AMERICAN HOMESTEADS PRESENTS

Homestead Starter Guide

BEGIN THE JOURNEY

Practical, faith-grounded guidance for families ready to grow their own food, build their own home, and create a generational legacy that no one can take away.

53M+
HOUSEHOLDS GROWING THEIR OWN FOOD

2/3
OF YOUNG-ADULT GROWTH NOW GOES TO SMALL TOWNS

$390K
MEDIAN WEALTH GAP: OWNERS VS. RENTERS

[1] NGA 2022 · [2] Weldon Cooper Center, UVA / Census Bureau 2023 Est. (2024) · [3] Urban Institute / Fed. Reserve SCF, 2022

OUR MISSION

We don't build the homestead.
We connect you to the right people who do.

7 SECTIONS INSIDE

→ 1 · Why the Homestead Life
→ 2 · Know Your "Why"
→ 3 · The 5 Pillars of Homestead Living
→ 4 · Your First 90 Days
→ 5 · Finding Your Land
→ 6 · The Homestead Pledge
→ 7 · Resources & Next Steps

WHAT'S INSIDE

Your Roadmap to the Homestead Life

1 **Why the Homestead Life**
The vision that changes everything

2 **Know Your "Why"**
Clarity before you buy a single seed

3 **The 5 Pillars of Homestead Living**
Food · Water · Shelter · Energy · Community

4 **Your First 90 Days**
Your practical action plan

5 **Finding Your Land**
What to look for, what to avoid

6 **The Homestead Pledge**
A commitment to the life you're building

7 **Resources & Next Steps**
Where to go from here

SECTION ONE · WHY THE HOMESTEAD LIFE

Why the Homestead Life

Something in the American soul has always known: true freedom isn't borrowed — it's built.

There's a reason more families than ever are turning their eyes toward open land. Something in the noise of modern life — the screens, the bills, the breakneck pace — isn't sitting right. For families who are done depending on broken systems and ready to build something generational, this guide is your first step forward.

> ***"Stop renting your life. Build something that lasts."***
>
> — AMERICAN HOMESTEADS

Homesteading isn't a trend. It's a return — to the values that built this country, to the rhythms that sustained families for generations, to the conviction that the land beneath your feet can be yours, and that your hands can build real food, real shelter, and a real legacy from it.

What Homesteading Actually Means

Homesteading is not all-or-nothing. It's not about giving up electricity or moving to Montana tomorrow. It's about intentionally building more self-reliance — one skill, one garden bed, one system at a time. It looks different for every family. And that's exactly the point.

The families living this life aren't survivalists hiding from the world. They're doctors and teachers and tradespeople who decided that real freedom doesn't come from a paycheck — it comes from knowing how to feed your family when the store shelves are empty and the power is out.

SECTION TWO · KNOW YOUR "WHY"

Know Your "Why"

The families who thrive are the ones who started with purpose.

Every successful homestead was built on a clear answer to one question: Why do we want this? Not a vague sense of unease with modern life — a real, specific, written-down answer. The plan without the "why" will not survive the first hard season.

Common "Why" Anchors

1. **FOOD SECURITY & QUALITY**
   You want to know exactly what your family is eating — and you want to be the one who grew it. No labels you can't read. No supply chain surprises.

2. **FINANCIAL FREEDOM**
   Every jar of preserved food, every egg gathered, every kilowatt generated is money you don't owe someone else. Homesteading is a long-term wealth strategy.

3. **FAITH & STEWARDSHIP**
   Working the land is one of the oldest acts of worship. Many homesteaders are driven by a deep sense of biblical stewardship — caring for what God has entrusted to them.

4. **FAMILY LEGACY**
   You want your children and grandchildren to know where food comes from, what hard work looks like, and what it means to own something real.

5. **RESILIENCE & PREPAREDNESS**
   The world is uncertain. You want the peace of mind that comes from knowing your family can weather whatever comes — without depending on systems you don't control.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Write down your top two "why" anchors in a journal or notebook. Keep it somewhere you'll see it — especially when the work gets hard. The families who thrive on homesteads are the ones who remember why they started.

SECTION THREE · THE 5 PILLARS

The 5 Pillars of Homestead Living

A homestead isn't just a piece of land — it's an integrated system. The most resilient families build intentionally across five pillars. You don't need to conquer all five at once. But knowing the full picture helps you plan wisely from day one.

F

FOOD

The first and most fundamental pillar. Starts with a garden — even a container garden on a porch — and grows into orchards, chickens, livestock, and a full pantry of preserved food. Your goal: feed your family from your land at least part of the year.

W

WATER

The most overlooked pillar and the one that can make or break a homestead. Understand your water source: municipal, well, spring, or rainwater collection. Learn basic filtration. Store emergency water. Know your local water rights laws.

S

SHELTER

Whether you're improving an existing home or building from scratch, every homestead needs a structure that is efficient, maintainable, and built to last. Learn basic carpentry, weatherproofing, and heating options for your climate.

E

ENERGY

Power independence is achievable for most homesteads. Solar plus battery backup is the most common path. Wood heat, propane, and generators add layers of resilience. Start with a whole-home energy audit and build from there.

