

# Hunting

GUIDE



# Be Sure to Have Papers in Order

Hunting rules and regulations vary widely from location to location, but licenses are generally required.

Those caught without the proper credentials can face serious charges. At the same time, licensing fees are typically used to fund conservation programs aimed at local wildlife and fish.

## WHERE TO GO

Check with local municipalities and the state to learn more about which licenses are required. The type of game you plan to hunt can have a direct impact on what's required. In many cases, obtaining a license can be as easy as visiting a retail outlet that sells fishing and hunting equipment, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. So you can get needed paperwork while grabbing additional gear at the same time. You can also typically register for licenses on your individual state's website. You'll usually be asked to select the type of certification, and fill out a form before receiving your legal documents. Some states allow registration by phone, as well.

## DIFFERENT LICENSES

There are a number of different licenses, depending on the type of activity. States may also have higher fees for

non-residents. There are special requirements for anyone who wants to fish, trap or hunt in coastal or inland waterways. National wildlife refuges have their own permits and user fees. Hunter safety courses may be required, in particular for first-time hunters and youth hunters. You may also be able to purchase combina-

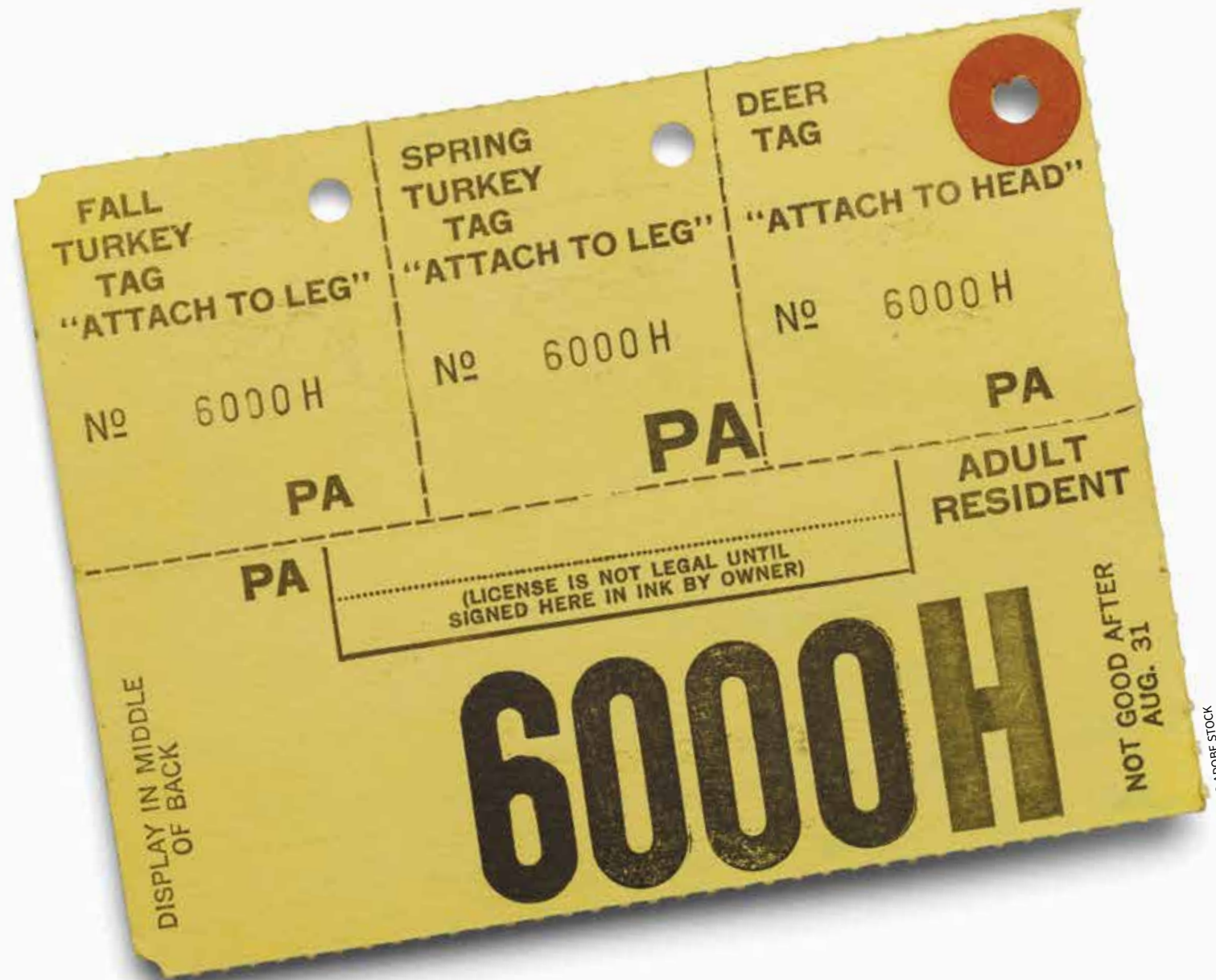
tion hunting and fishing packages, and lifetime licenses, depending on your local regulations. Taking care of these simple requirements takes the guesswork and worry out of things if you run into a game warden this hunting season.

