

# Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation **Hunter Education Manual**

Set Your Sights on Safety



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### WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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**Nathan Erdman**, Chief, Law Enforcement Division  
**Michah Holmes**, Chief, Communication and Education Division

Pake Wise - Editor  
Lance Meek - Associate Editor  
Michael Bergin - Associate Editor  
Jennifer Bengé - Associate Editor

Hunter education office:  
P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152  
Phone (405) 521-3855

Layout by Stroud Design, Inc.  
Edited by Pake Wise  
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Website: [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com)

Email: [pake.wise@odwc.ok.gov](mailto:pake.wise@odwc.ok.gov)

Curriculum developed by



University of Central Oklahoma

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# INTRODUCTION

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

### WELCOME TO OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

#### OBJECTIVE 1

Welcome to Oklahoma's Hunter Education course! This course is designed for everyone – from people just starting out to experienced hunters. The goal is to help you understand the serious responsibilities that come with the sport of hunting.

Through this course, you will:

- **Learn Safety:** Develop a strong understanding of how to stay safe in the field.
- **Learn to Make Better Choices:** Create a foundation for making fair and responsible decisions.
- **Protect the Tradition:** Start your journey so you can eventually pass these hunting traditions down to the next generation.

### Why Is This Course Important?

Hunter education saves lives. It improves the way hunters behave and helps prevent accidents. In Oklahoma, hunting-related injuries and deaths have dropped by more than 70% over the last 30 years. These required courses have successfully reduced hunting incidents here and in every other state and Canadian province that uses them.

### More Than Just Firearm Safety

This isn't just a course on how to use a firearm. It provides clear guidelines on how to be a respectful, ethical hunter and offers a guide to Oklahoma's wildlife. You will also learn why **wildlife conservation** (the wise use of resources) and management are so important to our state. This course is a way to protect the future of hunting in Oklahoma.

### The Future is in Your Hands

Oklahoma has a long history of people who are committed to the land and its animals. By using modern management techniques and getting help from hunters and the public, the future of our wildlife looks bright.

#### Words to Know

**RESPONSIBLE** – Being fully accountable for your actions.

**ETHICAL BEHAVIOR** – Acting in a manner that is respectful of people, land and wildlife.

**RIGHTS** – Benefits you legally have, or actions you can legally take.

**PRIVILEGES** – Benefits that can be taken away.

**TRESPASSING** – Hunting or otherwise intruding on private and some public property without permission.

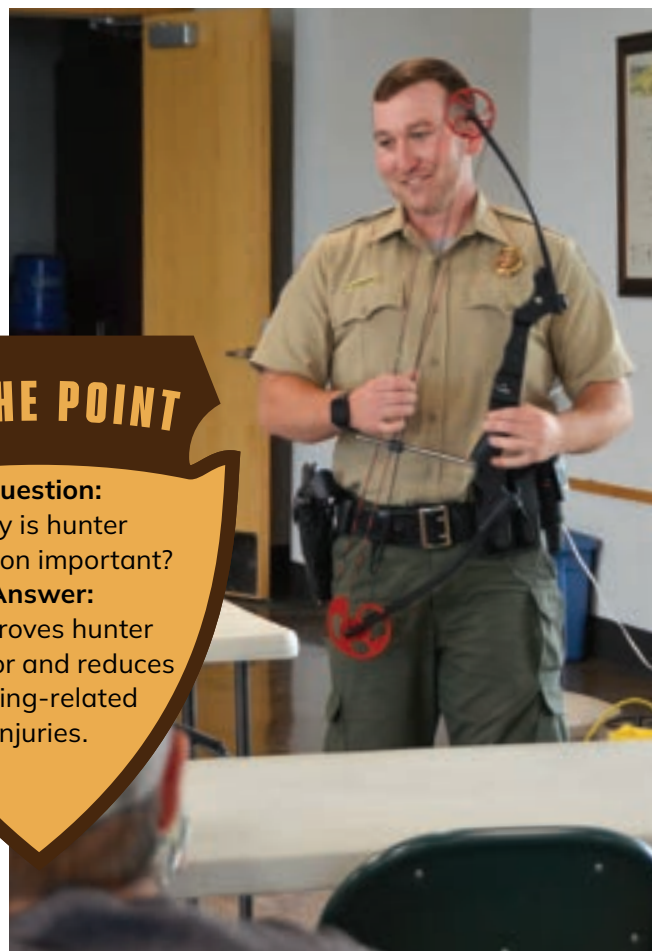
#### TO THE POINT

##### Question:

Why is hunter education important?

##### Answer:

It improves hunter behavior and reduces hunting-related injuries.



JENNIFER BENGE

# HUNTER RESPONSIBILITY

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

### WHAT IS A RESPONSIBLE HUNTER?

#### OBJECTIVE 1

#### Being a Responsible Hunter

A responsible hunter takes full ownership of everything he or she does. Enjoying the Oklahoma outdoors is a great privilege, but it comes with the duty to protect our wild lands and the animals that live there.

##### What Does a Responsible Hunter Do?

- **Prioritizes Safety:** Always puts safety above everything else.
- **Follows the Law:** Obeys all hunting rules and makes sure their friends do the same.
- **Respects the Land:** Values nature and treats the environment with care.
- **Stays Safe in the Field:** Knows and follows all safety rules and hunting regulations. Clearly identifies the target before pulling the trigger.
- **Follows a Personal Code:** Develops his or hers own rules of right and wrong and follows them every single time.
- **Supports Conservation:** Helps protect wildlife by following bag limits (the number of animals you can take) and supporting nature programs.
- **Respects Others:** Acts kindly toward other hunters, landowners and the general public.
- **Shows Self-Control:** Does not abuse the privilege of hunting.
- **Owns Mistakes:** Admits to mistakes and does whatever is necessary to fix them.

#### Be Safe, Be Legal and Be Responsible!

##### Why Your Behavior Matters

One of the main reasons some people are against hunting is because they believe hunters behave badly. Irresponsible hunters can quickly ruin the sport's reputation. Taking an animal's life is a serious act. How the public sees your behavior can change the future of hunting in Oklahoma.

### TO THE POINT

#### Question:

What is one of the main reasons some people oppose hunting?

#### Answer:

The bad behavior of some hunters.

#### Question:

What is a responsible hunter fully accountable for?

#### Answer:

His or her actions.

#### Responsible Hunters DO NOT

**POACH** – Taking game illegally is punishable by fines and the loss of your hunting license, vehicle and hunting gear.

**TRESPASS** – It's illegal to go on private and some public property without permission.

**BECOME GREEDY** – Taking more game than the legal limit or pushing to achieve a full limit by using unsafe actions.

**NEGLECT SAFETY** – Safety is always the most important thing you should think about while hunting.

#### Do Your Part: Always Be Fair, Honest and Responsible!

##### The Good Neighbor Policy

In Oklahoma, most of the land where wildlife lives is private property. This means hunters are guests when on someone else's land. You should always practice these good neighbor habits:

- **Ask First:** Always get permission before entering private property. Trespassing is against the law and is wrong.

# HUNTER RESPONSIBILITY

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

- **Leave No Trace:** Leave the land exactly as you found it. Don't leave trash and don't damage trees with deer stands. Always close gates behind you.
- **Be Grateful:** Get to know the landowner. Thank him or her for letting you hunt. You can show your thanks by offering to help with chores around the property.
- **Know the Lines:** Learn the property boundaries so you don't accidentally wander onto someone else's land.
- **Don't Poach:** Poaching is taking animals illegally. If you are caught, you can be fined, lose your hunting license, and even lose your truck or gear.
- **Report Crimes:** If you see someone poaching, contact your local game warden. Game warden contact information can be found in the Oklahoma Hunting Guide and at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).

### Hunter Pride

Hunters have many reasons to be proud of their role in the outdoors. For a long time, hunters have been the leaders in making the world better for wildlife. They have worked hard to improve the land where animals live, helped move species to new areas where they can thrive, and have even saved some animals from the edge of extinction. This history is a rich tradition that brings many rewards, especially the chance to pass the sport down to the next generation.

### Rights vs. Privileges

It is important to understand the difference between a right and a privilege. A right is something guaranteed to you that cannot be taken away except in very rare or extreme cases. Examples of rights include your ability to vote or your right to speak your mind.

A privilege, on the other hand, is an opportunity that you are allowed to have only if you follow specific rules. If you fail to meet those conditions, that privilege can be taken away. Common examples of privileges include having a driver's license, belonging to a private club, or earning your hunter education certificate. You should always treat hunting as a privilege. If you abuse it through bad behavior or by breaking the law, you can lose the chance to hunt entirely.

## DEVELOPING A PERSONAL CODE OF HUNTING ETHICS

### OBJECTIVE 2

Responsible hunters create their own personal "code of ethics" to guide how they behave in the woods. This code is basically a set of rules you make for yourself to ensure you do the right thing, even when no one else is around to see you. It helps you make the right decisions during the heat of a hunt.

#### If you were to write your own personal code of hunting ethics, it might look like this:

I promise to respect all wildlife and the land where I hunt. I will always act responsibly when I am outdoors. I will treat every landowner as a host and myself as a guest. This means I will always ask for permission to hunt and be polite so that I will be invited back in the future.

I will follow every rule for safe firearm handling. If I am hunting with others, I will kindly but firmly insist that they follow the safety rules too. I will obey all hunting laws and regulations, and I will make sure my hunting partners do the same.

I will work hard to practice my shooting and improve my hunting skills so that I can be as effective as possible. I will also support conservation programs to make sure there is plenty of wildlife for future generations of Americans to enjoy.

Finally, I will help teach younger hunters the skills and the respectful attitude they need to become true outdoor sportsmen.

# HUNTER RESPONSIBILITY

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

### PREPARING FOR A SUCCESSFUL HUNT

#### OBJECTIVE 3

A successful hunt doesn't depend on reaching your bag limit or bringing home a trophy animal. True success is about much more than that. It requires preparation, both for your body and your mind. Successful hunters plan everything ahead of time.

To prepare for a hunt, wise hunters do the following:

- They plan out every detail of the trip before they leave.
- They scout the hunting area in advance to learn the land.
- They read wildlife field guides to understand the habits, food sources and behaviors of the animals they are hunting.
- They keep their firearms and equipment in top shape and make sure they use the right ammunition for the specific game they are hunting.
- They practice with their firearm or bow frequently throughout the year, not just right before the season starts.
- They make sure they are physically fit and in good shape before heading into the field.
- They study all the laws and rules for the area where they plan to hunt.
- They make sure they have purchased all the necessary licenses and permits.

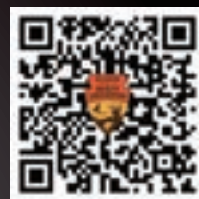
Smart hunters also help improve what the public thinks about hunting. By acting correctly, they help protect the future of the sport. They do this by always being courteous, thoughtful, respectful and responsible.



### Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact

Oklahoma is a member of the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact.

Most states are now Compact members. Violations in any member state can result in the loss of hunting or fishing privileges in all the member states.



AARON BALSTIN

# WILDLIFE CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT

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### MANAGING RESOURCES

#### OBJECTIVE 1

The wildlife resources in Oklahoma are renewable. This means that the essentials animals need to survive – like food, water, and shelter – are naturally replaced by the environment over time. However, these resources are not unlimited. They cannot support an infinite number of animals, especially since people often use the same land and water. This is why conservation and management are so important; it ensures wildlife can continue to survive alongside people.

In Oklahoma, wildlife belongs to everyone in the state. To take care of these animals, we must practice conservation, which means using our natural resources wisely rather than wasting them.

#### What is Habitat?

For any animal to do well, it must have a good habitat. You can think of a habitat as an animal's "neighborhood." A healthy habitat must include these five things:

1. Food
2. Water
3. Cover
4. Space
5. Arrangement



### TO THE POINT

**Question:**

Who owns the wildlife in the state of Oklahoma?

**Answer:**

The people of Oklahoma.

**Question:**

What is the most important thing we can do to ensure that we have wildlife in the future?

**Answer:**

Increase wildlife habitat.

These elements must be in the right arrangement so the animals can reach them safely. If any of these are missing, or if the quality of the land is poor, the number of animals in that area will drop.

Most of the land in Oklahoma is privately owned, so it is important for landowners and the public to work together. People value wildlife because it makes life better and brings money to the state through tourism and outdoor sports. The most important thing we can do to protect wildlife for the future is to manage and increase wildlife habitats.

### FIVE IMPORTANT PARTS OF SOUND HABITAT

#### OBJECTIVE 2

#### Food

Every wild animal depends on either plants or other animals to survive. Without the right nutrition, animals face serious problems: they may starve, get sick more easily, or be unable to have healthy babies. The amount of food available changes with the weather and the seasons. People also change the food supply when they plant crops, build new houses, or allow livestock like cattle to graze on the land.

#### Water

Water is the most basic need for all living things. The amount of rainfall in an area doesn't just provide drinking water; it also determines how well the plants grow. Since many animals eat those plants, the amount of rain directly controls how many animals a piece of land can support.

#### Cover

Cover is another word for shelter. It is essential because it provides a safe place for animals to sleep, eat, and raise their young. It also gives them a place to hide from predators. Depending on the animal, cover can be anything from thick bushes and tall grass to rock piles, trees, or underground burrows.

#### Space

Animals need enough room to move around and find the other requirements (food, water, and cover). If too

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KELLY ADAMS

many animals are crowded into a small area, they won't be able to find what they need to survive or reproduce. Overcrowding can even change how animals behave, making them more stressed or aggressive. Ultimately, a lack of space leads to a drop in the total number of wildlife in that area.

### Arrangement

Arrangement refers to how the other four parts of a habitat – food, water, cover, and space – are spread out across the land. It also considers the distance and obstacles between those parts. Not all animals have the same needs when it comes to arrangement. For example, a tiny white-footed mouse might find everything it needs to survive within just half an acre. On the other hand, a white-tailed deer may need to travel across a full square mile or more to find the same resources.

An animal's home range should ideally have several different sources for food, water, and shelter. If one of these essentials is too far away for an animal to reach safely, or if there is a dangerous obstacle in the way – like a busy highway – the animal may be forced to leave that area and look for a better place to live.

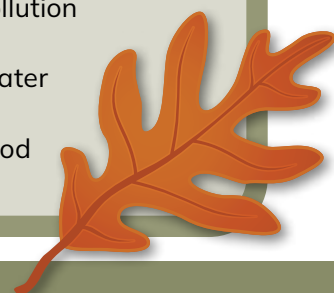
## CARRYING CAPACITY

### OBJECTIVE 3

Carrying capacity is the maximum number of animals a habitat can support all year long. When there is enough food, water, space, and shelter for every animal to stay healthy and reproduce, the population is at or below the carrying capacity.

#### Factors that limit the amount of wildlife:

|                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| Disease/parasites | Starvation |
| Predators         | Pollution  |
| Accidents         | Water      |
| Conservation      | Food       |



# WILDLIFE CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT

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However, nature is all about balance. If there are too many animals, the habitat becomes overcrowded. When a population grows larger than what the land can provide for, the animals begin to struggle. You might see signs like:

- Animals starving because there isn't enough food.
- Diseases spreading quickly through the group.
- Adult animals failing to have healthy young.

Most species reproduce every year, which constantly adds new animals to the population. If they reproduce too much and the number of animals goes over the carrying capacity, they will start to compete for the few resources left. This can damage the land itself – for example, too many deer might eat all the young trees and plants, which ruins the habitat for the future. This damage makes the carrying capacity drop even lower.

This is where hunting and trapping become important tools. By removing some animals from the population, hunters help keep the numbers in balance with what the land can provide. This ensures the habitat stays healthy and the remaining animals have enough resources to survive.

## THE NORTH AMERICAN MODEL OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

### OBJECTIVE 4

Oklahoma and all other states use a system called The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. This model is based on two main ideas: first, fish and wildlife belong to all the people, and second, wildlife should be managed so that they stay healthy and stay around forever.

This is the most successful system in the world. While many other countries struggle to save the few animals they have left, we have a huge variety of wildlife. This is because we use science and active management to protect the animals and the land they live on.

