

Surviving The Next Great Depression

Mention of the Great Depression readily conjures images of long lines with streets full of the skinny, unemployed masses. Beginning in 1929, the Great Depression resulted from a culmination of awful natural disasters as well as economic collapse, societal panic and the damage caused by repeated bank runs and the crash on Wall Street of October, 1929.

In the span of only a few weeks, investors in the United States saw more than 40 billion dollars vanish, and that was at a time when the US dollar was still held against a gold standard. The crash on Wall Street and the subsequent panic and bank runs that ensued led the citizen of the US from their heyday of the Roaring Twenties to the extreme poverty and hardship of the 1930s.

Combined with catastrophic crop failures in the Dust Bowl and record repossessions of family farms by the banks, much of the Midwest and the East Coast were left financially devastated.

Worst of all, many families were left in ruins. Farmers and homesteaders who had mortgaged their land in order to purchase livestock, tools or new farm machinery such as tractors and plows, lost even their capability to subsist and feed their own families.

Foreclosures hit record highs and a mass exodus (the Dust Bowl exodus) of people from the Midwest swept toward California.

Amidst the turmoil and ruin of the 1930s, though, life went on. In spite of soaring unemployment rates, Americans from all walks of life were able to forge ahead and survive. Not everyone suffered throughout the 1930s, though, even among the poorer groups of society.

Families that stayed together and pooled their resources, individuals who sought out any and all extra work they could or who had unique, niche talents that they could employ, and those with the will, fortitude and perhaps a touch of good luck (or the right mentality) managed to survive and maintain a decent standard of living in the process.

During such a depression, when paper or hard currency may be of little value or very hard to come by, barter and trade become viable and necessary means of exchange. Many of the best barter items are small, everyday things that are currently available rather cheaply, so you can start stockpiling supplies very affordably. Consider stashing away some of these useful items:



- **Lighters** are immensely useful for trade and barter during a crises, whether you live in a more remote rural area or in the heart of an urban metropolis. Standard Bic lighters are reasonably cheap and good to stock up on for use as barter and trade items, while you may want to stock up on some more expensive Zippo or other lighters that can be refilled over and over again for personal use.
- **Toilet paper** is probably still going to be available, but maybe not all the time. Amidst shortages and delays in the distribution of goods, you're still gonna need to use the toilet and [having toilet paper on hand](#) is a very nice convenience. Alternatively, when there's none to be had but the demand exists, you might be surprised what some people would be willing to trade for a roll of toilet paper.
- **Tobacco** or **cigarettes** are a very useful trade and barter

item. Even (and perhaps especially) if you don't smoke, a small stockpile of tobacco and/or cigarettes can serve you very well in the event of another depression. The fact is that there are a whole lot of smokers in the world and there'll probably be a whole lot more during a depression when stress and tension run high, so you'll have a valuable barter item when you most need it.

- **Alcohol**, like tobacco or cigarettes, is a useful product to stock up on. Pure grain alcohols and higher proof vodka, rum, whiskey and gin all store well and are imminently tradable. Finer wines, [beers](#), malts and other alcoholic beverages can be stockpiled as well, for use as luxury trade or barter items, as well as for personal use if desired.
- Not everyone is interested in tobacco or alcohol, and there may be times when you just want to help someone out with a bowl of hot food. **Rice, rolled oats, corn and beans** are all reasonably cheap and store for years when properly canned or bagged. In addition to being easily traded, these foods are good staples for you and your family, as well as for use when more casual friends or acquaintances need an extra meal but you can't afford to share your more valuable bread, meat, eggs or dairy.
- **Utility tools**, especially small and compact multi-tools from manufacturers like Gerber and the Leatherman Company can be immeasurably useful to have. By stocking up on a few extra tools, you'll be able to give them to your friends or family in need and / or trade them for other valuable commodities that you need.
- **Butane** and other fuels are generally in very short supply, or are cost-prohibitively expensive, during economic turmoil or a prolonged depression. Rather than stockpiling butane for use fueling your camp stove or gas oven, one of the best uses of stored butane is in

refilling lighters and small lanterns for others in trade for other items you need. With even a small stockpile of butane (think a couple of those little canisters for camp stoves) you'll have a valuable resource that others are likely to need, and you can reap the benefits of having been better prepared when you trade for the material goods you need.

- **Spices**, such as **sugar, salt** and **pepper** as well as **mustard seed, cinnamon** (sticks and/or powder), and other herbs and spices offer you a touch of luxury in your cooking. During a time when imports and exports may be limited or nonexistent, being able to satisfy that craving you have for something sweet or exotic can do wonders for lifting the spirit and raising morale among your friends or family. Spices and herbs can also help make bland foods more palatable, especially important if you have to eat the same things day in and day out for weeks or months on end. Most spices and herbs are known to have varying beneficial health effects, as well, and can also be traded during times of scarcity.
- **Batteries** aren't one of the most traditional of items to stock up on, but we live in a digital age now. The next depression doesn't necessarily entail power outages or grid shutdown, in which case we'll all want our electronic gadgets and gizmos to keep working. Batteries are small, cheap, easy to store, and can make great trade and barter items in the event of widespread chaos due to manufacturing or supply shortages.

Remember that production of basic goods will continue even in the event of a serious depression, because people still have to live, but there may well be shortages and prices are likely to vary steeply from week to week and month to month.

Another good way to limit expenditures and conserve resources during another depression is for families to band together. As

opposed to simply representing more mouths to feed, families that bind together during hardships have more adults and able-bodied individuals who can work to bring in additional money, food or material goods.

At the same time, everyone's living expenses are pooled, reducing how much rent or utility bills each adult member is responsible for. Even small contributions go a long way during hard times, so everyone in the family should be encouraged to get involved and do all that they can.

Finally, as obvious as this might seem, when you see the unemployment numbers soaring do everything you can to keep your job. Even during the worst years of the Great Depression, more than half the population was still employed and working; people still had to eat, sleep and wash their clothes, and production was still going on, albeit at far lower levels.

So if you know there are a hundred, or a thousand, people waiting to take your job in a second if you get fired, do what you can not to cross with your boss or make trouble, show up on time and do what you have to.

The media thinks you're better off not knowing this

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*This article has been written by **Bill White** for [Survivopedia](#).*