

1920 Survival Ideas for Now

Natural disasters, wars, etc. still happen.
We are told to pack a getaway kit of essentials.
Learning some skills would be a good idea too.

Some may actually be better than what we do now, at least in terms of sustainability.

1) grown your own fruit and vegetables

From Victory Gardens in WWII, to staying alive in the Great Depression, to knowing what is in your food (organic, GMO free, etc.), and tastes better (think ripe and not shipped unripe from around the world)

2) played a woodwind or string instrument w/o an amp or keyboard

Will definitely make you a better musician (understanding your craft) and an appreciation for the art form and artists. Recent research has shown that playing music on an instrument makes you smarter (as does learning at least one other language)

3) received bottled milk on your doorstep most mornings

Seen as a necessity then. Then for fifty years you had to do it yourself. Now delivery services are back, IF you pay for it.

4) ridden a horse for chores and/or work

Cars, motorcycles, powered scooters, etc. did exist in 1920, expensive, so many still kept horses or walked.

5) kept chickens at your home for eggs and meat

Still allowed to keep up to two in your yard (no roosters, noisy)

6) gathered sea life from the shore to eat

Did not need a Fish & Game permit back then, of course the easy to reach inter tidal was soon empty.

7) used a cast iron coal/wood burning stove for cooking and baking

The food tastes so much better. Speed and convenience does not mean better, only faster in our over stressed out existence.

8) used and maintained a kerosene lantern for light

Electric lights did exist (The lamp at PPLH was incandescent), but only slowly making its way into homes and businesses. People were afraid of them at first (anything new has a learning curve).

9) plucked and prepared a chicken or turkey for dinner

Not just for eggs. Stores even sold whole poultry for you to deal with best you could (cheaper than prepped for you).

10) ridden a diesel train more than 500 miles

No more stagecoaches. Trains were the way to go long distance now. Roads for cars were still very iffy and often not usable.

11) had an x-ray before surgery (no MRI, Cat scan, ultrasound, etc.)

X-rays were a big help, but not the total answer.

12) treated any infection w/o antibiotics

They had a crude antibiotic in the form of sulfa drugs, but still a few years to penicillin, ampicillin, etc.

13) sewn your own clothes using a treadle sewing machine

You can still find these in many antique stores. No computer stitching patterns though.

14) taken a horse drawn ambulance to a hospital

Trucks were beginning to appear, but a horse was more reliable.

15) walked a mile or more to and from school each day

No school buses or parents to get you to school. (I was doing this myself in kindergarten in the late 50s)

16) made sourdough bread

Homemade sourdough is incredible. ALL homemade bread fresh from the oven is heavenly.

17) drank water from a stream or lake unfiltered

Pre giardia this was common (pre 1990s?). The taste is so good without chlorine (which has saved countless lives in our overcrowded world.)

18) built and used an AM crystal radio for news and entertainment

The beginning of the age of radio. Good for introducing people to many genres of music, comedy, news, etc.

19) used a black and white roll film camera and kept images in an album

Families from that time period had shelves full of photo albums. A LOT less expensive than the studio portraits of our last quiz.

20) knitted or embroidered something as a gift

You could buy yarn, etc at your neighborhood 5 and 10 store (Woolworth's in Pacific Grove)

21) bought a house for less than a \$1000

Housing is the one necessity that costs have far exceeded inflation. Look at the banner image above, still many empty lots. Compare to now though.

22) been to a five and dime store for essentials

Think the dollar stores of our time (or general store of times past). Had a lunch counter and soda fountain too (before fast food).

23) been with someone when they died

Our current habit of hiding our old and dying far away to die alone and without respect is a strong reflection of what will happen to us when our time comes. Being with someone you know when they die does a lot to assuage our own fears of death. It will happen, not optional.

24) sent postcards or airmail letters

The Lighthouse gift shop sells postcards. Very common till email and texting came in.

25) survived fighting in WWI and/or the Spanish Flu

COVID was very tame compared to Spanish Flu and poison gas in trenches (or black death centuries earlier).

26) built anything from wood using only hand tools

You could buy the materials to work with instead of felling a tree yourself. Still much more satisfying to make things by hand.

27) ever sent or received a telegram

Much easier to set up a telegraph system again after a disaster. Learning morse code, not so easy. This may be a wash.

28) ever made your own beer or wine?

During prohibition you could not legally purchase alcohol of any kind, but you could make limited quantities for personal use. (except in Pacific Grove, a dry town)

29) driven a stick shift car with spark advance (Model T)

If Gen X thinks a stick shift car is pointless, a Model T was much harder (yes, hand crank to start it too)

30) used a phone with no dial and only operator assistance

No cell phones either. You had to ring up the operator at a central switch board and have her (almost all women) connect you. Long distance was VERY expensive.

31) can read and write in full handwritten cursive script

(Secret code your teenage children will not be able to read). There is a feeling that cannot be described when using pen and ink.

32) kept accounts in a ledger book by hand

This is a funny one. Too many people overly trust their spreadsheets and calculators. To the point, where they no longer see horrible costly errors no bookkeeper from then would have missed.

33) had polio, tuberculosis, mumps, measles, or chickenpox

Plagues and pandemics are not just a 21st century event. Communities that did not learn to work together for the public good, went extinct.

34) had a good paying job without a high school diploma

It was rare at the time for someone, not of the upper class, to get a diploma. Someone with the right skills could make a living with only one income in the family too.

35) depended on a hand wound pocket watch to tell time

Teaches us to slow down. No alarms, must wind daily, in your pocket so you are not constantly checking it. Downside was the radium dials that gave people cancer from the radioactive radium.

36) used an ink dip pen to do assignments for school

Some schools, in my time, still had the place for the inkwell would have sat, built into the desk.

Women did not get the right to vote till the year before, 1919. Before prohibition (1918-1933), in 1850 half the adult male population was drunk by noon. Add in more guns, cars, etc. AND WWI with Spanish flu having taken out so many, we needed everyone to be able-bodied. However, cocaine, cannabis, heroin, and other 'drugs' we would consider dangerous now were perfectly legal, IF they were disclosed on the ingredient list. Asbestos was legal, so was lead paint and leaded gas. The Pledge of Allegiance and "In God We Trust" had not happened yet.

Traffic laws? With the growing number of cars (and bad drivers. some still drunk) it was bound to happen. Before cars there was no need for stop signs, traffic lights or lane dividers. And the first speed limits were 12 MPH on city streets and 15 MPH on country roads. Remember there were still horses and horse draw wagons on the roads.

Inflation happens because of greed and/or scarcity. As we filled the available space, land for homes and businesses became scarce, but cheaper imports and modern farms kept most other expenses under control and in line with wage increases. Much, much more could be said about these "good old days". Salmon could be caught with a fly rod just off shore in Pacific Grove or in the high Sierras (dams killed that). Racism, sexism, phobias of all kinds were rampant back then and only slightly better now. We still have a lot to learn.