## IF YOU DON'T

Penalties for those who

hunt without a license also vary from place to place, so you'll have to do your own research to find out what's at stake if you don't follow the proper regulations. Fines are common, as are requirements to pay court costs and attorney fees. If you are convicted of game-related infractions, you may also lose the right to

hunt in the future. Hunting offseason can also lead to steep financial penalties, and officials may again revoke your hunting privileges. These fines are typically directed toward programs that preserve natural habitats and other programs aimed at conservation and protection of wildlife.



# Take Care with Partners, Land

There's a great sense of companionship with fellow hunters and with nature when participating in this sport.

It's important to keep several key things in mind for both safety and enjoyment.

## PICKING A PARTNER

Your partner on these adventures needs to be someone you deeply trust. In case of an accident or emergency, this person will be required to think clearly and act quickly. They also need to know how to keep a secret. You don't want to draw a crowd by bragging too much after the two of you find that sweet spot out on the lake, or an out-of-the-way locale where wildlife is plentiful. The less said, the better chances you'll have as a team on your next outing.

## ARRIVE ON TIME

Pack up your gear the night before, and go to bed early. Be sure to be awake and on the road with plenty of time to get to the location and set up before wildlife become active. Respectful partners don't make someone else late, thus potentially missing out on a trophy. Be courteous and safe if using a recreational vehicle. You may come across other hunters or campers while outdoors, so always completely investigate a noise before firing your weapon.



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## RESPECT LANDOWNERS

Don't hunt on private property without permission. Besides being unethical, it's illegal and could land you and any partner in a serious legal mess. Whether you fish or hunt, be respectful of the land and water. Pick up after yourself. Bring along trash bags

for snack wrappers, water bottles and other refuse. Leave each space as you found it. If you are hunting with permission on someone else's land, consider sharing a portion of your catch or kill.

## STAY TOGETHER

Pledge to remain together

during the extent of your excursion. If it's turned into a quiet day, discuss an early trip back to camp with one another — rather than leaving someone to hunt alone. That can present a bigger risk should something go wrong, including injuries, illness or getting lost. Set some pre-

hunt guidelines for signaling if you're going to be out of speaking distance from one another. Set boundaries for one another, in everything from how much they enjoy chatting or who gets the first shot when an animal is spotted. Consider a rotating schedule.



# The Right Gear

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Sometimes success comes down to what you wear and what you bring.

Experienced hunters and fishermen know what to bring based on years of hard-won experience. But newcomers may be unsure when it comes to gearing up. Here's a general checklist to make sure your experience is fun, safe and rewarding.

## THINK COMFORT

Hunting and fishing can be a waiting game. You may wait hours, or longer, for the perfect target. So comfort is just as important as durability. Hunting can be hard on

the feet, while fishing is often associated with the risk of slips and falls. Shoddy boots can lead to blisters or taking a tumble. Wet or cold feet turn everything into a chore. In both instances, look for well-fitting boots that are waterproof. Backpacks are essential, in particular on longer outings. Purchase one with enough space for water, snacks and a first-aid kit.

