

Chapter 1

RESPONSIBILITY (ETHICS)

Guidelines for a Responsible Hunter

- **Be a good neighbor.** Ask permission when you hunt on private property.
- **Be a safe hunter.** Know all the basic safety rules and follow them all the time.
- **Understand and obey all rules and regulations** found in the *NJ Fish and Wildlife Digest*.
- **Work with the landowner to meet his wishes.** Offer to share a portion of your harvest with him.
- **Be responsible.** Practice shooting year-round on a safe range, such as those provided on the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Management Areas.
- **Join a conservation group.** Work to ensure that there is wildlife and habitat for the future.
- **Be a responsible hunter.** The future of hunting in NJ depends upon you and your actions in the field.

Did you know?

Growing up as a citizen of the United States you have a unique opportunity that few people in other countries have. In many countries hunting is only done by the upper class who own the animals. Here in the US, wildlife belongs to all the people. This means that no matter what your race, religion or social status you have the equal opportunity to hunt wild game by legal means. However, there are several steps you must take to become a legal hunter. The first step you are doing right now by completing this Hunter Education Course.

Six Responsibilities for All Hunters

(1) RESPONSIBILITY TO YOURSELF

Are you physically prepared for the hunt? Get in shape before the hunting season and stay within your physical limits.

Are you mentally ready for the hunt? Are you ready to make the split second decisions needed before every shot taken? Are you prepared to take an animal's life? If you are not, understand that it is okay to pass on a shot and still have a successful hunt.

Have you scouted the area you will be hunting? Is there any new development that may affect your ability to make a safe shot? Has this changed the 450 foot safety zone?

Do you have a map and compass or GPS? Learn how to use them and learn where your hunting property's boundaries are.

Is all your hunting equipment in working order? Have you checked your firearm, bow, tree stand, and safety harness for loose or worn parts?

Are you wearing the proper amount of hunter orange clothing? There are times when you may not need to wear 200 square inches of hunter orange. Know the exceptions.

Avoid wearing colors that may confuse you with game. Wearing colors such as red, white or blue found on turkeys or brown and white found on deer may lead the irresponsible hunter to mistake you for game.

(2) RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUR FAMILY

Many people care about you. If possible, always try to hunt with someone responsible. For your safety, have you told people exactly you will be hunting (leave a map) and when you will be returning in case you do not return on time? Do you have a cell phone or two-way radio? Be sure to contact family members if your plans change from what you have told them.

(3) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE LANDOWNER

Wildlife is a product of the land. About 80 percent of New Jersey's land is privately owned, while the rest is owned by federal, state or local government. Unfortunately not all hunters are responsible and ask permission. This lack of courtesy can lead to poor hunter / landowner relationships.

Whether you hunt on public or private property, respect the land as if it were your own. Do not litter or dump. Remember, to hunt on this property is a privilege. Do not abuse it. Leave the property better than you found it. If illegal dumping is found or seen, report it to 877-WARN-DEP. Do not trespass. It is against the law to enter private property without permission,

even if the property is not posted or fenced. All land in New Jersey is owned by someone. If you do not know whom, go to the local town hall and ask for a tax map of the area. Always secure permission before hunting on private land.



If you are hunting on private property, be sure to ask the landowner about any special rules you should observe. Leave fences and gates the way you found them, unless the landowner gives you different instructions. Do you have permission to hunt the entire property, or are some sections off limits? Does the landowner want you to stop by before leaving his property? Take time to talk to landowners. They will appreciate your interest.

(4) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE WILDLIFE RESOURCE

Know the game species you are hunting. Become familiar with the animal's habits, food sources, cover, sounds and identifying markings. This varies from species to species. You must learn as much as you can about the animal. This should be done long before the season. Remember, you are in his world now.

The goal of all hunters **must** be a clean, one shot kill. Know your bow or firearm and your effective shooting range. Practice often until you are capable of hitting your target

accurately with every shot. Keep within your personal limits.

Look closely to see if the animal was hit. Do everything possible to recover wounded game but do not break the law and trespass on property you do not have permission to hunt. Make sure you can properly field dress the game animal you are hunting. **Do not** allow an animal to spoil because you did not know how to field dress or skin it properly.

(5) RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW THE LAWS

Wildlife laws are designed to protect wildlife, promote firearms safety and provide equal hunting opportunity for all New Jersey hunters. A summary of the general regulations is found in the *NJ Fish and Wildlife Digest*. These rules may change from year to year. Check the current hunting digest before you hunt to be sure that you know the current regulations. It is your responsibility to know and obey all rules and regulations. If you have any questions you may contact your regional law enforcement office to have them answered. You can find the number for all offices, including law enforcement, on the inside cover of the digest. Remember, ignorance



is **no excuse** for breaking the law.

Your license is not a license to trespass. All hunters must obtain permission to hunt on private property and written permission to hunt within the 450 feet safety zone. The NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife has provided a **Hunter Landowner Courtesy Card** (in this manual and in the digest) for you to use when obtaining permission to hunt.

