

# Hunting Guide



# Pack for Success

While you may do most of your hunting from the same general location, how you get there can sometimes be a challenge when carrying gear.

You don't want to alert nearby wildlife with a loud UTV or ATV, so walking is usually your best bet. Packing appropriately can lessen the exhaustion you feel throughout your trek and ensure you're alert when game is in your sights.

Keeping your gear's weight manageable isn't the only factor you should consider. Here are some other beneficial tips to remember when preparing for a hunting excursion, from the experts at Field and Stream.

## SAFETY FIRST

Make sure you save room in your bag for the crucial safety equipment every hunter requires. Pack a first aid kit with gauzes, bandages and ointments to help protect yourself from cuts or scrapes. You should also remember to bring a properly fitted harness and safety belt if you will be scaling heights to reach your stand.

## NAVIGATION TOOLS

Whether you prefer an old-fashioned compass or a state-of-the-art GPS system,



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knowing where you are and how to get back to camp is crucial. It's easy to lose your sense of direction when tracking a wounded animal. Always tell a hunting partner before you venture off alone, so they

know which way you are going.

## PACK WITH CARE

You don't want to find yourself rooting around in your bag when the adrenaline is

pumping as you prepare yourself to take a shot or track your target. Instead, pack your most important items in the most accessible areas of your bag.

Make use of extra pockets to

dedicate to special tools you know will be used. You should know exactly where to look when these items are required as it can be the difference in a bountiful hunting trip or going home empty handed.

# Hunting's Economic Impact

The sport of hunting is a pastime Americans enjoy to get in touch with nature and stock their freezers with healthy protein. What you may not realize about a hunter's efforts is the significance their presence has on the local economy.

To support the hunting industry and doing so legally, make sure your licenses and tags are up to date. You can acquire this paperwork instantly on your state's federal website or visiting a local sporting goods shop; don't forget to stock up on the latest and greatest gear while you're there.

Take a look at some of the positive effects' hunters have on the economy and conservation of majestic wildlife.



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## ECONOMY GROWTH: BY THE NUMBERS

The National Wildlife Federation offers some encouraging statistics that sportsman can feel proud to be a contributor of and newcomers to the sport can enhance.

Its economic impact accounts to \$86.9 billion, annually.

Each year, hunting supports 680,937 jobs.

State and local tax revenue generates about \$5.4 billion per year.

On a federal level, taxes generate about \$6.4 billion each year.

There is no question that honest hunting plays a big role in the development of local communities and feder-

al funding to ensure wildlife and their habitats are maintained.

## CONSERVATION EFFORTS

A recent study from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service shows hunting is declining. According to the data, only about 5% of the country, 16 years and older

actually hunt. This statistic is half of what it was 50 years ago, and the decline is expected to increase over the next decade. A large percentage of conservation efforts are paid with the taxes that hunters pay for the sport. The NWF says in the last 70 years, sportsmen have paid over \$6.4 billion to directly support wildlife restoration, hab-

itats and hunter education.

Vital streams and wetlands are also crucial to supporting wildlife and their homes. In recent years, the Supreme Court has deemed over twenty million acres of wetland as being unqualified for Clean Water Act protections. You can do your part by raising awareness to bring federal funding back to your area.

# Start a Hunting Club

If you're an avid hunter, it's likely you have visited or are already a member of an established hunting club.

These communities are known for providing an outlet for hunters to share stories about their excursions, keep each other safe and improve techniques through a sense of comradery.

You may be surprised with how obtainable it can be to begin a club of your own. From choosing a plot of land to determining how to reach out to people to potentially join, it's a journey that can begin as a hobby and turn into a full-fledged career.

Before jumping into the process blindly, consider how you will make these decisions, as recommended by the American Hunting Lease Association.

## ACQUIRING LAND

If you don't already own a piece of land to establish your hunting club, buying or leasing is the first step. When searching for a location, make sure it has attractive features for wildlife to use as a habitat. Look for things like drinking streams and heavy brush which can be used as cover.

