EPISODE 05 | LEVEL A2-B1

How to Prepare for Emergencies

Make your emergency checklist in English

In this episode	Learn practical emergency vocabulary and build a simple home checklist.

How to use this transcript

Listen to the episode while you read. Pause when you see a practice box, answer aloud, and then continue. The performance directions have been removed so you can focus on the English.

Full Transcript

Jake Mia, did you hear the news? There's a storm coming this weekend. They said it could cause a power outage.

Mia A power outage means the electricity goes off. No lights, no internet, no refrigerator. Are you ready for that?

Jake Totally. I have a flashlight.

Mia Oh, good. Where is it?

Jake On my phone.

Mia Jake, how much battery does your phone have right now?

Jake Let me see. Eleven percent.

Mia So your flashlight needs a flashlight.

Jake Okay, okay. Maybe I'm not as ready as I thought.

Mia Don't worry. Almost nobody feels ready until they check. Hello everyone, and welcome to the English Story Podcast. I'm Mia.

Jake And I'm Jake, the man with eleven percent.

Mia Today you'll learn how to check the supplies in your home, and how to make a simple emergency shopping list. And the good news is that being prepared doesn't have to be scary or expensive.

Jake Right. We'll start small. And along the way, you'll learn useful English, like "running low on" and "stock up."

Mia One quick note. Some of today's advice comes from official sources in the United States, like FEMA, the Red Cross, and the CDC. If you live somewhere else, please follow your local authorities for rules and alerts.

Jake You know, I had a power outage last winter. It lasted a whole evening.

Mia What did you do?

Jake I sat on the sofa in the dark and ate ice cream, because it was melting anyway.

Mia That's actually a smart choice. But what about light?

Jake I used my phone, and then I had no phone. So I went to bed at seven o'clock.

Mia That's one way to solve it.

Jake Not a good way. I was cold, I was hungry, and I was embarrassed.

Mia And that's why a little preparation helps. When you're ready, an outage feels like a small problem, not a big one.

Jake Okay, so I think I should run to the store right now and buy everything.

Mia Please don't. That's called panic buying, and it's expensive. First, let's check what we already have.

Jake "Let's check what we already have." I like that sentence.

Mia It's very useful. Walk around your home. Open the drawers. Look in the kitchen and the closets. Write down what you find. And test things. Does the flashlight work? Do the batteries still have power?

Jake Good point. Last year I found a flashlight in my drawer, and the batteries inside were dead. For two years.

Mia That's a very quiet flashlight.

Jake And very dark.

Mia Let's explain two words. Supplies are the things you keep for when you need them. And essentials are the most important things, the things you really need.

Jake Like coffee.

Mia Maybe not for an emergency. But let's start with water.

Jake Water? I have a tap. Water comes out. Done.

Mia Usually, yes. But sometimes an emergency can stop the water, or make it unsafe to drink. In the United States, official guidance says to keep about one gallon of water for each person, for each day, for several days. A gallon is a little under four liters. That water is for drinking and for basic cleaning.

Jake	That's a lot of water for a family.
Mia	It is, which is why you build it slowly. Start with one day. Then add a second day. You can buy bottled water, and you can keep it under a bed or at the bottom of a closet.
Jake	So my sofa and my bed both have secret lives now.
Mia	Small spaces are fine.
Jake	What about the water from my tap? Can I fill bottles myself?
Mia	In many places, yes, if the bottles are clean and made for food or drink. But if you're not sure about your local water, follow your local authorities, and buy bottled water instead.
Jake	And should I write the date on the bottles?
Mia	Many people do. It's a simple habit, and it helps you remember when to check them.
Mia	Now, food.The best emergency food is nonperishable. That means it doesn't go bad quickly, and you can keep it without a refrigerator. Think of canned beans, rice, peanut butter, crackers, and dried fruit.
Jake	And food you can eat without cooking, because maybe you can't cook.
Mia	Exactly. And think about your family's needs. If someone is vegetarian, or has an allergy, or needs baby food, put those foods on the list first.
Jake	Here is a mistake I made. I bought ten cans of soup. And no can opener.
Mia	Jake.
Jake	I looked at those cans for an hour.
Mia	So add a manual can opener to your list. Manual means you use your hands, with no electricity.
Jake	I disagree about one thing, though. I think canned soup is the best emergency food.
Mia	I like soup too, but it can be heavy and expensive. Beans, rice, and crackers are often cheaper.

Jake Okay. A mix. Some soup, and some crackers.

