



Safety First

Firearm Safety

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| Treat every firearm as if it is loaded. Always assume a firearm is loaded, even if you believe it isn't. |
| Always point the muzzle in a safe direction. Never point a firearm at anything you do not intend to shoot. |
| Be sure of your target and what is beyond it. Identify your target clearly and ensure there are no obstructions or other people/animals behind it. |
| Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot. Only put your finger on the trigger when you have identified your target and are ready to fire. |
| Never use alcohol or drugs before or while handling firearms. Impairment can lead to dangerous mistakes. |
| Store firearms and ammunition separately and securely. Prevent unauthorized access, especially by children. |

General Safety

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| Wear hunter orange. Make yourself visible to other hunters. |
| Carry a first-aid kit. Be prepared for minor injuries. |
| Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. This is crucial in case of emergencies. |
| Be aware of weather conditions. Dress appropriately and be prepared for changes in weather. |
| Carry a map and compass/GPS. Know how to navigate in the wilderness. |
| Stay hydrated and carry enough food. Prevent exhaustion and dehydration. |

Essential Gear Checklist

Clothing and Personal Items

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| Hunting attire | Camouflage clothing suitable for the environment, hunter orange vest/hat |
| Boots | Waterproof, insulated boots appropriate for terrain and weather |
| Socks | Moisture-wicking socks to prevent blisters |
| Gloves | Insulated gloves for cold weather |
| Hat | Warm hat or cap |
| Backpack | Durable backpack to carry gear |

Hunting Equipment

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| Firearm/Bow | Cleaned, sighted-in rifle, shotgun, or bow |
| Ammunition/Arrows | Appropriate ammunition or arrows for the game being hunted |
| Knife | Sharp hunting knife |
| Binoculars | Binoculars for spotting game |
| Rangefinder | Laser rangefinder for accurate distance measurement |
| Game Bags | Bags for transporting harvested game |

Navigation and Survival

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| Map & Compass/GPS | Topographic map and compass or GPS device |
| First Aid Kit | Comprehensive first aid kit |
| Water/Food | Sufficient water and high-energy food |
| Fire Starter | Waterproof matches, lighter, or fire starter |
| Emergency Blanket | Lightweight emergency blanket |
| Headlamp/Flashlight | Headlamp or flashlight with extra batteries |

Tracking and Scouting

Identifying Animal Tracks

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| Deer Tracks: Heart-shaped, cloven hoof prints. Size varies depending on the deer species. |
| Elk Tracks: Larger than deer tracks, with more rounded hoof prints. |
| Bear Tracks: Large, five-toed prints with claws usually visible. |
| Coyote/Fox Tracks: Oval-shaped, with four toes and claw marks. Coyote tracks are larger than fox tracks. |
| Wild Turkey Tracks: Three toes pointing forward and one pointing backward. Distinctive scratching marks may also be visible. |
| Rabbit Tracks: Front feet tracks are smaller and rounder, while hind feet tracks are larger and elongated, showing the rabbit's hopping pattern. |

Scouting Techniques

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| Use Maps: Study topographic maps to identify potential game habitats, such as feeding areas, bedding areas, and travel corridors. |
| Look for Sign: Search for tracks, droppings, rubs, scrapes, and other signs of animal activity. |
| Glassing: Use binoculars or a spotting scope to scan open areas for game, especially during early morning and late evening. |
| Trail Cameras: Deploy trail cameras to monitor game activity in specific areas. |
| Wind Direction: Always be aware of the wind direction to avoid alerting game to your presence. |
| Timing: Scout during different times of the day and different weather conditions to understand animal movement patterns. |

Ethical Hunting Practices

Fair Chase

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| Respect the Animal: Give the animal a fair chance. Avoid using unfair or unsportsmanlike methods. |
| Know Your Limits: Only take shots that you are confident you can make accurately and ethically. |
| Use Appropriate Equipment: Use equipment that is suitable for the game you are hunting and legal in your area. |
| Avoid High-Fence Hunting: High-fence hunting can limit the animal's ability to escape and is often considered unethical. |

Respecting Wildlife and Habitat

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| Minimize Impact: Leave the hunting area as you found it. Avoid littering, damaging vegetation, or disturbing wildlife. |
| Respect Private Property: Obtain permission before hunting on private land. |
| Report Violations: Report any suspected hunting violations to the appropriate authorities. |
| Support Conservation: Support conservation efforts by purchasing hunting licenses and contributing to wildlife organizations. |

Post-Harvest Ethics

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| Proper Game Care: Handle harvested game with respect. Field dress the animal promptly and properly to preserve the meat quality. |
| Waste Not: Utilize as much of the animal as possible. Donate meat to food banks or use the hide and antlers. |
| Report Harvest: Accurately report your harvest to the appropriate wildlife agency. |
| Respect the Animal's Life: Take a moment to appreciate the animal's life and the role it plays in the ecosystem. |