



Backup power, ranked by what actually works.

Twelve ways to keep phones, lights and a fridge going, from best to barely.

1 Portable power station



- Silent, indoor-safe, runs phones, lights, a CPAP
- Size it to your fridge if that matters
- Recharge from wall, car or solar

2 Folding solar panel



- Pairs with the power station for days-long outages
- Full sun only, expect a slow charge
- Set it out in the morning, not at noon

3 Battery banks



- One per person, kept charged
- Enough for several phone fills
- The cheapest insurance on this list

4 Car as a charger



- A USB port and a cheap inverter run small things
- Engine running, outdoors, never in a garage
- Watch the gas gauge

5 Jump pack



- Starts the car and charges a phone
- Lives in the trunk year round
- Charge it every few months

6 Gas generator



- The most power, and the most ways to get hurt
- Outdoors only, twenty feet from windows
- Stored fuel goes stale, use a stabilizer

7 Rechargeable lanterns



- Days of light on one charge
- Some double as a phone bank
- Hang one in the bathroom

8 Solar yard lights



- Pull them inside at night for free room light
- Not bright, but endless
- Great for a hallway or kids' room

9 Hand-crank radio



- News and a little phone charge
- Cranking for a phone is slow, use it for the radio
- Keep it where you can find it in the dark

10 Power tool batteries



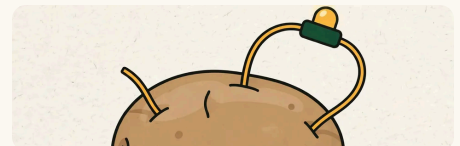
- USB adapters turn them into big banks
- Already charged if you own the tools
- Brand-specific adapter, check the fit

11 Bike dynamo



- Real but tiny, a trickle for a phone
- A novelty unless you ride anyway
- Put the money in a power bank instead

12 The toys



- Potatoes, lemons and coins light an LED, nothing more
- Pulling cells from old laptops is a fire risk for amateurs
- Skip anything that needs a workbench to help you

Buy the power station before the generator. Skip the potato.

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