

Hunting GUIDE



Introducing Hunting to Children

If hunting is a staple in your family's life, you are probably eager to introduce the lifestyle to your children. Avoid making common mistakes and ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for your children's impressionable minds.

Consider these tips from the National Wild Turkey Foundation to seamlessly introduce hunting into your child's life and get them involved.

BRING THEM ALONG

Before your child is equipped with a weapon, invite them to go hunting with you as a spectator. You already know that prime conditions for active wildlife may not be ideal for children, so plan a day where the weather is mild. This trip should be more about getting a taste for the outdoors and gaining experience rather than landing a trophy. Teach them about scouting. Bring along a pair of binoculars and teach them how to follow animal tracks, sheds and find other signs wildlife is active in the area.

HUNTING CLUB

If you are active in a hunting club, invite your child to a gathering where members discuss their experiences. It can be a great way to get them excited and work towards having their own stories to tell. Consider creating an experience that will be appealing to children like a campfire where you'll roast marshmallows and sleep outdoors. The key to getting them excited about hunting is to ensure they are entertained.



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VISIT A WILDLIFE REFUGE

Introduce the type of wildlife your child will learn to hunt by visiting a refuge or taking them to your favorite

hunting spot. Discuss how the importance of treating the animals with respect while hunting and the benefits they provide. A good way to teach

them about responsibility is to task them with keeping a hunting journal, they can keep track of areas where they saw signs of animals.

Hunting Safely

Hunting safety issues don't always involve firearms or other weapons. There are many other factors to be wary of.

A 2013 report by the International Hunter Education Association states that annually there are 300-500 hunters killed and nearly 6,000 who are injured in tree stand accidents. The same report says most incidents occur when users are climbing or exiting the stand but can also happen when they fall asleep up in the tree.

Here are some great tips from the United States Forest Service about how to stay safe while hunting.

TIPS FOR HUNTERS

It doesn't matter what type of game you are hunting, being outdoors during the season creates serious risks. Ensure you are following all laws regarding safety and enjoy your experience while clear-headed and alert.

One good way to keep yourself safe is to check the expected weather for the location you plan to hunt. If severe weather is on the radar, it's a good idea to stay in for the day. According to the National Weather Service, lightning kills an average of 47 people in the United States each year and seriously injures hundreds more. Don't get caught outside in a storm, especially if you have excessive gear to pack before you can head to safety.

Before aiming your weapon, clearly identify your target. Being overeager and pulling the trigger at what you

think is an animal can be fatal to a nearby hunter. Make sure to tell your hunting plans to a friend or loved one who is staying behind. They should be aware of your arrival date, departure time and where you will be. In case trouble arises, your family will know where to send help.

Avoid wearing white or tan during hunting season. It's recommended to wear bright orange clothing that is easy recognizable to other hunters.

TIPS FOR NONHUNTERS

Spending time outdoors for non-hunters can also be dangerous. If you do come across hunters while on hikes or during other outdoor activities, be courteous. Wear bright colored clothing so you don't get mistaken for an animal and do the same if you bring your dogs along.

Pay attention to when hunting season is. If you don't feel comfortable around the activity, consider taking a walk in a national park or another area where hunting is not allowed.

TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

If you are only beginning to consider making hunting a part of your life, you probably have many questions. While you may not become an expert during your first season, with practice and dedication, the skills will come. The first step of beginning the journey of hunting is to take a safety course. An expert will teach you the proper way to have an ethical experience while ensuring everyone involved remains safe.

Check with your local officials to find out course times, dates and fees. They are a crucial part of the process.



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Find a Hunting Property

The easiest way to find property in your area that is open for hunting is to ask local enthusiasts. They may be shy to tell you their secret spots, but may be able to point you to a spot you can make your own. You have two types of land to choose from: public or private.

According to the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, the United States government owns about 640 million acres of land. Talk to your local refuges about federally owned land in your area to find a public property open for hunters.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

State laws regarding hunting can vary drastically. It's a good idea to brush up on the regulations pertaining to your area before each sea-

son. Laws can change drastically from year to year and they are not always widely publicized. It's in your best interest to stay on top of changing regulations as they can carry expensive fines.

START SCOUTING BEFORE THE SEASON

With a landowner's permission, venture out to the property you will hunt while wildlife is active. Pay attention to signs animals were present and prepare a plan of where you will install

your stand or watch for activity. Blindly walking into property without a solid plan in mind can be dangerous as you may intrude on another hunter's space and be mistaken for wildlife.

PRACTICE YOUR AIM

Visit a local shooting range for some helpful target practice. Making sure you know exactly how your weapon performs will not only help you hold the sight steady on a target, it's also crucial to safety.

