

# 20 Tips to Make You a Better Hunter

Whether you're a veteran buck hunter or a newbie heading to the woods for the first time, the tips below can help you see more success this season.

**Tip 1**  
Human odor spooks deer. Shower with a scent-free soap before every hunting trip, and try not to contaminate your hunting clothes on the way to the field. Keep them sealed in a plastic container or bag with leaves, dirt and other ground debris from around your stand until you arrive at your hunting location. Doing so will allow your hunting clothing to take on the naturally occurring scents that permeate your hunting location.

**Tip 2**  
Most hunters think that doe estrous is the be-all and end-all of big buck attraction. Though estrous is a wonderful tool, it's simply that. Wise hunters know that during the early-season it's important to take advantage of a buck's territorial instincts. The scent of an estrous doe during early October simply doesn't make sense to a buck, but buck scent is always worth checking out.

**Tip 3**  
During the peak-rut, try a drag rag soaked in doe estrous. Often a buck

will follow the trail right to your stand.

**Tip 4**  
Many hunters spray down with odor eliminator just after suiting up, and prior to the trek into the stand, but experienced hunters will bring an odor eliminator with them to the tree stand. After the walk to the stand, apply an odor eliminator to your body, paying special attention to your hat and hair.

**Tip 5**  
When muzzleloader hunting in wet weather, a piece of electrical tape over the end of the barrel will keep out moisture. You simply shoot through the tape when it's time to harvest that buck.

**Tip 6**  
One of the deadliest scent set-ups defies the accepted rule of playing the wind. Locate a long strip of timber or cover with the wind blowing along the length of it (blowing from one end to the other). At the windy end, pour some deer scent at several areas, then set up high in a tree stand just on the edge of the timber. If you're set up high enough, your human odor should flow above the deer.

**Tip 7**

Practice setting up and taking down your tree stand before the season, and do so low on the tree. Getting into and out of your spot as quietly as possible is key to having a look at a good buck.

**Tip 8**  
You don't have to own your own plane, or even by an airline ticket, to check out aerial photos of your hunting area, and there are no better scouting aids than aerial photos. Just search Google Maps for your hunting area.

**Tip 9**  
Avoid trimming shooting lanes and otherwise disturbing your hunting area during the season. The time to clear shooting lanes is during summer. Wise old bucks can become conditioned to the smell of freshly cut timber, and begin to associate it with human predation.

**Tip 10**  
If some concealment is good, then maximum concealment is better. Tree stand blinds help to fool the wary eye of a deer, and provide the added benefit of shelter from harsh winds.

**Tip 11**  
You've got a buck on adjacent land

patterned, but it doesn't cross over to your hunting area until after shooting time is over. What to do? Try tempting the buck to come over to your side with a deer decoy or by calling.

**Tip 12**  
Be sure to douse yourself with tick repellent when scouting during summer and early fall. Tick-borne diseases can shut down your hunting season, and you don't want it to be over before it's begun!

**Tip 13**  
Don't underestimate the importance of being able to get to your tree stand undetected, and don't think that going in under the cover of darkness will help. Make sure to use a creek or curtain of forest to cover your entry.

**Tip 14**  
Wash all hunting clothes in a non-scented detergent each time you're heading to the woods. Keep them in a plastic bag until arriving at your hunting area.

**Tip 15**  
Try making a mock scrape. First, put on surgical gloves to prevent human odor contamination. Using a stick, scuff the leaves off of an area about the size of a hubcap.

**Tip 16**  
During the late season, scout for reopened scrapes in deep cover. Surviving bucks are reluctant to get in the open country, but still look for the last hot does in cover.

**Tip 17**  
When there's snow on the ground, look for leaves strewn across an area where deer have pawed for mast. If there's still some mast around, that might be a good spot to set up and wait for the deer's return.

**Tip 19**  
You've taken the shot, now what? If you find brown hair and pink or red blood with bubbles in it, most likely you got a heart or lung hit. Brown hair and thick, dark-red blood indicates a hit too far back, possibly a liver shot. White hair and watery blood with stomach matter indicate a bad hit.

**Tip 20**  
Most falls from the tree stand happen while climbing into or out of the stand. That's why it's important to always wear a full-body safety harness when hunting from a tree stand.

—From Knight & Hale Game Calls

## Tips for Hunting on Private Land

Over 93 percent of land in Missouri is privately owned, so the bulk of deer hunting opportunity is on private land. Before you start, you must identify the landowner and get permission to hunt or enter their land.

