

Section 3: Being A Hunter

Chapter 7: The Hunter's Responsibilities

STUDENT PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

In this chapter, the student should learn:

1. Things that make a responsible hunter
2. Responsibility to the resources
4. Why hunting laws are necessary and important
5. Why good marksmanship is important
6. How to sight-in a rifle or handgun
7. What is your dominant, or master eye
8. Proper game care

ETHICS

All hunters must accept the responsibilities that come with the sport, since hunting is often made up of a series of decisions that must be made in a split-second. The future of hunting may well depend upon how responsibly you make those decisions and the judgment you use. *A set of values or principles that aid in making good decisions is called **ethics**.*

A hunter has many different kinds of responsibilities. First, you must handle the firearm or bow according to safety guidelines. In addition, the responsible hunter must know the proper way to shoot a firearm and the right kind of firearm and ammunition for each kind of game. This is a combination of knowledge and skill that makes up an experienced hunter.

The responsible hunter must also know what clothes to wear for protection from the weather and from other hunters who may not be acting responsibly. Clothing choices change from season to season and with the various hunting techniques and styles.

The responsible hunter must have good social skills. This means getting along with the people within your hunting group and the person who owns the land you are hunting on. You must also consider any other people you might meet or who may see you going to or coming from a hunt. Remember, hunters are constantly being judged by others who may be non-hunters



HUNTER'S ETHICS KEY TERMS

Ethics
Conservation
Regulations
Wildlife Officer
(TIP) Turn-In-a-Poacher
Sight Picture
Master Eye
Field Dressing
Plucking
Skinning
Violation
Dressing

NRA Hunter's Code of Ethics

• I will consider myself an invited guest of the landowner, seeking his permission, and conduct myself that I may be welcome in the future.

• I will obey the rules of safe gun handling and will courteously but firmly insist that others who hunt with me do the same.

• I will obey all game laws and regulations, and will insist that my companions do likewise.

• I will do my best to acquire marksmanship and hunting skills that assure clean, sportsmanlike kills.

• I will support conservation efforts that assure good hunting for future generations of Americans.

• I will pass along to younger hunters the attitudes and skills essential to a true outdoor sportsman.

or even anti-hunters, and the actions of one can reflect upon all hunters. You should always be aware that you represent the sport even when you are not hunting. You should always do your best to project a good image to people, whether they are hunters or non-hunters.

The responsible hunter also knows how to conduct himself/herself when taking game to a check station. Often, non-hunters and members of the news media visit check stations. Imagine the impact upon the public if a few irresponsible hunters, who were behaving in a loud, boisterous way, were checking poorly cared for deer as a television crew taped the action. Do you think the actions of these few hunters could affect how others view all hunters? Do you think these hunters demonstrate respect for the sport or the game they've taken?

Conservation is the wise use of our natural resources. The responsible hunter understands the environment. You must know what good habitat is and generally how it helps wildlife. You must study the animals you hunt so you can learn their ways, habits, and hiding places, as well as food choices and needs.

The complete hunter also has the responsibility of protecting the environment to the best of his/her ability. We must recognize that for human beings to live, natural resources must be used. However, we also must recognize that it is our responsibility to use all resources wisely. Waste and irresponsibility are not conservation.

Only when you develop the knowledge, skill, and attitude to understand and take on these responsibilities as a hunter can you call yourself a complete hunter and sportsman.



Permission To Hunt

Approximately 95 percent of the land in Ohio is privately owned. As a result, most hunters do at least part of their hunting on land owned by an individual. This means that only five percent of the land in the state is publicly owned, and not all of this land is open to hunting.

It is each hunter's responsibility to cooperate with land-



owners to insure good hunter-landowner relationships. As a responsible hunter, you must recognize that you are a guest of the landowner. As a guest, it is respectful to get the landowner's permission to hunt well in advance of the actual hunting days.

If a landowner refuses permission to hunt on the land, you must accept this landowner's decision gracefully. Responsible hunters do not trespass on another's property. We know that an individual owns that property and hunting there without his/her knowledge is illegal. Hunting without permission has closed more private lands to hunting than any other act alone. In Ohio, the landowner's written permission is required for hunting and trapping on private lands.

