

# INTRODUCTION TO HUNTER EDUCATION

Goal: To introduce the Hunter Education Program, program sponsorship and funding efforts throughout North America.

## Lesson 1: Welcome and Introduction to the Course

In this lesson you will:

- Recognize hunter education requirements

## Welcome to Hunter Education!

This hunter education program was produced by Outdoor Roadmap to help develop your knowledge, skills and attitudes about:

- Safe, legal and ethical hunting.
- North America's hunting heritage.
- Principles and practices of wildlife conservation.
- The role hunters play in wildlife conservation.

By successfully completing this course, you'll learn to be:

- **Safe** by following all firearm and hunting safety rules;
- **Responsible** about hunting, wildlife, conservation and hunting laws;
- **Well-informed** by knowing and showing acceptable behavior and

- attitudes while hunting; and
- **Involved** by joining and participating in hunting and conservation organizations.

## About this Course

It is recommended that you check with your local state or provincial wildlife agency, as additional personal instruction and evaluation of students' knowledge, skills and attitudes may be required.



## Why Is Hunter Education Important?

Hunter education started in New York in 1949. Hunters had to take firearms safety training before they could buy a hunting license. Hunter education later expanded to other states and provinces. Now it is required almost everywhere in North America.

Hunter education is important because it:

- Helps prevent hunting and shooting incidents.
- Improves hunter behavior and compliance with hunting laws.

Preventing hunting-related shooting incidents is the first

## > Hot Links

To take the online version of this hunter education course, visit [www.ORMtraining.com](http://www.ORMtraining.com)

To find an instructor or a field day near you, visit the OutdoorRoadmap Training Directory at: [www.ORMoutdoors.com](http://www.ORMoutdoors.com)

To find a place to hunt, get the best information on what gear and strategies you'll need and to connect with other hunters, visit [www.OutdoorRoadmap.com](http://www.OutdoorRoadmap.com).



[OutdoorRoadmap.com](http://OutdoorRoadmap.com)

## About OutdoorRoadmap.com

OutdoorRoadmap.com is a one-stop online source of information and services related to hunting, target shooting and conservation. Outdoor Roadmap hosts a vibrant community where visitors trade tips, stories, photos and videos. By teaming with partners and a growing community of outdoor enthusiasts, OutdoorRoadmap.com offers interactive maps and tools, product reviews, discounts on gear, event listings, training and licensing resources, and a wealth of outdoor information.

concern of hunter education. Also, promoting safe, ethical and legal hunting practices improves public acceptance of hunting and helps uphold our hunting tradition.

## Who Funds Hunter Education?

Hunter Education programs are often community efforts that are supported by many people and organizations. The main sources of funding and support are:

- State/Provincial wildlife agencies
- Hunting and conservation organizations such as the National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Safari Club International
- U.S. Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program. This program, which is administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the United States, provides major funding from excise taxes placed on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. These funds are used by state wildlife agencies for wildlife restoration, hunter education and shooting range development.
- Sportsmen's clubs and other local



## Hunting is safe and getting safer.

During the last 30 years hunting-related shooting incidents have decreased dramatically. Today, hunting is one of the safest outdoor activities, thanks to hunter education.

### Why is hunting getting safer?

- Hunting Regulations: for example, laws requiring hunters to wear fluorescent orange during some hunting seasons.
- Hunter Education: now required in 49 states and 10 provinces of Canada. (Alaska is currently considering mandatory Hunter Education).

organizations and businesses  
To learn what agency or organization is responsible for hunter education in your state or province, visit your state's or province's department of natural resources government website.

## Lesson 2: Why Do We Hunt?

In this lesson you will:

- Identify the reasons why people hunt.
- Hunting is a natural activity.**
- People hunted for thousands of years, before and after learning how to grow plants and raise animals for food.
  - Before the 1900s, people

throughout North America depended on their hunting and outdoor skills to survive.

- Even though farms produce most of our food now, many people still enjoy hunting.

Hunting is different now than it was when this country was first being settled. While, it's still exciting and challenging, today there are rules guiding when, where and how you can hunt. That's because, more than 100 years ago, wildlife populations were in danger due to habitat loss and the fact there were no hunting regulations. Back then, people who loved wildlife and hunting demanded laws to protect wildlife populations. Their commitment launched one of the greatest conservation success stories ever and is why we can still enjoy hunting now.

