

Urban Living

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Moving Out

If you are still getting together the money to move into a permanent address of your own, you should also be assembling your hope chest of things needed in a modern home. Since you should have already assembled camping and road survival gear you have many basics to use it if you need to. Remember that your camp gear is optimized for portability while home furnishings are designed for comfort without mobility in mind. Don't wear out your expensive sleeping bag or other gear when you could pick up a blanket and futon mattress for cheap.

Check the papers and online for places to rent, avoid rental agents, they just surf the papers and net for you saving maybe a few hours and then charge a months rent, payoff for them is between \$200 and \$1000 per hour.

Furnishing

Here is a list of some of the things you should consider getting if you are taking a semi-permanent address.

Kitchen

Silverware of some form: a knife set and cutting board, steak knives, paring knife, utility knife, and a good cleaver (look in the Chinese food section). Cookware varies by need. When living alone, all you need is a small pot and a tiny frying pan, but that is if you never have visitors. If you're cooking for a group, get bigger. The thrift store can be your friend here. Honestly, though, if you're getting an apartment and like to cook, it may be in your interests to drop a little dough as soon as you can on good cookware, silverware, and cutlery. A Chinese wok makes for inexpensive quick meals from nearly any meat or vegetable available. Add a bamboo steamer for more utility. A good pressure cooker can be cheap or expensive but a good set saves you large amounts of fuel, electricity, and time when cooking. Research before buying. For unfurnished places a hotplate, some pots and pans, a toaster oven, and maybe an inexpensive pressure cooker or two let you cook most foods. Microwave ovens are mostly just for warming things up very quickly, although you can sort of cook in them if that is all you have. If you happen to be in the presence of some more technologically gifted activists, and you score a microwave oven for cheap or free, please consider its potential value as electronic parts, where cooking with it may be unproductive. There are combination microwave/toaster ovens. Some even have hot plate pads on top. Consider the price against buying separately. If the place has no refrigerator, just buy dry foods and things that keep at room temperature. If you buy meats cook them right away, which will preserve them for a day or two. Most of the stuff in a refrigerator is moldy leftovers or stuff that would be fine at room temperature or in an DIY evaporator cabinet cooler.

Sleep

You need bedding pillows, sheets, and pillow cases, consider a big electric blanket, even if you cant afford to heat the whole house you can sleep warm, even then get one or two comforters. A note on bedding, if you plan on sharing a bed, and once you have, sleeping alone will never be enough again, get your top sheet and any blankets a size or two bigger than your bed. If you have a full size bed get queen bedding, if a queen, get king. This will kill that "don't hog the blankets" argument before it even begins. As for the bed itself, save up as much money as possible and get the best you can afford as soon as you can. You spend a third of your life in bed, and quality sleep affects your entire lifestyle. Don't skimp on your mattress. Oh, and buy it new, or you run the risk of 6-10 legged roommates sharing your bed. Eeew. If you don't have the money for heat think about making the canopy and curtains mentioned in Free Furniture.

Bath

Towels! Get them new, for the same reasons as the bed. You should consider your soaps and the like before moving as well. A shower curtain, toilet brush, and **Do Not Forget** a toilet plunger; you will regret it. We actually advocate giving them as housewarming gifts, because no one ever remembers the bloody things until it's too late. Don't bother with expensive things at this point, though. Just get sturdy and practical. Lots of bleach and maybe an industrial cleanser or wax stripper will help you clean off the nasty crud you find when you move in, and you might not be afraid to let your boy/girlfriend visit the place. There are scrub brushes which can be used to scrub mop the floor, but if the gunk is really bad use a putty knife, just be careful not to damage the floor.

Plumbing Basics

If you have a clogged pipe or drain start with a classic suction cup shape plunger, this is useful for more than clogged toilets, you can plunge most any drain including shower and floor drains and sinks, there are smaller plungers made for sinks, don't get one of the plungers with the tapered end made only for toilets. Another thing to do if your sink is clogged is to unscrew the U-bend with your hands, often it is just a glop of mixed hair and grease clogging the works, this is also where stuff that falls down the drain can be recovered. If the plunger or disassembly will not clear a clog but the pipes appear intact you can try snaking the drain. A drain snake can be very cheap but the cheapest snakes are only good for small pipes to poke holes in a clog, better snakes are thicker, longer, and let you crank the end to drill through tough clogs. For the many everyday clogs a cup of lye pellets and some boiling water will dissolve most hair and grease clogs, if you cant get lye in your hardware store concentrated clothing bleach works too sometimes, add the lye and boiling water or bleach and leave so the clog has time to dissolve.