## WEAPON OF CHOICE

In some cases, the choice of what you'll carry is based on regulations. States may institute seasons where certain weapons can or can't be used. Always check with online resources to make

sure you are in compliance before heading out. Otherwise, choose a rifle or gun based on comfort level. Tired of the same old option? If you're looking to upgrade, discuss what's available with representatives from local sporting goods stores, gun and ammo shops or the local wildlife and fisheries offices.

## PLENTY OF AMMO

A good rule of thumb with ammunition is to bring more than you think you'll ever need. Even expert marksmen have to contend with fast-moving wily creatures that lead to missed shots. You don't want to miss out on that key moment — or worse have to call

off a larger trip — because you used up all of your ammo. Consider purchasing a bow for an exciting new twist on hunting.

## DON'T FORGET

For obvious reasons, it's easy to focus on guns and ammo to the exclusion of most other things. Accessory items like enhanced vision or night goggles may come in handy. Binoculars are often critically overlooked. They can help you get a better idea of what's headed your way, or to scout out a nearby spot if it's been a slow day. Stay weather-aware and bring additional clothing, as needed, to protect yourself from precipitation or cold conditions.

# Hunting Safely

Injuries can and do happen, so remain vigilant while spending time outdoors

Hundreds of hunters are killed each year while thousands more are injured, according to annual reports. Gun safety is of critical importance. Many other injuries are related to everyday activities associated with the sport, like climbing into or exiting from a deer stand.

## FOR HUNTERS

Time spent outdoors presents its own unique challenges and risks, whether hunting or fishing. Begin by following all safety precautions with your weapon of choice. Refrain from getting intoxicated. You'll need to be alert and clear-headed when firing a weapon or operating a boat. Share your plans with others, including when you plan to arrive, where you will be, and how long you intend to be gone. Make sure they are prepared to sound the alarm if you aren't in contact by a certain time. If possible, travel with a partner. Wear bright orange so that you are recognizable to others, avoiding white and tan-colored clothing.

Closely track the weather before and during any trip so that you're adequately prepared. If strong storms are in the forecast, consider staying home. Lightning kills some 50 Americans each year, according



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to the National Weather Service. Hundreds more are seriously injured. The risk of collision is greater when boating in heavy rain, and hunters with heavy backpacks may struggle to navigate out of the woods.

## FOR NON-HUNTERS

Campers, hikers and other

adventurers should pay close attention to hunting seasons, so they're aware of when hunters are most likely to be present. Non-hunters should also wear brightly colored clothing. Keep dogs on a leash so they're not mistaken for wildlife. If you find that you are still uncomfortable after taking these precautions, consider

heading to a place like a national park where hunting is forbidden.

## FOR BEGINNERS

There's a lot to take in for beginning hunters, from required licensing to choice of weapon to the range of options for gear. You won't become an expert over the first season,

but dedication and practice will help smooth the way. Start with a hunter safety course. Depending on where you live, they may actually be required. Find out more about dates, times and fees for these courses via the internet or by discussing it with local fisheries and wildlife officials and sporting goods store personnel.

# Hiring a Guide

Hunting is full of variables each year, whether because of population numbers, timing or the weather.

Being unfamiliar with the wildlife and terrain, whether because you're new to the area or are away from home, can end up making it that much tougher. Consider hiring a guide to ensure the best hunt in unfamiliar territory.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Talk to friends about their experiences with guides and check online reviews.

Interview more than one guide before deciding, and come prepared with lots of questions. Ask how long they've been in business and how long they've been in the area. Ask for references. Discuss their track record on safety, since that's such a critical element to any hunting experience. Make sure they are deeply familiar with the property, waterways and wildlife.

## BEFORE YOU GO

Once you've decided on a guide, it's time to set the parameters for your hunt. Do you mind a long hike to get there? Were you planning on camping? The type of animals you can hunt may be governed by season. If not, discuss that, as well. Have a conversation about your larger goals. Did you have a specific number in mind, or will you simply be



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content with whatever the experience brings?

Make sure that they've adequately scouted your intended area, both in the distant and more recent past. You're paying for institutional knowledge, but also key details about how things like population and migration are unfolding this season. Ask about success

rates with particular species, required permits and the size of the hunting area. Learning the number of annual hunts they've conducted will also give you a better idea of their level of expertise.