The responsible hunter also has a clear understanding with the landowner about bringing friends along. Remember that these friends must also have written permission from the landowner before hunting.

Hunting Regulations

Regulations are rules or laws by which conduct is regulated. To be a safe and ethical hunter, you must observe all hunting laws. Hunting laws are enforced by **wildlife officers**. These laws

are necessary for three basic reasons:

1. To insure the safety and welfare of people
2. To insure everyone equal opportunity to hunt
3. To protect and conserve wildlife

Each state's hunting laws will differ, but almost all of these laws help to accomplish one or more of the goals listed above.

Many laws are for the protection of wildlife. **Closed seasons** (means that period of time during which the taking of wild animals is not allowed) provide protection to game during periods of reproduction and winter stress. **Bag limits** (means the number of animals that can be taken in a day or season) make it possible for the maximum number of hunters to take part in the allowable harvest. To the sportsmen, the need for closed seasons and bag limits is well understood and each law is followed.

Here are some of the other things responsible hunters must do or not do to make sure they get along well with landowners:

- Ask about the presence of livestock. Avoid hunting near livestock or buildings.
- Ask about gates. Always make it a rule to leave gates as you find them, whether open or closed.



**Hunters
Know The Law**
**Ohio Revised Code
Section 1533.17**
- No person shall hunt or trap upon any lands, pond, lake, or private waters without obtaining written permission from the owner or the owner's authorized agent.

Penalties are up to \$500.00 and 60 days in jail for a first offense. For a second offense the penalties are up to \$1,000.00, 6 months in jail, and/or loss of firearms or other hunting implements.

- Cross fences in ways to avoid loosening the wires or posts. Whenever possible, use gates to get through fences.
- Restrict all driving to roads and established trails. Driving off roads causes ruts which result in erosion and damage to the property.
- Never drive or walk through standing crops if damage might occur. Don't send a dog into standing crops if damage might occur.
- Don't park in a way that blocks gates or roadways.
- Be alert and report anything you think might be wrong, such as broken fence or injured livestock, to the landowner as soon as possible.
- Don't wear out your welcome. It is all right to hunt the same land several times during a season, but never hunt the same place day after day, thus depleting the wildlife rather than harvesting the surplus.
- Recognize that the landowner has done you a favor by allowing you to hunt. Stop to thank him after the hunt. You can say "Thanks" in many ways, such as helping with chores.
- Offer to share some of your game, which has been properly cleaned, as an appropriate gift. Remember the landowner on holidays.

Unfortunately, there are some who do not believe that rules are meant to help both wildlife and people. They risk lives and other hunters' reputations by breaking those rules. Some even expand their illegal activities to "non-game" animals. These people are not sportsmen. They are poachers and should be seen as a threat to the safety and reputation of responsible hunters.

Ohio wildlife officers work hard to enforce the state statutes and Wildlife Code regulations governing hunting, but unfortunately they may not catch every violation.

A responsible hunter reports wildlife law *violations*- *an act that breaks any regulation or law*, to a wildlife officer, to the county sheriff's department, or to Turn In a Poacher (TIP).

Ohio's TIP Program is helping to curtail poaching throughout the state. *TIP* is designed to involve the public in reporting wildlife violations. Citizens who observe wildlife violations should write down the information, and then call the TIP toll-free hot line, 1-800-762-2437.



Poachers are hurting our sport and costing us places to hunt.

DON'T GIVE THEM A BREAK!

Report ALL wildlife violations.



Marksmanship

Being a responsible hunter also involves knowing which firearm and ammunition combination is best suited for the type of game being hunted. In addition, it involves developing the shooting skill necessary to make a quick, clean kill when the opportunity of a shot presents itself. To do this, the responsible hunter knows that he/she must study and practice as much as possible.

Master Eye

Before you can become a competent shot, you must determine which is your **master eye**, or *individual dominant eye*. Just as everyone has a dominant hand, left or right, they have a master eye. Most people assume that their master eye is the same as their dominant hand, but this is not always true.

There are several ways to determine your master eye, but this is one of the easiest:

1. Form a small triangle with your hands and extend your arms as far as possible in front of you.
2. Pick a spot some distance from you, across a room is far enough, and make sure you can see it through the triangle **with both eyes open**.

3. Concentrate on the spot and pull your hands slowly back to your face.
4. Close one eye and leave the other open, and then open the first eye and close the second.