Legal, Leases, and Landlords

The term Landlord has its origins in feudal times where serfs would work the fields and lands and give all of the fruits of their labors to one person or family in return for a right to live there and keep a modest amount of food not to starve. In modern times, it basically works the same way. Landlords, along with the Employer, the Banker, and some say Cops are forces that can cause real inconvenience if things turn nasty. Do not get us wrong. Some landlords are actually very good in their role as long as the rent is paid, and have a reputation of charging a fair price and fixing what needs to be fixed. However, many are cut-throat slumlords choking every last penny they can eek out of a tenant while fixing nothing, invading privacy, and placing folks they do not like on quasi-legal databases they share with others of their kind. Even the kindest little old lady landlord will lose no sleep at night charging you extortion late fees and have maintenance gleefully tossing all your picked-through stuff on the curb if you are more than a week or two behind (sometimes more sometimes much less)! She will have another tenant in a few weeks, while you will be looking at The Street or Squatting if you have no emergency funds or back-up.

Leases

Be sure to read the contract carefully. A favorite legal trick of ours is to line out and initial anything unfavorable or prejudicial to our renters rights in the contract you sign, if you can get away with it. Just draw a single line over the words in black ink, no X-es or scribbles; it must still be readable under the line out, You can also box and X paragraphs and sections, again initialing them. If they even read the contract and object to your changes, move on to another place. They do not need to countersign these edits because this is the document they will use to attempt to evict or sue you. The judge will laugh them out of court.

Know the laws about reasonable inspection and notice for eviction and repairs. Many states have minimum statutory punishments paid in months of free rent if the owner walks on your rights. Be brutal if the landlord is a big slumlord.

Be sure to document any damage and keep the photos so you will not be charged for the damages. A big scam with slumlords is keeping deposits for even the tiniest scrape on the wall or smudge in the carpet. In some areas, it is so common that half the landlords practice this.

Do not cosign leases with folks you do not trust. Stories have been told of folks cosigning for their buddies to get an apartment and in roommate deals, only to get screwed when the rent has been skipped on and the place has been damaged.

Eviction

The laws vary state to state and even city to city. Know these laws. Even in the most landlord friendly places, they are at least going to have to file and give you a court date before the 'notice to vacate' notice is given (which in some states is 30 days, others 24 hours!) While most judges deal with landlords on a monthly basis, it may be in your interest to go to the court. The biased court system always awards an eviction by default if the tenant does not show, but delays the decision if the landlord

does not. Be sure to bring all receipts to the court as some slumlords will 'lose' payment records. If you can prove that you are sincerely trying to pay what you owe, but are going through hard times, some (but not all) judges may give you a bit more time to pay - or secretly plan to screw the landlord, get another pad, and your stuff to safety!

In some cities, there are churches that may pay all or some of your rent one time only. Folks have reported varying success with this, but that may be worth checking into.

Rooms for rent, hostels, bunkhouses, and boarding houses usually go by the more landlord friendly laws governing hotels and motels. Most places that have weekly or daily rent operate like this. The landlord can kick you out on spot for little reason and do not need a court order or eviction procedure.

Starting Out Cheap

Inexpensive Apartment

This is perhaps the most optimal starting out arrangement. You will have to be 18 or older with a valid ID or emancipated and declared legally adult by a judge. You will also most likely have to sign a lease saying you will be there for a period of time ranging from a year to 6 months. What keeps some folks out of this is the enormous amount it takes to set up. Most landlords are going to want a deposit equal to the first months rent plus the rent itself. Many even tack on an application or processing fee of 20 USD to 100 USD on top of that. Some may even want the last month's rent as well. Bear in mind, this is before hooking up utilities. That said, if you look around, deals can be found on deposits and reasonable rent can be located as well. In college towns, the best times to look is during the summer or right when semesters are ending as students tend to take up all the reasonable housing. It is even possible to get utilities paid apartments, but be careful because many of these get skimpy with heating or air because they pay it.

An apartment can be cheaper than motels, hostels, or rooms for rent if you take into account security of stuff, privacy, and piece of mind if the initial start up can be met.