Choose the Right Gear

A successful hunting excursion can be benefited by bringing along the right gear. Make sure every box is checked on your list before heading out. It can be the difference in having an exciting experience or going home empty handed.

STAY COMFORTABLE

Many times, hunting is a waiting game. It may take hours or even days before the target you have been waiting for makes an appearance. Keep yourself comfortable to ensure you're ready to react at a moment's notice.

Boots: Hunting can take a serious toll on your body's wheels. A shoddy pair of boots can cause uncomfortable blisters, cold or wet feet and make walking a chore. Consider finding a pair of well-fitting waterproof boots to make it easy when tracking an animal.

Backpack: If you are venturing out for an all-day trip, having room for your supplies is important. You will want enough space to fill it with water and food to keep yourself nourished. Also, after filling your pack with the essential hunting items, you'll want to leave room for a map or GPS to avoid becoming lost.

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

Some seasons carry certain criteria regarding which weapons can be used. Follow the laws carefully to avoid expensive fines or hunting unethically. Here are some thoughts to consider when packing away your weapons.

Ammo: Always bring more

than you think you'll need. You may be an expert, but animals are unpredictable, leading to missed shots. Don't run into a situation where you must cancel your trip due to a lack of ammunition.

Gun: If the season is appro-

priate for firearms, choose a gun you are comfortable with. Consider visiting an outdoor gear store to find the perfect accessory for your hunt like an enhanced or night vision scope.

Bows: Another popular

type of hunting involves using a bow and arrow. Spend plenty of time practicing, as this style takes much more accuracy and patience than hunting with a rifle.

Binoculars: This classic tool is important to any hunt-

ing trip. Choose a pair that gives you a clear perspective of your surroundings. If you find yourself in an area with little activity, they make it easy to scout distant locations for wildlife or other hunters.



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Tracking Animals

Before you can even take your shot, you must know how to find the wildlife you are seeking. Research the animals you are hunting to learn their habitats and behaviors before heading out on a trip.

SEARCH FOR SIGNS

Wildlife spends much of their time navigating through open fields or woods, they often leave obvious signs they were there.

An easy way to discover an area that is heavy in animal activity is to look for footprints. Study images of the game you will be hunting to discover the sizes of adult wildlife. You should safely follow the markings in the ground until they disappear. This can be an easy way to find their habitat.

It's also a good idea to know how to identify animal feces. Analyzing the excrement can give

you a good idea about how much time has passed since the animal was in the area and how many are active. It may not be the most glamorous research but for hunters it can be the difference in a successful day or a disappointing trip.

If you typically stick to the same area to hunt, it's a good idea to invest in a few trail cameras. By viewing them before the season begins, you will gain a good sense of where animals are active throughout the property.

TRACKING YOUR TARGET

While hunting, it's not always easy to drop your target in a single shot. Sometimes, a wounded ani-



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mal can flee for quite a distance, depending on where the shot landed. To hunt ethically, it's important to spend ample time searching for your prey so their life is not wasted.

The most common way to

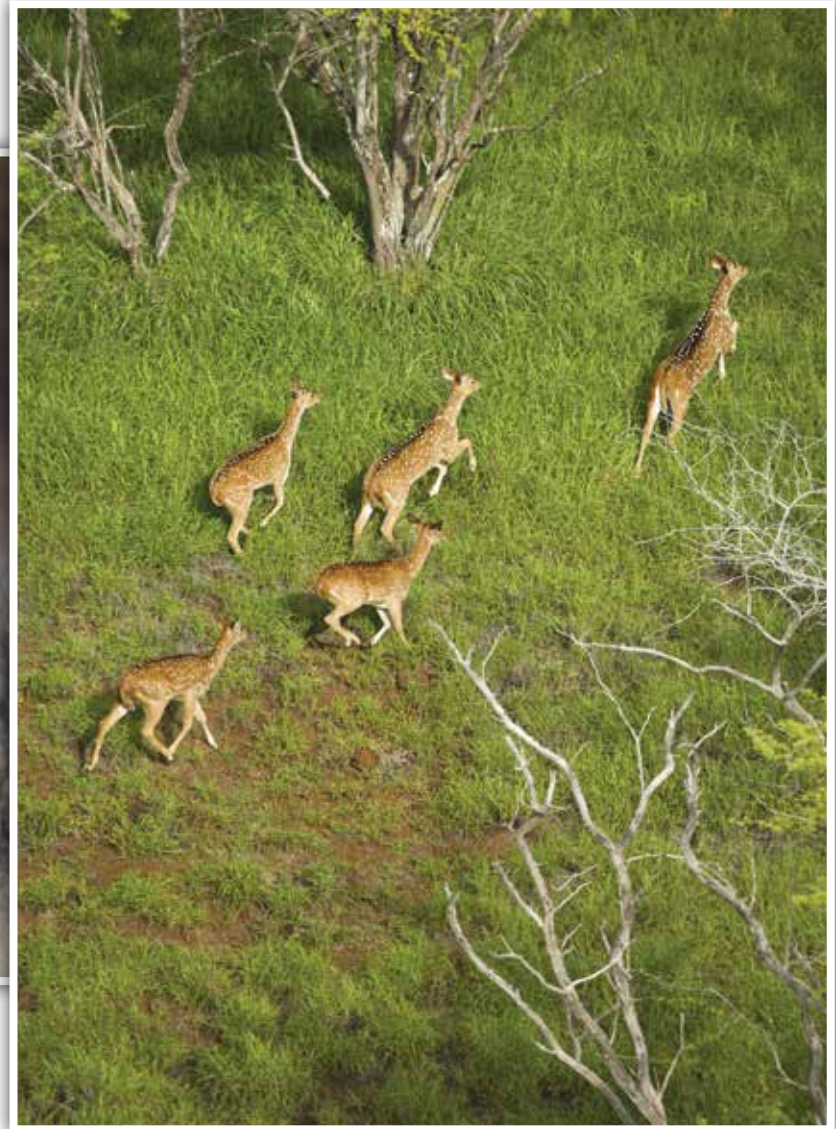
find your target after an impact is to follow their blood trail. Pay attention to the direction the animal headed after the initial shot to get a sense of which direction they went. Especially if you landed

