter

The only thing worse than being cold is being cold and wet.

Use a garbage bag to create a waterproof roof for your shelter

that will keep rain and even dew off of you and your possessions. Just string it between limbs using rope or zip-ties and you're set. On the flip side, you can also use it to make shade. Heat stroke is just as dangerous as frost-bite.

8. Ground Cover

You can lose a lot of body heat through the bottom of your sleeping bag, and sleeping wet is never a good time.

Lay a garbage bag under your sleeping bag and you'll keep your body heat in the bag while keeping ground moisture from soaking up through your bag.

9. Creating a Quarantine Zone

Combine garbage bags with the ever-present duct tape and you can make a relatively secure quarantine zone.

In a post-SHTF scenario, disease is going to be an issue and you'll need to keep sick people separate to prevent spreading the illness.

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for an EMP right now**

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10. Make a Mattress

Another great survival use of plastic bags is as a mattress. Just stuff it full of dry leaves, old blankets or whatever you happen to have on hand. The super heavy duty ones are great because they'll be less prone to tear and you can wipe them down and reuse them if you're traveling.

If you're on the run, you'll need to get quality sleep when you can and this will make it much more comfortable than sleeping on the ground.

11. Lining Your Garden

Plastic bags have several uses in the garden. You can place them over the soil to keep it warm and moist and to keep weeds out of your garden.

You can also use it to line your beds to preserve dirt and moisture. You can even fill them with dirt and grow root veggies such as potatoes in them.

12. Flotation Device

Plastic bags, especially the heavy-duty ones, make great flotation devices in case you need to cross a river. Just fill them with air and tie them securely shut. Duct tape is handy here yet again.

13. Blanket

When you have nothing else and the temperatures are dropping, you can always stuff a large garbage bag full of leaves and use it as a blanket. It may not be perfect but it will work to keep your body heat in.

14. Rain Boots

Walking around with wet feet is not only uncomfortable; chronic wet feet can be a health hazard. If you're on the run and only have one pair of shoes, you want to try to keep them dry.

Plastic bags are great to cover up your shoes when you're going to be walking through water or marshy turf. Just step into the bag and tie or tape it around your ankle or calf.

15. Patching Tears in Bags or Rafts

Cut a piece of bag to use as a patch for your bag or tent. Duct tape over it and it will most certainly get you by in a

pinch.

Video first seen on [DPRG Clips](#)

16. Stretcher

In a pinch, a big sturdy plastic bag can be attached to two poles for use as a stretcher. You'll have some stretch but as long as the bag is sturdy and you keep it off the ground, it should last for quite a while, especially if you double-layer using two bags.

17. Heating Water

There are a few different methods to accomplish this but the easiest (and safest for the bag and the water) is to simply put the water in the bag, tie it shut and hang it in the sun. You'll be surprised by how quickly the water heats.



Making Fire with Water and a Plastic Bag

18. Lashing a splint together

Because the bags have a bit of stretch (but not too much) and are extremely flexible, they're great to use as "rope" to bind a splint together. Simply tie the bags around the limb and the poles and you're done.

The number of uses for plastic bags for survival really is only limited by your imagination. Because they're so versatile, we recommend that you carry at least a couple in your BOB and your medical kit. After all, they weigh nothing, take up very little space and have more uses than possibly any other item.

If you can think of any uses for plastic bags that we missed, please tell us about them in the comments section below.

*This article has been written by **Theresa Crouse** for [Survivopedia](#).*