Once again: do not cosign a lease with anyone you do not COMPLETELY trust. The authors of this project know many who got screwed like this.

Weekly Rate Motels

This is the most expensive way to go. However, it bears mentioning because it has the one advantage of not needing a sizable deposit. Unlike hostels or rooming houses, they will tolerate kids. Even the crappiest motels offer a TV for entertainment, a clean bed, hot shower, and privacy. This is much preferable to the street as long as money is available and you have immediate plans to move to a more economical housing solution. However, the cash to maintain one of these can be higher than nice apartment rent, even if reduced weekly rates are used. Be sure to load up on the free towels and soap when you depart to make up for paying high rates. Be sure to get any stuff out before checkout or you may lose your stuff. This is only to be used in temporary situations and more income is on the way. Unlike Hotels, most of these also do not require credit cards, only a valid ID. Be also aware, that during certain peak season events in places, motels have been known to jack up rates with little notice.

Be aware that these Hotels can be traps for the working poor. Eating out all the time combined with rents that take up most of the paycheck has many trapped in situations where they cannot save to move out without 2 throwaway jobs or one really good paying job.

Hostels

Hostels are located in many adventure tourist destinations worldwide. Most are going to require an out-of-state ID to get in, though. Research the rules and clientele that hostel is aimed at. Most hostels

are for college age travelers, but long term housing for low income people or migrant workers exist as well. It is a good idea to get an idea of the social scene and find out how much a stay is. Many hostels are dorm type arrangements where you may be rooming with a dozen or more people. Also don't be surprised by people engaging in sex hidden only by their sheets, loud snoring, and questionable hygiene. Keep a close eye on your gear and never let anyone see anything of value. Before taking a room at a hostel check for hotel discounts and coupons especially in the off season that may be actually be cheaper than a hostel dorm room.

Rooming Houses

You can find ads for these in the newspaper or occasionally craigslist, though most traditional rooming houses advertise by newspaper. Like hostels, rooming houses may consist of a private room where a bathroom is shared or sometimes just bunks. Still, this can be much cheaper than motels and less picky than Hostels. Most of the time the management is going to want a week's deposit plus one weeks rent to move in, but this varies widely. Be sure to be cautious with your stuff for theft. Also realize when the pigs bust rooming houses (often because some are in high crime areas), they may knock in every door, leaving your stuff exposed.

Roommate Situation

Sometimes, it can be practical to move in with someone who has already set up a pad. There are numerous ways to find these people ranging from your circle of friends, coffee house bulletin boards, craigslist, and the newspaper. The amount of cash needed to get into a roomie deal varies greatly from more than to get a nice apartment (from many folks trying to pay for huge house that they can not afford) to less than a rooming house. Most roommate situations are very temporary things. The more roommates there are, the more volatile this situation can be as eventually some will move off, some may come up with some excuse about the rent money, or person disagreements about living styles can get out of hand. Be sure to interview to make sure your potential roomie is going to be compatible with you. Also be cautious of rooming with friends because if bad things happen, some friendships can be lost.

The advise we give under leases and landlords applies double in this situation, even above renting apartments. Bad roommate deals can end up with someone being caught with the lease. Do not sign this unless you truly trust the folks you are rooming with and have known them for some time.

Sofa Surfing

If you know several sympathetic friends, you can ask to sleep on their floor or couch. With the right network of friends, you may be able to bounce from place to place for a certain length of time. Bear in mind, however, this can get old very quickly. Welcomes can be worn out. Also, friends that are coupled or find a new boy/girlfriend are going to be less likely to agree with this than single friends. Do not get complacent and stop looking for ways to <http://wiki.stealthiswiki.org/wiki/Urban-Living> 5/14 get your own place just because you found a temporary couch. Misunderstandings or bad scenes concerning sex occasionally happen if you are crashing with both gay and straight apartment owners even if they are already in a relationship. Unless you are down with it, be frank. Don't be clueless and carefully analyze both your intuition and the advice of friends, be wary of engaging in survival sex.

