

6 Skills Every Suburban Homesteader Needs

Suburban homesteader. What comes to mind when you hear that term? Personally, I think of person who lives in the typical American suburbs, they're probably married with a few kids.

Maybe a dog. Their land isn't huge, but it's being transformed into something that's functional and they're very proud of that fact. The household quite possibly runs on two incomes and free-time is scarce commodity given all the social obligations they have. Does this description sound like you?

Even if there are a few differences with your situation, you can relate to it, right? Then you're a suburban homesteader.

We've identified you as a suburban homesteader. Awesome! But what now? What do you need to do to make this life work?

Well, as luck would have it, I've laid out six skills you need to improve your abilities and become the suburban homesteader you always wanted to be:

1. Monthly Financial Tracking

I've spoken before about how important financial independence is to the suburban homesteader. Those guidelines still hold true. I want to see you free from the shackles of debt. Even more so, I want you to track your finances and know what your incomes and expenses are. Treating your suburban homestead like a business by looking at the financials of your home every month will easily let you see the areas that are going to become problems before they do. Are you spending too much money on dining out? Has your income dipped in the last few months? Are you spending more on a certain area of life than you were before? Why?

All these answers are answered in the monthly financial review. Suburban homesteaders typically are folks who rely on

two incomes and have a vast array of family activities in addition to the homestead which makes it easier to fall into debt. Keeping track of your finances on a monthly basis will help you keep your debt from rising and allow you to track the costs of all these activities.

2. Gardening

Most people think of gardens or farms when they hear the word *homesteading*. You more than likely will not have room for a farm in suburban homesteading so you need to concentrate on gardening. The simple act of starting a garden can do so many things for you. First and foremost, you will provide food for your family at reduced cost to what you would pay at the supermarket. Second, the food you will be providing will be fresher and healthier than what you are buying. Even if you buy GMO-free organic vegetables and fruits, they will not taste as fresh and vibrant as something you pull out of the ground or harvest moments before eating. Third, and probably most important, you'll be developing a functional skill that will make you more self-sufficient. And, to top it all off, gardening is a great family activity that everyone can take part in.

Get your garden going today!

3. Composting

The ability to produce your own compost is paramount to a healthy garden. Your soil's health is an investment in your garden and, in turn, an investment in your family's health.

And, truth be told, composting is not that hard. Take your table scraps, yard waste and whatever other organic matter you can find and throw it in a pile. Keep turning it every so often as you continue to add to it. Before long, you'll have thick, dark compost that your vegetables will love you for.

We have been feeding our compost pile here on the Suburban

Steadier Homestead for about a year and we probably have 2-3 cubic yards of compost at this point. It can be done and is easy to do. Don't worry about perfecting the balance of greens and browns. Just go at it and you'll learn what works best!

4. Handyman Capability

By definition, you live in the suburbs if you're a suburban homesteader. And that means 'fix-it' folks are very prevalent. Plumbers, electricians, contractors, gardeners, mechanics and appliance repairmen are all willing to take your hard-earned money. Most of these folks are quite skilled at what they do and will probably do the job quicker than you.

But, will they do it better than you? The answer is probably not. You can find out how to fix just about anything on YouTube if you're willing to spend a little time learning.

You might need some new tools and extra material for when you mess up the first time, but you can develop yourself into a pretty proficient handyman if you want to.

I don't want you to get me wrong here – being the son of a plumber, I can absolutely tell you there are times when you should call in the professionals. But most of the fixes around your house can be completed with a little learning, trial, failure and elbow grease. There's so many benefits to improving your handyman skills: saving money, developing a talent and having the confidence to know that you can conquer almost any problem your home throws at you!

5. Project Management Skills

I can already hear the groans on this one. First, I want you to stop thinking about the folks at work who are running around with Gantt charts and work breakdown structures (FYI, I am a project manager at work, so I am one of those people).

When I talk about project management skills around the

suburban homestead, I'm talking more about thinking through a project and trying to corral it a bit before jumping in full force. Let's take for instance a fairly small project of building a garden box. The project management skills you'd want to use here include the following:

1. Material Cost Estimate: Think about all the materials you're going to use including wood, fasteners, fill material (soil, compost, etc) and any new tools you need for the job. Can you afford this project right now (go back to the first skill we talked about)?
2. Project Duration Estimate: Is this a project you can finish on a Saturday? Is it a two-day job? With that information, you can then look at your calendar and figure out when a good time to start it would be. Maybe your kids have a soccer tournament this weekend, but you're free next weekend. Plan accordingly.
3. What's My Return On Investment (ROI)?: Why are you building this garden box? Do you need the extra space? Is the money your going to spend on it, not to mention your time, going to be compensated by the final product?

None of these things are terribly difficult to think about but it's important that the suburban homesteader (you!) is spending their time and money as wisely as possible.

Oh, and just so you know, I have used a Gantt chart for projects around the house ranging from remodelling to cooking Thanksgiving dinner – and they all went off flawlessly. So, maybe it isn't a bad skill to work on as well...

6. Determination and Self-Motivation

These are the least tangible but, arguably, most important skills a suburban homesteader needs to succeed. The reality of life on a suburban homestead is that things are not going

to always follow plan. Money is going to get tight at times, the family pet is going to get sick, Johnny or Jane is going to break their arm, Mom or Dad is going to get sick, the boiler is going to bust, etc. Life is going to happen.

Having a determination and self-motivation to keep going despite these setbacks is **the most important skill** a suburban homesteader can develop for success. So, to invoke a few over-played clichés, *keep your head up* and *keep your eyes on the prize*. Know what your goal is and shoot higher. You're bound to flounder a bit, but by aiming higher you'll increase your odds of achieving all that you wanted to achieve.

Become The Suburban Homesteader You Always Wanted To Be

So there you have it – 6 skills every suburban homesteader needs to succeed at this game. Financial tracking, gardening, composting, handyman skills, project management, determination and self-motivation. You'll be a better suburban homesteader and a better person if you spend the time to develop and hone these skills .

