

# Totally Ready

*Prepped when it really counts*

## Dollar Store Goldmines

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I am currently facilitating a Financial Self-Reliance class at church. Recording all my expenditures and income has reminded me of a few things. For the purposes of this articles the important ones are; so many of those I speak with when teaching or communicating with over social media have told me they just can't afford food storage or preparing kits and second there are many ways we can control what we spend when we prioritize. If your excuse for not preparing is lack of money let me help.

Yesterday there was a news report concerning stores selling merchandise for a dollar. Many are closing. I am stumped. Are we just too lazy to go to these stores or do we not understand what they sell? Shopping at these stores can not only help build kits, fill General Store shelves, accumulate food storage but also save on everyday purchases enabling you to pay off debts more quickly, save for future needs and still have amazing birthday parties, Christmas stocking and Easter baskets any child would love.

I decided to visit my local dollar store, it is a smaller one so your stores may offer even more.

For your kits:

Bandannas, 2/\$1.00: I have always advised that you put a "uniform" for each family member in all your Emergency kits. This could be matching bandannas which you tie around your neck, use as a headband, or tie around your arm. This will help you find a family member if you have been separated - people are more likely to remember someone with a bandanna than just another cute little boy with blond hair and blue eyes or brown hair and brown eyes.

Baseball caps \$1.00: Again, these would be great "uniforms" for family 120-hour kits, and would provide shade in the summer and warmth in the winter. You can further brand your uniform by decorating the caps - which are solid colors - with a stencil, or splatter paint them. This will make them unique and easy for people who have seen them to remember.

Crayons, coloring books, puzzles, playing cards, beach balls and crossword puzzles: All of these can be found for a dollar and can provide hours of distraction time when you are confined to a car in a traffic jam as you evacuate, or in a shelter or hotel room later. During Katrina and other disasters, many evacuated and still found themselves without power 50 miles or more away from the disaster area.

Pencils, 12/\$1.00 and Notepads 3/\$1.00: Together these are a communication line as you leave messages for rescue workers and family and friends. They also provide another form of amusement.

LED push light and or flashlight \$1.00: LED lights make great night lights when the power goes out and they are small and easy to stash in an Emergency kit, car kit or office kit. Inexpensive flashlights are perfect for a child's kit. Purchase a more sturdy one for adult kits.

70 foot rope, \$1.00: This may not be the strongest rope in the world but it is great for a clothes line and perfect for making a lean-to or sun shade when combined with a trap.

Clothes pins, \$1.00: A rope and clothes pins are not only important for the obvious but also after a flood or other

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disaster that causes water problems in your home. Hanging wet documents and photos to dry on a line can prevent them from being lost forever.

Pet dishes, \$1.00: I found a set of two good size heavy plastic bowls that would be perfect for a water and food dish for a pet. Pets are family members too.

Work gloves, \$1.00: These are a must in every adult kit, the kits of older children, auto kits and workplace kits. The \$1.00 variety may not be the most durable but they will provide protection during the early hours of clean up and can provide warmth if you are ever stranded in a cold environment. Purchase heavier ones for adult kits.

Pack of three Bungee cords, \$1.00: Pull yourself together. Need I say more?

Tools, \$1.00: Utility knife, screwdriver sets, mini screwdriver set for fixing glasses and other items with tiny screws, and a set of hex keys. All great additions to all of your kits.

Toothbrushes with cap 3/\$1.00 and a family size toothpaste also a dollar and of course dental floss. Dental floss has lots of other uses during an emergency when supplies may be limited.

Five glow bracelets or 2 glow sticks, your choice \$1.00: Glow bracelets are the perfect way to provide a little light at night for children and a great way to keep track of them in a crowd. Glow sticks can provide light that is safe without running down precious batteries.

Two child ponchos, \$1.00: These ponchos are good for a single use and come in a 2-pack. You may want to put two in each backpack if you are in an area where a weather emergency such as flooding, heavy rains and snow may be your disaster. Open these and you may discover they are large enough for many adults. We stash these in our backpacks when we visit Disneyland for use on the water rides so we aren't wet for hours after riding.