Today, hunting provides so much more than food. Hunting is a:

- Family tradition.
- Form of outdoor recreation people can enjoy with their family and friends.
- Chance to get closer to wildlife, learn about animals and plants and understand how we're a part of the food chain.
- Way to learn how people lived before farming and business practices made food so readily available in North America.



*Hunting is one of the safest outdoor activities, thanks to hunter education.*

*“I don’t know—I just like hunting.”*



humans lived. Even though this kind of self-reliant lifestyle may not be necessary today, it is important to people who enjoy hunting.

Many people will say things such as, “Hunting keeps wildlife from overpopulating, and hunting licenses pay for conservation.” All of this is true, but hunters also have personal reasons why they hunt.

**Hunting is relaxing.**

Some hunters say the worst day hunting is better than the best day at work or school. “Hunting takes your mind off of your worries and gives you time to relax.”

- Means of becoming more self-reliant, by using the same skills people have used since ancient times to find food for the table.
- Great way to exercise and relax in the outdoors.
- Perfect opportunity to explore wild places, improve your outdoor skills and feel the excitement of the chase.
- Natural experience that can end with a tasty and healthy wild game meal.

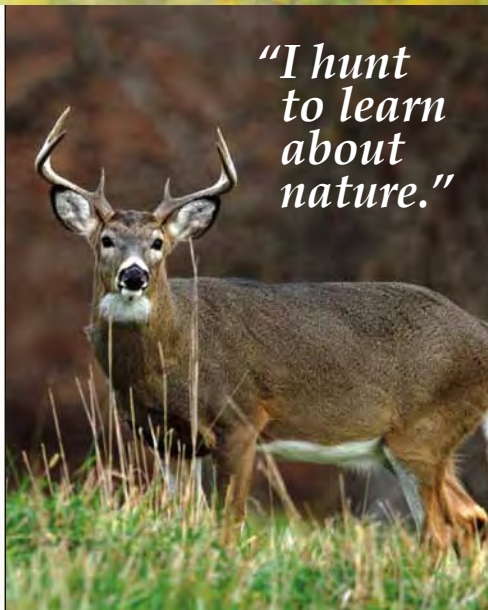
Hunting means many things to millions of people: friendship, nature, excitement, freedom, peaceful times, supporting conservation and feeling good about oneself. Hunting is all this and more!

**What People Say About Hunting**

There are many reasons why people hunt.

**Hunters enjoy wildlife.**

- Almost every hunter loves wildlife, yet they kill animals. However, hunting has nothing to do with violence or aggression. Instead, it’s similar to farming and gardening. People protect and care for their chickens and their vegetables, but usually raise them for food. Likewise, hunters support natural resource conservation and laws



*“I hunt to learn about nature.”*

that protect wildlife populations. They may kill and eat individual game animals, but their hunting experience includes so much more.

**Hunters like to be self-reliant.**

- It’s easier and often less expensive to buy what you need at the store rather than to make your own clothes or grow your own food. But some people are “do-it-yourselfers” because they enjoy the activity of making or growing things they need. Hunting is a lot like that. It’s about enjoying the hunt, not just having the product. They know how good it feels to have the skills to survive on their own in nature—the way the earliest



*“I hunt to relax and to get away from it all.”*

**Hunting provides lessons about nature.**

In nature, every living thing is part of a food chain. Sunlight and nutrients help plants grow. Plants feed mice, pheasants, deer and other animals. These animals feed meat eaters such as hawks, coyotes and mountain lions.

People are part of a food chain, too. They buy food that farmers and ranchers grow. Hunters know their place in the food chain and how the food chain works personally, as predators. Hunting provides lifelong, firsthand learning about nature’s cycle of life and death.

Hunters know the satisfaction—and also accept the

responsibility—that comes with harvesting game animals.

### **Hunting allows you to fully experience the outdoors.**

Hunting heightens a person's senses and is a great way to enjoy wildlife. Hunters develop a keen awareness and special skills for noticing the sights, sounds, smells and feelings in the wild outdoors.