Walk around the property and analyze it for animal droppings and tracks to ensure it is already being used by wildlife.



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If the cost of purchasing hunting land is too steep as you prepare a hunting club, ask your friends to go in as silent partners or involved investors. Your like-minded peers may enjoy the thought of having a stake in their own club and can help with daily operations.

## WHO CAN JOIN?

As you begin, it can be a good idea to only invite those you have established relationships with.

Getting to know the ins and outs of running a club while receiving feedback from those you trust provides a unique

perspective of improvements you can make. Once you begin opening your doors to the public, consider performing background checks and ensuring their licenses are current.

## INSURANCE

Because of the risk of injury

and even death when firearms or other weapons are present, it's crucial to insure your property. Be honest with your policyholder about the intentions of using the land as a hunting club. This is the best way for you to protect your club and its members.

# The Importance of a License

When you commit to hunting, it is your responsibility to ensure you do so legally.

Obtaining a license does more than keep you from facing serious charges if caught without one. Its fees also contribute to the conservation fund that fish and wildlife require to thrive.

Before heading out this season, make sure you behold the documentation to make your favorite hobby completely legal.

While hunting regulations in different areas can vary greatly, most locations require hunters to be licensed. Check with your local municipality to determine which documents you are required to have based on the type of game you plan to hunt.

Plan to spend this hunting season without fear of a game warden discovering your hunting excursion is not legally supported.

## WHERE TO GET A LICENSE

Fortunately, obtaining a hunting and fishing license is quick and easy in most states. The United States Fish & Wildlife Service suggests finding one at any retail outlet that deals in hunting and fishing equipment, such as sporting goods stores.

This provides enthusiasts with an incredible convenience as you can pick up gear while you get a license. Look for upgrades for your weaponry or advanced tools like efficient clothing, tech-savvy navigation supplies and decoys to help your hunt.

You can also register for a license on most state's websites. Simply choose the type of certification you need and fill out a form to instantly print your legal document.

## RISKS OF GOING WITHOUT

Each state enforces their own penalties to punish hunters who forgo a license, take the time to understand your unique regulations. Here are some common types of punishments local jurisdictions use to protect their wildlife conservation.

Tickets for unlicensed hunters which include fines, court costs and attorney fees;

Convictions of game-law offenses may cause infractions to your record that lead to the loss or suspension of your right to hunt; and

When hunting during a closed season, you may face financial penalties and a revocation of your hunting privileges.

Local and federal governments depend on the funds raised through acquiring a license to preserve the habitats of wildlife and ensure the benefits they provide are protected.



# Hunting on a Budget

Many Americans choose to hunt their own meat. While a successful trip can stock your freezer, there are still expenses you must pay upfront. Learn how to break into the hobby on a budget or enhance your passion with these money-saving tips.

## LICENSES

Most states require hunters to purchase appropriate licenses based on the type of game they choose to hunt. While permits are typically inexpensive when purchased alone, you may be able to find a discount by buying all your year-long licenses at one time.

Before acquiring certification for one species of wildlife, consider if you will pursue another type of hunting or fishing venture throughout the year.

Typically, hunting mammals, fowls and even fish may hold their own seasons and specific licenses. See if your state offers a bundle deal to save some money when acquiring these documents.

## SECOND-HAND GEAR

If you're in need of a new tool to enhance your hunting



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trip, you can sometimes find great deals on second-hand gear. Talk to the other sportsman in your club, community or on social media to make an offer on equipment that they have recently upgraded from. It's a great way to make sure you are comfortable with the new item before you invest in a brand-new option

at your local sporting goods store.

## RECYCLE AMMO

If you rely on ammo when hunting, you already know purchasing it can be a hefty investment. With a few simple tools, you can reuse ammunition which helps save money and gives you an

intimate insight into how your weapon performs.

