

for whatever reason, may close their land, vote for laws that limit hunting opportunities, or try to ban hunting altogether.

To preserve hunting in Montana we all need to behave responsibly—to the land, wildlife, the laws, and other people. Hunter Education provides you the tools and knowledge to do just that.

Who is responsible for administering Hunter Education courses and managing wildlife in Montana?

In Montana, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is responsible for administering Hunter Education courses and managing wildlife. Most volunteer instructors are hunters who are dedicating their time to make sure you get a good start as a hunter.

Montana Hunter Education classes are free to participants. Even though the instructors are volunteers, Hunter Education still costs money because manuals and other class materials are not free. Much of the money for wildlife management and Hunter Education comes from a tax placed on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. *(See page 107 for more information.)*

Why you hunt

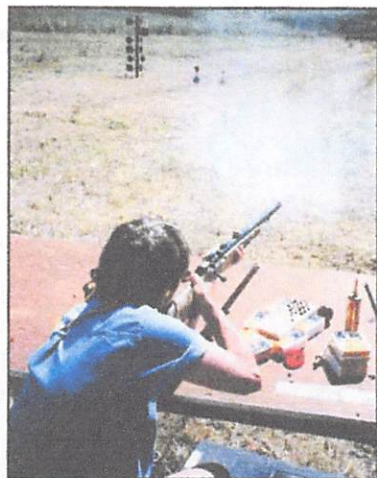
Is hunting necessary?

For tens of thousands of years humans hunted to survive. In many cases, we got our food, shelter, clothing, and tools from the animals we killed. For our ancestors, a successful hunt meant the difference between life and death. Today we get our food from grocery stores, and we no longer need to hunt to provide ourselves with shelter, clothing, or tools. However, some people still hunt primarily for food.

Just because we no longer *need* to hunt for survival doesn't mean that hunting is no longer necessary or desirable. We could also survive without swimming or riding bikes, without playing basketball, or spending time with friends.

There are many personal reasons why we hunt and why we value hunting. Hunting allows us to:

- 🦌 Gather our own food.
- 🦌 Spend time with family and friends.
- 🦌 Participate in family and community traditions.
- 🦌 Learn about animals and plants.
- 🦌 Be a part of nature and the natural world.
- 🦌 Develop skills and become self-reliant.
- 🦌 Exercise, relax, and get away from "the daily grind."
- 🦌 Explore wild places and feel the excitement of the chase.
- 🦌 Enjoy the taste of wild game meat.



Knowledge

Knowledge is learning and understanding the basics of safe gun handling and hunting. Before being trained in the skill of firearm shooting, you should know how the firearm operates and how to handle it safely.

Involvement

Part of the process of becoming a true, responsible sportsman is becoming involved in efforts to make hunting a respected sport. That includes teaching others, working with landowners, and cooperating with game wardens. It also includes joining conservation organizations, which will help preserve habitat and promote wildlife management.



Why is Hunter Education important?

Hunting safely

What we call Hunter Education used to be called Hunter Safety. In 1949, New York became the first state to require young hunters to take a hunter safety course. Many hunters didn't know how to handle firearms safely, and hunting accidents occurred at an alarming rate. To make hunting safer, experienced hunters organized classes to teach others basic safety techniques. It worked. There are now fewer hunting accidents.

Montana began offering voluntary Hunter Education classes in the late 1940s, and in 1957 classes became mandatory for all hunters under the age of 18. Today anyone born after January 1, 1985, must complete hunter education before they can buy a hunting license in Montana.

Hunting, like the public view of it, has changed over the years. As a result, Hunter Education has had to change, too. Safety is still a big part of Hunter Education, but today's classes also teach responsibility and ethics.

Hunter Education is important because it helps to:

- Prevent hunting and shooting accidents.
- Improve hunter behavior to maintain public acceptance of hunting.
- Ensure the future of hunting in Montana by educating the next generation of hunters.

The responsible and respectful hunter understands and respects the views of non-hunters. Many people have never hunted and don't understand what it's all about. Others simply disagree with hunting and killing animals. But in some instances, people who have nothing against hunting may have seen hunters doing things they don't like. For instance, wearing blood stained clothing in public. Irresponsible and disrespectful behavior of a few hunters can affect the public's attitude toward all hunters. Those who are against hunting,

Table of Contents

Chapter One

Hunting and Hunter Education.....	4
What is the purpose of Hunter Education?	4
Why is Hunter Education important?	5
Who is responsible for administering Hunter Education courses and managing wildlife in Montana?	6
Why you hunt	6

Chapter Two

Hunter Responsibility

The Responsible Hunter.....	10
What makes a hunter responsible?	10
What are laws and regulations?	10
What are ethics?.....	11

Chapter Three

Today's Firearms

Identification and Operation	16
Basic parts of a firearm	16
How do firearms work?	19
Common features of firearms.....	19
Differences between rifles, shotguns, and handguns.....	24
Identifying and operating firearm actions.....	26

Chapter Four

Firearm Safety

Basic firearm safety rules	31
Accepting a firearm	31
Loading and unloading a firearm.....	32
Transporting, casing, and uncasing firearms ..	33
Field carries	35
Firearm safety in the field	36
When is a shot safe?	39
Cleaning and storing your firearm	40

Chapter Five

Understanding Ammunition

Ammunition	45
Choosing the right ammunition for your firearm.....	50
Know your firearm's range.....	51

Chapter Six

Shooting Skills.....

Why do you need marksmanship?	54
Your dominant eye	55
Rifle-shooting skills	55
Shotgun-shooting skills.....	59
Sighting-in your rifle and patterning your shotgun	61
Where can you go to shoot?	62

Chapter Seven

Preparing for the Hunt and Outdoor Safety.....

Introduction	65
What is physical fitness?	65
Where can you hunt?	66
Topographic maps and compasses	67
Why do you need a plan?	69
What should you wear in the field?	70
Outdoor essentials: the rest of your gear	72
First aid.....	73
Extreme conditions.....	73
Oops, you're lost!	77
Water safety	79

Chapter Eight

Making the Shot and Afterward

What techniques can you use to hunt big game?	81
Picking your shot.....	83
Where should you aim?	83
What to do after the shot	84
Field care and transportation	87

Chapter Nine

Special Hunting and

Safety Concerns.....

Elevated stand hunting.....	91
What about using Off-Highway, Utility, and All-Terrain Vehicles (OHVs, UTVs, & ATVs) while hunting?.....	93
Turkey hunting	95
Hunting in bear country.....	96
What should you do if attacked?	99
Retrieving game meat in bear country	100

Chapter Ten

Conservation, Wildlife Management, and Identification

Respect for wildlife.....	102
What is habitat, and why is it important?	103
Wildlife management and conservation principles	105
What is conservation, and how do hunters help?	106
Wildlife identification	109