One eye should see the spot, the other the back of your hand. The eye looking at the spot is your master eye.

Hunting with a Shotgun

Many different types of wildlife are hunted with a shotgun. Hunters need to carefully select a choke and shot size to match the game being pursued and hunting conditions.

There is only one way to know for sure what shot pattern to expect from a specific shotgun. Create a target from a 30-inch or larger round piece of paper. Stand 40 yards away and point and shoot at the center of the circle with various brands of shot shells and various shot sizes. This is called **patterning a shotgun**. All shotgun hunters should pattern their guns to determine the best brand of shells and shot sizes for a given type of hunting.

Basically, shotguns are pointed rather than aimed. As a result, most have only a bead located on the tip of the barrel just behind the muzzle and some



form of channel or wide area on the action to help the hunter point.

The shooter should use some form of rest, such as sandbags on a table, a rolled up sleeping bag, or at least a solid sitting position, to hold the shotgun steady as he fires it at a patterning target. The shooter must hold the gun and point it at the target exactly the same way every time he/she fires.

Hunting with a Rifle or Handgun

A rifle and handgun differs from a shotgun because they fire a single projectile. Rifle or handgun ammunition, including bullet type, must be matched with the game you plan to hunt.

Because a rifle or handgun fires only a single projectile, sights must be used to hit targets accurately and consistently. These sights must be adjusted for the individual shooter because everyone's eyes see a little differently and everyone holds a firearm just a little differently than anyone else.

Always remember, a rifle or handgun must be sighted in with the ammunition you plan to use while hunting. Sight in before you go hunting, allowing yourself enough time to practice firing consistently and accurately.

Sights

Rifles and handguns use one of three basic types of sights: open sights, peep sights, or telescopic sights.

Open Sights: The rear portion of an open sight has a "U" or "V" shaped notch cut in the center. The front sight is usually a bead or post. To align the sights, the shooter centers the bead or post of the front sight into the notch

of the rear sight. This often is referred to as sight alignment. The aligned sights are placed upon the target to complete the sight picture.

Peep Sight: A peep sight includes a disc with a drilled hole in the rear portion. Usually, the rear portion of this sight is placed close to the shooter's eye. To align the peep sight, the shooter looks through the hole and centers the bead or post of the front sight. To complete the sight picture, the front sight then is placed upon the target. Those experienced with the aperture sight find that the eye will center the front sight more quickly and easily than with an open sight.

When using open and aperture sights, the rear sights and the target should appear blurred and the front sight should appear sharp and focused. It is impossible for the human eye to focus on three points of differing distances at one time. Focusing on the front sight will produce the most accurate shooting.

Telescopic Sights: When using telescopic sights, the shooter has the advantage of seeing only one image on the target. Additionally, most telescopic sights magnify the target, making it easier to see. However, keep in mind that magnification emphasizes all body movement, in-

Open Sight
Front Rear



Correct Open Sight Alignment



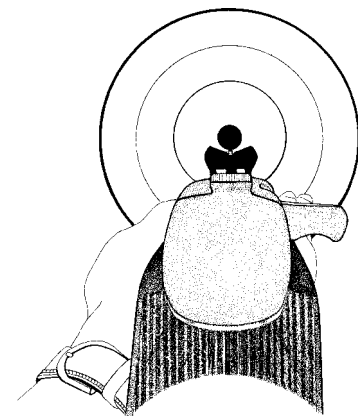
Peep Sight
Front Rear



Telescopic Sight



Correct Sight Picture



cluding breathing and heartbeat, which can impair confidence and hamper accurate shooting. As a result, most telescopic sights used for hunting magnify only moderately.

With a telescopic sight, the reticle, usually a crosshair of some form is placed on the target to complete the sight picture.

Sighting In

Concentrate on aligning the sights and using the same sight picture- *aligned sights that are placed upon a target before firing, every time.* Breathe normally as you aim. Upon exhaling, stop breathing and squeeze the trigger as you concentrate on the sights. The discharge of the firearm should be a surprise to you. Do not anticipate the shot going off! You need to fire at least three shots from a steady rest, using the same sight alignment and sight picture for each shot. Do not be concerned, at this point, if you are not on the bull's-eye.