### How is Conservation Paid For?

In 1937, a very important law was passed called the Pittman-Robertson Act. This law created a special tax on hunting and fishing gear, such as ammunition, bows, and boat fuel. The government takes that tax money and gives it back to the states to pay for wildlife projects.

Since 1937, hunters and anglers have provided more than \$10 billion for conservation. This money helps all animals, not just the ones people hunt. For example, when hunters pay to protect a wetland for ducks or a forest for deer, they are also saving hundreds of other birds, insects, and plants that live in those same places.

## TO THE POINT

### Question:

What does good wildlife management benefit?

### Answer:

Most of the plants and animals in a habitat – not just one species.

### Words to Know

**HABITAT** – Consists of cover, food, water, space and arrangement.

**CONSERVATION** – Wise use and protection of natural resources.

**MANAGEMENT TOOL** – Tools, such as prescribed fire or planting food plots, that Wildlife Department employees use to manage wildlife resources.

**SPECIES** – Animals or plants that have the same common characteristics and can interbreed.

**CARRYING CAPACITY** – The amount of wildlife each habitat can support throughout the year.

**PITTMAN-ROBERTSON ACT** – A federal tax on firearms and ammunition that helps fund conservation. This is administered through the Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program.

# WILDLIFE CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT

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### The Role of the Sportsman

Hunters and anglers support wildlife with their own money by buying licenses and paying these equipment taxes. They are willing to pay because they value the outdoors and want to use it.

However, there is a challenge ahead. In many states, fewer people are hunting and fishing than in the past. Even though the number of hunters in Oklahoma has stayed about the same, the general population is growing much faster. This means the percentage of people participating is actually going down.

Currently, there is no other system to replace the money that hunters provide. If hunting were to end, the funding used to protect Oklahoma's wildlife and wild places would be in serious trouble.



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### What Is Good Wildlife Management?

Good wildlife management:

- Is based on sound biological information.
- Includes the management of human activities that affect wildlife. Managing people is possibly one of the most important tools in a management plan.
- Has wildlife numbers that are just right — not too many and not too few. The number of animals are balanced with the resources of the habitat (food, water, shelter, space and arrangement).

### WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT TOOLS

#### OBJECTIVE 5

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) is the state agency in charge of looking after Oklahoma's wildlife. To keep animal populations healthy and balanced with the land, they use several important tools.

### The Management Plan

The most important tool is a management plan. Without these plans, many animals in Oklahoma would be in danger. Biologists constantly update these plans as the environment changes. One of the biggest parts of the plan is managing how people interact with animals.

- When animal populations are high, hunters get more chances to hunt.
- When populations are low or the habitat is struggling, hunters are allowed to take fewer animals.

### Research and Surveys

To make the best decisions, biologists act like detectives. They study where animals live, what they eat, and how they reproduce. Every year, they conduct surveys to find out:

- How many animals can be safely harvested without hurting the population.



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# WILDLIFE CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT

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- The health of the land and the environment.
- If the number of animals is going up or down.
- The age and sex of the animals being hunted.
- How wildlife and hunting affect the people living in the area.

### Bringing Species Back

Tools like transplanting (moving animals to new areas), protecting land, and conservation have saved many species from disappearing forever. Without these plans and the support of hunters, many animals we see today would no longer exist in Oklahoma.

### Law Enforcement

Laws are a vital part of wildlife management. They make sure no one takes too many animals and that everyone follows the same rules for hunting seasons. Game wardens are the officers who enforce these laws, but they can't do it alone. Responsible hunters help by following the rules themselves and reporting people who break the law to the authorities.

### Hunters in the Know

Hunters are often encouraged to harvest antlerless deer. While many hunters want to find a big buck, taking more does helps the herd. When there is a more even balance between the number of bucks and does, the entire population becomes healthier. This leads to better hunting, stronger deer, and even better antler growth for the bucks in the future.

## HUNTERS PAY FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN OKLAHOMA

### OBJECTIVE 6

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation is the state agency in charge of protecting our fish and animals. A common myth is that your general state taxes pay for this, but that isn't true. The Department gets zero money from general state taxes. Instead, it is funded by the people who use the outdoors.



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# WILDLIFE CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT

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### How the Department is Funded

- 1. License Sales:** When you buy a hunting or fishing license, that money goes directly toward managing Oklahoma's wildlife. This helps both game animals and non-game animals.
- 2. The Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program:** Established through laws such as the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937, this program is funded by special taxes on firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing gear and motorboat fuel. The federal government collects these funds and returns them to states like Oklahoma to support wildlife conservation, habitat improvement and outdoor recreation projects.
- 3. Partner Groups:** Organizations, such as the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation, that care about nature work with the ODWC to raise extra money and help protect the land.

### Who Runs the Department?

The ODWC is governed by the Wildlife Conservation Commission. This is an eight-member board. Each member is appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate to serve an eight-year term. The Department is an independent agency, meaning it has the power to create its own rules to protect our state's resources.

The Department is split into five main parts:

- **Administration:** Handles the business and office side.

- **Fisheries:** Focuses on fish and clean water.
- **Communication and Education:** Teaches the public and hunters.
- **Law Enforcement:** Includes the game wardens who enforce the rules.
- **Wildlife:** Focuses on land animals and their habitats.

### Impact of Hunters and Anglers on Oklahoma's Economy

Anglers, hunters and wildlife viewers spend dollars that, in turn, benefit many other industries throughout the state. The resulting economic benefits reach every corner of the state and its economy. Every resident and tourist of Oklahoma benefits from fish and wildlife recreation spending.

### By the Numbers

**Hunters ..... 305,815**

Average days per hunter ..... 11

Total expenditures ..... \$1.3 billion

Average per hunter ..... \$4,251

Average trip expenditure per day ..... \$387

**Anglers ..... 1.1 million**

Average days per angler ..... 12

Total expenditures ..... \$3.7 billion

Average per angler ..... \$3,363

Average trip expenditure per day ..... \$280

*\* Information provided by NORC and Southwick Associates in conjunction with the 2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, & Wildlife-Associated Recreation, coordinated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

## TO THE POINT

#### Question:

What is one of the primary purposes of wildlife laws?

#### Answer:

To protect game animals from being over-harvested.

#### Question:

Who pays the most for wildlife conservation?

#### Answer:

Licensed hunters.

# WILDLIFE CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT

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CHAPTER

### Why Education Matters

Education is one of the most powerful tools biologists have. When hunters are educated, they stay safe and understand why following the rules is important for their sport. In 2025, the Department operated with about \$66.5 million in revenue - all provided by hunters and anglers to benefit everyone in Oklahoma.

### The Future is in Your Hands

Wildlife belongs to all Oklahomans, not just the government. The future of hunting and nature depends on people like you. To keep Oklahoma wild, the public should:

- Support programs that improve the land.
- Teach others why hunting and trapping are important for keeping nature in balance.
- Always act with the highest ethics so that the non-hunting public continues to support the sport.
- Donate time or money to help wildlife.
- Take someone new hunting to pass on the tradition.



### Review

- Food, water, space, cover and arrangement are the five components that animals must have in an environment in order to survive.
- Carrying capacity is the amount of wildlife a habitat can support each year. When the amount of wildlife is greater than the carrying capacity, then wildlife begins to compete for food, water, and cover. This can damage the habitat and drop the carrying capacity even lower.
- A sound management plan, research and harvest studies, transplanting, protecting and conserving and law enforcement are all management tools used by wildlife managers.
- The sale of hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses, money from the Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program and money from private sources are the three main funding sources of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.
- The Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program provides a tax on firearms and ammunition in order to help fund state wildlife agencies.



## FIREARMS: RIFLES &amp; SHOTGUNS

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION



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FIREARMS: RIFLES  
AND SHOTGUNS

## OBJECTIVE 1

While rifles and shotguns can look very similar, they are built for different jobs. The biggest differences are how they are used and how the inside of the barrel is made.

## Rifles vs. Shotguns

- Rifles are made to fire a single bullet at a target that is usually standing still.
- Shotguns are made to fire a cloud of many small metal pellets (called shot). This makes it easier to hit a target that is moving through the air or across the ground.

## The Three Main Parts

Every rifle and shotgun has three basic parts you need to know:

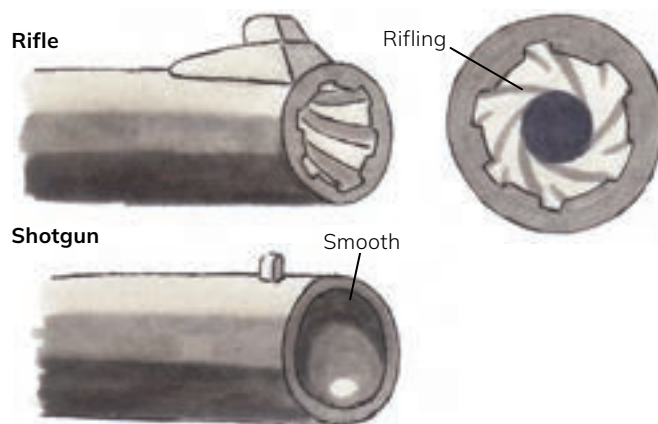
1. **The Action:** This is the heart of the firearm. It is the part that loads a new shell, fires it, and kicks out the empty casing.
2. **The Barrel:** This is the long metal tube that the bullet or pellets travel through after the firearm is fired.

3. **The Stock:** This is the handle or frame (usually made of wood, plastic, or metal) that holds the barrel and action together and allows you to hold the firearm steady against your shoulder.

## The Inside of the Barrel

The biggest difference between the two is what's inside the barrel.

- Rifles have spiral grooves cut into the metal.



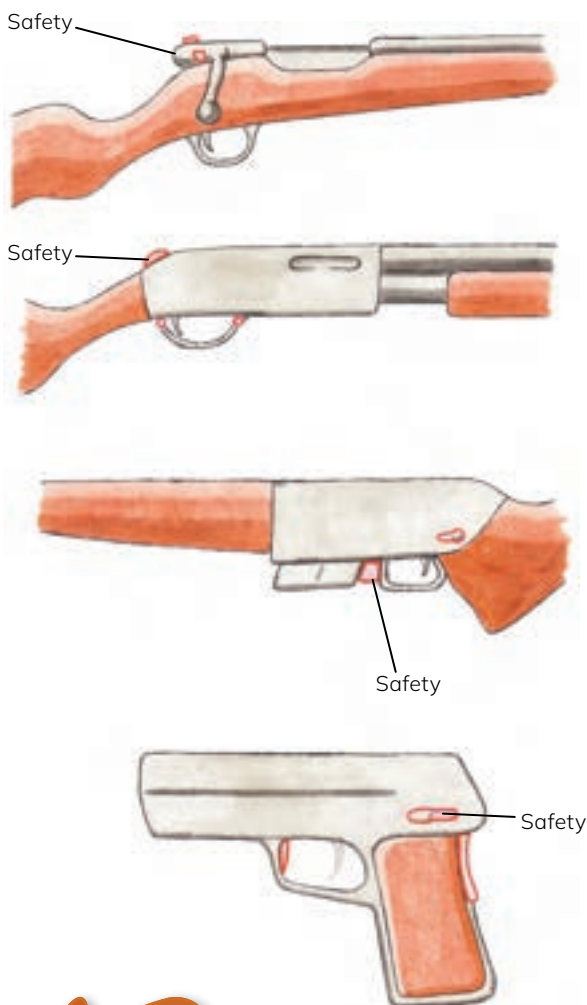
KELLEY FARRAR

- Shotguns usually have a smoothbore barrel, which means the inside is completely smooth so the pellets can spread out as they leave the firearm.

### What is a Safety?

The safety is a very important part of a firearm. Its job is to lock the trigger or the firing pin so the firearm cannot fire by accident. A smart hunter always makes sure they know exactly where the safety is located and how it works before they ever load the firearm.

**IMPORTANT WARNING:** A safety is a mechanical device, and **it can fail**. Just because the safety is on does not mean the firearm is 100% safe. You should never depend on a safety to prevent an accident. Always follow the rules of safe firearm handling as if the safety weren't there at all!



### Words to Know

**Rifle** – A firearm whose barrel has small spiraling grooves causing the bullet to spin and fly straighter.

**Shotgun** – A firearm that fires a shell holding multiple pellets.

**Action** – The part of a firearm that loads, fires, and ejects the cartridge or shell.

**Barrel** – The part of the firearm through which the bullet or pellets travel when fired.

**Stock** – The wood, metal or plastic frame that holds the action and barrel.

**Rifling** – Grooves inside a rifle barrel that cause the bullet to spin.

**Choke** – The narrowing at the end of a shotgun barrel that determines the pattern of the pellets as they leave the firearm.

**Nontoxic Shot** – Any shot approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for hunting waterfowl or in designated waterfowl areas.

**Range** – How far shot or bullets travel after exiting the barrel of the firearm.

**Muzzle** – The end of the barrel where the bullet or pellets come out.

### TO THE POINT

**Question:**  
What is the safety on a firearm?

**Answer:**  
It is a mechanical device that can fail!



## FIREARMS: RIFLES &amp; SHOTGUNS

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

## Parts of a Rifle



## RIFLES

## OBJECTIVE 2

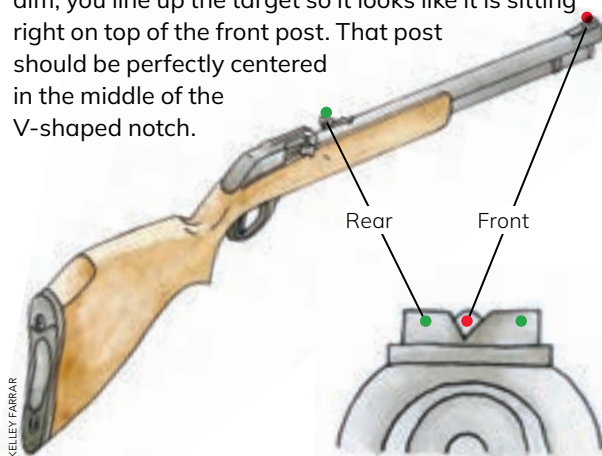
Rifles are designed to fire a bullet at a specific spot with great accuracy. They have long barrels with spiral grooves cut into the inside of the barrel. These grooves are called rifling, which is how the rifle got its name. As the bullet travels down the barrel, the rifling makes it spin like a perfectly thrown football. This spin makes the bullet much more stable and accurate while it flies through the air.

When choosing ammunition, you must be very careful. Always make sure the “caliber” (the size of the bullet) stamped on the side of your firearm’s barrel exactly matches the caliber printed on the ammo box.

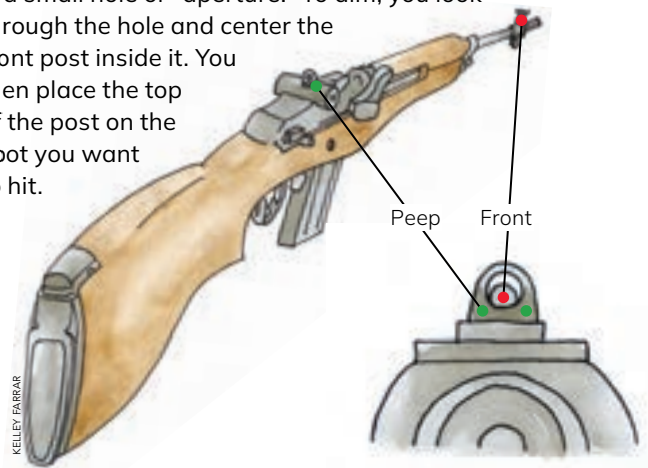
## Types of Rifle Sights

To hit your target, you need to use sights. There are three main types:

1. **Open Sights** Open sights use two parts. There is a “post” or small bead at the very end of the barrel and a “V-shaped” notch near the back of the firearm. To aim, you line up the target so it looks like it is sitting right on top of the front post. That post should be perfectly centered in the middle of the V-shaped notch.