### FIND A LANDOWNER

Information on land ownership can be found at the county court house from the assessor's office or a plat book. Plat books can provide the name of the landowner, and a phone book or the assessor's office can provide the landowner's address.

### GET PERMISSION: VISIT IN PERSON, BE COURTEOUS, AND ASK ABOUT RULES

Don't just make a phone call, take the time to visit the landowner. Face-to-face contact is important for landowners to learn more about you and to put a face and vehicle with the person that will be on their property. Arrange to visit at a time when the landowner may be outdoors or easily accessible. Avoid meal times, when other guests are present, and any time after sunset.

Be friendly and allow enough time to chat. A conversation can help you learn a lot about the surrounding area, deer movements, and the quality of the deer herd.

In that first face-to-face meeting, the landowner has to determine if you will respect his or her property and assets such as livestock. This judgment is based in part on how you look, act, drive, and present yourself. You should portray professionalism and trust. Make a good first impression and always be courteous, even if you are told "no."

Most importantly, ask about any rules and the landowner's property goals. Try to help him or her meet those goals. If the landowner wants a lower deer population to reduce crop damage, be sure to harvest does. If the landowner wants bucks to reach an older age class, pass up younger bucks.

### GIVE BACK: DO SOMETHING FOR THE LANDOWNER

A landowner who has allowed you to hunt on his or her property has given you something. It is a good idea to offer something in return. Depending on the situation, stopping by for an occasional chat, providing a portion of your harvest, or pitching in to help around the property often will be appreciated. You also may ask if you can post the landowner's boundaries as a gesture of good faith. All of these activities help you develop a good, long-standing, hunter-landowner relationship.

### EXPLORE ALTERNATIVES TO PRIVATE LAND

If you can't secure permission to hunt on private land for free, consider leasing land or working with an outfitter. As a lessee, you may be able to secure a property for multiple years and have control over how many people are able to hunt. Outfitters usually provide a location to hunt as well as hunting stands, lodging, other amenities such as skinning sheds. Find outfitters and land to lease on the Internet, in newspaper classifieds, through word of mouth, or from realtors.

### NEVER TRESPASS

Remember — purchasing a hunting permit does not give you the right to trespass. The best rule of thumb is this: if you don't own it or do not have permission from the person who does own it, you shouldn't be there. This includes retrieving your deer if it crosses property lines. If you shoot a deer and it enters someone else's property, ask the owner for permission to search their property for your deer.

### ASK FOR PERMISSION EACH YEAR

Permission to hunt on land one year does not automatically allow you to hunt there the next year. Always contact the landowner each year to ensure you are still allowed to hunt.

## If You Hunt From a Stand, Make Sure You Are Safe

Wood can rot, tree steps snap, railings fail and climbers slip. None of hunters that wound up in trauma center considered these possibilities when they began their climbs.

Surveysshow that one-quarter of hunters have experienced a fall or near fall from an elevated stand in the past. Many deer hunters use a safety harness every time they climb. Published research indicates that risky climbing behavior can catch up with you the longer you hunt.

Make using a fall-restraint device part of your routine every time you hunt above the ground regardless of whether you hunt with a ladder stand, a tower stand or hang-on stand.

Take a free online tree stand safety course

A 15-minute investment of your time in taking an online safety course could save your life. The Tree Stand Manufacturers Association provides a free, interactive course that you can finish in minutes. It can be found online at <https://www.huntercourse.com/treestandsafety/>

### Basic rules of tree stand safety

No matter what type of tree stand you use, the basic rules apply to all of them:

Always wear a full-body harness also known as a fall-arrest system. Connect to your tether line and keep your tether line short. The tether is designed to keep you in the seat, not to catch you after you fall.

Always have three points of contact while climbing into and out of the tree stand: This means two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand at all times.

Always use a haul line to raise and lower your unloaded firearm or bow into and out of the stand. You can also use the haul for other things like a heavy backpack.

Use a lifeline when climbing up and down, this keeps you connected from the time you leave the ground to the time you get back down.

### Take these other steps to stay safe

Be aware of suspension trauma: Suspension trauma can happen in less than 20 minutes and can be fatal. Attaching an additional foot strap to the body harness will take pressure off your upper legs should you fall.

Select a tree that is substantial enough to support your weight.

Read, understand and follow all of the manufacturer's recommended procedures.

Do not alter your equipment.

Use a short tether between you and the tree when seated in the tree stand.

Let people know where you'll be hunting, where you'll be parking your vehicle and when you intend to return.

Carry a cell phone with you so you can call for help if you are injured after a fall.





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