a shot from a distance, it can be a chore to find the exact impact spot but that's where you should start. Consider bringing along products or lights that help blood easier to find while it's dark.

If you bring a hunting dog on your trips, they will give you the best chances of finding your prey. A well-trained pup will have no problem following a scent and revealing the animal's location.



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Bucket List Hunting Trips

Whether you're an avid hunter or a weekend warrior, you owe it to yourself to participate in a hunting trip of a lifetime. Don't be afraid to trek out beyond your normal grounds.

Here are a few of the greatest American hunting locations, from the experts at Field and Stream.

BLACK-TAILED DEER, ALASKA

This is the perfect hunting location for the adrenaline junkie. The first challenge you'll face is how to navigate to Kodiak Island, but many local companies offer boats to make access feasible. Once you're on site, you'll notice a number of black-tail deer, but be wary, the island is also a place the world's largest brown bears call home.

Hunting trips can be DIY or outfitted with inclusive features.

SPRING BEARS, IDAHO

To have the most success while hunt-

ing black bears in the Rocky Mountains, schedule your trip around mid-April through June. You will find a plethora of game feasting to flush their systems after a long hibernation. The experiences can be customized by hiring a guide or do it yourself by venturing through dirt roads or trails located in national forests.

AXIS DEER, LANAI, HAWAII

Lanai, Hawaii is home to a 90,000-acre private island featuring an exotic background to take a hunting excursion. The area is flourishing with free-

range axis deer and mouflon sheep. Getting to the island is an experience as you will take a ferry from Maui before you arrive on this luxurious location.

ELK, NEW MEXICO

If elk are your preferred game, you'll enjoy the Gila National Forest in New Mexico. The area's 3.3 million public acres are famous for the large animals. By taking an outfitted trip, you will likely find yourself on horseback to reach a desolate portion of the forest where wildlife is active.

Hunting in America

Hunting is a part of American culture. As early as the 1800s, government officials enacted the North American Wildlife Conservation Model. It was put in place to instill hunting regulations and deem that all fish and wildlife belonged to each American. Wildlife needs to be managed in a way that populations will be sustained forever.

See how significant hunting is to our country by reviewing these statistics from the 2016 United States Fish and Wildlife Service Survey.

- Deer hunting landed on the top of the big game category for the animal most hunters pursued at 80 percent.

- The most popular migratory bird to be hunted is the

dove. Followed by ducks and then geese.

- Americans aged 55-64 made up the largest age group of hunters.

- It is estimated that hunting expenditures racked up \$26.2 billion. Equipment sales accounted for 49 percent, 35 percent were trip related and 15 percent was due to other

expenses required to hunt.

- The average big game hunter spent about 16 days annually hunting.

- There were 12.4 million Americans who participated in archery. Those aged 16 and older were the largest age group at 79 percent.

- By household income, the largest group of hunters

earned \$50,000-\$99,000 per year.

- For small game, squirrels were the most sought after for hunting. They were followed by rabbits, quail and pheasants.

- Nearly 86 million Americans participated in some sort of wildlife watching. This includes photography,

feeding and simple observations.

- Bird watching remained the most popular type of wildlife observation accounting for 88 percent of animal viewing.

- Bears were the least sought-after game in the Big Game category as a mere 2 percent of hunters approached them.