Magnifier reading glasses, \$1.00: When you can't afford a second pair of prescription glasses or you just need a little help for reading, these are a real money saver. Also valuable for any good first aid kit - ever try to remove a splinter without a good pair of glasses? Add a pair to all your kits.

Sun glasses for children and adults, \$1.00: Sun glasses are vital in a kit to help not only in sunny weather but also if stranded in the snow. They will help to prevent snow blindness which can be a very serious hazard.

About our General Store, it is a place we can turn everyday to meet our needs. General Stores in the past not only had food but also medications, cleaning supplies, tools and just about everything anyone would need to eat, work and play.

Items from dollar stores for your General Store shelves:

Vegetable seeds: Learn to plant a garden even if you don't have lots of room. There are many things that can be grown in pots. Learn to garden in case you need to grow one at some point in the future, learn now so you will know then.

Plastic trash can bags: The cost in the grocery store was \$2.99. These were a name brand.

Lunch snacks: These are also important to have on your General Store shelves in the food storage area. Remember comfort foods are a must. Cookies, Fiddle Faddle, fruit snacks, and fruit cups.

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Clothes pins, \$1.00: A rope and clothes pins are not only important for the obvious but also for the reasons we mentioned previously. Hanging clothes also saves money.

Hygiene items, \$1.00 each: Deodorant, shampoo, shaving cream, 6 combs, or 3 large bars of soap. All these only a dollar each.

Medical needs, \$1.00 each: antibacterial cream, cortisone cream, bandages, and 2 pack hand sanitizers. Teething gel is available and a great addition to kits even if you don't have a child; adults get toothaches too and a dentist may not be an option for a day or two.

Office supplies: We mentioned pencils already but in addition look for legal pads, envelopes, padded envelopes, sticky notes and poster board. Poster board was only 69 cents.

Speaking of food storage: So much here to get excited about. Pickles, mustard, catsup, barbecue sauce, spices, cereal, chips and so much more. There are even some great deals in the refrigerated foods like lunch meat, cheese and eggs. When purchasing brands you are not familiar with purchase one and try it before investing in many.

Cleaning supplies: It is crazy how much you can get for this department of your General Store. I found not only cleaners but also sponges, broom with dustpan, brooms, kitchen gloves, wet mops, and much more.

Party Supplies: Yes, celebrations are important, especially during a stressful time. Purchase gift bags, greeting cards, paper plates and cups, banners, crepe paper, holiday decorations and sodas and cake mixes.

We have not even begun to list all the items you can purchase for less at these stores. Again, as always, when purchasing a new item or brand, take it home and test it with your family before you purchase several. Even at a dollar it's not a bargain if you throw it away, but you can find some real deals if you are willing to experiment. Also, know your prices canned veggies for a dollar are not a bargain when you can wait for a sale and purchase them for 79 cents.

You do not have to spend a large sum of money to assemble a great Emergency kit for each family member to carry in their car or to keep at work. Begin by gathering items from around your home and then hop in the car and check out your local one dollar store. Stop putting it off or making excuses. Begin today.

Prices are going up, and in a few months even these store may have to adjust their selection or raise prices. This is evident as stores are closing. Shopping only at a favorite grocery store and not venturing further may be tempting and shopping online with no shipping charges is also tempting, don't do it. Cookies for sale at dollar stores are a dollar while at the grocery store they are \$2.99. If you purchase a box a week you would save \$104.00 a year, just on cookies. If you purchase toothpaste (12 a year), birthday and holiday cards (10 per year), chips (12 per year), shampoo and conditioner (5 each or 10 per year) you will save \$85.50 on just four items, add the cookies and you have saved \$189.50. Is this beginning to make sense? You bet it is.

This week make a list of items you need in your kits and supplies you are lacking in your General Store and check out your local dollar store. Once you have done this begin shopping there for weekly needs as well.