

Building a Load out Plan for Your Vehicle



Most people's primary plan is to bug out by vehicle which makes a lot of sense given how much further you can travel and how much more you can carry. Most of us have a bug out bag that we have packed and repacked (and repacked again) and we know exactly how much it will hold and what goes where. Now how many of you have done this for your vehicle?

If you haven't, I think you will find much like you probably did with your bug out bag, space fills up FAST!

Today I'm going to teach you one way to plan for a vehicle load out, this will do two things for you, first it will save you time in an emergency by helping you know in advance of the balloon going up what all will fit in your vehicle and where it goes. Also I will help you develop a plan to secure the load so you can travel more safety.

So where to begin? First get out a piece of paper and list out the things you intend to pack. Hopefully by now in your preps you have seen the advantage of using bins or bags to group items so you are able to stay organized and load large amounts of stuff quickly.

Next prioritize these items, what if your loading gets cut short and you have to stop what you are doing and immediately get on the road? What would you want going in there first? For my wife and I it would be our Bug Out Bags and primary weapons followed by water, medical kit, food, spare gas, tools, ham radio equipment, generator, and finally personal luggage.



Plano 1919 Sportsman's Trunk

Once you have the list prioritized draw out the rough shape of your vehicle's interior and start "filling" it with the items you plan to pack. So if you know your medical bag is about 1/3 of the width of the back of your SUV then draw that there with the giant vehicle repair and recovery box that you think takes up about 2/3 the width of the back of your SUV next to it. Now what can go on top of that? What can go behind it? At this point you may have to make trade-offs as to what on the priority list gets loaded first because something heavy just has to go on the bottom. That's okay.

Now if you plan to put a cargo carrier on the trailer hitch, pull an actual trailer, or have a roof rack start "filling" this up as well. As I mentioned above spare gas is high on my priority list but obviously this is stored outside the car.

Okay so now we have a rough plan all done without having to lift anything. If you aren't great at estimating dimensions you can speed up the accuracy of your first round draft by measuring the inside of your car and then measure some of the larger bulkier items while making your paper draft. Because I had been camping with most the items in the past I sort of knew how much room most of my things took up.

Now it's time to physically go out and bring each item to your vehicle and see if your plan works. You will discover several things when you go to do this. First your stuff is ALL OVER THE PLACE! How many trips did you make to the basement, garage, kitchen, bedroom, storage room, storage shed, etc? Lots and in some case things weren't where you thought they were. Imagine going through that for the first time in an emergency?! So while you are gathering the things on your lists just note where they are like: "Med kit- Basement top shelf".



Roof top storage is an often overlooked place to store many items. Make sure you have appropriate tie down materials.

I don't expect you to store everything in one place, for one thing while it would be awesome to have everything stored two feet behind my truck but my garage isn't heated and cooled so I wouldn't want to store medicine in there for example. Second I don't want all of my preps on display every time I open my garage door! So it's okay to store things you plan to bug out with in different places but try to limit the total number as best you can and document where each item is. As an added hack I put a small piece of bright red duct tape on each item that is part of my vehicle load out to make it easier to see on shelves next to everyday items that may not be going.



Having gear stored in one location is nice, but not always possible.

The second things you may discover is you over estimated how much space you have or you fit it all in but in the case of a car instead of a truck you may find it riding on the bump stops. I was actually pleasantly surprised to find out I went too conservative and I had more room to stack things than I planned so I was able to add to my list. Either way now is the time to fine tune and in some cases make some tough decisions as to what doesn't make the cut. Hopefully everything you pack is just bonus because you are headed to an already well stocked Bug out Location but I know many folks aren't there yet. If you do have a place to store things at your Bug out Location this might be time to think about what you can live without at your primary residence and go ahead and preposition more out there.

Once you have become Tetris-master 9000 and fit everything together as efficiently as possible and in an order that makes sense (all while documenting where it came from) you need to do two final things. First ensure the things you want to be able to get to (quickly in some cases) can be. How many times have you seen the people by the side of the road unloading a trunk full of stuff to get to their spare tire? Don't be that guy! You should be able to get to anything you may reasonably expect to need to assist your vehicle in making it to your destination. Perhaps just as importantly you will need to be able to get to anything you plan to grab should you have to abandon the vehicle and head out on foot, possibly in a hurry!



Careful planning now can save hours of wasted time when you need it.

Lastly **SECURE YOUR LOAD!** My initial exposure to load out plans came from my very first days in the army when it was impressed upon us how devastating something like a couple of full ammo cans flying around a vehicle in the event of an accident or roll over could be to the occupants. Most of us can imagine the dangerous road conditions under which we may need to bug out and so the likelihood of an accident is much higher than during our normal daily drives. Add to this a loaded down vehicle that will not be able to respond or perform as well as normal and other stressed out drivers trying to make good their escape and you can see why all that stuff in your vehicle needs to be secured as best possible. If you have a pickup truck this is made easier by tie down points. Do you have the ratchet straps or cargos netting you need to do so? Inside of a car can get trickier but it can be made safer. For example the ammo cans I mentioned could be wedged down behind the back of the front seats on the floor board rather than stored on top of a box on the back seat parallel to the back of your head. Use your imagination and actually try tying things down to see if you have what you need. Now add those bungee cords, ropes, and ratchet straps to your list and note their location.

That's it, you've done it you have a load out plan. I recommend you practice fully loading your vehicle for a load out twice a year. It's a pain but it will improve your time getting out the door, reveal any items that "magically" moved from where you thought they were stored, and remind you to make updates as your packing list and especially your vehicle possibly changes. Good luck and be safe out there!

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