Mia A mix is perfect. Now, light. A flashlight is better than a candle. Candles can start a fire if they fall over.

Jake Even pretty candles?

Mia Even pretty candles.

Jake Okay. What flashlight should I buy?

Mia A simple one. In the shop, ask, "Does this need batteries?" Some flashlights use batteries, and some you charge. Check the battery size, and keep spares.

Jake "Does this need batteries?" Another good question for the shop.

Mia And ask, "How long will this last?" That works for batteries, for a power bank, and for food. A power bank is a small battery that charges your phone.

Jake So I charge my phone before the storm, and I keep a power bank, and the cable.

Mia Yes. And a battery powered radio, or a hand crank radio, can give you news and alerts when the internet is down.

Jake So my phone is not my only plan.

Mia Right. You need a backup. A backup is a second thing you can use if the first thing doesn't work.

Jake What about a headlamp?

Mia Good idea. A headlamp goes on your head, so your hands are free. It's great for cooking, or reading a story to a child.

Jake I like it. I can look like a mining expert in my kitchen.

Mia Style matters. But you still ask, "Does this need batteries?"

Jake Okay, let's pause for you at home. Look around the room you're in. What light do you have that doesn't use your phone?

YOUR TURN

Pause and answer in your own words.

Mia If you found one, great. If not, put "flashlight" on your list. That's also a good answer.

Jake Mia, what about the people in my home? I live alone, but my sister visits with her baby.

Mia Good question. Think about each person. Everyone needs first aid supplies, like bandages, and hygiene products, like soap, toothpaste, and wipes. In cold weather, add blankets and warm clothes.

Jake And the baby?

Mia Babies need diapers, wipes, and food. Older adults may need extra glasses or batteries for a hearing aid. People with disabilities may need special equipment. And pets need food, water, and their medicine too.

Jake My cat wants to be first on the list.

Mia Put her first. One important thing. Medicines, and any medical equipment that needs electricity, need planning before an emergency. Please talk to your doctor, your pharmacist, or the company that provides the equipment. Don't change your medicine, and don't make your own plan.

Jake That's not something to guess.

Mia Let's pause again for you. Think of one person or pet in your home. What do they need that is not on your list yet?

YOUR TURN

Pause and answer in your own words.

Jake Mia, I've been thinking. Maybe I should buy a big generator. Then I don't need all these small things.

Mia I'd start with the basics. A generator is expensive, and it can be dangerous if you use it in the wrong place. For most people, simple supplies come first.

Jake But a generator sounds exciting.

Mia Excitement is not a good reason to buy something.

Jake Fair. So, safety.

Mia Yes. Let's talk about safety. Three quick reminders. One, use flashlights, not candles. Two, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed. A closed refrigerator keeps food cold for about four hours. A full freezer can stay frozen for about forty eight hours, and a half full freezer for about twenty four hours.

Jake So I shouldn't open the door to check on the pizza.

Mia Exactly. Three, never use a generator, a charcoal grill, or a camping stove inside your home, in a garage, or in any closed space. They make carbon monoxide, a gas you can't see or smell, and it's very dangerous. If you use a generator, keep it outside, at least twenty feet from doors, windows, and vents. That's about six meters. A carbon monoxide alarm in your home is also a good idea.

Jake Got it. Never inside. Never in the garage.

Mia Now, a kit is only half of a plan. Keep your supplies in one place, and make sure everyone knows where it is.

Jake And write phone numbers on paper. If my phone dies, I don't remember my mother's number.

Mia Most of us don't. Also sign up for local alerts, if your city has them. And think about people who may need help, like an older neighbor who lives alone.

Jake A short knock on the door can help a lot.

Mia When I was a child, my grandmother kept a plastic box in the hallway. Inside, there was a flashlight, a radio, and a small paper with phone numbers. We always joked about it. But one night the lights went out on our whole street, and we knew exactly where everything was.

Jake That's a great story. Okay, so I'll keep the numbers in my phone, and I'll take a photo.

Mia A photo is good, but a paper copy is better, because phones run out of battery.

Jake Hmm. I still like my phone.

Mia Do both. Paper in the box, and a photo on your phone.

Jake Fine. Both. Now let's pause for you. Where could you keep your supplies at home?

YOUR TURN

Pause and answer in your own words.

Mia A closet, a shelf, or a box under a bed are all good places.

Mia Yes. One more small thing. Everything we've talked about is for staying at home. A small bag that you can take with you if you leave is a different thing, and we can talk about it another day.