The advice to travel light and watch your stuff applies double in this situation. Few people want to have their pad stacked with tons of someone else's stuff. Always be packed up and ready to leave forever on short notice. Never leave anything unattended unless you have known who you are crashing with for a long time and they are very trusted. Avoid pissing off those who lend you their hospitality by leeching their food, smokes, or other supplies unless offered. Respect their personal rules of the house and do not bring anyone or anything over without approval. Try to spend the day out (even though being out may cost more money) so they don't get sick of your face. Come home at a reasonable hour so they don't have to wake up or get their door in pajamas to let you in. Stay clean, shower every day, shave and use deodorant, take your shoes off by the door and keep the place clean. Making the place smell from you or your wet dog is their easy excuse to kick you out. If friends are giving you crash space because you are a hard luck case (especially if you have also borrowed money from them or eat from their supply) NEVER NEVER come around flashing cash, a new gadget, or expensive unshared food! This inducement to jealousy is easily the last straw for many couch crashers we have known.

Intended for travelers and adventurers, conservative use of the couchsurfing website for "in town" crashing is discouraged and might hurt your couchsurfing reputation and scare people out of hosting, but it is a good tool for emergencies if you can make yourself seem on vacation.

<http://www.couchsurfing.com> - resource for sharing short term, free living space. Just keep in mind that couchsurfing is largely about community and forging friendships, so someone who just wants a crash pad and nothing else might have a tough time. Every couchsurfer has an online ID and people who you stay with will rate you. This is to weed out the creepy types, so be somebody who people would enjoy to have over, token gifts and good stories are a nice touch. For the greatest success, contact a number of people weeks before you're planning to visit and aim to stay in less popular cities and/or travel during less popular times.

<http://www.hospitalityclub.org> - free accommodation community with 437,042 members.

<http://www.globalfreeloaders.com> - free accommodation community with 56,961 members.

<http://www.bewelcome.org> - free accommodation community with 7,236 members.

<http://www.tripping.com> - global community of travelers offering free accommodation.

<http://www.belodged.com> - more confidential system of free accommodation networking.

<http://www.warmshowers.org> - community of touring cyclists offering free accommodation.

<http://www.Stay4free.com> - Members make their spare room available to visitors for free in return for accommodation when they travel themselves

<http://www.place2stay.net> - Provides a network of people who need and offer free accommodation worldwide for travelers.

http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Shopping_and_Services/Travel_and_Transportation/Lodging/ Lodging Directory *The lodging directory on yahoo. go stay with a family, rent a room, share an apartment, stay on a farm...*

Homeless Shelters

The last resort after all of the above, Homeless Shelters do offer a bed and bath. Most even offer meals or laundry. However, most shelters require you show up in the afternoon to secure a bed and kick you out in the early morning. A few go a step further and may require a letter from a church or social worker and may require you to enroll in certain drug rehab or job training programs. You may not hang around there or store your stuff. The time you have to be there actually hurts people getting jobs as night work leaves you back on the street during daytime and many daytime jobs may let off too late to claim a bed. Day beds are very rare. A few may allow you to come in later if you have a note from an employer. Be careful if you do this, because some employers may make unfair assumptions about you as

a person due to homelessness if they find out. Do not even think about coming there highly intoxicated as some may refuse to let you stay. Shelters are popular places for cops to raid looking for fugitives.

Many cities are forcing anyone who wants to stay in a homeless shelter to get tested for TB before even being allowed to stay (except during inclement weather conditions). Most only give these on certain days and it takes two days for them to read the test, so you may still be outside anyways. Once it is read, many facilities give you a card to show when you show up again.

Some only take men and some only take women. Women's shelters tend to have better funding and less waits for beds, but this can vary according to area. A few will take kids (either runaway or rarely homeless families), but expect social services to be nosing around asking questions pushing for foster care or being shipped back to a relative if a minor is involved. Sometimes during inclement weather, they have been known to open up more beds.

You may have to put up with the facility's religion if the facility is part of a religious organization. Even if the facility is not religious, perception amongst the staff tends to look down upon those who are in situations where there is no alternative. You are automatically assumed to be irresponsible, a drug head, or criminal. While caring people exist, most are jaded from years of dealing with the mentally ill, addicts, and liars. Expect indifferent treatment at best and outright contempt at worst.

Because of all these limitations and hassles that can many times hinder more than help, we suggest you use one of the above methods or grab a cheap tent and try your hand at stealth camping if the city you are in has stretches of unpopulated wooded areas if worse comes to worse.