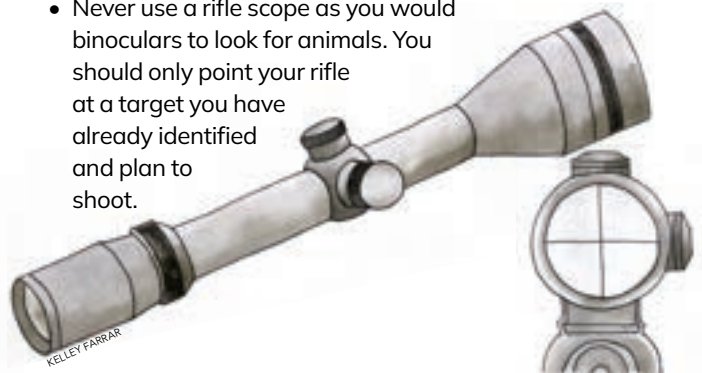
2. **Aperture Sights (Peep Sights)** These are similar to open sights, but instead of a V-notch, the back sight is a small hole or “aperture.” To aim, you look through the hole and center the front post inside it. You then place the top of the post on the spot you want to hit.



3. **Telescopic Sights (Scopes)** Scopes are like small telescopes mounted on top of the rifle. Most scopes have crosshairs (two lines that cross in the middle). The big advantage of a scope is that it makes the target and the crosshairs appear on the same level, so both stay in clear focus at the same time.

## Two Important Scope Rules:

- Even if you have a great scope, you still need to spend plenty of time practicing at the range.
- Never use a rifle scope as you would binoculars to look for animals. You should only point your rifle at a target you have already identified and plan to shoot.



### THE RIFLE CARTRIDGE

#### OBJECTIVE 3

A cartridge (often called a round or a shell) is a small explosive device. At the bottom of every cartridge is a primer. When the firearm's firing pin hits the primer, it creates a spark that quickly ignites the gunpowder inside. This explosion creates pressure that pushes the bullet out of the firearm. As the bullet moves down the barrel, the rifling makes it spin.

To be a responsible hunter, you want to make a clean shot. This means the bullet must go deep enough to hit the animal's vital organs so it expires quickly and without suffering. Ammunition is one of the least-expensive parts of a hunt, so always buy the best quality for the animal you are hunting. Your goal should always be to harvest the animal with just one well-aimed shot.

### Centerfire vs. Rimfire Cartridges

The difference between these two is where the primer is located.

- **Centerfire Cartridges:** The primer is a small cap located right in the center of the bottom of the casing. These are usually more powerful and are used for hunting larger animals like deer or elk.
- **Rimfire Cartridges:** The primer is hidden inside the rim or the very edge of the bottom of the casing. These are usually smaller and less powerful, often used for target practice or hunting small game like squirrels.

### Trajectory

The trajectory is the path a bullet follows from the moment it leaves the firearm until it hits the target. Even though it looks like it travels in a straight line, it actually travels in an upward and then downward arc.

As soon as a bullet leaves the barrel, gravity starts pulling it toward the ground and air resistance slows it down. Because of this, the bullet is always dropping. Bullets can travel from just under a mile to more than seven miles, so you must always be sure of what is far behind your target.

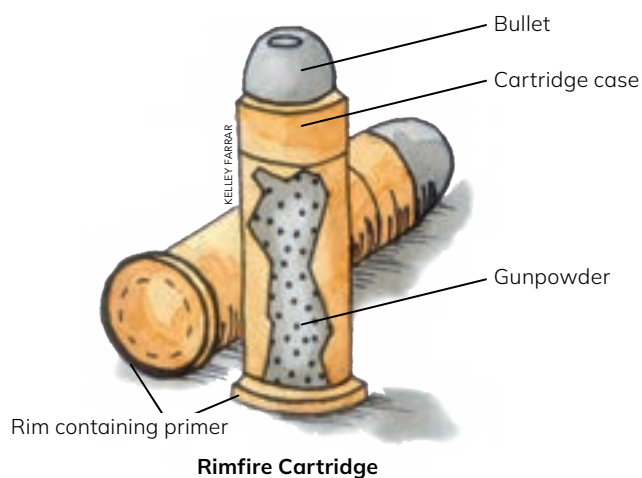
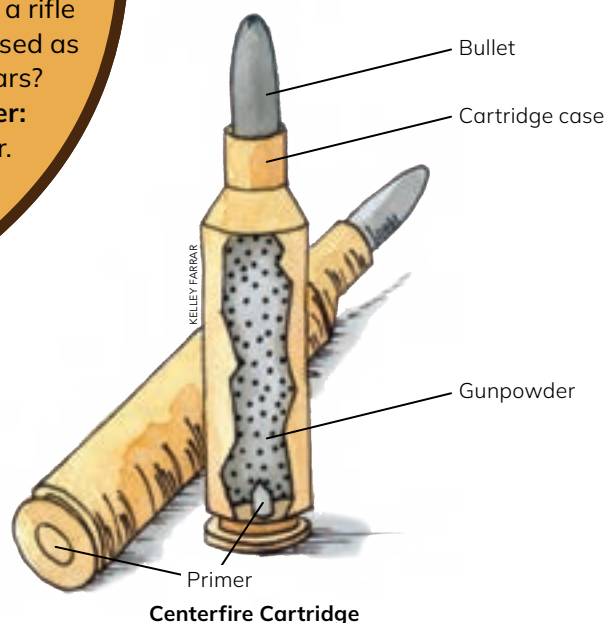
#### TO THE POINT

##### Question:

When can a rifle scope be used as binoculars?

##### Answer:

Never.



## FIREARMS: RIFLES &amp; SHOTGUNS

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

## Parts of a Shotgun



## SHOTGUNS

## OBJECTIVE 4

Shotguns are built differently than rifles. Instead of firing one single bullet, they usually fire a “spread” of many small metal pellets. This makes it much easier to hit a target that is moving, like a flying bird or a running rabbit. Most shotguns have a smooth barrel on the inside.

While they usually fire pellets, shotguns can also fire a slug. A slug is one large, heavy piece of metal that acts like a rifle bullet.

## What Does Gauge Mean?

The size of a shotgun’s barrel is measured in gauge. Common sizes include 10, 12, 16, 20, and 28 gauge.

Here is the tricky part about gauges: the smaller the number, the bigger the barrel. For example, a 12-gauge is much larger and more powerful than a 20-gauge. The only exception is the .410, which is measured by its actual size in inches rather than gauge. It is the smallest of all common shotguns.

Always check the side of your firearm’s barrel to see



what gauge it is. You must make sure your ammunition matches that number exactly.

## Understanding Choke

The choke is a slight narrowing at the very end of the shotgun barrel. It controls how quickly the pellets spread out after they leave the muzzle.

- Tight Choke: Keeps the pellets close together so they can travel farther before spreading out.
- Open Choke: Allows the pellets to spread out almost immediately after leaving the barrel.

As a general rule, different chokes are used for different distances:

- Improved Cylinder: Best for 20–30 yards.
- Modified: Best for 30–40 yards.
- Full: Best for 40–50 yards.

## TO THE POINT

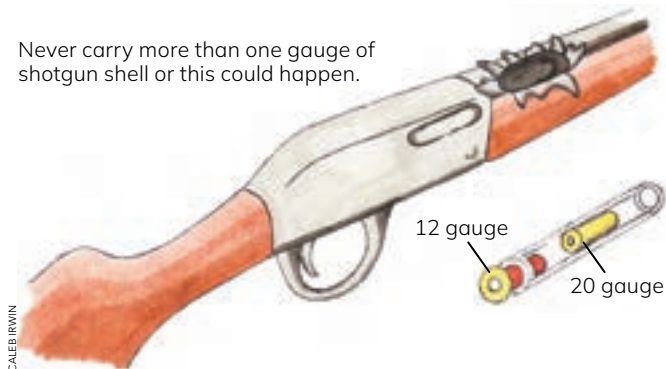
**Question:**

How do you determine the correct size of ammunition for your firearm?

**Answer:**

Find the gauge or caliber stamped on the outside of the barrel.

Never carry more than one gauge of shotgun shell or this could happen.



### Patterning Your Shotgun

To find the best combination of ammo and choke for your hunt, you should pattern your shotgun. This means firing at a large piece of paper at different distances to see exactly where and how the pellets hit. It takes a little time, but it is important. Patterning helps ensure you can harvest an animal cleanly rather than just wounding it.

## THE SHOTGUN SHELL

### OBJECTIVE 5

A shotgun shell is made up of five main parts: the hull, primer, powder, wad, and shot. Each part plays a specific role in making the firearm fire.

- **Hull:** This is the tube that holds all the other parts together.
- **Primer:** This is the small cap at the bottom. When the firing pin hits it, it explodes to start the process.
- **Powder:** This sits above the primer. When the primer sparks, the powder burns very fast,

creating the pressure needed to push everything out of the barrel.

- **Wad:** This is a plastic or paper divider that sits between the powder and the shot. It pushes the shot out of the barrel and keeps the pellets together for a split second after they leave.
- **Shot:** These are the small, round metal pellets that spread out to hit the target.

### Shotgun Shell Length

When you look at a box of shells, the length is given in inches. This number tells you how long the shell is after it has been fired and the end has opened up. You must make sure your shotgun is built to handle the length of the shell you are using.

### Choosing Your Shot Size

Shot pellets come in many different sizes. They are labeled with numbers:

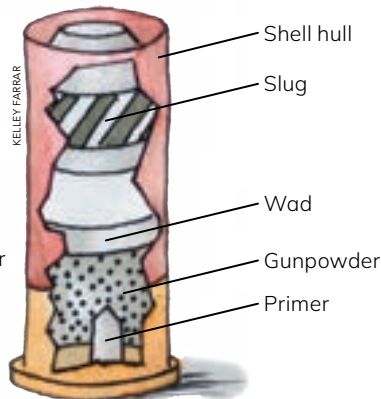
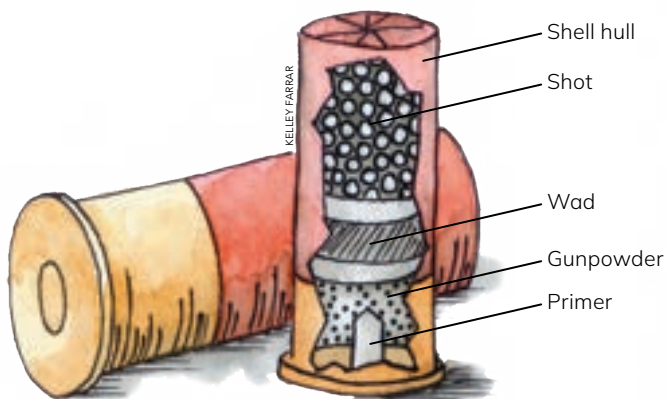
- **Small Numbers:** These are the largest pellets (like #00 Buckshot).
- **Large Numbers:** These are the smallest pellets (like #8 birdshot).

You should choose your shot size based on the animal you are hunting. For example, you would use much larger pellets for a turkey than you would for a small quail.

### Nontoxic Shot

In the past, almost all shot was made of lead. However, experts discovered that ducks and geese were accidentally eating old lead pellets left in the field, which caused them to get lead poisoning and die. Because of this, it is now illegal to use lead shot when hunting waterfowl.

Most hunters now use nontoxic shot, which is made of materials that won't poison animals. Steel is the most popular and affordable choice. Because steel is lighter and harder than lead, it flies differently, so it is very important to pattern your firearm with these shells before you go hunting.



# FIREARMS: RIFLES & SHOTGUNS

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

### FIREARM ACTIONS

#### OBJECTIVE 6

The firearm action loads, fires and ejects the cartridge or shell. The action can be:

- Bolt Action
- Pump Action
- Break Action
- Lever Action
- Semi-Auto Action

#### Bolt Action

The bolt action is mostly found on rifles. These firearms are popular because they are simple to use, very accurate, and rarely jam. To open the action, you just lift the bolt handle up and pull it toward you. This allows you to see inside the chamber or load a new cartridge then slide forward to close the action. Because they are so reliable, many hunters prefer them for long-range shooting.



CALEB IRWIN

#### Pump Action

You will see the pump action on shotguns more than any other type of firearm. It is very reliable and easy to use once you practice. To make it work, you slide the front grip (the part under the barrel) back and then forward. This motion kicks out the old shell, pushes a new one into the chamber, and gets the firearm ready to fire again.



CALEB IRWIN

#### Break Action

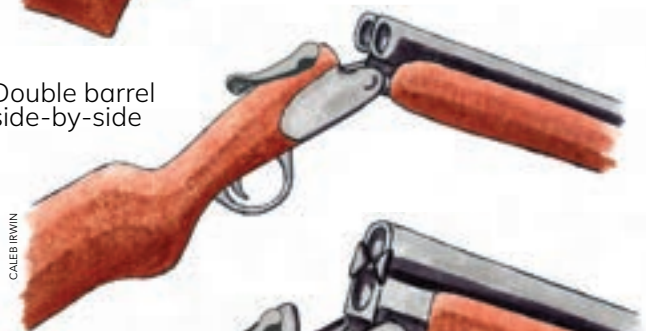
A break action firearm has a hinge in the middle. The release button or lever is usually located on top, right behind where the barrel meets the stock. To load it, you push the release and break the firearm open to place a shell directly into the chamber. After you fire, you open it again to pull out the empty shell by hand. This is one of the simplest and safest designs for new shooters.

##### Single-shot



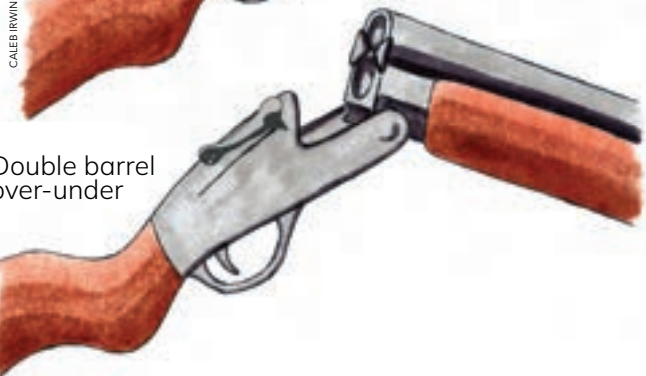
CALEB IRWIN

##### Double barrel side-by-side



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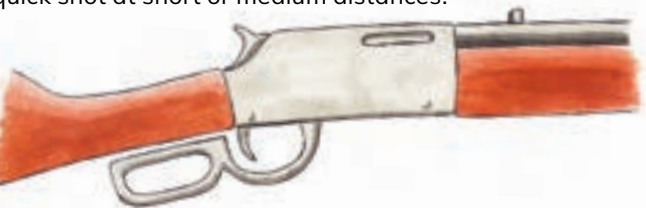
##### Double barrel over-under



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#### Lever Action

A lever action firearm uses a large metal loop located around the trigger. By pushing this lever down and then pulling it back up, the action ejects the old shell and loads a new one. These are mostly rifles and are famous for being accurate and reliable. They are a favorite for hunting in thick woods where you might need to take a quick shot at short or medium distances.



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# FIREARMS: RIFLES & SHOTGUNS

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

# 4

CHAPTER

### Semi-Automatic Action

The semi-automatic action is very popular for both rifles and shotguns. It uses the energy from the shot you just fired to do the work for you. Every time you pull the trigger, the firearm fires, kicks out the empty shell, and loads a fresh one automatically. You only have to pull the trigger once for each shot you want to take.



## CLEANING AND STORING YOUR FIREARM

### OBJECTIVE 7

Dirt and debris can easily build up inside any firearm. To make sure your firearm works safely and correctly, you should clean it after every time you use it. Every hunter should own a complete cleaning kit and use it often.

### What's Inside a Cleaning Kit?

A good cleaning kit should include these items:



- **Bristle brushes:** These should be the right size (caliber or gauge) for each of your firearms.
- **Cleaning rods:** Different lengths for rifles, shotguns, and handguns.
- **Cleaning patches:** Small squares of cloth sized to fit inside the barrel.
- **Patch holders:** These screw onto the end of the cleaning rod to hold the patch in place.
- **A stiff toothbrush:** Great for scrubbing small, hard-to-reach areas.
- **Bore solvent:** A special liquid cleaner that breaks down gunpowder buildup and lead.
- **Gun oil:** To keep parts moving smoothly and prevent rust.

