

# Survival Guide for Impending Incarceration

By Gordon R. Greer

Well, I'm not certain where it is you are currently located. But I am certain about one thing. If you are being handed this information, then things are looking pretty much as if you are going to be locked down for awhile in one of the government facilities designed to keep you apart from the rest of society. I've created this little information pamphlet to give you some advice on some of the essentials you should know in order to make the transition into that environment as comfortable and safe as can be made.

Many of the things you read here are "politically incorrect"; prisons are not politically correct places to be. I've drawn upon my own personal experiences in order to provide you with this information. I was incarcerated myself for approximately seven calendar years.

I hope this pamphlet helps you and gives you a few tips that might help you deal with the situation which has befallen you and help you get through this and back out and "into the world" again. There is much more I would tell you if I had more time, but the information included in this pamphlet is the basic information you need to know. I know that the first time incarcerated will benefit from the information provided and it is my sincere hope that if you are reading this, that you might also take this time to make the necessary changes in your life to insure that this will also be the last time you are faced with a situation such as this. Now let's take a look at some of the basics.

1. Prison is not like society, there is a strong likelihood that if you are going to prison and in mainstream society you would be considered to be a part of the majority, you will be considered to be a minority when you are locked down.
2. The majority of prison populations are minorities, therefore in that world if you are a black man or woman, you will notice that there are a lot more black people in that environment. If you are white, you will notice that there are fewer whites and you are now outnumbered.
3. In prison, segregation is natural. Caucasians hang out with other Caucasians, and African

Americans hang out with other African Americans, Native Americans with other Native Americans, Hispanics with other Hispanics and child molesters hang out at the Chapel. You will get through your stay a lot easier if you stay within the racial lines that exist in the penitentiary.

4. No one is your friend! (At least, when you first get there. DO NOT TRUST ANYONE!) You might have people getting friendly with you and wanting to buddy-up. BEWARE! Start by asking yourself "Why is this person being nice to me?" And "Who is this person?"
5. Don't borrow! People will be eager to help you get on your feet. They will seemingly give you stuff because "We are all in this thing together!" There is no free lunch (or anything else!) and you'd better be aware that everything has a string attached. If you borrow, you are going to have to pay back with interest! I've seen many a new inmates get beat up because they owed the owed other inmates. I also understand that there are times when it appropriate to get something from "the store" (The store is usually run by one or two inmates on a unit and when people borrow canteen items from the store they are expected to pay back two for one items borrowed or three for two items borrowed.) In any case, this can be very expensive. Be aware you will have to pay these items back.
6. Don't do drugs! If you do, remember that drugs are very expensive in prison! I've seen people seriously injured over drugs debts in prison. There is pretty effective communication between prisons, so if someone goes to a different yard (prison) owing a debt, there is always somebody at the prison ready to collect. Understand, there is a huge underground economy run by prison inmates and gangs.
7. Prison is difficult on everyone, your fellow inmates, the guards, and your family. In a sense your family is doing time with you. You should keep this in mind when dealing with other inmates in prison and your friends and family members.

# AN INFORMATION PAMPHLET

FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE  
GOING TO PRISON FOR THE  
FIRST TIME

Authored by:  
**Gordon Greer**  
222 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 10  
Tulsa, OK 74113  
(918) 636-4807

Brought to you by:  
Kevin Adams  
Attorney at Law  
406 S Boulder Ave, Suite 400  
Tulsa, OK 74103  
(918) 582-1313

#### Disclaimer:

**The information in this pamphlet is not intended to be legal advice. The information provided is intended to assist people that are going to prison for the first time. The information in this pamphlet reflects the personal opinion of the author, as a person who has been to prison. Following the advice in this pamphlet cannot guarantee your safety and it is up to you to use your best judgment while incarcerated.**

Gordon R Greer has a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Human relations from the University of Oklahoma. Mr. Greer is a certified Drug and Alcohol counselor, facilitates outpatient therapy groups for substance abuse relapse prevention, coping skills and anger management.

Mr. Greer was incarcerated for 7 years in the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. Mr. Greer consults with individuals who have never been incarcerated, about what to expect when arriving in prison, how to interact with the other inmates, strategies for gaining favorable placement and dealing with prison bureaucracy, strategies for gaining parole and strategies for making personal changes to prevent relapse and re-incarceration.

