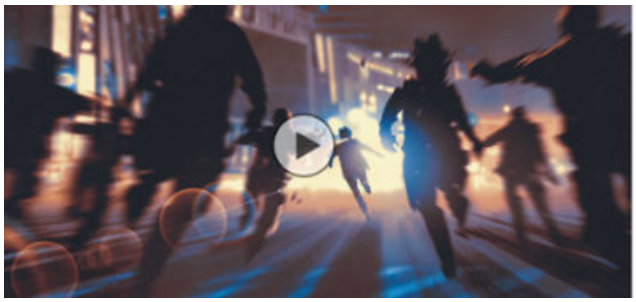
Top 5 AR-15 Upgrades You Need For Survival

One of the greatest aspects of the AR-15 is the ability to easily accessorize or upgrade the rifle to improve its performance.

A lot of these upgrades, but not all, can be done with little to no gunsmithing experience. Finding yourself in a survival situation is when these upgrades could be the most useful. Whether you are using your AR-15 on trips into the wild or are concerned with a bug in/out situation, these 5 upgrades could give an advantage in any situation.



Improve your chances
to survive a mass shooting event
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The Optic

One of the most important and first upgrades to your rifle should be an optic[1]. The current market is loaded with options that are as simple as a red dot sight and graduate to low power variable optics (LPVOs). Many people will refer to all these optics as an AR-15 scope but there is a lot of differences. But how do they differ?

Red dots are easy to install and use. Most trainers like these optics because you simply "put the thing on the thing and shoot." This makes them extremely handy for new or inexperienced shooters but may not be very accurate at distance. Holographic sights are very similar to red dots but use a different technology to make them more durable and more

apt to work if the lens is damaged. LPVOs like 1-6x scopes[2] bridge the gap between red dots and traditional scopes. Easy to use for close targets but capable of increasing magnification to stretch the legs on your rifle to ranges up to 600 yards.

One item to consider is an optic that does not use batteries; rather, fiber-optic or tritium illuminated reticles. This will decrease the number of items you will need to include in your load-out. Regardless of the optic you choose for your rifle, a set of back up sights as a redundancy is a must.

Sling

A good quality sling is probably one of the most overlooked upgrade you can put on your rifle. The sling has more uses than just tying the rifle to your body. It can be used as added support when shooting off-hand to improve accuracy, used as cordage in an emergency, and, in worst case scenarios, you can adapt it to be a tourniquet. Standard G.I. issued slings can be found very inexpensively; however, new, more modern slings has started to become available that increase form and function. The Blue Force Gear Vickers Sling is a great example of an upgraded sling that allows for quick adjustments to help stabilize your rifle.

Ambidextrous Charging Handle

An area that most people do not train enough on is utilizing your weapon with your non-firing side. If you are right handed, there may become a time where shooting with your left hand is required should you be in a specific defensive position or injured. Having an ambidextrous charging handle may prove to be vital when clearing malfunctions or reloading as you use your non-firing side. In addition, normal left handed shooters will appreciate the ability to use the right side to unlock the charging handle. While this is not required to increase the accuracy of your weapon, it will greatly assist in weapon manipulation.

Bolt Carrier Group (BCG)

The most complex and vital part of your AR-15 is the BCG. It performs various functions that most people are unaware of. The BCG is responsible for feeding, chambering, locking, firing, unlocking, extracting and ejecting a round all the while controlling gases to cycle the next round. Most of the malfunctions that an AR-15 will experience will occur with the BCG. This is due to most people’s misunderstanding of the bolt carrier group and how to maintain it. Under, or over, lubrication can be a contributing factor to malfunctions with

the BCG.

One simple way to by-pass this issue is to upgrade to a nickel boron (NB) bolt carrier group. The nickel boron coating creates a smooth surface that reduces friction and allows for better performance with minimal lubrication. This coating will also assist with corrosion resistance in more damp climates. These two features make NB BCGs a viable upgrade if you constantly find yourself in the field or preparing for more dire situations with little or no time for rifle maintenance.

The Barrel

Without a doubt, the barrel is the heart of any rifle and where the majority of the accuracy will be generated. While most AR-15s will have mil-spec, most people will want more accuracy than 4 minute-of-angle (MOA). An upgraded barrel is a great starting point for the desired increase in more precise

shots. 4 MOA accuracy could mean the difference in harvesting or missing a shot on game equating to potential devastating impacts on survival. However, upgrading the barrel is not as simple as buying the first one you see.

There are a number of considerations that you must keep in mind when choosing your new barrel. Some points to keep in mind are the length of barrel, the twist rate, the ammunition you would use, and how all three of these attributes affect one another. A great example is determining the correct barrel length to maximize the effectiveness for the XM193 (55 grain 5.56×45 mm) round. Some believe that a 1/7 twist, 12.5” barrel will provide the best versatility for power, accuracy and stabilization of the XM193 while others believe 14.3” barrels perform better. Obviously, a lot to think about before buying what would best with your AR-15.

You may also need to employ a gunsmith to install the new barrel. While this is not a difficult task, you may find it more frustrating to complete without the proper tools. A gunsmith will not only ensure it is done with the correct tools but also check the headspace for proper fit.

Conclusion

The AR-15 is the most versatile platform to accessorize and upgrade. The majority of the upgrades can be done quickly and easily without special tools. However, there are some upgrades that will be more intensive. Regardless of the upgrades you choose, your focus should always be on how to become more confident and accurate with your rifle. One of the best ways to do that, in conjunctions with your upgrades, is to get training. From a bare-bones rifle to the highest quality one, training with your rifle will help you prepare for most situations.

Resources

[1] https://www.outdoorsbest.com/best-rifle-scope-reviews/

[2] https://www.outdoorsbest.com/1-6x-scope/