C

COMMUNITY

The most underestimated pillar. The homesteaders who thrive are not isolated — they are deeply connected to like-minded families, local traders, farmers markets, and faith communities. Find your people. You cannot do this alone, and you were never meant to.

SECTION FOUR · YOUR FIRST 90 DAYS

Your First 90 Days

The biggest mistake aspiring homesteaders make is waiting until everything is perfect. You can start building the homestead mindset, skillset, and financial foundation right where you are today.

DAYS 1–30 FOUNDATION MONTH — LEARN & PLAN

→ Write your "Why." Keep it where you'll see it daily.

→ Read two homesteading books (see Section 7 for recommendations).

→ Subscribe to 2–3 trusted YouTube channels on homesteading.

→ Map your current monthly food, utility, and housing expenses.

→ Identify the three homesteading skills you most want to build first.

DAYS 31–60 SKILL MONTH — START WHERE YOU ARE

→ Start a container garden or raised bed — even if you rent.

→ Preserve one type of food (jam, pickles, or dried herbs).

→ Take a basic first aid or preparedness course.

→ Connect with one local homesteader, farm, or extension office.

DAYS 61–90 VISION MONTH — PLAN YOUR LAND

→ Define your land budget and target region.

→ Visit 2–3 rural properties, even just to walk them.

→ Research zoning and water rights in your target area.

→ Create your 12-month homestead savings goal.

→ Join the American Homesteads community.

Quick-Start Skill Checklist

- ■ Seed starting & basic gardening — begin with tomatoes, herbs, and leafy greens
- ■ Food preservation basics — water bath canning, dehydrating, or fermentation
- ■ Emergency water storage — 1 gallon per person per day, minimum 2 weeks
- ■ Basic tool literacy — chainsaw safety, hand tools, basic carpentry
- ■ Financial baseline — zero-based budget, 3-month emergency fund started
- ■ Community connection — find one local farm, CSA, or homestead network
- ■ Soil basics — learn composting and pH testing before you buy land

SECTION FIVE · FINDING YOUR LAND

Finding Your Land

Buying land is the most consequential financial decision a homesteader makes. Do it wisely and you build generational wealth and freedom. Do it impulsively and you inherit someone else's problems at your own expense.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO AVOID
→ Reliable water source (well, spring, or creek)	✕ No well or unreliable water rights
→ Good solar exposure for gardens and solar panels	✕ HOA restrictions on animals or structures
→ Usable road access year-round	✕ Flood plain without knowing your full risk
→ Zoning that permits your intended use	✕ Contaminated soil (always test near old farms)
→ Soil quality — get a test before you buy	✕ Access only via private road with no easement
→ Reasonable distance to a small town	✕ Landlocked parcels
→ Climate that matches your experience level	✕ Buying more than you can afford or manage
→ Room to grow — 2–5 acres is a good start	✕ Skipping a professional land inspection

> *"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now — but plant the right tree, in the right soil, in the right place."*
>
> — PROVERB

The Debt-Free Land Strategy

Pay cash if at all possible, or make a minimum 20% down payment and use a 15-year fixed-rate loan with payments no more than 25% of take-home pay. Never let the dream of land become a financial trap that steals the freedom you're trying to build.

The financial guidance in this guide is general in nature and for informational purposes only. It is not intended as professional financial, legal, or investment advice. Consult a qualified financial advisor before making major land or financing decisions.

American Homesteads Can Help

We introduce families to vetted builders, educators and partners — and, as each partnership is in place, land and lending professionals. Begin your journey at **AmericanHomesteads.org** — membership is free. Always.

SECTION SIX · THE HOMESTEAD PLEDGE

The Homestead Pledge

Words matter. A pledge written and signed is a covenant with yourself and your family — a declaration that you are choosing a different kind of life.

I believe in the God-given dignity of working the land.
I commit to building a life my family can depend on —
not borrowed, not rented, but built.

I will learn before I leap, plan before I plant,
and give more than I take from the soil and from my neighbors.

I will teach my children where food comes from
and what honest labor looks like.

I choose freedom — the kind you build with your own hands.

Freedom. Build Yours.™

_____ _____

SIGNATURE **DATE**

Welcome to the American Homesteads family. We're glad you're here.

SECTION SEVEN · RESOURCES & NEXT STEPS

Resources & Next Steps

Recommended Reading

01 THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF COUNTRY LIVING
Carla Emery
The original homesteader's bible. 900+ pages of practical, time-tested knowledge on every aspect of self-sufficient living.

02 THE BACKYARD HOMESTEAD
Carleen Madigan
Perfect for beginners with limited land. Shows you how to produce food on as little as a quarter acre.

03 FOLKS, THIS AIN'T NORMAL
Joel Salatin
A passionate, practical case for why reclaiming food sovereignty matters for every American family.

Your Next 3 Moves

1 **Begin your journey at AmericanHomesteads.org**
Membership is free. Always. Tell us about your homestead, and a real person on our team will help you take the next step.

2 **Join our email community**
Get practical tips, encouragement, and homestead resources delivered to your inbox.

3 **Share this guide**
Every family that finds the homestead life is one more family choosing freedom. Pass it on.

CONNECT WITH US

Website: AmericanHomesteads.org

Email: hello@americanhomesteads.org

"Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce."

— Jeremiah 29:5