Weekend warriors may not see much savings when reloading their own ammo, but for those who spend a lot of time practicing in the field, it can be a worthy but time-consuming endeavor.

Check with your local shooting clubs or gun stores

to get a demonstration on reloading ammo for your specific weapon and how to find affordable equipment to help get started.

The art of gunsmithing can become something you pass down in your family, and with enough practice and patience, it can become a career.

# Join a Competition

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service reports that 101.6 million Americans participated in hunting, fishing and wildlife activities in 2016.

While a large portion of the participants hunt as a hobby, there is a percentage that pursue the activity to earn their income.

If you think you have what it takes to turn your passion for hunting into a career, joining a competition is a great place to start. Your local area likely sponsors events where enthusiasts are tasked with acquiring the largest game to earn an award.

These competitions are a great way to showcase your skills and share a sense of sportsmanship with other hunters. Here are some tips to break into the competitive level of hunting.



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## HOW TO FIND EVENTS

Finding competitions to join can be an easy task by following hunting groups on social media, frequenting local sporting-goods stores and reaching out to fellow hunters. If you're debating between different events to partake in, consider your experience and the level of competition.

If you are only becoming

familiar with the competitive level of hunting, competing against seasoned veterans may leave you falling short and affecting your confidence.

On the other hand, when you begin climbing the ranks, you don't want to compete with those who are far below your skillset. To really fine tune your skills, try to match your abilities to different lev-

els as you become a better competitive hunter. You will learn more and the grand prizes continue to grow as the events require more advanced sportsmen.

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Don't be discouraged if you fall short during your hunting competitions. Just like every

other skill, practice is the best way to sharpen your familiarity with it. Whether you target practice or partake in hunts as a hobby, use each experience as a learning tool to use when you compete in the next event.

## LIFELONG FRIENDSHIPS

Hunters and fishermen are known for their close camara-

derie and companionship. As you begin developing a relationship with other sportsmen, you will learn new tools and tips that can take your skills to the next level. Look for team competitions where you can pair with another hunter to share a remarkable experience and help one another become better at the trade.

# Deciding what to Hunt

If you're not already an avid hunter, you may be deciding which type of game is right for you. While the sport largely decides on the type of wildlife in your area, traveling a short distance can present an entirely new set of challenges.

When hunting out of state, it's crucial to understand the local laws and regulations they have in place. Failing to do so can put you in serious risk of expensive fines and travel expenses to face courts. If you plan to hunt for game in a different state, take the time to protect yourself from strict hunting enforcements.

Once you're familiar with a location's expectations of its hunters, here are some types of game to consider pursuing.

## DEER

Whitetail deer are one of the most sought-after game because of their availability and the lean meat they provide. For most of the United States, the bowhunting season lasts much longer than a fire-arm season.

When getting started to hunt whitetail, you should spend the offseason researching different



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land to find signs of their presence. Here are some factors to look for when finding suitable hunting locations.

**Rubs:** Bucks mark their territory by rubbing their antlers on trees. You can easily get an idea of the size of wildlife and how long they were there by analyzing the height of the rubs and its freshness.

**Bedding areas:** Look for

depressions in grass, leaves and pine needles to discover these areas. Learning these places helps you understand travel patterns so you can set your stand in a high-traffic location.

## ELK

Elk hunting is extremely popular in Western America. If you're not familiar with this type of game, it's a good idea to

team up with a professional guide for your first time out. It's also beneficial to prepare for more aggressive wildlife as you begin an elk-hunting trip as bears and wolves are also common in this part of the country.

## FOWL

Hunting birds is an activity that is usually performed by teams of friends and your

favorite canine. The sport requires perfectly blending in with your surroundings through blinds and camouflage and can be enhanced by expertly performing their specific call with a specialized device.

Dress appropriately as you will likely find yourself in the water or field as you wait for a flock to reveal its location.