### TO THE POINT

#### Question:

What should you do before cleaning a firearm?

#### Answer:

Always make sure it is unloaded.

### How to Clean Your Firearm

The steps for cleaning are basically the same for every firearm. Always follow this order:

1. **Safety First:** Double-check to make sure the firearm is **COMPLETELY UNLOADED**.
2. **Inspect:** Check the barrel for any blockages and make sure everything is working right.
3. **Scrub:** Soak a patch or bristle brush in bore solvent and run it down the inside of the barrel.
4. **Dry:** Run several dry patches through the barrel to soak up the solvent and check for any signs of rust.
5. **Protect:** Once the barrel is clean and dry, run one last patch through with a light coat of gun oil to protect the metal.
6. **The Action:** Clean all the visible parts of the action (the moving parts that load and fire the firearm).
7. **Exterior:** Wipe down and lightly oil all the metal parts on the outside of the firearm to prevent fingerprints and moisture from causing rust.

# FIREARMS: RIFLES & SHOTGUNS

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

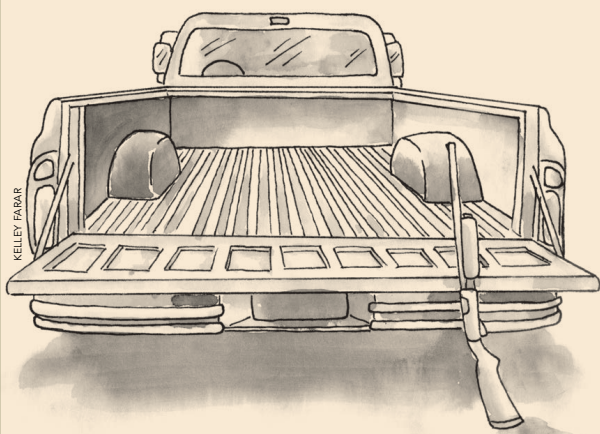
### TRANSPORTING FIREARMS

#### OBJECTIVE 8

When you move firearms in any type of vehicle, you must follow specific laws and safety rules to keep everyone safe. It is extremely dangerous to travel with a loaded firearm. Because of this, you should always make sure your firearms are completely unloaded and placed inside a protective case before you put them in a car or truck.

Additionally, you should never lean a firearm against a tailgate, a tire, or any other part of a vehicle. It is very easy for a firearm to slip and hit the ground. If the firearm falls, the shock of the impact could cause it to fire accidentally, even if the safety is turned on.

### TO THE POINT



#### Question:

In the picture above, is this safe?

#### Answer:

No.

### MARKSMANSHIP

#### OBJECTIVE 9

#### The Prone Position



The prone position – where you lie flat on your stomach – is the steadiest and most accurate way to shoot.

#### The Sitting Position

The sitting position is much more stable than standing.



When you sit, your body moves less, which keeps the muzzle from swaying. If you use a bipod (a two-legged stand) while sitting, your shot will be even more accurate.

# FIREARMS: RIFLES & SHOTGUNS

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

### The Kneeling Position



The kneeling position is also steadier than standing. You drop down onto one knee and use your other leg to help brace your arm. Just like the sitting position, using a bipod can help make this even more stable.

### Shotgun Shooting Position



When shooting a shotgun, your stance is different because you are often aiming at moving targets. You should stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart. To keep your balance and prepare for the firearm's kick, you should lean slightly forward so that more of your weight is on your front leg.

### The Standing Position



The standing position is the easiest one to get into quickly when you spot an animal. However, it is very difficult to hold the firearm perfectly still while standing up. Because of this, it is the least accurate shooting position.

#### Review

- One important difference between a rifle and a shotgun is that rifles shoot a single bullet and shotguns shoot many pellets.
- Be able to locate and describe the parts of rifles and shotguns.
- Clean your firearm after every use in order to ensure safe and efficient functioning.
- The most common firing positions are prone, sitting, kneeling, standing and shotgun shooting positions.



## FIREARM SAFETY

### OBJECTIVE 1

The person holding a firearm is always responsible for handling it safely. To help hunters remember how to stay safe, the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) uses four simple rules. You can remember them using the phrase **ACTT**:

- A**ssume that every firearm is loaded.
- C**ontrol the direction of the muzzle — point the firearm in a safe direction.
- T**rigger Finger — keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire.
- T**arget — be certain of your target and of what's behind it.

## TO THE POINT

### Question:

What do you do when hunting with someone who refuses to follow the rules for proper firearm safety?

### Answer:

Immediately tell them your concerns and refuse to hunt with them unless they follow the rules.

### Question:

When unloading a firearm, where should you point the muzzle?

### Answer:

In a safe direction.

## Firearm Safety Tips

Staying safe while hunting or shooting is all about following a few smart habits. Here are the most important rules to keep in mind:

### Check Every Firearm

Whenever you pick up a firearm or someone hands one to you, always check for yourself to see if it is unloaded. Never just take someone's word for it.

### Watch the Muzzle

When you are carrying a firearm, your No. 1 job is to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Never let the barrel point at yourself or anyone else, even for a second.

### Keep Your Finger Off the Trigger

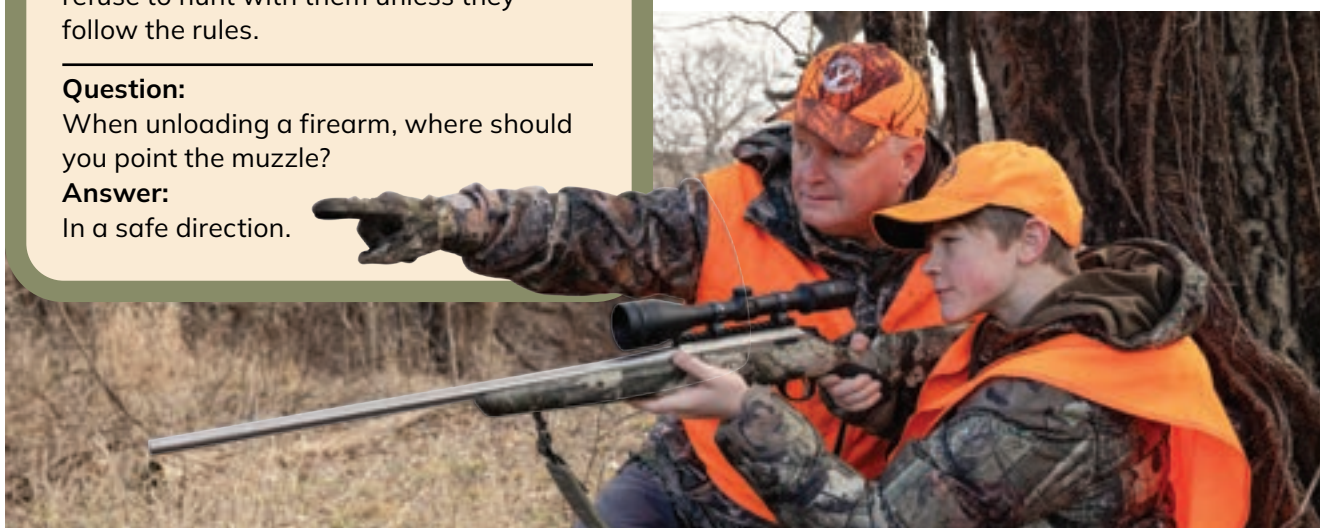
Most people naturally want to put their finger on the trigger when they pick up a firearm. **Don't!** Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until you are ready to shoot. If the firearm is loaded and you trip or get startled, having your finger on the trigger could cause it to fire by accident.

### Know Your Target and Beyond

Never fire a shot unless you are 100% sure of what your target is. You also need to know exactly what is behind it. A bullet can travel right through a target or miss it completely, so make sure there is nothing in the background that could be hit. Never point your firearm at anything you don't plan to shoot.

### Use the Right Tools

Never use the scope on your rifle to look for animals like you would use binoculars. If you use your scope to scout, you are pointing a loaded firearm at things you haven't identified yet. Also, always double-check that your



AARON BALSTIN

ammunition matches the firearm you are using. Using the wrong ammo can cause the firearm to explode.

### Handle Problems Correctly

If you fall or trip while carrying a firearm, unload it immediately after and check the barrel. Even a little bit of snow, mud, or dirt trapped inside can cause the barrel to burst when you fire. If you find a clog, clean it out completely before using the firearm again.

### Safe Behavior and Friends

Never use drugs or alcohol before or during a hunt, as they mess with your judgment and reflexes. Finally, if you are hunting with a friend who is being unsafe, speak up! Tell them your concerns immediately. If they won't follow the rules, stop hunting with them. Your safety is more important than the hunt.

### Avoid Dangerous Surfaces

Never shoot at water or flat, hard surfaces like rocks or metal. Bullets can bounce off these surfaces (this is called a ricochet) and fly in a dangerous, unpredictable direction.

## LOADING AND UNLOADING FIREARMS

### OBJECTIVE 2

Keep your firearms unloaded at all times unless you are actually using them. It is very important that you fully understand how your specific firearm loads and unloads before you head out. If you aren't sure how it works, have someone with experience show you the right way to handle the ammunition.

Whenever you are loading or unloading, always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. If your firearm has a safety, make sure it is turned on during this process. You should also keep your finger outside of the trigger guard the entire time to prevent an accidental discharge.

Here are a few more tips for handling your firearm safely:

- **Check it yourself.** Never just take someone's word for it when they say a firearm is empty. Always look inside the chamber yourself to be 100% sure.
- **Practice with dummy ammo.** Use fake, plastic "dummy" rounds to practice loading and unloading until you can do it smoothly and safely.

## TO THE POINT

### Question:

The more you hunt, the more likely you are to have an accidental discharge. How do you make sure it doesn't kill or injure someone?

### Answer:

Always point your firearm in a safe direction.

### Question:

What should you assume about every firearm?

### Answer:

Assume that every firearm is loaded.

### Question:

When handling a firearm, you should always control what?

### Answer:

The direction of the muzzle.

### Question:

Who is responsible for safe handling of the firearm?

### Answer:

The person holding the firearm.

### Question:

You should never take a shot until you are certain of what?

### Answer:

Don't take a shot until you are certain of your target and what is behind it.

### Question:

Is it OK to use drugs or alcohol before or during shooting?

### Answer:

No. It is dangerous. Never do it.

### Question:

What should you do after a fall?

### Answer:

You should examine the barrel of your firearm to make sure there is no snow, dirt or mud in it.

- **The Golden Rule.** Even if you just unloaded the firearm, always treat it as if it were still loaded. This habit prevents tragic accidents.

## CROSSING FENCES, WATERWAYS AND OTHER OBSTACLES

### OBJECTIVE 3

Many hunting accidents happen because hunters forget basic safety rules when crossing fences or other obstacles. It is very easy to trip or lose your balance when climbing over a fallen log, sliding down a steep hill, or walking through a stream. If you are carrying a loaded firearm when you slip, it can be extremely dangerous.

The best way to stay safe is to always unload your firearm before you try to cross an obstacle. Also, remember that whenever you pick up a firearm or someone hands one to you, you should immediately check to make sure it is empty.

### How to Cross Safely

If you are hunting alone: Unload your firearm and leave the action open. Point the barrel away from you and gently place the firearm on the ground on the other side of the fence or log. Once the firearm is safely on the ground, you can climb over.

If you are hunting with a partner:

1. Both hunters should unload their firearms and leave the actions open.
2. One person stays on the original side and holds both firearms.
3. The second person crosses the fence or obstacle without a firearm.



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## TO THE POINT

### Question:

When do you know that a firearm is pointed in a safe direction?

### Answer:

If it went off, no one would get injured.

### Question:

When should you treat a firearm as if it were loaded?

### Answer:

Always, even if you just unloaded it.

### Question:

Before crossing a fence or other obstacle, what should you do?

### Answer:

Always unload your firearm.

### Question:

What should you do when picking up or accepting a firearm from another person?

### Answer:

You should always make sure that it is unloaded.

4. The first person carefully hands the firearms across to the partner. The muzzles should always be pointed up and away from everyone.
5. Once the second person has the firearms, the first person can safely cross.



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## SAFE ZONES OF FIRE

### OBJECTIVE 4

A zone of fire is the specific area where a hunter can safely shoot. It is your “safety window.” If you are hunting by yourself, your zone is based on what you can see, any obstacles like trees or rocks in the way, and how far your firearm can shoot.

When you hunt in a group – especially for birds or ducks – the rules get more strict to make sure no one gets hurt. Hunters usually walk or sit in a straight line so everyone can see each other. To stay safe, follow these rules:

- Stay in line: No one should ever run ahead or fall behind the rest of the group.
- Never shoot behind you: The area behind the line of hunters is strictly off-limits.
- Know your angle: The person in the middle has the narrowest zone of fire (about 45 degrees). The hunters on the far left and right ends have a

wider zone because they can safely aim toward the outside edges.

- Don’t “cross” shots: Never shoot at an animal that is flying or running directly between you and another hunter.

By sticking to your own zone, you ensure that every shot is fired away from your friends and in a safe direction.

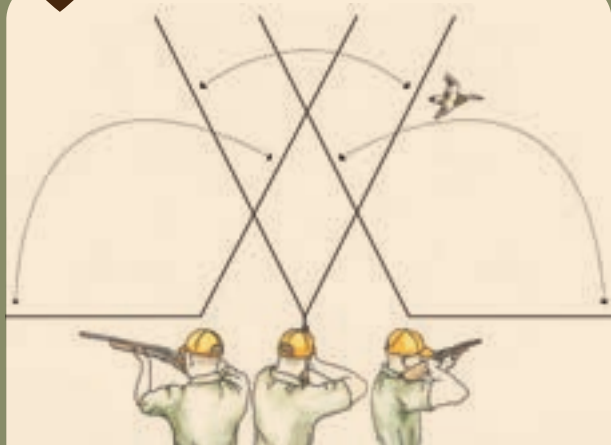
## AMMUNITION SAFETY

### OBJECTIVE 5

It is important to know the correct methods for handling ammunition. Following a few rules can keep you and your hunting partners safe. Carry only the correct size of ammunition for your firearm.

- If ammunition appears dented or in any way defective, don’t use it!
- Store ammunition in its original box. Do not mix different types of ammunition in a generic container.
- Keep ammunition away from heat or from being hit.
- Keep your ammunition locked in a separate container from your firearms.

## TO THE POINT



### Safe Zones of Fire

#### Question:

Who can safely shoot at this bird?

#### Answer:

The hunter on the right.

## TO THE POINT

#### Question:

What is the most important thing to do when carrying a firearm?

#### Answer:

Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times.



## The 10 Commandments of Firearm Safety

1. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
2. Firearms should be unloaded when not actually in use.
3. Don't rely on your firearm's safety.
4. Be sure of your target and what's beyond it.
5. Use correct ammunition.
6. If your firearm fails to fire when the trigger is pulled, handle with care!
7. Always wear eye and ear protection when shooting.
8. Be sure the barrel is clear of obstructions before shooting.
9. Don't alter or modify your firearm, and have firearms checked by a gunsmith regularly.
10. Learn the mechanical and handling characteristics of the firearm you are using.

## HUNTER ORANGE

### OBJECTIVE 6

In Oklahoma, if you are hunting big game like deer, elk, bear, or antelope with a firearm, the law says you must be easy to see. You are required to wear a hunter orange hat and an orange garment on your upper body (like a vest or jacket). Together, these pieces must total at least 400 square inches of hunter orange. Using solid hunter orange is the safest way to make sure other hunters can see you.

Almost all other hunters and trappers must also wear orange if they are in the woods during a big game season. You must wear either an orange hat or an orange vest if you are hunting while an antelope, bear, deer, or elk season is happening.

The only hunters who don't have to follow this rule are those hunting:

- Waterfowl
- Crow, crane, or dove
- Fur-bearing animals at night



AARON BALSTIN

Even if the law doesn't require it, wearing orange is still the smartest move for safety. For example, people hunting quail or pheasant should always wear an orange vest or hat. Turkey hunters should also wear orange while walking through the woods so they don't get mistaken for a bird.