Creative Methods

Good for you if you find a good place to stay in the city without having to use creative methods. But if not below are some ideas for those who might think they are out of options. You will sometimes even find yourself with access to an abandoned building, open unused room, and maybe even a bed in a house but for social, security, or other reasons no access to a normal kitchen, laundry, or bathroom. Many of your needs will be met using your regular camping gear like sleeping bag, ground mat, and stove but often you can take advantage of the utilities and environmental control offered. See Low Impact Crashing for furnishings, basic utilities, and services. Be smart about using really expensive camping gear if you are walking the very gray line of creative urban living, this stuff has a great resale value on ebay, and it would be a shame to either wear it out or have a cop or fellow cam dweller lift your gear to sell for a few bucks. Keep your gear packed and organized at all times so you can pick up and run if the heat comes down on you. Don't overload yourself with gear, if you cant wear your pack everywhere and keep it safe while sleeping there is no reason to expect it to stay around for long, some crackhead will rip you off and sell your stuff just as readily as he will give blowjobs for another fix.

Free Naps

Anywhere you find seats you can usually catch some Zzzz. Often just a fitful nap not the peaceful sleep you really needed, expect to be awoken by security after a time.

- Airports are the best for this and can often get a whole nights sleep in. See <http://www.sleepinginairports.net/>
- Hospital - Try crashing at the Waiting Room of the local hospital. Tell the nurses that you're waiting for your sister/friend/whoever to have a baby, then lay down on the floor and catch some Zzzs. Might not be too comfy, but definitely safer than sleeping under a bridge. Eventually, the hospital staff will get wise to you but hopefully by then you'll have gotten some rest.
- Library - Find a book or newspaper to hold, which is quite easy at the library, and doze off, since it appears you were legit and just reading they will likely not throw you out unless it is a security guard or cop and your skin is the wrong hue of brown.
- Bus and train stations.
- Malls - Most are open from about 10am to 9pm, and have assorted seating areas indoors and out. If you can stand the noise, sleeping in a mall is fairly safe as far as unwanted attacks go. When was the last time you saw someone raped in the middle of a mall? Not that rent-a-cops are the most attentive personnel, but to avoid being woken up sunglasses, headphones, and a book are helpful when you want to be left alone. Make sure to use your pack as a pillow, lying directly on top of it, or tie the straps to your arm and keep it in between your body and whatever you are sleeping on.
- Big furniture shops.
- If you're in a college town, simply go figure out where the frat party is, make friends there and find a couch to stay (or pass out late at the frat house). Only works if you are around the age of a typical college student. They will not want some 40 year old showing up.
- Under a tree (not fern), in a doorway or bus shelter.

Rooftop

Many buildings have a flat roof and parapet to keep people from falling off. If you don't want to challenge a fire escape you could set up on businesses with flat parapet roofs like one story strip malls and mini marts, climb the dumpster or something else in back, just remember if you make too much racket running around the roof they will probably come up and find your squat. If the rooftop has both a real drain (most do) and a hose faucet if you are lucky you are set. There are even some rooftops with unprotected electrical outlets in range of wireless Internet! If it was not for blazing hot temperatures in the summer daytime sometimes in excess of 120 degrees F or vulnerabilities to strong winds knocking your tent off the roof or lightning dangers, all the comforts of home are here if you can keep quiet.

On larger buildings it gets trickier but the payoff is your "yard" can be quite large. You will either have to attach a ladder to the roof from the fire escape or pick or break the inside lock to the roof access. Even then you need to assure regular access to the roof from outside while keeping random people from noticing your squat. We have seen people try to bicycle lock a ladder nearby to get up on the fire escape, and rope it up once on the roof, but this is a real workout to raise and lower it every day, it is suspicious activity to any witness, and the ladder is easily stolen. Once you have access to the roof you can build a shack to live in or just camp out in your tent or hammock. Take advantage of electricity and water connections running to air conditioners and lights, but be careful these are live deadly electrical wires and there is no way to turn them off unless you can access the fuse or breaker box inside. In addition to a squat your rooftop might have enough space to start a rooftop garden like we discuss in Farm It. If you are a legit renter, get tight with the building manager or borrow and copy the roof keys. If you know someone living in such a building ask them to help you get access, the rub is they have to trust you to not rat them out if you get busted.