Hunters hone their skills while waiting silently in a duck blind on a crisp autumn morning. As the birds fly in, they watch as the first rays of sunlight illuminate their colorful plumage. They hear the raucous honking of geese in a cornfield or the "whoosh" when they silently glide onto the lake. Hunters smell the fresh air

a turkey gobbles in response to your call or a bull elk challenges your bugling, it is exhilarating. Interacting with wild animals in their language is an experience few nonhunters will ever know.

and then knowing how to read animal sign once there. Hunters work to improve their knowledge and outdoor skills. They enjoy the mystery and suspense of tracking and taking wild game. Hunting



*"I hunt because I like adventure."*



*"I hunt to interact with wildlife."*

in the woods after a spring rain or the musky scent left behind from a herd of elk on the move. They hear the rattle of antlers as two whitetail bucks fight for dominance. Hunters taste venison steak fried on a camp grill. They feel a special kind of friendship when hunting with others.

### **Hunting lets you interact with wildlife.**

Calling game is a thrill. When

### **Hunting offers outdoor adventure.**

Hunting develops woodsman-ship skills. Mastering these challenges can provide a sense of freedom and satisfaction. It may require hiking up a long, steep hill to an area where game crosses,

involves split-second decisions and being able to handle different situations, including being prepared for emergencies and wilderness survival.

No hunt is like any other and no one can know all there is to know about hunting. To make the most of every hunting adventure, hunters continuously develop the following skills:

- Marksmanship
- Reading animal sign
- Game tracking
- Still hunting
- Habitat development
- Field dressing
- Cooking
- First aid and wilderness survival

### **Hunting is a privilege everyone in North America can enjoy.**

Choosing to hunt is a gift of freedom. In many countries, hunting is only for wealthy landowners or people of power

*"I hunt because I have freedom of choice."*



and influence. In North America, wildlife belongs to everyone, and you can choose to take up hunting now or continue hunting as a long-term, cherished tradition.

### Hunting develops skills and improves self esteem.

Being a good hunter takes skill. Developing hunting skills takes time and improving those skills over a lifetime gives hunters a sense of accomplishment. A skilled hunter can:

- Call in a flock of ducks
- Train a hunting

*"I hunt because it keeps me healthy."*

*"I hunt with man's best friend."*



dog to near perfection for game retrieval

- Stand unseen within 30 yards of a large bull elk
- Wait patiently for an opportunity to take the best shot

### Hunting provides health benefits.

Hunters must stay in shape. Keeping up with an eager bird dog, hiking hills or setting decoys keeps hunters active and healthy.

Game meat is healthy, tasty and has a low fat content when compared to most store-bought meats. Plus, a diet of game animals does not include the chemicals used at the feed lot to make livestock grow faster, fatter or bigger. Game meat has great flavor that store-bought meat cannot match. Many hunters pride themselves on providing their families with wild meat and vegetables from their gardens for wholesome and flavorful meals.

### Hunters enjoy time afield with their dogs.

Owning and training a hunting dog is a special experience. A good hunting dog is more than a dog. It's a hunting partner. Hunting dogs live to hunt. Watching them seek and retrieve game is an exciting reason to go afield.

### Lesson 3: Recognize the Truth about Hunting

In this lesson you will:

- Identify the false beliefs about hunting.

There are many common misunderstandings and false beliefs about hunting. The following set of questions and answers presents correct information about hunting.

### Is Hunting is dangerous?

**No.** Hunters just about everywhere must pass a hunter education course focused on safe



hunting practices, hunting laws, safe gun handling and other topics. Also, there are strict laws to regulate when, where, what and how people can hunt. As a result, hunting has one of the lowest incident rates of all types of outdoor recreation.

### Does hunting eliminate animal populations?

**No.** Not a single animal on the endangered species list got there because of regulated hunting. Environmental concerns and loss of habitat are the main problems for endangered species. Wildlife agencies closely regulate hunting today. Limited seasons and bag limits ensure that adequate numbers of animals survive winter for giving birth or breeding during the following spring. Most hunted species are common animals. Those that are not as common, but are controlled to prevent habitat problems or unwanted interactions



*While buffalo almost were wiped out by the late 1800s, it was unregulated market hunting - NOT legal, regulated hunting - that reduced their populations.*

with humans, have strict hunting quotas. Wildlife biologists issue a conservative number of permits to meet the harvest objectives.