### TO THE POINT

#### Question:

What is the safest color to wear while hunting?

#### Answer:

Solid hunter orange.

## SAFELY CARRYING YOUR FIREARM WHILE HUNTING

### OBJECTIVE 7

There are several safe ways to carry your rifle or shotgun while hunting. The carry you choose depends on the animal you are hunting and the area around you. You should always be cautious and pick the safest method for the moment.

Hunting situations can change quickly, so you must be ready to adjust. For example, the cradle carry is safe if the muzzle is pointed to the left and no one is standing there. However, if another hunter joins your group and walks on your left side, that carry is no longer safe. You would need to change how you are holding your firearm immediately.

The most important thing to remember is that the muzzle must point in a safe direction at all times. A safe direction means that even if the firearm went off by accident, no one would be hurt.

# SAFETY

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

# 5

## CHAPTER



### Shoulder Carry

Rest the forearm on the top of your shoulder by holding the grip.



### Trail Carry

Hold the stock with one hand, and make sure the muzzle is pointed at the ground.



### Two-handed Carry

Hold the grip in one hand and the firearm's forearm in the other hand. This carry provides the best muzzle control.



### Elbow Carry

Hold the grip of the firearm over your elbow, let the stock rest against the back of your upper arm. The muzzle of the firearm should be pointing down. Using this carry gives the handler the least control.



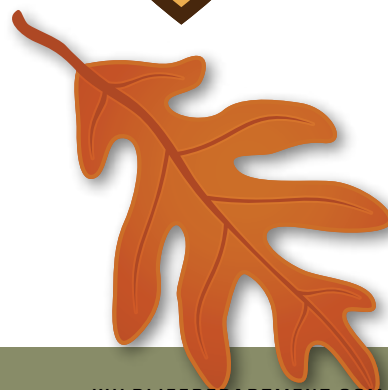
### Cradle Carry

Cradle the firearm's forearm in the bend of one arm. Hunting situations change often. You should always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. This can change depending on the location of other members of your party.

### TO THE POINT

**Question:**  
What carry provides the best muzzle control?

**Answer:**  
The two-handed carry.



## TURKEY HUNTING SAFETY

### OBJECTIVE 8

Turkeys behave differently than other animals, so hunters have to use special techniques to find them. Because of this, you need to follow extra safety rules to stay safe in the woods.

**Never stalk a turkey.** It is very hard to sneak up on a turkey without being seen. More importantly, if you try to crawl toward a turkey sound, another hunter might mistake your movement for a bird. This is a common way hunting accidents happen.

**Be cautious when considering reaping or fanning.** With reaping or fanning, a hunter uses a turkey decoy as cover while moving toward a bird. While legal and growing in popularity, reaping or fanning is a questionable hunting strategy from a safety standpoint. You can be easily mistaken for a real tom turkey, which is a legal bird to harvest.

**Avoid red, white, and blue clothing.** These are the colors of a male turkey's head. If a hunter sees a flash of red or

white in the bushes, they might think you are a bird. Stick to camouflage and use hunter orange when moving.

**Speak up to other hunters.** If you see another hunter nearby, do not wave or make turkey sounds to get their attention. Quick movements or bird calls might make them think you are game. Instead, stay still and yell in a loud voice.

**Choose a safe calling spot.** When you sit down to call turkeys, don't hide so well that you can't see what's around you. Pick a spot with a large tree at your back. The tree should be wider than your shoulders and taller than your head. This protects your back and prevents other hunters from mistaking your small shoulder movements for a bird.

**Be 100% sure of your target.** Never shoot just because you hear a sound or see a bush move. You must see the entire bird to make sure it is legal and safe to shoot. A good rule is to wait until you can clearly see the turkey's eye. This ensures the bird is close enough for a clean shot and that you know exactly what you are aiming at. In turkey hunting, it is smartest to assume that every sound you hear is another hunter until you prove otherwise.



KAREN PEREZ

## TO THE POINT

### Question:

What should you avoid wearing while turkey hunting?

### Answer:

Don't wear red, white or blue.

### Turkey Hunting Safety

- Never assume that you are alone in the woods — even if you are the only one with permission to hunt.
- Never assume that other hunters are acting responsibly.
- Use a flashlight when walking in the dark.
- Make sure your facemask does not obscure your vision.
- Be aware of what is beyond your target before you shoot.
- Keep your firearm unloaded until you are set up in the field. Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.
- Keep your decoy covered until ready to set it up. After harvesting a turkey, cover it until you are out of the woods.
- Wear orange when moving through the woods.

## FIREARM SAFETY IN THE HOME

### OBJECTIVE 9

#### Safe Storage

Keeping firearms safe in your home is your responsibility. You must always follow safety rules whenever you touch a firearm. When a firearm is not in storage, you must always keep it under your direct control.

Never store or move a loaded firearm. Firearms should only be loaded when you are in the field hunting or at a shooting range. Before you put a firearm away, you should turn on the safety, open the action, and look inside the chamber to be 100% sure it is empty.

Even when a firearm is put away, you should keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and leave the action open. Here are the best ways to store your gear:

- The Best Way: Store firearms and ammunition in separate locked cabinets or safes.
- The Next Best Way: Store them together in one locked safe.



- If You Don't Have a Safe: Use trigger locks on every firearm and store them in a place where children cannot reach them.

Store your firearms in a dry place away from heat. Moisture causes metal to rust, and high heat can cause wooden parts of the firearm to crack or split. Finally, make sure everyone in your family knows exactly what to do if they ever find a firearm that wasn't put away correctly.

#### Firearm Education

Safety starts with learning. Everyone in the family needs to know how to handle firearms safely. Without education, locks and safes aren't nearly as effective.

It is never too early to start teaching children about firearm safety. Even if a child is too young to hold a firearm, you can start by talking to them. Children must understand that firearms are not toys. Parents should always lead by example by following the safety rules themselves.

Children should not handle a firearm until they are old enough to understand and follow every single safety rule. Even then, an adult must always be there to supervise. You should never let a child handle a firearm alone.

Hiding the truth about firearms from children does not make them safer. If children don't understand the risks, they might find themselves in a dangerous situation. Education is the best way to prevent accidents.

### TO THE POINT

#### Question:

What is the best method for storing firearms and ammunition in the home?

#### Answer:

Locked separately in a cabinet or safe.



## TREESTAND SAFETY

### OBJECTIVE 10

#### What are Treestands?

A treestand is a seat or platform attached to a tree that gives a hunter a better view from up high. This is very helpful for bowhunting because it keeps you quiet and helps hide your scent from animals. However, treestands have one big downside: once you are up there, you can't move around to get a better angle if an animal walks by.

#### Treestand Safety Rules

The most common way hunters get hurt or killed is by falling from a stand. Falls happen because of bad equipment, picking the wrong tree, or slipping while climbing. Follow these rules to stay safe:

##### Wear a Full-body Harness

Always wear a safety harness that meets professional standards. You must wear it the entire time – from the moment you start climbing up until you are back on the ground. Never use just a simple belt or chest strap; they can be deadly in a fall. Your harness should include a shock absorbing tether and a suspension relief system. There should be no slack in the tether when seated.



##### Know Your Gear

Every season, read the instructions that came with your stand. Practice using it at ground level before you go high into a tree. Never go over the weight limit the manufacturer lists for the stand. Always practice in your full-body harness in the presence of a responsible adult, learning what it feels like to hang suspended in it at ground level.

##### Check for Damage

Inspect your stand and climbing gear every single time you use it. If anything looks worn out or broken, do not use it! If you ever do fall while wearing your harness, throw the harness away and buy a new one, as the fall can weaken the straps.

##### Have an Emergency Plan

If you fall and are hanging from your harness, stay calm. Use your suspension relief strap to stand up and take the pressure off your legs. If you don't have one, keep moving your legs to keep your blood flowing. Always carry a phone, whistle, or flashlight within reach so you can call for help.

##### Tell Someone Where You Are

Always give a hunt plan to a friend or family member. They should know exactly where your stand is and when you plan to be home.

##### Pick the Right Tree

Only put your stand in a healthy, straight, living tree. Never use a dead tree or one that leans. Also, don't leave your treestand out in the woods for more than two weeks. Weather and animals can damage it in ways that are hard to see.

##### Use a Haul Line

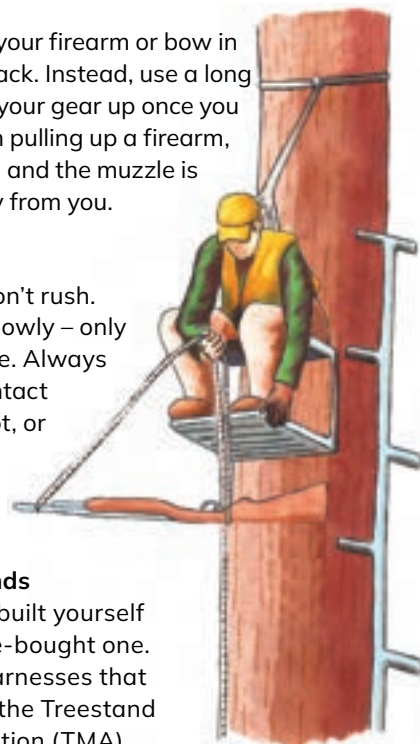
Never climb a tree with your firearm or bow in your hands or on your back. Instead, use a long rope (a haul line) to pull your gear up once you are safely seated. When pulling up a firearm, make sure it is unloaded and the muzzle is pointed down and away from you.

##### Take Your Time

Know your limits and don't rush. When climbing, move slowly – only 10 to 12 inches at a time. Always keep three points of contact (two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand) on the ladder at all times.

##### Avoid Homemade Stands

Never use a stand you built yourself or try to change a store-bought one. Only use stands and harnesses that are safety-certified by the Treestand Manufacturers Association (TMA). Contact the TMA office or visit [www.TMAstands.com](http://www.TMAstands.com) for a list of certified products.



## TYPES OF ELEVATED STANDS AND CLIMBING EQUIPMENT

There are five common types of elevated stands:

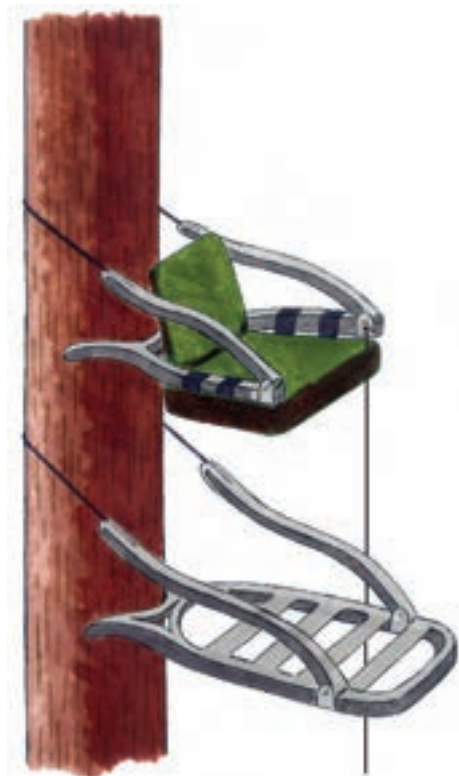


**Hang-on Stands** — Chained or strapped to trees. Inexpensive and lightweight. May be difficult to place in a tree and a ladder may be required. Last step of climbing aid should be installed above platform.

**NO MATTER** what type of stand you use, you need to **CHECK IT FOR WEAR AND TEAR**, such as broken welds, cracked boards, weak spots in the expanded metal, or frayed cables, etc. every time you get into the stand! Any kind of stand can be dangerous depending on how it's built, how it's maintained and how well you inspect it.



**Ladder Stands** — Stands that use a ladder to reach the perch. These are often heavy and require at least two to three people to install or remove.



**Climbing Stands** — Moves up and down the tree with a series of stand up/sitdown motions. Can only be used on trees that are straight and have no lower branches.

## SAFETY

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION



**Self-supporting Stands (Tripod Stands)** — Used when no trees are available. Needs to be erected on level ground.



**Box Blinds** — freestanding, elevated blind. Same function as a self-supporting stand with added concealment. Also needs to be erected on level ground.

## TO THE POINT

**Question:**

When should treestands and full body harnesses be checked for wear and damage?

**Answer:**

They should be checked before each use.

**Question:**

What two things should you do before using a treestand?

**Answer:**

Always inspect trees and check the steps to make sure they are securely fastened.

**Question:**

What should you wear when installing, removing or using a treestand?

**Answer:**

Use a full-body harness from the time you leave the ground until you are back down.

**Question:**

What should you always wear when hunting from a treestand?

**Answer:**

A full-body harness.

**Question:**

What should be used to get your bow or firearm into and out of your treestand?

**Answer:**

A haul line.

### About Climbing Aids

Climbing aids are often used to reach a stand. There are many types; regular ladders attach with straps, chains or ropes, hang-on steps hang from the bottom or side of a stand, climbing “sticks” are portable ladders; and screw-in steps attach with screws into the wood of the tree. All climbing aids should be used with extreme care. A full-body safety harness with climbing belt should **ALWAYS** be used when installing and climbing any type of ladder. Be sure you have the landowner’s permission to install a treestand, especially if you are using screw-in steps or treestand that may damage the tree. Carefully inspect the treestand and climbing aid before each use. What may have been safe from the last hunt may not be safe today.

## WATER SAFETY

### OBJECTIVE 11

### Boating Safety

Hunters who use boats sometimes focus so much on the hunt that they forget about boat safety. However, staying safe starts long before you get on the water. Following these rules can prevent accidents:

- **Don't Overload:** Never put too much gear or too many people in your boat.
- **Keep it Low:** Keep heavy gear and passengers low in the boat to help it stay balanced.
- **Wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD):** Always wear a PFD while the boat is moving.
- **Stay with the Boat:** If your boat flips over, stay with it. It is easier for rescuers to find a boat than a person in the water.
- **Pack Dry Clothes:** Keep an extra set of clothes in a waterproof bag.
- **Learn the Rules:** Take a boating safety course and follow all local laws.

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia is one of the biggest dangers for hunters, especially in cold or wet weather. It happens when your body loses heat faster than it can produce it, causing your internal temperature to drop to dangerous levels. You don't have to fall into a lake to get hypothermia; even getting sweaty in cold weather can chill your body enough to start the process.

Symptoms to Watch For:

- Uncontrollable shivering (though shivering may stop if you get dangerously cold).
- Feeling weak or clumsy.
- Feeling confused or "fuzzy" in the head.
- Pale skin.
- Feeling very sleepy or tired.
- Slow breathing or a slow heartbeat.



U.S. COAST GUARD PHOTO

### How to Treat Hypothermia

If someone shows signs of being too cold, you must act fast. Hypothermia can be deadly.

1. **Get out of the cold:** Find a dry, warm area away from the wind and rain.
2. **Dry off:** Take off wet clothes and put on windproof or waterproof gear.
3. **Warm up:** If it is safe, start a fire. Get the person into a warm sleeping bag or wrap them in blankets.
4. **Add heat:** Apply warm packs to the neck, armpits, and groin.
5. **Eat and drink:** Give the person warm drinks and sugary foods like candy to help their body create energy.
6. **Move:** If the person is able, have them move around to increase their body heat.

### What to Wear

The best way to avoid hypothermia is to dress correctly.

- **Avoid Cotton:** When cotton gets wet, it stays wet and pulls heat away from your body.
- **Wear Layers:** Use layers of wool or synthetic (man-made) fabrics. These materials keep you warm even if they get damp.
- **Outer Shell:** Always wear a jacket that is windproof and waterproof to protect you from the elements.

## Personal Flotation Devices (PFD)

Every hunter on the water should wear a personal flotation device, even if they are a strong swimmer. It is especially important for children or anyone who isn't good at swimming to wear one whenever they are near a lake or river.

If you accidentally fall into cold water, you need to save as much body heat as possible. You can do this by pulling your arms tight against your chest and tucking your knees up toward your body. If you are with other hunters, huddle close together in the water to share warmth. Even the best swimmers can get cold very quickly and develop hypothermia in chilly water.