You might also try to access attic space to survive in winter but again be sure to use extra stealth when entering or exiting the building, some attics are also safely accessible from the roof through vents. If camping in an attic you may have to lay down plywood or boards to keep from stepping through a sheet rock, plaster, or other weak ceiling. You must try to keep your activity to places over a hallway where people will not be too suspicious of your occasional sounds. This is a difficult to keep secret squat and often requires lots of work and resources. Consider a different idea unless you have a friend in the building who can help you out. But, like roofs, attics get dangerously hot during warm summers with temps going even above the rooftop itself!

Bridge

We all have seen campers under bridges. Bridges offer protection from sun and rain and, if located in a nonresidential area, there are often longer times between camp breakups by cops compared to more exposed camping spots. If trash starts to visibly build up the city will often kick everyone out and come in with a prison work crew to throw everything away including your camping gear. Some bridge campers will tap lighting and irrigation systems to provide basic electricity and water needs, there are dangers of contaminated or untreated water and obvious electrical dangers involved with these activities as many bridges have the same 440 voltage or higher lines as streetlights do..

Spaces between and behind buildings

Think about the narrow space between buildings, Some boxes or a dumpster blocking the entrance give you some privacy. If you keep it clean and move out during the day the owners may not brick or fence over your camping spot, but remember that it is first come first serve every night.

Parks

Most urban parks have overgrown areas large enough to allow real camping. Try to find a place hidden by thorns and vines that will discourage city workers. A regularly used trail will lead other homeless or even park services to your hideout. To avoid making a trail use rocks as stepping stones if possible. Steep forested hillsides are great to hang a hammock for a few days. Hammocks can be regular blankets or drapes with both ends tied into a knot and tied to the tree with strong rope. Never make a

mess, as this will attract the attention of park services and force them to evict you. Leave packaging in the dumpster where you found its contents. Leave no trace! Urinate away from the wind or you might have your little set-up smelling. Do your other business away from your camp and bury it.

Treehouses are also a real option short term. Without too much trouble a little platform can be created by a crafty houseless person. Add an army poncho for camouflage and shelter from rain and you have one of the most ideal places to sleep. You sleep well hidden and away from animals, both human and not. The difficulty is the obvious damage to the tree from repeated climbing by an adult human.

Storage Space Rental

What freak has not dreamed of renting a storage unit for a home? Unfortunately, the on site management is almost always against this. One inspection by the fire marshal, and the site manager is canned and the owner is in big trouble. It might be possible to bribe a manager but the trouble of modifying the unit, lack of water or bathrooms, and the locking of the buildings are all problems that make it almost not worth the trouble. Most of the time, merely asking about this will prevent you from renting in the first place. Or it could earn you a stern 'get the hell out and take your stuff with you' if you already are.

The good news is that a small storage unit can be very useful to a person without a regular home. Just be sure the overall cost of storage and moving does not exceed the value of the stuff. Sometimes it is cheaper to just start over and build up anew than hold onto stuff. Storage facilities, depending on area, run for fairly cheap and provide a great haven for valuable items that are not realistic to carry with you or may need when a better living situation comes around. Be sure to have a friends mailing address, valid phone number, and ID as well. As always, when conducting business, dress as cleanly as possible when opening the unit.

Day use policy of a storage unit varies from one place to another. Stories are told of some homeless people using a rented unit to catch a daytime nap on a cot with the door open and the permission of the manager. Some managers won't mind you using a light bulb electrical outlet adapter to run or charge electronics, but this all depends on the attitude of the manager. If you want to try any of these day use tricks do it in a storage site different than where you are keeping your stuff.

No matter the scam, do not jeopardize your stuff's storage by trying to camp out there! Being homeless and getting kicked out of your storage is not pretty. At best, you may have to move your stuff on very short notice to somewhere else. At worst, you could be arrested and upon return find your stuff picked though and in the dumpster.

Bike Locker

Some say that rented city and college bike lockers can be converted for personal use by modifying the lock. Even if not such a realistic place to urban camp, this is one of the few 24 hour accessible lockers that a homeless person can safely stash some gear in. Check rules about city inspection of contents.

Tent Cities

Many cities have an informal or well organized homeless movement which often with local assistance is working for the right of homeless groups to establish transitory or permanent settlements in or near urban areas where there are many services and sources of sustenance available to the homeless person.