### Were buffalo were nearly wiped out by hunters?

**No.** Market hunting, which was unregulated, nearly wiped out the North American Bison in the 1800s. At that time, there were no laws to protect wildlife. In the early 1900s, concerned hunters called for hunting regulations and an end to market hunting as a way to conserve remaining game animal populations. Hunters such as U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt and his hunting friends led the charge. They founded the Boone and Crockett Club and created legislation to conserve wildlife for all to enjoy. Due to the early efforts of hunter/conservationists, once rare species such as white-tailed deer, elk, pronghorn, wood ducks and wild turkeys are abundant today.

### Is hunting necessary?

**No.** While most people could survive without hunting, it doesn't mean hunting is

unimportant. It is a tradition that allows people to gather their own food and interact with and learn about nature. People value their hunting time as it relieves stress and provides quality time with family and friends. Hunting provides benefits that everyone can enjoy. They are:

- **Wildlife Management**—Keeping wildlife populations healthy and in balance with available habitat is important. Hunting is a tool wildlife agencies depend on to

people, crop damage and vehicle collisions.

- **Funding for Wildlife**—Hunting licenses and special taxes on hunting equipment contribute about \$800 million to the economy annually. These funds provide an average of about \$2 million every day for wildlife management, research and hunter education.
- **Jobs and the Economy**—Hunting creates 600,000 jobs in the U.S. alone, creating salaries

» **85** percent of the public is in favor of legal, regulated hunting.

help manage wildlife numbers. When there are more animals than the habitat can support, it can cause severe population declines as the animals destroy their own habitat, spread diseases and often suffer from malnutrition and/or starvation. Wildlife management reduces conflicts between wildlife and

and wages of nearly \$21 billion. People spend nearly \$25 billion a year to go hunting. In addition, the money hunters spend generates about \$5 billion in federal tax revenue annually.

- **Help for the needy**—Sharing game meat with the community is a longstanding hunting tradition. Today, hunters share

meat with family and friends and donate tons of healthy game meat to programs providing food for people in need. Hunters also raise money to pay meat processors, so they can donate processed game without cost to charitable programs.

### **Are illegal hunters everywhere?**

**No.** Legal hunters demand effective conservation and law enforcement. They have no tolerance for illegal hunting or poaching. Hunters not only demand laws to protect wildlife, they also turn in poachers to wildlife authorities.

### **I know a lot about guns. Why should I take hunter education?**

Hunter education is not just about guns but how to safely use

all kinds of hunting equipment, especially firearms. Hunter education includes gun handling safety rules; hunter ethics; laws; wildlife conservation and identification; the hunter's role in wildlife conservation; care and use of harvested game; first aid and wilderness survival; and showing respect for oneself, other hunters, landowners, nonhunters, and natural resources.

Hunter education helps prevent hunting and shooting incidents, improves hunter behavior and compliance with hunting laws. It also contributes to acceptance of hunting by the general public.

### **Most people don't hunt. If the majority is supposed to rule, why is hunting allowed?**

About 20 million people in North America hunt. That's a minority, but their families and friends and people who know about hunting and conservation efforts support them. According to a 2006 Responsive Management survey, about 85 percent of the public is in favor of legal, regulated hunting.

## **Lesson 4: Hunter Education Requirements at a Glance**

In this lesson you will:

- Identify sources of information to determine hunting requirements for specific states and provinces.

Hunters must meet the requirements for the state or province in which they are hunting. Before beginning a hunt, you should read the most current hunting regulations of that particular state or province.

### **Generally Speaking:**

- States and provinces require the completion of a hunter education course.
- States and provinces have records of hunter education graduates.
- Official hunter education certifications are accepted in all other states and provinces.

For information on hunter education requirements in United States and Canada visit: [OutdoorRoadmap.com/hunting-regulations-and-safety-training](http://OutdoorRoadmap.com/hunting-regulations-and-safety-training)



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