8. Gangs are real. Gangs are racial. Being a member of a gang will get you in trouble! The blacks tend to put away their affiliation as to Crip or Blood while incarcerated. By the same token the Angels and the Mongols tend to put away their "colors" and the affiliation just becomes one of being "bikers". Skinheads, UAB, etc.... You are better off staying unaffiliated with any of the groups who may tout offering you protection while you are incarcerated. Stay to yourself and read a book.
9. Don't become someone's "bitch"! Don't hold anything for another person! Your objective is getting out of prison as soon as you can. If you start acting stupid and doing favors for someone else you are placing yourself in danger of picking up a new charge! The tales are true about the guy or girl who goes in with a two year sentence and picks up new charges while inside which equate to years more that they have to do.
10. Don't live like a "troll". Clean up your area and make your bed and the little space you have in the world doesn't have to be polluted or look like crap. Because of the lack of space, personal hygiene is very important in prison.
11. Don't sit on anyone else's bunk. Think about it. Respect is the issue here and would want lay your head down where someone has just farted? Think about the other guy and respect him too. Don't hesitate to draw the boundary for anyone who comes to visit you at your bunk in prison.
12. Keep quiet. Avoid acting like a child. No doubt you will witness many people acting like idiots. This is prison and a lot of people act like idiots. Don't be that guy. Keep your mouth shut! Don't gossip or say anything critical of another person even though you KNOW they are one of the idiots. Remember always you want to get out of prison. People who act out are destined to come back and do what we refer to as "Life on the installment plan".
13. Stay out of the Chapel. That is where most of the child-molesters congregate because they live in fear of the GP (General Population). Having God in your life is a good thing, but this is one place he needs to work for you and

with you outside of the Chapel. Read your Bible, pray, whatever else it is that you feel you need to do, but know that if you hang out at the Chapel in prison someone is going label you as being one of "them".

14. Be tolerant of other people's lifestyles. You are going to see and hear about and know that there are men having sex with other men. Keep your mouth shut! Just because they engage in a behavior doesn't mean that you have to. You don't want to be the one doing it and you need to have that boundary set. You don't do it by being noticed. You do it by being quiet, minding your business and flying under radar. Don't go in loud and proclaim that you'll never be "the bitch". If you do, you open the door for someone to challenge you and MAKE you their "bitch".
15. "Punk" is the worst word in prison. Don't use it and eliminate it from your vocabulary. "Bitch" is next to being the worst word, but to call someone a punk you'd better be ready to fight. Calling someone a bitch can get you in the same spot. It is best if you are trying to get out of prison to refrain from any name calling at all.
16. Write your "people". Spend a lot of time writing to those who love you. Don't con them for money, but be real! If you haven't burnt every bridge and there is someone to write to, make the effort to keep connected. By the same token, you need to understand that the world keeps turning for everyone else and their life doesn't stop because yours did. Also keep in mind that while prison is tough for you it is also tough for your family. When they come and visit you they are subject to a lot of rules, regulations and embarrassment. Also keep your collect phone calls to a minimum, they are expensive.
17. Take time to reflect on why you are in the situation you now find yourself and stop blaming others. It's time to "Man-up" and take responsibility for the bad choices and decisions you have made. When and if you get the opportunity to live with the rest of us again, what is it going to take for you to do that and NOT have to worry about going back to prison? A very dear friend pointed out to me once that if I got out prison and returned to doing the same things I

did which took me there...more prison was all I would have to look forward to. I have found this to be an absolute truth.

18. Do not talk about your crime or the amount of time that you have left. This is especially true if you have been convicted of a sex offense or other offenses that are looked harshly upon by other inmates. Many guys convicted of these types of offenses lie about what they were convicted of.
19. Take advantage of the programs offered by the prison. Different prisons have different programs. You want to enroll and participate in as many programs as you can get into. Participating in the programs will help you pass the time. It will help you prepare for life on the outside and you will meet other inmates that are also focused on getting out of prison. Participation and graduation from prison programs will also assist you when and if you come up for parole and if you get a judicial review.
20. You must begin the process of changing while in prison. Nobody plans to go to prison. However, most people that end up in prison ignored many of the warning signs that lead them there. The process of rebuilding must begin while you are incarcerated. If you have not began the process of changing by the time you are released than you are destined to return to prison. Even if you have lost everything that you have worked for as long as you have your freedom you can get those material possessions back. Your family, your health, and your freedom are the things that are really important.

**Disclaimer:**

**The information in this pamphlet is not intended to be legal advice. The information provided is intended to assist people that are going to prison for the first time. The information in this pamphlet reflects the personal opinion of the author, as a person who has been to prison. Following the advice in this pamphlet cannot guarantee your safety and it is up to you to use your best judgment while incarcerated.**