Examples are Dignity Village in Portland Oregon, or Tent City Three and Four in the Seattle area although there are usually car parks and small tent enclaves hidden in most cities near older industrial zones, electrical sub stations, railroad easements, and parks. Occasionally unauthorized or contested tent camps will be raided, the cops have been know to slash their way through camps with razor blades to destroy tents and packs hoping to drive the homeless away. Acquire shelter materials or a larger tent locally for long stays and use this for your shelter, try to keep your nice tent packed away for emergency moves or in safe storage elsewhere once you get settled. Always keep your gear neat, organized, packed, and ready to go . Many tent city campers will leave a cheap tent, ground pad, and sleeping bag in camp during the day, it just depends on how safe the camp is and with sleeping bags how bedbug free it is, you will find only the naive or foolish leaving anything of value in camp when they are out.

Dumpsters

This is simple, don't sleep in dumpsters. The reason for this advice is that while you are having a stinky but restful night of sleep safely hidden from the cops and security who want to arrest or molest the homeless you might easily oversleep and wake to find yourself being dumped and compacted in an automatic dumpster unloader garbage truck. So while it may be one of the easier places in a downtown area to catch a sticky nap, don't do it, try stealth camping in an industrial area or under a bridge.

Underground Structures

Many cities have old established tunnel, utility, or unused subway networks that might be opened for our use. Be sure to explore large drainage tunnels during the dry months of the year and if safely possible active train tunnels although this may entail serious risk unless there is a maintenance walkway wide enough to prevent a fall onto the tracks when a high speed train passes. Just check any interesting holes, tunnels, access pannels, or doors that appear to lead into walls, sidewalks, or hillsides. In New York and London lost subway stations have been turned into meccas for street punks and the homeless. In rural areas re-purposed military nuclear war bunkers and missile silos can be found although most are on farmers land, made into historical sites, or destroyed by the DOD, a famous example was a group producing the majority of Amerikan LSD operating out of an abandoned underground nuclear missile launch silo.

Abandoned or Unused Structures

You can see many ideas on Squatting in that chapter. Remember that even if there is a bad draft or leaks a building is a great way to conceal your regular camping tent and living activities. If you are traveling light a hammock suspended from lag bolts anchored into the wall studs beats sleeping on cardboard or newspaper, tarp or plastic sheet suspended above your hammock or mat will protect you from leaky roofs. Remember to restrict indoor cooking to cement floors or fireplaces because of the fire hazard, also ensure adequate ventilation of your cooking area because of the real danger of carbon monoxide poisoning, best practice if possible is to cook outdoors in a concealed location.

The Street

When you run out of options, you are stuck out on The Street. It can be so bad that some people turn to survival sex exchanges or commit petty crimes just to get a nights stay in jail.

Suburban Living

Suburban areas are likely the most difficult to improvise housing. Short of renting a basement or garage for a very small amount, it will be difficult. The suburban sprawl was designed with a petroleum powered vehicle in mind, so most services are a highway drive away. Radically-dressed and -minded outsiders will likely be harassed by the local police

Garden Shed

In older neighborhoods with large lots adjoining park or wetland areas there are sometimes disused sheds or old garages. Look for unkempt yards or long grass without foot trample around the out building this may indicate an elderly homeowner or uninterested renter who has no use for the building. Choose and use a path of approach that does not leave a trail visible from the house or easily noticed from other homes. Whatever the plan light and smoke discipline are absolutely essential for most of these ideas, bored neighbors are either totally oblivious or constantly snooping for any excitement.

Garden Shed Kit

A mini-barn or garden shed can be purchased at most North American hardware stores. All that is really needed is a concrete platform or four stone corner pedestals to start. These quick shelters have two benefits in a suburban area they may not be noticed by neighbors if built quickly during the work week, they are also a quick way to get shelter on a piece of land you plan to build a larger alternative home. These were proposed as a third world emergency prefab home after disasters. A good idea is to build on property of a friend who you will share utilities with. Contact a manufacturer with your plans, most will have at least one design with a normal size door and windows, some will custom cut the wood to include windows and doors where you want them as well as the overall height and size to your liking. If a move is required most quality sheds in good shape can be transported on a flat bed pickup truck and only require a new cement platform to be poured at the new location.

Useful upgrades to a quick build shed home include the following features:

- Normal size house door with proper lock (as opposed to double barn doors).
- Windows angled to catch summer and winter sun.
- Overhang roof and extended length cement platform or gravel porch.
- Garden hose plumbing or buried pipe for regular water utility.
- Drainage into a gravel/sand pit or garden next to your shed-house if soil drainage allows.
- Rain gutters and storage barrel for washing water.
- Electricity, include a circuit breaker of a lower value than the circuit you are connecting to so your breaker will flip first.

