

LIFE GOES ON BAG - TECHNOLOGY OVERVIEW

[Workbook](#) page: None

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After Katrina, I found that one of the most useful items I had was my laptop computer. If you are the kind of person who hyperventilates whenever someone brings up the topic of modern technology, I am going to make this as easy as possible for you. If any of this is confusing, then find a kid over the age of ten and they will be able to show you how to do it.

I leverage technology in my own way, but if you have other methods that work for you then use them. This is my method and it is *a* way to do it, but it is not the only way. All of the items here can be purchased quite reasonably, and you probably own one or more of them already.

LAPTOP COMPUTER - A laptop is far more portable than a desktop computer, and our plans are all about being portable. A laptop is many things all in one package, but few people appreciate them for what they are - a communication device. They are useful for email, internet access, file and data storage, document creation, and many things besides. If you have a DVD drive, you can watch movies. You can listen to music. You can listen to internet radio. Dollar for dollar, a laptop can provide more value than anything else in your kit. You can also use it to play games, which helps pass the time. If you do not own a laptop computer, then you can use your desktop computer at home for everything here - but when it is time to replace your home computer, buy a laptop. It doesn't have to be the latest or the greatest. Even older laptops will work just fine for us.

DOCUMENT SCANNER - Document scanners are inexpensive, and you will get a lot of use out of whichever one you buy. I prefer flat-bed scanners like the one pictured. I have been using that very scanner - an old Epson perfection 1260 for over five years, and I paid less than 100 dollars for it. Looking online, flat bed scanners can be had for fifty dollars on different sites. I frequently purchase from www.newegg.com, and they have always provided excellent service.

COLOR PRINTER - Any color printer will do. There are even some all-in-one units that will print, fax, scan, and perform other technological feats of wonder. My brother-in-law just bought a Lexmark all-in-one at Sam's Club for less than \$100 and he likes it. I like Epson photo printers. Right now I'm using a Canon photo printer, but I find the ink cartridges expensive. Shop around and find a good price. The printer is not required for our preparations, but it is very nice to have for some of the projects we will work on later.

USB EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE - This is a device that plugs into your laptop and provides extra storage space. We will primarily use it to make redundant copies of our data. I am currently using a Venus case with a hard drive that I installed. You can buy them already assembled, however, and I have used the SimpleTech drives available at www.amazon.com with great success. A word of caution, however - when the drive is plugged in, make sure that you do not bump it, drop it, or let your kids knock it off the table. Hard drives are very durable when they are unpowered. When they are powered, the disks inside the unit spin at thousands of RPM, and the little 'fingers' that read those disks are very fragile. If the unit hits the floor while it is spinning, all heck breaks loose inside and the poor thing will never work again.

[Listening to Katrina](#) - www.theplacewithnoname.com/blogs/klessons

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USB FLASH DRIVE - Now we are entering the world of pure magic. A USB Flash Drive is a small device about the size of a stick of gum that uses static memory to store data. I use a Transcend Jet Flash 2 GB drive that is smaller than most. They cost \$9 and are waterproof. You can hang it by a chain around your neck and never be without it. I keep mine in my wallet. Using the methods I am going to show you on the next few pages, I have over 9,000 photographs and over 1,000 documents on my USB Flash Drive, and I still have 700 MB left - which means about 35% free space.

That should do us for now. If you are starting from scratch, here's your shopping list:

1. Laptop computer. Any modern laptop will do. I like the Windows XP operating system, but Microsoft is pushing everyone to Vista, so you might end up with that. If you prefer Macintosh, you will have to make decisions on your own.
2. Document scanner. Any flat-bed scanner with a minimum of 300 * 300 DPI color resolution.
3. Color or photo printer. Again, anything you like. Cheap is fine.
4. USB External hard drive. 500 GB minimum.
5. USB Flash Drives. Minimum 1GB, 2GB preferable. You will want one of these for every member of the family, including children.

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