Ask about what else is provided in your hunt, including lodging, meals, hauling and processing. Make sure you

confirm transportation options for your party, both to and from the hunting site. The best guides will also know a thing or two about where to set up for the best results whether hunting or fishing.

## PEOPLE SKILLS

Deciding on a guide may come down to how you get

along with the specific person. The best guides have a deep well of knowledge and experience, but they also need to know how to lead people. They need to clearly outline the challenges involved, including the specific terrain. They need to be excellent communicators, with a conversational teaching style that you connect with.

# Tips for Packing Wisely

A smart packing routine ensures you have everything you need, but without weighing yourself down too much.

This is particularly important when you need to hike into a choice hunting site, rather than scare away nearby wildlife with a rumbling utility vehicle.

## THINK SAFETY

Begin packing each time by adding or reviewing crucial safety items. Every hunter or fisherman should have a first-aid kit with bandages, disinfectant, gauze and ointments in case of cuts or scrapes. Hunters who will be climbing into an elevated stand should also bring a harness and safety belt.

Knowing where you've traveled is crucial, whether on land or water. It's your choice whether to bring old-fashioned maps and compasses or to make use of modern-era GPS systems, but don't risk getting lost. It could have deadly consequences. Let your hunting partner know if you need to venture away on your own.

## PRO TIP

Position the most-needed items in the backpack's most accessible areas, either at the top of the bag or in dedicated outer pockets. Place any special tools or equipment in the pockets, as well. In some cases, these things may be needed at a moment's notice. You don't



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want to be fumbling around — or be forced into completely unpacking — in order to find something at the bottom.

## OTHER ESSENTIALS

Bring a water bottle or a hydration bladder. You may also need decoys, game calls,

scent attractors or eliminators, a game carrier, odorless insect repellent and sunscreen. Bring additional clothing that's weather specific. If you're staying overnight, you'll need more than a tent and sleeping bag. Pack a flashlight and lantern, camp chair, stove, mess kit, garbage bag, bathroom items,

matches, rope, meals and snacks.

Fishermen have their own unique requirements, including a hat, extra clothes in case you get wet (especially socks), waders if you plan to leave the shore, and a windbreaker. As for equipment, pack backups of all essential items. If there's

a mishap with your primary rod or reel, you'll be prepared. Make sure your extra reel is free of tangles. Bring several spools of fishing line, too. Snags can and do happen. You don't want to be forced to cut a fishing trip short because you're missing these basic elements.

# Building a Campfire

If you're planning on extending your next hunting excursion, knowing how to build a warming, long-lasting campfire can be critical.

Here's a look at the material you'll need, how to start a fire — and how to properly cook a tasty meal.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

A small hatchet, a folding saw and a sharp knife are handy tools that will ensure a great fire. Next, you'll need to collect wood that can be layered in order to encourage the flames. Cut limbs from downed trees that are about the thickness of your arm, making sure the center of the wood is dry. Avoid cutting from live trees, since they don't catch fire as easily. Use the hatchet to cut off smaller branches and make thin shavings, then collect twigs, straw and leaves. If it's raining, prepare the wood under a tarp to ensure that it's as dry as possible.

## GETTING STARTED

Pick a safe location for the fire, preferably in a fire pit. Make sure the flames are not near any grass, shrubbery, other debris and overhanging tree limbs. Experts recommend at least 10 feet of clearance on all sides. Build a perimeter around the fire with



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rocks or green wood to discourage it from spreading.

Place the thicker sticks on the ground, then the smaller branches and finally top it all off with the shavings and other kindling. Leave plenty of space for needed air to reach the interior of the fire. Light a

match and place it directly under the tinder. Once the first flames begin to appear, add more kindling. When a reliable fire is finally going at the base, add more fuel as needed.

## COOKING MEALS

The danger of eating under-

cooked wild game is always part of cooking meals over a campfire. The medical term is trichinellosis, and it happens when someone eats raw meat with trichinella larvae. Invest in a digital thermometer to ensure that all cooked meats reach the recommended inter-

nal temperatures, then you won't have to worry. Don't forget the aluminum foil, a multi-purpose item that can be used to cook directly on coals, wrap leftovers and line cookware. You can even mold it into a serving bowl or rudimentary pot, if needed.