Locate the center of your shots, or group. Once the center of your group is determined, adjust the rear sight in the direction needed to move the center of your shots over the bull's-eye. Lack of a tight group could be the result of improper sight align-

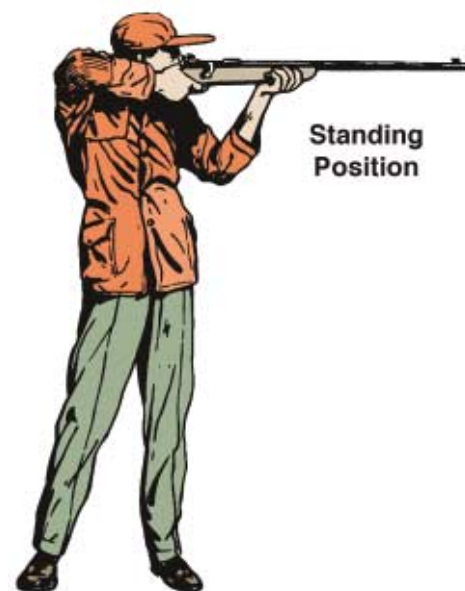
ment or sight picture. Poor breathing technique or jerking the trigger instead of squeezing it slowly can also spread your shots. Only practice can make you a good rifle shot. Generally speaking, pistols and .22 rifles are sighted in at 25 yards. High-powered rifles are sighted in at 100 yards.

Shooting Positions

When you are shooting a rifle there are many different positions you can use. Always use the steadiest possible position for accurate shooting. The steadiest and best shooting position is called the prone position, where the shooter is actually laying on the ground.

Second best is the sitting position, where your arms rest on your knees. The third, kneeling, allows you to rest one elbow on your leg, but it is not a very stable position. Standing or offhand is the least steady of all, and if you must use it, try to lean against a tree or post to help steady your shot.

You should be familiar with all positions because sometimes you can't always get into the steadiest position for that once in a lifetime shot.



Game Identification

The responsible hunter knows to **positively identify** and see the game **clearly** before even raising a firearm. Wildlife identification is a skill developed by studying an animal's physical characteristics, coloration, and tracks. Often, this identification must include not only the species, but also the sex or other information.

For example, a spring turkey hunter is allowed to take only a bearded turkey. So the hunter must not just see and identify the turkey, but he/she must also see the specialized feathers, called a beard, which sprout from the bird's breast.

Duck hunting is one of the more demanding examples of game identification. You must wait until the birds' colors and feathers can be identified, which determine what species and sometimes what sex the bird is, before you shoot.

Responsible hunters don't try to learn game identification in the field. Experienced hunters start long before the hunting season, studying the quarry, scouting specific areas to hunt, and learning as much about the animal and its habits as possible. When an experienced hunter is familiar with an animal's habits, he/she is able to be patient until the

quarry is in a good position to make a good shot, insuring a quick, clean kill.

Game Care

As a hunter, how tasty your wild game will be depends almost entirely on the field care you give the animal after it has been killed. Dirt, heat, and moisture are the three main causes of meat spoilage.

Field Dressing is the removal of the entrails to prevent the meat from spoiling. Entrails are the internal organs of an animal, sometimes referred to as "guts." Field dressing protects your game and permits field identification by wildlife officers.

Dressing is the removal of the head, feet, skin and/or feathers. Dressing is not permitted on some game, including deer and turkey, until it has been permanently tagged at the official check station. For waterfowl, dressing is not permitted in the field, according to federal regulations.

Dressing game birds involves one of two methods: plucking or skinning. **Plucking** removes the feathers and leaves the skin on the bird, which makes it tastier by sealing in juices and natural fat, and by preventing drying while cooking. **Skinning** removes the skin entirely and is simpler and faster.



- To skin a bird, pull the skin until it tears, then peel the skin off, cutting off the feet when finished.
- To pluck a bird, simply pull out the feathers.

The field dressing of big game (deer) is no different from small game. If the head is to be mounted, the throat should **not** be cut or stuck. Bleeding wild game is not necessary, because the best way to bleed the carcass is by prompt field dressing.

When field dressing big game, like deer, carefully check for old wounds where broadheads may be embedded in the deer. Being cut by a broadhead is a serious injury.