- Solar electricity and LED lighting is a viable option for charging a few electronic devices and batteries.
- Dry wall, paint and insulation make this shed house more livable.
- Shower curtain rail around porch for showering in summer.
- Fold away bed and table saves room in your shed house.
- Freight pallets cut to size and plywood make a good floor above the cold cement, tile or carpet over.
- Propane gas for heating and cooking can be plumbed in using camping components.
- Fireplace or wood stove for heating and cooking makes sense in some areas.
- A directional WiFi antenna mounted on the roof can let you connect to a house even hundreds of feet away.
- Toilet plumbing can be a challenge to include on a low budget; an outhouse or chamber pot would be easier.
- Tall bushes, garden trellises, and shrubberies around your shelter will obscure the view by neighbors giving you privacy.
- Solar water heating system can be made and insulated hot water storage can use LP gas or kerosene to heat water in winter.
- Telephone service only requires stringing or burying a two conductor wire from a nearby building.
- Rigging a 12 volt DC system for lighting and small appliances (available at RV stores and truck stops).

Car

How to camp comfortably in your Cars

The practice of finding and squatting a random unlocked car can be quite dangerous, as angry auto owners have been known to attack and even shoot homeless people sleeping in their vehicles. Use this tactic as a real last resort, and try to only use clearly abandoned or unused vehicles with dust on the windshield or flat tires if you must.

Squat a House

At the edge of the suburban rural boundary, in badly planned cul-du-sacks, greenspaces, or wetlands, and near parks there are often pockets of older neighborhoods where a house may sit for years unoccupied waiting for inheritors to sue each others asses off until the lawyers take the house and divide the spoils amongst themselves. Look near large construction projects for houses slated for destruction or partially finished structures with a good roof abandoned by bankrupt contractors. An old weathered for sale sign might be a house open to squat, but could also mean somewhat regular visitors depending on the

housing market, take down the realtor's sign. Even better finding an incomplete subdivision with some nearly finished homes.

Deciding to squat a house takes some good detective work. Find a place where it is apparent that the yard work is not being taken care of, peek in the windows has anyone been home in a few months. Does it appear that the house has been squatted or burglarized without any cleanup? All of these are good cause to stake the place out. Put a padlock on the front door and see if it is removed, camp out in the back yard if you can do so discreetly just to be sure. Try before you pry, an open door or window might remove the charges of breaking and entering if you get busted.

Squat the place. While you are squatting light up your devices you use and go outside to see what is visible at night, pull the shades and check again, light and motion will give you away most easily. Keep your travel in and out infrequent, at night only if possible, no music or noise. Cooking fires, cigarettes, and grilling might be noticed from the smoke and smell. If you kept clean you will be hard to spot. To the average WASP the homeless are dirty and distant, the suburban and rural townies and cops won't tolerate filthy bums, but will they even notice a clean one?

Always make your living space as near as possible to the back door on the ground floor, clean that room up first for occupation. Since this is not your house be ready to run if you hear someone trying to enter through the front, legit owners drive up and enter through the front door 99% of the time without doing a walk around, pile up junk in front of the front door to make noise and slow them down. Barricading the back door means that even if the owners or another squatter tries to take the place you will have the option of using the back door for escape when the give up and head to the front. Always have your bags packed for a quick escape, if confronted be apologetic but be sure to get away before anyone gets violent. It might help if you tell a story of your dead grandfathers house in this town that you thought you were squatting in, this is just a weak distraction to get out the door and prevent violence, be cool, smile, grab your pack, don't let anyone get their hands on you, know your escape routes have at least two. Expect the cops in the area soon so get away from the property and into a store or movie theater, lock your bike at a different store bike rack and stash your pack safely nearby, maybe do a covert tree stash, the pack really gives you away, retrieve everything after dark.

Fuel Up

In many places oil heat is still in use or a partly filled tank remains. Most older systems are easy to tap but unless you can access the basement require a fuel transfer pump, just ask nicely for some fuel and fill up by pumping from the outdoor fill pipe. Camping stoves designed to burn diesel fuel and kerosene will burn furnace oil just fine.

See also Squatting



Urban Living

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