(6) RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHER USERS OF THE OUTDOORS

Just about everybody enjoys the great outdoors, but not everybody who goes outdoors is a hunter. Less than two percent of the population of NJ hunts. This does not mean the remaining 98 percent are anti-hunting. Most people do not have much of a pre-formed opinion on hunting. What you do in the field, both positive and negative, affect the general public's opinion. Your actions may represent that of all hunters. Be considerate of non-hunters and their personal feelings. Some non-hunters are unfamiliar with hunting traditions and wildlife laws.



Do not jeopardize the future of our sport by your careless actions.

Fair Chase

Fair chase hunting involves a hunter who understands and respects the animal hunted, follows the law, and agrees to hunt using no methods that would give him / her an unfair advantage over the animal. The fair chase hunter understands that a successful hunt does not need to end with a full bag limit.

Ultimately it is your decision. Hunting should be a positive experience that you feel good about.

The concepts of fair chase may vary depending upon where you live. Some areas of the country it is not acceptable to bait deer while other areas it is. There are some techniques that no matter where you are in the world are not considered fair chase, such as shooting game from the air or from a moving vehicle. It is a balance that you must set between yourself and the animal hunted in a manner that does not provide you with an unfair advantage.

Competition between yourself and other hunting companions can cloud your mind and lead to irresponsible hunting and poor choices. Competition can lead you to rush shots without being sure of your target and beyond or lead you to take far and difficult shots which are not in your effective range. Do not allow this competition to lead to an experience that you would not feel good about.

Peer pressure can have both positive and negative affects. Choose your hunting partners wisely. Be a positive role model.

Do things such as:

- Picking up spent shells or litter in the field.
- Taking only sporting shots. (No birds on the ground or roosted in trees)

Negative peer pressure can lead to irresponsible or illegal hunting behavior.

A few examples are:

- Allowing someone else to shoot your bag limit.
- Hunting within a safety zone

Do not feel pressured by your hunting partner to take part in activities such as these. It is your responsibility to try to correct these actions of your partner. Illegal hunting activities should be reported to your regional law enforcement office.

Poaching is a type of illegal hunting behavior that involves the taking of game outside the legal season. A responsible hunter will not tolerate this type of behavior because it goes against everything fair chase stands for.

Remember: the future of hunting in NJ will be decided by the majority of NJ residents that do not hunt and how they view the actions of you and your fellow hunters.

THE FIVE STAGES OF A HUNTER

Studies have shown that hunters pass through different stages depending upon their levels of development and skills. Some of these stages may lead the irresponsible hunter to poor decision making. Remember that just because there are five stages doesn't mean that you will go through all five stages or go through them in order. The stage that we are all striving for is the sportsman stage. This stage helps to ensure that we will have hunting for future generations.

Stage 1: Shooter Stage

The hunter is most concerned with having success to demonstrate his skill to himself and others. This may mean that many shots are fired to achieve this feat. The eagerness to shoot can lead to poor decision making. Hunters who take time to target practice often will move out of this stage quickly.

Stage 2: Limiting Out

Success is determined by filling your daily bag limit every time you go out. If not careful, the need to limit out may cause you to take poor shots. The sooner the hunter realizes that limiting out is not the only measure of success, the quicker he may move out of this stage.

Stage 3: Trophy Stage

Quality is more important than quantity. Hunters in this stage are hunting a specific animal for a challenge and are willing to pass up shots they know they can make on other animals. However, the challenge of harvesting this animal should be getting it within your effective range. Hunters must be careful

that their desire to harvest a particular animal doesn't drive them to become irresponsible.

Stage 4: Method Stage

Hunters in this stage focus more on how they hunt and their equipment chosen. Some hunters may choose to hunt with the most primitive equipment while others choose to use the most hi-tech. Hunters in this stage must always be aware of their own limitations while using either primitive or high tech equipment. The goal remains a quick clean kill.

Stage 5: Sportsman Stage

Success is measured by the total experience of the hunt including things such as appreciation of nature, understanding the habits of the animal hunted, the process of the hunt and hunting with others to share these experiences. Hunters in this stage become involved with conserving our natural resources by becoming involved with conservation groups and introducing new comers to the outdoors. Success in this stage is not based on the harvesting of an animal.

**HUNT SMART Courtesy Card
Visitor's Copy - Not Transferrable**

I request permission to enter your property for the following purpose:

Dates from: ____ / ____ / ____ to ____ / ____ / ____

Limitations: _____

Hunter can hunt within 450 feet of buildings: Yes No

Landowner's Name: _____

Address: _____

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Landowner's Name: _____

Address: _____

**HUNT SMART Courtesy Card
Landowner Copy**

Permission given to: _____

Address: _____

Vehicle Make _____

Year _____ Color _____

License Plate No. _____

No. in Party _____

Dates from: ____ / ____ / ____ to ____ / ____ / ____

Limitations: _____

Other Licenses, tag no: _____

Hunter can hunt within 450 feet of buildings: Yes No

**HUNT SMART Courtesy Card
Landowner Copy**

Permission given to: _____

Address: _____

Vehicle Make _____

Year _____ Color _____

License Plate No. _____

No. in Party _____

Dates from: ____ / ____ / ____ to ____ / ____ / ____

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Hunter can hunt within 450 feet of buildings: Yes No