Jake Okay, let's build the checklist. I use four columns. Item. Already have. Need to buy. And Check or replace by.

Mia Good. Let's do the first category, water. Item, bottled water.

Jake Already have, two bottles. Need to buy, more. And check by, the date on the bottle.

Mia Category two, food. Item, canned beans.

Jake Already have, three cans. Need to buy, four more.

Mia Item, manual can opener.

Jake Already have, no. Need to buy, one.

Mia Let's put the essentials first. And the can opener is an essential.

Jake Category three, light. Item, flashlight. Already have, one. And I tested it. It works, but the batteries are low.

Mia "We're running low on batteries." That means we don't have much left.

Jake So, need to buy, one pack. And check in six months.

Mia Item, power bank.

Jake Already have, one. Need to buy, nothing. Check or replace by, charge it every month.

Mia	Category four, health. Item, first aid kit.
Jake	Already have, a small one. I think it's old. So, need to buy, maybe. And check or replace by, look at the dates.
Mia	Good. Item, pet food.
Jake	Already have, half a bag. Need to buy, one more bag. And that's for the cat.
Mia	Of course.
Mia	Nice. That's a real checklist, and it only took a few minutes.
Jake	But Mia, it's getting long. I can't buy everything this week.
Mia	You don't have to. First, fill the most important gaps. Then add a little each week. What should we add to the list first?
Jake	Water, food, and light.
Mia	Exactly. And "stock up" means to buy extra of something, so you have more for later. You can stock up slowly, with one or two extra items each time you shop.
Jake	Like one extra can of beans, every time.
Mia	Yes. And think about your storage space. You don't need expensive equipment to be prepared.
Mia	Compare prices, too. A simple flashlight is often cheaper than a fancy one, and it does the same job.
Jake	But the fancy one has colored lights.
Mia	Colored lights aren't an essential.
Jake	Fine. Essentials first.
Mia	And check your home before you shop. Many of us already have blankets, a first aid kit, or a radio.
Jake	That's reassuring, because my cat would sit on any big machine.

Mia Finally, take care of your kit. Every few months, check the expiration date on food and medicine. The expiration date is the date after which something may not be safe or good. Check your batteries. And ask, has anything changed in my home? A new baby, a new pet, a new medicine?

Jake I'll put a reminder in my phone. Which will be charged.

Mia I check mine twice a year, when I change the clocks. It's easy to remember, and it only takes a few minutes.

Mia Let's practice with a short shopping role play. Listen first. I'll be the shop assistant, and Jake will be the customer.

Mia Hello, can I help you find something?

Jake Yes, please. I'm making an emergency kit. Does this flashlight need batteries?

Mia Yes, it takes three batteries. Do you need some?

Jake Yes, please. How long will this last?

Mia Let me check the box. It tells you how long the light runs. You can read it before you buy.

Jake Great. And where are the canned foods? We're running low on beans.

Mia Aisle five, on the left. Is there anything else?

Jake Maybe a manual can opener. I forgot that last time.

Mia Very good. Now it's your turn. Imagine you're in a shop. Ask the assistant, "Does this need batteries?" Say it out loud.

YOUR TURN

Pause and answer in your own words.

Jake Now ask, "How long will this last?"

YOUR TURN

Pause and answer in your own words.

Mia And one more. What's one thing in your home that you're running low on?

YOUR TURN

Pause and answer in your own words.

Jake	Good work, everyone. These small sentences are useful in any shop, not only for emergencies.
Mia	There's a saying, "better safe than sorry." It means it's smart to prepare, even if nothing happens.
Jake	I like that. I'm going to be safe, and not embarrassed.
Mia	Let's remember the steps. Check. List. Prioritize. Buy. Store. And review.
Jake	Check what you have. List what you need. Prioritize the essentials. Buy a little at a time. Store it in one place. And review it every few months.
Mia	And here is your small action for today. Choose one category, water, food, light, or health. Check what you already have. And write down three missing items.
Jake	Three items. That's all. And you're already more ready than me, with my eleven percent.
Mia	Now, we have a question for you in the comments. Which category will you check first, and what's one item on your list? Write it in English. We read every comment.
Jake	And if this episode helped you, please give it a like, and subscribe to the English Story Podcast for more English conversations.
Mia	Thank you for spending this time with us. Stay safe, stay prepared, and keep practicing your English.
Jake	And charge your phone.
Mia	Goodbye, everyone.
Jake	Goodbye.

Keep listening. Keep practicing. Your English is improving every day.

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