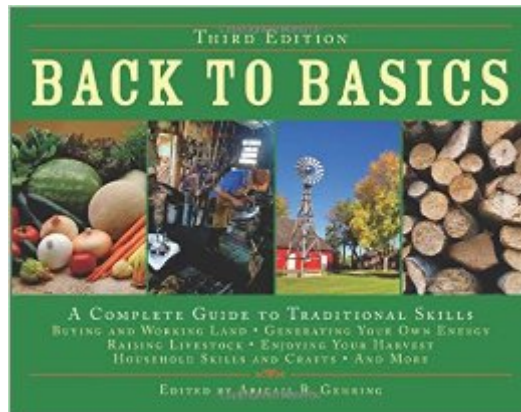


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# Back To Basics: A Complete Guide To Traditional Skills, Third Edition



## Synopsis

Anyone who wants to learn basic living skillsâ "the kind employed by our forefathersâ "and adapt them for a better life in the twenty-first century need look no further than this eminently useful, full-color guide. Countless readers have turned to Back to Basics for inspiration and instruction, escaping to an era before power saws and fast food restaurants and rediscovering the pleasures and challenges of a healthier, greener, and more self-sufficient lifestyle. Now newly updated, the hundreds of projects, step-by-step sequences, photographs, charts, and illustrations in Back to Basics will help you dye your own wool with plant pigments, graft trees, raise chickens, craft a hutch table with hand tools, and make treats such as blueberry peach jam and cheddar cheese. The truly ambitious will find instructions on how to build a log cabin or an adobe brick homestead. More than just practical advice, this is also a book for dreamersâ "even if you live in a city apartment you will find your imagination sparked, and there's no reason why you can't, for example, make a loom and weave a rag rug. Complete with tips for old-fashioned fun (square dancing calls, homemade toys, and kayaking tips), this may be the most thorough book on voluntary simplicity available. 2,000 color photos and 200 black-and-white illustrations.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Until I checked this book out of the library, I had rarely given a thought to getting "back to basics," that is learning how to be more self-sufficient. After I read the book, I soon bought it, because it

opened my eyes to the many ways that I am almost entirely dependent upon others for my basic needs. "Back to Basics" is a helpful guide for those who want to get away from it all and live totally independently on a farm, and even those like myself that live in town, but that want to become more self-sufficient, and less dependent on expensive fossil fuels and foods that someone else has raised or grown. "Back to Basics" is a colorful, easy-to-understand encyclopedia of basic skills. There are hundreds of color photos, and most lessons are laid out step-by-step, making the concepts very easy to learn. The book is divided into six basic parts: I. Land: Buying It - Building on it (how to choose land, build a home, develop a water supply, create a sauna, etc) II. Energy from Wood, Water, Wind, and Sun (making your home more efficient, how to use wind energy, setting up a solar-powered house, etc) III. Raising Your Own Vegetables, Fruit, and Livestock (how to properly grow all sorts of fruits, vegetables, and grains, how to farm fish, beekeeping, butchering an animal, etc) IV. Enjoying Your Harvest Year Round (canning, preserving all kinds of foods, making cheese and wine, etc) V. Skills and Crafts for House and Homestead (making natural dyes, weaving, woodworking, stenciling, soapmaking, making homemade perfumes, etc) VI. Recreation at Home and in the Wild (camping, canoeing, kayaking, celebrating holidays, etc) This book definitely has the potential to help all of us live more self-sufficiently, learning to do the things that our grandparents probably learned growing up. However, one possible drawback is that becoming self-sufficient takes a lot of work, and in the case of switching your home over to some type of alternative energy, a lot of money as well. Most readers are probably not going to have the land, time, and money to make some of the more significant changes suggested. However, the book still offers a lot for the rest of us, and at the least, educates us as to what it takes to live in a self-sufficient manner. Another possible drawback is that the book tries to squeeze a lot of information into 456 pages. This means that while you are getting a very concise, and surprisingly detailed, overview, you may need to consult more detailed sources if you need more help than what the book offers. Overall, this is an interesting and useful book that offers practical ways to become more self-sufficient, something that is highly relevant in these times of rising energy and food prices. My family has already used some of the ideas, starting our first garden this year.

This illustrated book has been published chiefly for those who are new to country living, and/or who have an interest in self-sufficiency and in retrieving some of the "lost arts" which are appurtenant to traditional country life. The information is mostly introductory and rudimentary... a good start for most folks new to these areas of interest. I have lived in the foothills of rural Appalachia for 55 years and have been involved in carrying out nearly all the construction, activities, arts, and crafts found

within this text. Some of the text, (along with the accompanying drawings and photos), is quite good. The information is solid and one can get started along the right track; however, the work goes astray (the publishers sort of "threw in the kitchen sink"), into areas which are not particularly relevant to traditional country living. The editors simply went too far afield when they got into topics such as "Winter Sports," "Kayaking and Rafting," "Foraging for Flour and Emergency Rations," and so on. Most of these subjects are tagged on at the end, I felt just to make the book longer, (it's plenty long enough at 456 pages!) Additionally, on topics such as "Emergency First Aid," "Fly Fishing" (and fish identification), and "Recipes," there are obligatory sections, none of which are all that useful since these are subjects, any one of which could fill volumes. Had these areas of specific interest been omitted, the more appropriate topics could have been somewhat expanded, such as "Barn Building" or "Preserving Meat and Fish". While there is quite a great deal of quality information in this Skyhorse Publishing Third Edition (2008) for those seeking a new or improved life in the rural countryside, I still feel that the editors strayed off-base to the point that I cannot heartily recommend the work.

This is simply the best reference book for self sufficient country living ever, bar none. From building to growing to conserving to preserving to raising animals to cooking... recreation, knitting, herbs, knots, quilting, cider, canoeing, candle making, soaps, blacksmithing, not to mention beer and wine making; and everything in between and extending from both ends - this book has it all. The table of contents only touches on what's contained. If you can think of it, this book probably has it. It is \*the\* encyclopedia of living the "basics." At the end of the movie adaptation of H.G. Wells classic "The Time Machine", the main character escapes to the future where humanity has forgotten all basic knowledge and skills. The friends that he leaves behind discover that he has taken only three books with him, and we're left to wonderingly consider which three - and which three we might bring. This book would be one of my three. After all, what culture could survive long without beer, smoked meats, cheese and wine?

This book provides a great overview of a lot of things, but doesn't get too much into the weeds. As the daughter of a contractor, I'll tell you that the book leaves a LOT out of building your own home. But I'd like to build a stone cottage some day, so I appreciate the ideas it offers. I'm not all the way through, but I like how they offer other books to read if you are interested in one specific activity, allowing you to gain more knowledge than the general overview the book provides. Good overview, but if you want to do something on your own, you're going to have to purchase a lot of specialty

books in each area.

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