It is important to remember that people suffering from hypothermia often can't think clearly. They might make bad choices or be more likely to have an accident because their brain is cold. If you start feeling the effects of the cold, be extra careful! Don't let a small mistake turn into a much bigger problem.

Finally, always check the weather forecast before you head out. Make sure you are thinking about the safety of everyone in your group – including your hunting dogs!



## Review

- Safely load and unload a firearm. Firearms should be kept unloaded unless they are in use.
- Five methods of carrying firearms: two-handed, cradle, elbows/side, trail, shoulder carry.
- When two hunters need to cross a fence, both hunters unload their firearms and one hunter holds the firearms while the other hunter crosses the fence. Then the firearms are handed over the fence.
- The area into which a hunter may shoot safely is referred to as a “zone of fire.” When three hunters are hunting in a line and a game bird flies up behind them — NO ONE SHOOTS IT!
- The biggest safety hazard when using treestands is falling. You should always:
  1. Wear a full-body harness
  2. Follow manufacturer's instructions
  3. Inspect treestands and fall-arrest systems for signs of wear
- Hypothermia occurs when you get too cold for too long and your body's internal temperature drops. The first symptom of hypothermia is shivering.

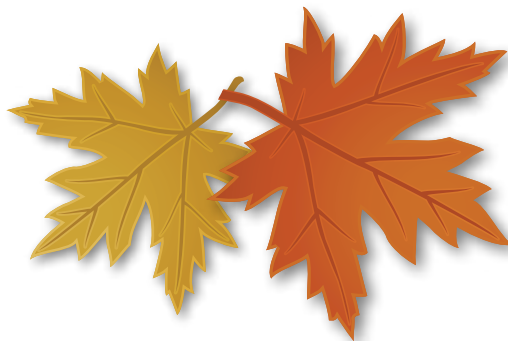
## TO THE POINT

### Question:

What should you wear to avoid hypothermia?

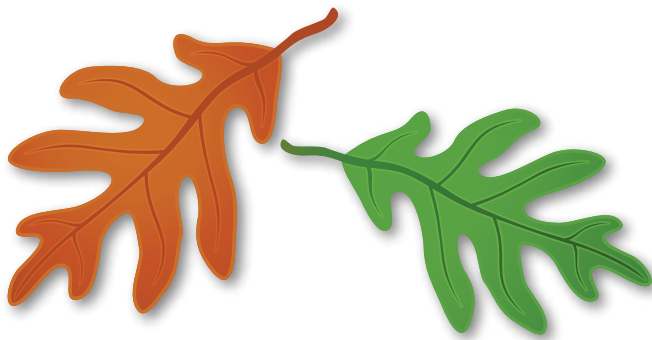
### Answer:

You should wear layers of clothing.



## IDENTIFYING OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE

Not properly identifying an animal before you shoot it can result in not only hunting fines or the suspension of your license but can also severely damage public support for hunting. A hunter who isn't cautious about what he or she shoots is a dangerous hunter and an unethical one.



## TO THE POINT



**Question:**

What is this a picture of?

**Answer:**

A white-tailed deer.

## LARGE MAMMALS

### Elk

#### Habitat

Found statewide in Oklahoma. Herds can be found in the Wichita Mountains area and other, smaller herds are in isolated locations statewide.

#### Size

4 to 5 ft. high at the shoulder. Males weigh 580 to 1,000 lbs. Females are smaller at 420 to 600 lbs.



# FIELD GUIDE TO IDENTIFYING OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE

DESIREE BRANSON CLINE/READERS PHOTO SHOWCASE 2021



## Black Bear

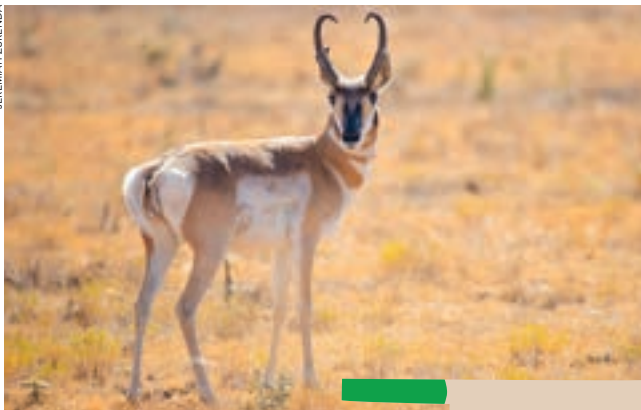
### Habitat

Black bears are found mostly in eastern Oklahoma as well as parts of the Panhandle.

### Size

5 to 6 ft. high when standing on its hind legs. 2 to 3.5 ft. high at the shoulder. Weighs 200 to 475 lbs. or more.

JEREMIAH ZURENDA



## Antelope

### Habitat

In Oklahoma, these striking big game mammals can be spotted in the short- and mixed-grass prairie of Cimarron, Texas and Beaver counties.

### Size

3 ft. high at shoulder. Males weigh up to 140 lbs.; females weigh up to 105 lbs.

JEREMIAH ZURENDA

JEREMIAH ZURENDA



## Mule Deer

### Habitat

Mule deer habitat changes throughout the year as different plants become available to feed on. In early spring they prefer the new growth of grasses. In summer they mostly feed on forbs and shrub foliage. After the fall frost, mule deer depend on evergreens and woody shrubs. They are found in western Oklahoma.

### Size

3 ft. high at shoulder. Bucks (males) weigh up to 405 lbs.; does (females) up to 160 lbs.

WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM



## White-tailed Deer

### Habitat

White-tailed deer are found statewide in Oklahoma but prefer open woodland. They follow established paths to and from their food sources, and feed in the early morning and late afternoon.

### Size

About 3 ft. high at shoulder. Weighs 150 to 225 lbs. Generally smaller than mule deer.

## MEDIUM TO SMALL MAMMALS



DAVID STROZDAS/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019

### Coyote

#### Habitat

Coyotes are extremely adaptable and thrive in a wide range of habitats from mountains to deserts. They are found statewide in Oklahoma.

#### Size

23 to 26 in. high at the shoulder. 39 to 55 in. long, including a 12 to 18 in. tail. Weighs 20 to 50 lbs.



DWAYNE KEAR/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2018

### Bobcat

#### Habitat

Bobcats can be found statewide in forests, swamplands and deserts.

#### Size

Up to 22 in. high at the shoulder. 25 to 30 in. long not including tail. Tail length is approximately 5 in. Weighs 15 to 35 lbs.

## UPLAND GAME BIRDS



JUSTIN AVERY/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2022

- Eastern
- Rio-Eastern Hybrid
- Rio Grande
- Merriams Rio Hybrid

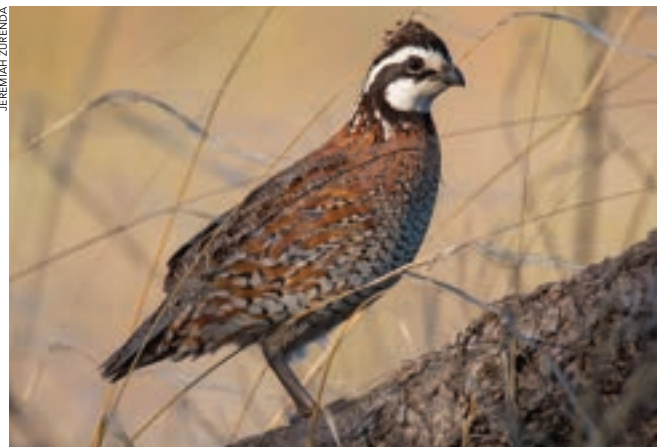
### Wild Turkey

#### Habitat

Oak woodlands, pine-oak forests. The two main subspecies in Oklahoma are the Eastern wild turkey in the eastern part of the state and the Rio Grande wild turkey in the rest of the state.

#### Size

37 to 46 in. high. Weighs 17 to 28 lbs.



JEREMIAH ZURENDA

### Northern Bobwhite

#### Habitat

Farmland areas, open brushy country, roadsides and forest edge. Prefers open forests, grasslands, pastures, meadows and shrub cover. Found statewide.

#### Size

8.5 to 10.5 in. high. Weighs 6 to 8 oz.

# FIELD GUIDE TO IDENTIFYING OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE

DAVE AND STEVE MASLOWSKI



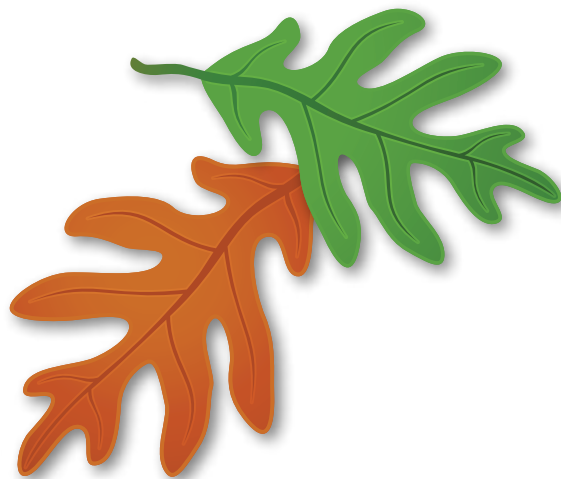
## Ring-necked Pheasant

### Habitat

Farmlands, pastures, and grassy woodland edges. Although successful in most grassland habitats, this species is most commonly found in the central plains.

### Size

Male 33 in. high; female 21 in. high. Weighs 2 to 3 lbs.



## MIGRATORY BIRDS

JOHN THORNTON/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2015



## Mourning Dove

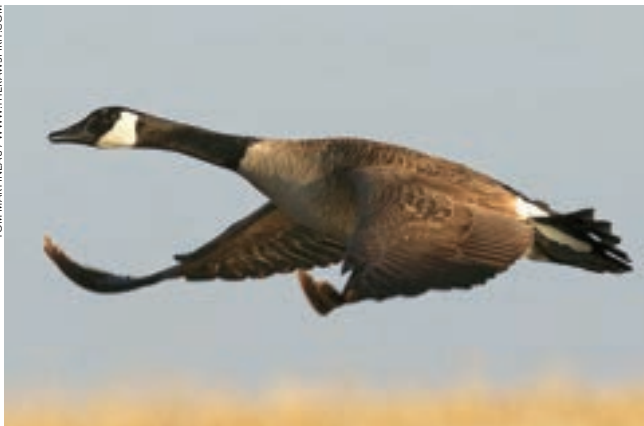
### Habitat

Open lands including prairies and open forest as well as suburban areas. Found statewide.

### Size

10 to 12 in. high. Weighs 4 to 6 oz.

TOM MARTINEAU / WWW.THERAWSPRIT.COM



## Canada Goose

### Habitat

Near water, grassy fields, and grain fields. Found statewide.

### Size

30 to 44 in. long. Weighs 7 to 20 lbs.



## Mallard

### Habitat

Grasslands areas around a pond or small lake with lots of reeds or marshy areas. Found statewide.

### Size

24 to 28 in. long. Weighs 2.5 to 3 lbs.

One of the main concerns of new and experienced waterfowl hunters alike is correct identification. While it might seem like a hard skill to develop, there are a few simple things you can do to improve your identification skills. Go with an experienced waterfowl hunter, study a waterfowl ID guide or practice by watching waterfowl when not hunting.

## Sandhill Crane

Large, greyish bird with long black legs, long neck and black, chisel-shaped beak.

### Habitat

The sandhill crane can be found in the western half of Oklahoma on agriculture fields, sandy rivers or mudflats along lakeshores.

### Size

4 ft. tall. Wingspan 6 ft. Weighs 8-11 lbs.

## Whooping Crane

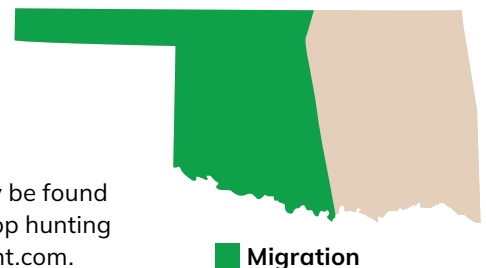
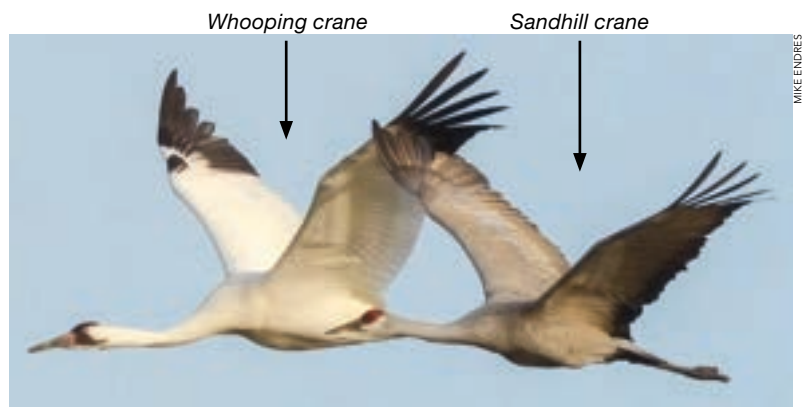
Large white bird with black wingtips and red markings on its face and crown. Slightly larger than the sandhill crane. Whooping cranes are a federally endangered species, and it is illegal to hunt or shoot them.

### Habitat

Whooping cranes migrate through the western half of Oklahoma and may be found in the same areas as sandhill cranes. If whooping cranes are observed, stop hunting and report the birds to a game warden or biologist or at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).

### Size

5 ft. tall. Wingspan 7.5 ft. Weighs 15 lbs.



# GAME CARE

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM



## FIELD DRESSING AND THE CARE OF GAME

Ethical and responsible hunters:

- Know the laws and use legal and ethical methods of hunting.
- Never waste game and properly care for game meat.
- Tag and check in game if required.

## THE HUNT: ONE SHOT HARVESTS

As a hunter, you are responsible for taking good care of any animal you harvest. This responsibility starts the moment you take your first shot. A good hunter always aims for a quick, clean harvest with just one shot.

The way you hunt an animal and how you care for it right away will change how the meat tastes. If an animal is shot while it is resting, the meat will usually taste much better. However, if an animal is chased for a long time, its body releases waste products into its muscles. This can give the meat a gamey or unpleasant flavor.

## AFTER THE HARVEST

### OBJECTIVE 1

### Words to Know

**Game Care** – The process of taking care of the meat immediately after an animal has been harvested.

**Field Dressing** – A method of cleaning a dead animal to preserve the meat.

**Carcass** – Body of a dead animal.

**Entrails** – Waste products left over from field dressing.

**Aging Meat** – A method of tenderizing meat.

### Tagging and Caring for Your Game

As soon as you harvest a deer, elk, antelope, bear, or turkey, you must tag it immediately. Your tag needs to include your name, your customer ID number, and the exact date and time you got the animal.

You also need to leave evidence of sex and species attached. This means leaving certain parts of the animal (like the head or feathers) on the carcass so a game warden can easily see what kind of animal it is and if it is a male or female.

### Preventing Spoiling

Once the animal is tagged, you must move fast to keep the meat from going bad. You need to do two things: field dress it and cool it down.

### Field Dressing

Field dressing is removing the entrails. This is important because it keeps the meat from soaking up waste from the body.

# GAME CARE

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

### The Three Meat Spoilers

The flavor of your meat depends on how you handle three things:

- **Temperature:** You must get the meat cool as fast as possible.
- **Dirt:** Keep the meat clean. Getting dirt or hair on the meat can ruin the taste.
- **Moisture:** Keep the meat dry. Wet meat can grow bacteria more quickly.

Meat that is kept cool, dry, and clean will always taste much better than meat that gets warm, wet, or dirty.

## CARE OF THE CARCASS

### OBJECTIVE 2

### How to Keep Your Meat Fresh

To make sure your meat stays good to eat, you need to keep it cool, dry, and clean. Here is how you do it:

#### Keep it Cool

- **Find some shade:** Keep the meat out of the direct sun.
- **Find a breeze:** Moving air helps pull heat away from the meat.
- **Hang it up:** Hanging the meat from a tree or a sturdy post helps it cool down on all sides.
- **Watch the heat:** Never carry a large animal on the hood of your car or truck. The heat from the engine will spoil the meat quickly.

#### Keep it Dry

- **Field dress immediately:** Removing the organs right away helps the meat dry out and cool down.
- **Wipe it down:** Use a clean cloth to wipe away any extra blood or fluids.

#### Keep it Clean

- **Don't drag it:** Never drag the meat through the dirt or mud.
- **Use a cover:** Wrap the meat in cheesecloth (a thin, breathable fabric). This keeps dirt and bugs off while still letting the meat breathe.

### Respect Others

Hunting is a tradition, but it's important to remember that not everyone hunts. Seeing a dead animal on the back of a truck can be upsetting to some people.

To be a responsible hunter, you should cover the animal with a tarp or canvas or keep it inside a closed part of your vehicle where it isn't in plain view. Being thoughtful of others helps keep the public supportive of hunting.

## FIELD DRESSING

### OBJECTIVE 3

Field dressing your game right away is a vital skill. The effort you put in now ensures the meat tastes great when you cook it later. Since it can be a messy job, take off your jacket, roll up your sleeves, and wear latex or rubber gloves to stay clean and protect yourself from diseases.

#### The Goals of Field Dressing

1. **Cool the meat:** Organs hold heat and rot quickly. Removing them helps the meat stay fresh.
2. **Clean the meat:** You must remove blood and digestive juices quickly, especially if the animal was hit in the stomach.
3. **Lighten the load:** Removing the organs makes the animal much lighter and easier to move.

## TO THE POINT

#### Question:

Who is responsible for the proper care and use of a harvested game animal?

#### Answer:

The hunter who harvested it.

#### Question:

When should deer, elk, antelope, bear and turkey be tagged?

#### Answer:

Immediately after being harvested.

# GAME CARE

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

### Essential Tools

- Sharp Knife & Sharpener: Your most important tools.
- Small Axe or Saw: To cut through bone.
- Rope: For dragging the animal or hanging it up.
- Gloves: To keep your hands clean and safe.



into the body cavity so it stays attached to the intestines. Be very careful not to break the bladder (which holds urine).

### Steps for Field Dressing

1. The First Cut: Lay the animal on its back with the tail end slightly lower than the shoulders. Cut the skin and muscle along the center of the belly from the breastbone to the tail. Be careful: Use your free hand to push the stomach and intestines away from the knife so you don't accidentally puncture them.
2. Open the Chest: If you aren't planning to have the head mounted by a taxidermist, cut through the breastbone and up the neck to the chin. This helps you reach the windpipe.
3. The Back End: Carefully cut around the anus. Pull it



4. Remove the Organs: Roll the stomach and intestines out of the body. Cut the diaphragm (the thin wall of muscle between the chest and stomach). Reach up into the neck to cut the windpipe and gullet, then pull the heart and lungs out.
5. Clean and Cool: Turn the animal belly-down to drain any blood. Use a clean stick to prop the ribcage open so air can circulate. If you accidentally poked the intestines, wipe the inside clean or rinse it with water and dry it immediately.

# GAME CARE

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

### Aging the Meat

"Aging" meat means letting it sit in a cold place to make it more tender and improve the flavor.

- **The Right Temp:** The best temperature for aging is between 34°F and 36°F.
- **Location Matters:** Because Oklahoma weather is usually too warm, don't age meat outside. It's better to use a walk-in cooler or a refrigerator.
- **Timing:** Most deer meat is best after aging for one to two weeks.

## APPRECIATE THE GIFT!

Never forget to appreciate the gift! Hunting an animal is a great privilege that can be immensely rewarding. A responsible hunter never forgets to give back when opportunities arise.

## DISPOSAL OF ENTRAILS AND CARCASSES

### OBJECTIVE 4

#### How to Dispose of a Carcass

In Oklahoma, there are strict laws about what you do with the parts of an animal you don't keep. To keep the land and water clean, you must follow these rules:

- **Protect the Water:** Never dump any part of a dead animal into a well, spring, pond, or stream.
- **Respect Neighbors and Drivers:** Do not leave a carcass within a quarter-mile of someone's house or a public road.
- **Bury it Right:** If you bury the remains, make sure they are deep enough so the wind or rain won't uncover them. Also, don't bury them in areas that flood easily.

### Keep the Sport Clean

Every state has different laws, so always check the rules if you hunt outside of Oklahoma. Regardless of the law, follow these tips to be a responsible hunter:

- **Stay Out of Sight:** Never leave animal remains where other people might see them.
- **Think of Others:** Remember that people use the woods for hiking, camping, and other activities. Most people do not want to stumble across animal waste.
- **Protect the Future of Hunting:** Leaving a mess makes hunters look bad. When the public has a negative view of hunting, it can lead to new laws that make it harder for you to hunt in the future.

Your actions reflect on every other hunter. By being thoughtful and cleaning up after yourself, you help protect the sport for everyone.

#### Review:

- Tag your deer, elk, antelope, bear or turkey immediately with name, customer ID number, date and time of harvest.
- A sharp knife and a good sharpener are perhaps the most important tools for field dressing. Rope, gloves and a game bag are handy to have in the field.
- Prevent the meat from spoiling by immediately field dressing the animal and keeping the meat cool and dry.
- Field dressing a carcass immediately helps preserve the meat. Organs deteriorate rapidly so remove them quickly. The faster they are removed, the faster the meat will cool and the better it will be preserved.
- Dispose of animal carcasses in a manner consistent with state law. Never leave waste remains out where other people can see them.

## BOWHUNTING

### OBJECTIVE 1

#### The World of Bowhunting

Bowhunting is one of the oldest ways to hunt. It was the main way people hunted for thousands of years until firearms were invented in the 1300s. Today, bowhunting is very popular in Oklahoma.

Bowhunting isn't something you can learn in just a day or two. It takes a lot of focus and patience. To be successful, you must practice constantly to make sure your shots are accurate.

#### Why Do People Bowhunt?

- History: It connects hunters to the past.
- Challenge: It is a personal goal to master the difficult skills needed to get close to an animal and make a good shot.

#### Getting Started: Your Equipment

The best way to get started is to visit a pro shop that specializes in archery. They will help you find gear that fits your body. You need a bow that feels comfortable in your hand and isn't too hard for you to pull back (draw).

#### What You Will Need:

- A Bow: One that matches your physical abilities and the animal you are hunting.
- Arrows and Broadheads: Broadheads are the sharp metal points on the end of hunting arrows. They must be razor-sharp.
- Finger Protection: A glove or a release tool to help you let go of the string safely.
- A Covered Quiver: This holds your arrows. It must have a cover so the sharp broadheads don't cut you while you are walking.

**Important:** Your arrows must match your bow. If an arrow is too flexible or too stiff for your bow, it won't fly straight. All your arrows should be exactly the same so they fly the same way every time.

### Words to Know

#### Bow

**Longbow** – One of the first bows invented. It's little more than a slim stick with a string.

**Recurve** – A shorter bow with recurved limbs that allow it to shoot as powerfully as a long bow.

**Crossbow** – A recurve or compound bow mounted on a rifle stock. String is held back by the bow requiring less movement when game approaches.

**Compound** – A modern bow designed to allow an archer to hold their bow at full draw with less force.

#### Arrow

**Field tips** – Narrow arrow tips used for target shooting and hunting small game.

**Broadheads** – Wide, razor-sharp tips used for hunting large game and turkey.

**Covered quiver** – A case that safely holds and carries arrows.



### Judging Distance

Because an arrow travels much slower and drops faster than a bullet, knowing exactly how far away an animal is the most important part of bowhunting.

- **Use a Rangefinder:**  
This is a small tool that tells you the exact distance to a target. It is the easiest and most accurate way to hunt.
- **Practice at the Range:**  
If you don't have a rangefinder, you must get good at guessing distance. You can practice by joining a 3D archery club (where you shoot at life-sized foam animals) or by having a friend place targets at different distances for you to guess.
- **Know Your Area:** Before an animal walks by, use landmarks like a specific rock or tree to know exactly how far away different spots are from your treestand.



### TO THE POINT

#### Question:

What piece of equipment protects the hunter and other people from contact with broadheads?

#### Answer:

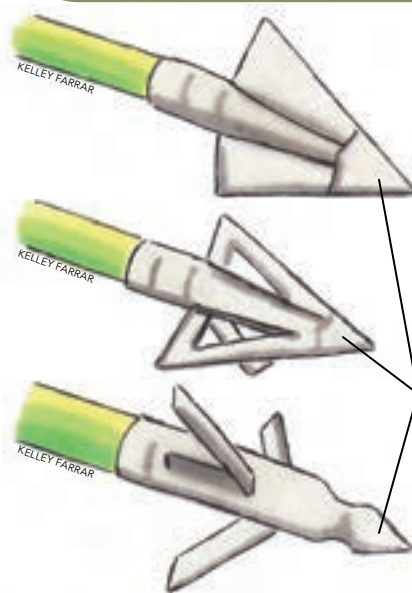
A covered quiver.

#### Question:

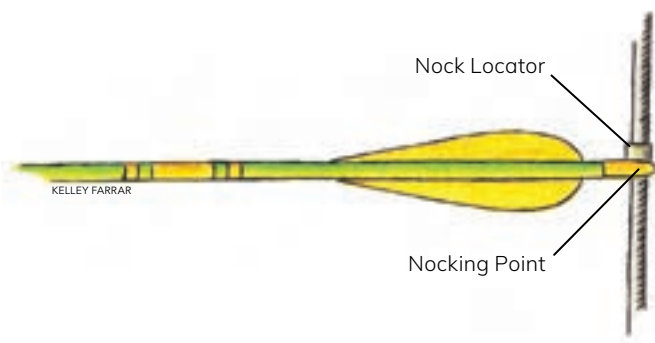
What is one of the skills should you develop to become a good archer?

#### Answer:

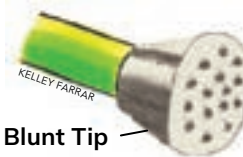
Judging distance.



**Broadheads**  
used for hunting large game or turkey.



**Field Tip**  
used for target practice and small game.



**Blunt Tip**  
used for hunting small game.



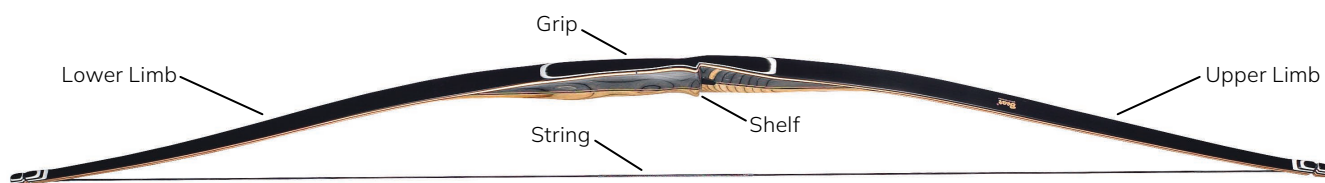
## FOUR MAIN TYPES OF BOWS

### OBJECTIVE 2

In modern times, the recurve and compound bows dominate for sport and hunting practices. Newer materials, including flexible plastics, fiberglass, and carbon fibers, have led to increases in range and projectile velocity.

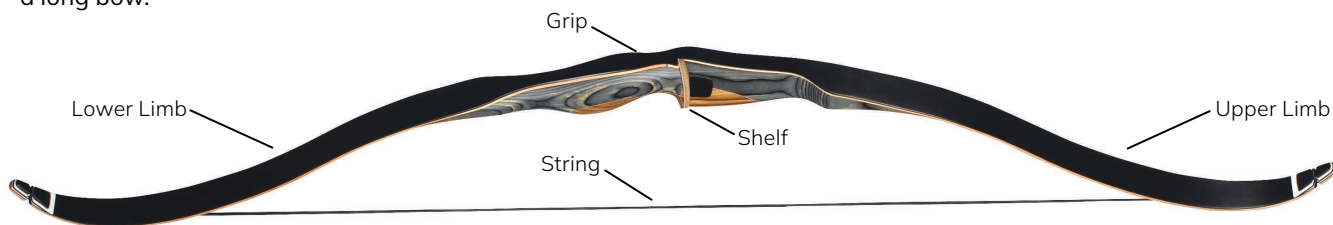
### Longbow

Sometimes called a “Stick Bow” — the traditional bow. Usually straight until the string is attached. The bow curve and power is dependent on how far the string is pulled.



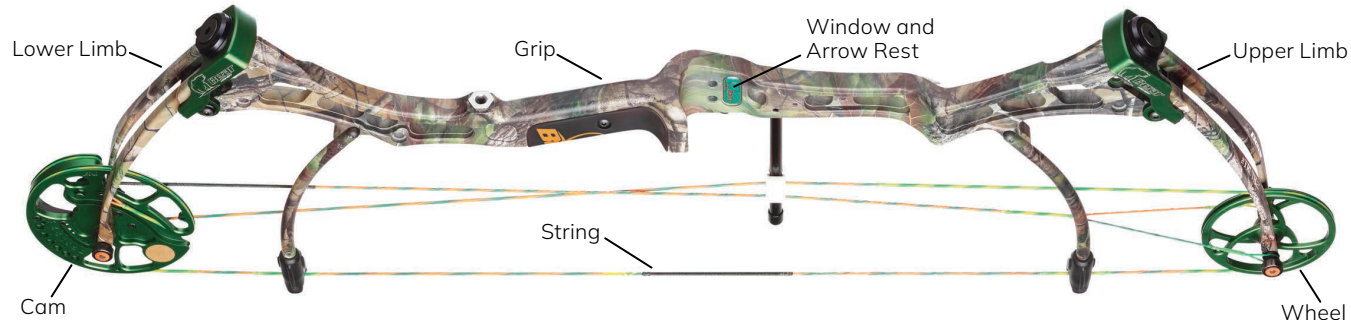
### Recurve

A stick bow that curves at the ends. Smooth and quiet when shooting, a recurve has more power and is shorter than a long bow.



### Compound

Most popular bow for hunting. Uses cables and pulleys to provide more power with less effort than pulling a long bow.



### Crossbow

Short, compound or stick bows mounted on a stock so they can be cocked, aimed and fired.



#### Crossbow Safety Tips

- Always carry a crossbow in the uncocked position to prevent unintentional firing.
- Always hold a crossbow with a two-handed carry and pointed in a safe direction.
- Always keep your fingers below the rail.
- Always treat a crossbow the same as you would a loaded firearm, making sure to keep it pointed in a safe direction. In most cases, the only way to uncock a crossbow is to fire the loaded bolt.
- Always engage the safety, and keep your finger off of the trigger until you are ready to pull the trigger.
- Never aim at something you don't intend to shoot.
- Never pull the trigger without a properly loaded bolt. This can cause a dry fire that can damage the crossbow and/or injure the archer.

#### Review

- Blunts, field tips and broadheads are three types of points commonly used in the field.
- Arrows should be matched to the bow and to the hunter. They should also be matched to each other.
- Recurve and compound bows are most popular for sport and hunting.
- The long bow, recurve, compound and crossbow are the four types of bows.

# HUNTING WITH MUZZLELOADERS

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION



## MUZZLELOADERS

### What is a Muzzleloader?

Muzzleloaders were first created in the 1300s. Over hundreds of years they were improved, but eventually, modern firearms took their place.

Unlike modern rifles where you put a bullet in the chamber, a muzzleloader is loaded by pouring powder and dropping the bullet directly down the end of the muzzle. Because they don't shoot as far as modern rifles, the hunter must be more skilled. You must sneak up much closer to the animal to make a clean, safe shot.

### Hunting with Muzzleloaders

Hunting with something other than a modern rifle can be both exciting and difficult. Many hunters find that using a different style of equipment gives them a great sense of accomplishment.

### Why Choose a Muzzleloader?

Many people enjoy the extra challenge it provides. It also gives them a connection to history, since they are using a firearm similar to what people used hundreds of years ago.

### Safety First

Because these firearms use loose gunpowder, you have to follow special safety rules:

- **Careful Loading:** You must be very careful when measuring and pouring the powder.

- **Safe Storage:** Both the firearm and the powder need to be stored correctly to prevent accidents.
- **Maintenance:** These firearms must be kept very clean to make sure they are safe to fire the next time you go out.

## SAFETY COMES FIRST!

### OBJECTIVE 1

#### Mastering the Muzzleloader

Learning to hunt with a muzzleloader is exciting, but it also takes a lot of work. Many hunters love the idea of using actual antique or historic firearms in the woods.

**A Word of Warning:** Old metal can be weak. It might not be strong enough to handle the pressure when the gunpowder explodes inside the barrel. If the metal fails, the firearm could burst and cause a serious injury. Always take an old firearm to a professional gunsmith to have it checked out before you ever try to fire it.

#### Gunpowder Safety

You must treat black powder with a lot of respect because it is an explosive. If you aren't careful, it can be very dangerous.

- **Keep it away from fire:** Never use black powder near an open flame or a campfire.

# HUNTING WITH MUZZLELOADERS

## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

# 9

- Watch for sparks: Store your powder in a safe, cool place where there is no chance of a spark.
- Handle with care: Only open your powder container when you are ready to measure it out and close it immediately afterward.

## BLACK POWDER

### OBJECTIVE 2

#### Using the Right Powder

It is very important to know that smokeless powder (the kind used in modern bullets) is not safe for most muzzleloaders. If you use the wrong powder, the firearm could explode. Always check your owner's manual to see exactly which powder is safe for your firearm.

Most muzzleloaders use black powder or synthetic powder. You must be extremely careful with both because they can catch fire or explode from:

- Sparks or open flames
- High heat or direct sunlight
- Static electricity
- Dropping or hitting the container

When these powders catch fire, they burn very hot and very fast. They won't work if they get wet or damp, but you should still treat them as dangerous. Always keep your gunpowder in its original container so you don't mix it up.

#### Cleaning Your Firearm

Black powder and synthetic powders are highly corrosive. This means they contain chemicals that will eat away at the metal of your firearm and cause rust very quickly. To protect your muzzleloader, you must clean it thoroughly with soap and water every single time you use it.

#### Percussion Caps

Muzzleloaders use small parts called percussion caps to light the powder. These caps have a tiny bit of explosive inside them. For safety, you should always store your percussion caps in a separate place away from your gunpowder. That way, if one accidentally goes off, it won't set off all your powder at once.

## LOADING A MUZZLELOADER

### OBJECTIVE 3

#### How to Load a Muzzleloader Safely

Loading a muzzleloader takes focus and care because black powder is an explosive. You should always follow the specific instructions in your owner's manual, but here are the general safety steps you need to know.

#### Making a Marked Ramrod

A marked ramrod is a lifesaver. It helps you avoid "double loading" (putting in two charges by mistake) and ensures your bullet is pushed all the way down. If there is a gap between the powder and the bullet, the firearm could explode when fired.

#### How to mark your ramrod:

1. Check for empty: Make sure the firearm is unloaded.
2. Mark the "Empty" line: Drop the ramrod down the empty barrel. Use a permanent marker to draw a ring around the ram rod right where it meets the top of the muzzle.
3. Mark the "Loaded" line: Load the firearm with the correct amount of powder and the bullet. Push the ramrod down until it stops. Draw a second ring around the ram rod at the top of the muzzle.

#### Using Your Marks

- Before loading: Drop the rod in. If the "Empty" line shows, you are good to start.
- While loading: After you seat the bullet, use the rod to check that your "Loaded" line is visible. If the

### Words to Know

**Muzzleloader** – Firearm that uses black powder and loads through the barrel.

**Black powder** – Combustible powder for firing a muzzleloader.

**Black powder substitute** – Replacement for black powder that is less sensitive, cleaner and more efficient.

**Percussion Caps** – Ignites black powder.

**Ramrod** – Stiff rod used to load a muzzleloader.

# HUNTING WITH MUZZLELOADERS

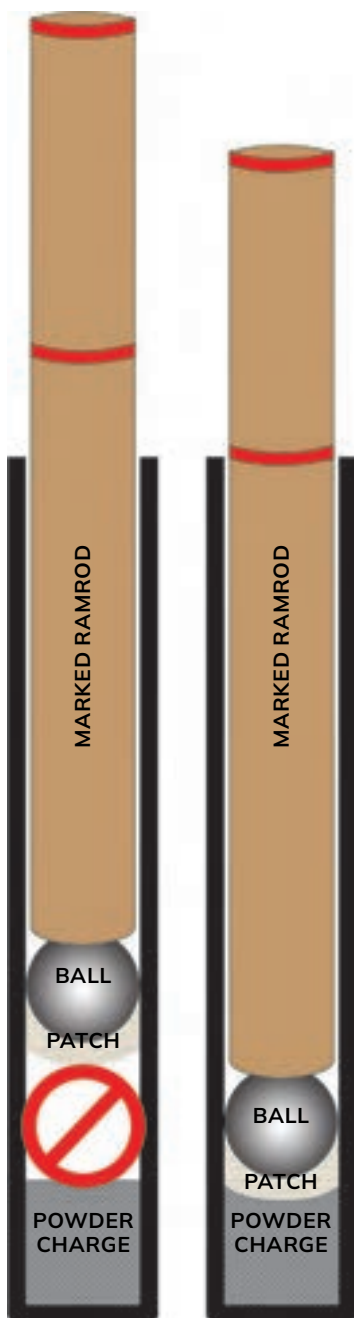
## OKLAHOMA HUNTER EDUCATION

mark is sticking out too far, the bullet isn't pushed down enough. **NEVER** leave a gap of air between the powder and the bullet.

### Make Sure It's Empty

Before you do anything, you must prove the firearm is unloaded.

- Check the barrel: Slide a marked ramrod down the barrel to see if it's empty.
- Clear the barrel: Point the firearm in a safe direction and fire one percussion cap. This clears out any old oil and makes sure the "flash hole" is open so the firearm will fire correctly when you are ready.



## TO THE POINT

### Question:

What should you use to find out if a muzzleloader is loaded?

### Answer:

The marked ramrod.

### Question:

Where should the bullet and patch be when a muzzleloader is properly loaded?

### Answer:

Firmly seated against the powder.

## Review

- Follow manufacturer's procedures and get help from a qualified instructor. Loading a muzzleloader should be done with great care. Always follow your owner's manual for the correct loading.
- Use a marked ramrod to find out if a muzzleloader is unloaded.
- Use a marked ramrod to make sure there is no air space between the bullet or shot and powder.
- Always consult a gunsmith before using any historic firearm.
- Do not expose gunpowder to an open flame or store it anywhere there is a possibility of a spark.
- The two types of powder most commonly used in muzzleloaders are black powder and synthetic.

## SURVIVING BEING LOST

### OBJECTIVE 1

#### Survival Skills: What to Do if You Get Lost

Enjoying the great outdoors is the best part of hunting. But like any sport, you need specific skills to stay safe. One of the most important things you can learn is how to survive if you get lost or injured. Even if you think you know the woods well, it is very easy to get confused or turned around.

#### The “STOP” Rule

If you realize you are lost, the most important thing to do is **STOP**. Do not panic.

- S** — Sit down.
- T** — Think.
- O** — Observe your surroundings.
- P** — Plan your next move.

If it is getting dark, stop trying to find your way home. It is much safer to focus on staying warm and alive through the night. Don't worry about missing dinner or being late for work – your only job is to stay put so rescuers can find you. Since Oklahoma doesn't have many huge wilderness

areas, you will likely be found by the next day if you stay in one spot.

#### The Rule of Threes

To stay calm, remember what the human body needs to survive. You can generally last:

- **3 Minutes** without air.
- **3 Hours** without shelter in extreme weather.
- **3 Days** without water.
- **3 Weeks** without food.

As long as you can breathe and have a way to stay warm, you have plenty of time to think and wait for help.

#### Prepare Before You Go

The best way to survive a problem is to prevent it.

1. **Tell Someone:** Always tell a friend or family member exactly where you are going and when you will be back. If you aren't home on time, they can call for help.
2. **Learn to Navigate:** Carry a compass and a topographic map of the area. These maps show hills, rivers, and roads so you can figure out where you are.
3. **Carry Your Kit:** A survival kit does no good if it's left in your truck. Carry it with you every time you go into the woods.



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#### Reminder

Hunting is safe, but accidents can happen. If you are involved in a hunting incident, please contact your county game warden to report the incident. Game warden contact information can be found in the Oklahoma Hunting Guide and at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).

## Building Your Survival Kit

Your kit should be small, light, and easy to carry. Here are the essentials:

### Shelter and Fire

- Large, heavy-duty orange plastic bag: (Used as a poncho/shelter).
- Parachute cord: For tying things down.
- Waterproof matches or a lighter.
- Fire starter tool.
- Cotton balls soaked in Vaseline: These make great fire starters!

### Signaling

- Whistle: It lasts longer than your voice.
- Signal Mirror: To reflect sunlight toward planes or rescuers.
- Fluorescent tape: To mark your path or location.

### Other Helpful Gear

- A sturdy knife and a small folding saw.
- First aid kit.
- Flashlight with extra batteries.
- High-energy food bars and water purification tablets.

- Metal cup for boiling water.
- Tourniquet: Visit [stopthebleed.org](http://stopthebleed.org) to learn how to use one and purchase items.

## The “Orange Bag” Trick

Instead of a thin emergency blanket that tears easily, carry a large, heavy-duty orange plastic bag.

1. Prepare it: Cut a hole big enough for your face in one of the top corners.
2. Use it: Pull the bag over your head like a poncho. It will trap your body heat and keep you dry. The bright orange color also makes it very easy for search teams to see you from far away.



LANCE MEEK

Seam

Cut Here

Opening

## TO THE POINT

### Question:

What is the first thing you should do when you think you are lost?

### Answer:

Stop, don't panic, and think before you act.

### Question:

What is the first symptom of hypothermia?

### Answer:

Shivering.

### Review

- When you think you are lost, stop, don't panic, and think before you act.
- Survival starts before you go afield.
- Before going afield tell someone where you are going.
- Learn to use a map and compass.



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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Go Outdoors Oklahoma Mobile App

The Go Outdoors Oklahoma mobile app is your ticket to the outdoors! With this app, you can buy, view, and store your licenses, apply for controlled hunts, find training workshops, classes, and other outdoor-related events on the Outdoor Calendar. It is also a legal way to carry your licenses while in the field.



You can also E-check your harvest in the app, even if you don't have a cell signal.

Download it today from the Apple App Store or Google Play.

### Controlled Hunts Application

Interested in extra hunting opportunities? Look no further than the ODWC's Controlled Hunts Program. Controlled hunts offer the chance to harvest animals from areas that don't always allow harvest during the regular seasons. These hunts are offered for deer, elk, pronghorn, and turkey.

The annual application period opens in April and runs until mid-May. The entire process occurs online at [GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com](https://GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com). There is a one-time application fee paid at the time you apply, regardless of how many hunt categories you apply for.

### Purchasing a License

The first step to buy a license in Oklahoma is to go to the Go Outdoors Oklahoma website: <https://gooutdoorsoklahoma.com>.

Once you are there, you can log in to buy a license, manage your account, check your harvest, and more. To log in or create an account, you will need to enter your date of birth, last name, and the last four digits of your Social Security Number.

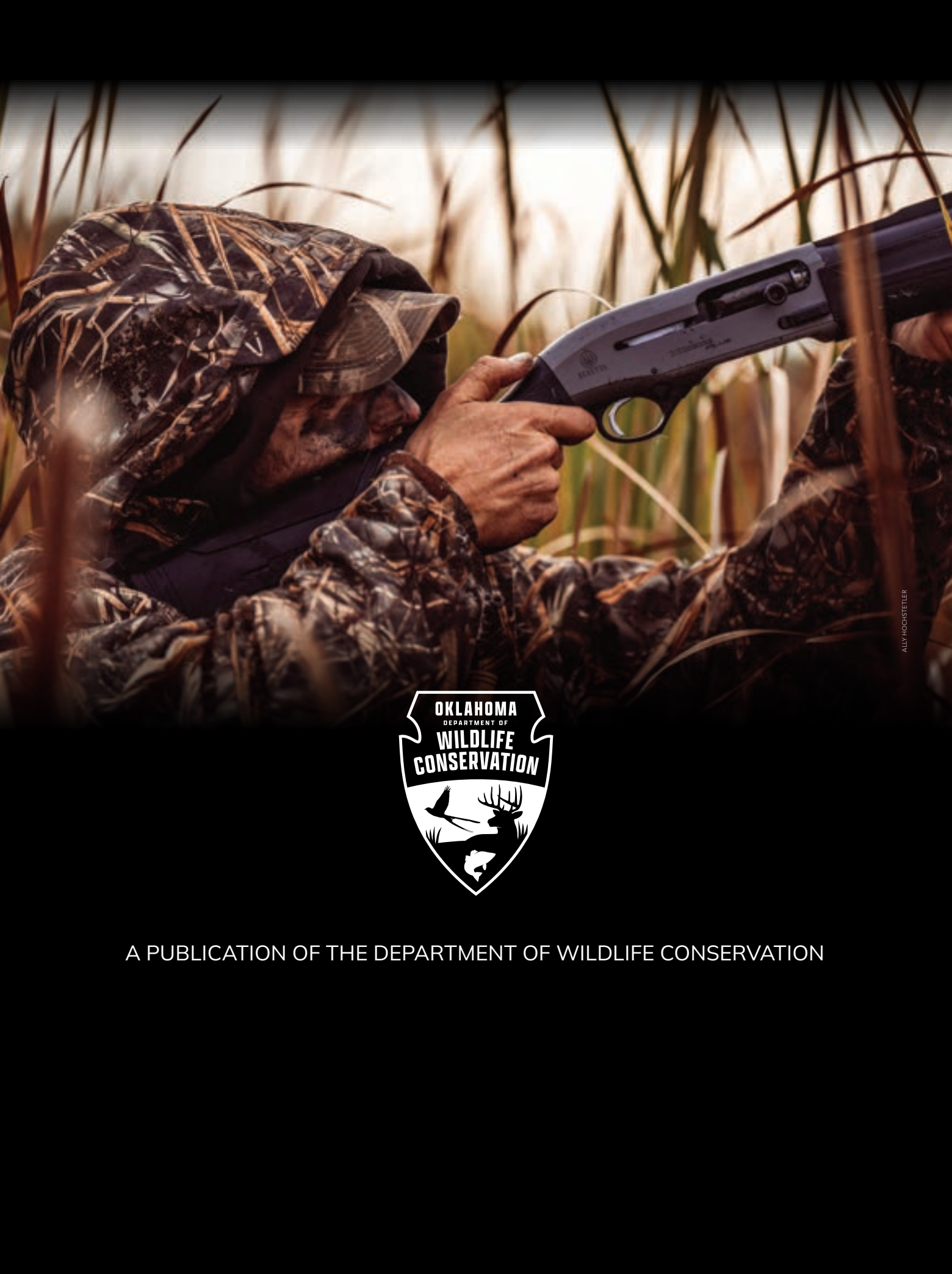
### Access

If you are looking for the location of your next outdoor adventure or hunting trip, look no further than the Go Outdoors Oklahoma app. In the app under Hunting and Where to Hunt, you will find a list of wildlife management areas, shooting ranges, non-ambulatory access, Oklahoma Land Access Program (OLAP) locations, and more. Through the links listed in the app, you will be able to find where the areas are located, information for area contacts and game wardens, license requirements, and specific area rules and regulations.

### Shooting Ranges

ODWC has ranges across the state that can be used by residents and nonresidents that have a current Oklahoma hunting or combo hunting/fishing license. These ranges all offer rifle and pistol ranges and some even offer archery and shotgun areas. To find the one that best fits your needs, go to [wildlifedepartment.com](https://wildlifedepartment.com).

ODWC is working on renovating or constructing shooting ranges on wildlife management areas statewide.



ALLY HOGSTETTER



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