

A GUIDE TO MENTORING - A FEW THINGS TO KNOW

The world has become increasingly modern and flooded with technology, so introducing kids to hunting encourages exercise and promotes spending time outdoors. It can also teach valuable life lessons and get kids involved, which is good for the overall sport. Hunting encourages quality time with the family. One valuable lesson to learn is about the process through which food makes it to our table.

Our gun and hunting rights are challenged at every turn and hunting is in danger of becoming a thing of the past. So mentoring our children and other adults, teaching them how great the outdoors is will help keep our sport alive. Our youth are responsible for keeping the sport alive by advocating for gun and hunting rights in the future. In addition, let us not forget hunters are also some of the primary activists that support habitat restoration and wildlife management.

As a mentor, your job is to **TEACH** the student assigned to you what you know about hunting and the outdoors. You might also help document their experience by asking them to write about it later and take pictures while you're with them.

A Good Mentor:

- Has FUN!
- Listens well
- Communicates on the student's level
- Provides leadership
- Is a positive role model
- Is on time
- Is committed and willing to face unexpected hurdles
- Reinforces the successes of the student

LASTLY, A GOOD MENTOR MAKES THIS ABOUT THE MOMENT AND THE EXPERIENCE, NOT ABOUT BAGGING GAME. YOU ARE A MENTOR NOT A GUIDE!

Here are some things you might want to **TEACH** them while you're out:

- Animal signs, like deer scrapes and rubs, turkey scratching, hair deposits, scat, tracks, bird or squirrel nests, animal beds and trails, wildlife foods, etc.
- How to scout and find the animal you are hunting
- Listen to the sounds of the outdoors and tell them what they hear
- Teach them to use their calls
- Teach them how to walk quietly
- Teach them everything you can about hunting, remember you were a first-time hunter once.

As a mentor we want you to foster their interest in hunting and the outdoors. We can make this experience fun, rewarding, and make sure they want to come back again and again. Because these students are the mentors of tomorrow!

Remember:

- ***Make sure they have their tag and license!***
- ***Watch Your Bad Habits:*** We all have bad habits but don't pass on your bad hunting habits. Teach your student the right way to do things and how to follow the rules, even if you don't always do it.
- ***The hunt is about them:*** Do not focus on harvesting game. The experience is the priority, and it is likely to play a big role in their interest in hunting moving forward.
- ***Remember the weather:*** Just like adults, kids or other students are likely to find more enjoyment when they are comfortable. Make sure your student dresses warm and has proper clothing to hunt.
- ***Bring snacks:*** A snack break is a good way to add some entertainment while in the outdoors. Not to mention, a hungry student is likely to lose interest quicker than a well-fed one. Pack snacks!
- ***Call it a day when they are ready:*** With any luck, patience will be something the student you take out knows already, but if not that is a lesson you can't force upon them. If they ask to go back to camp, you might encourage them to stay a little longer, but for the most part, heading back to camp when they are ready is best. If they ask to go again, you can preface the trip by saying "we can go, but we will be staying in the woods a little longer this time."
- ***Let them choose their level of involvement:*** We all want the student we are mentoring to take the kill shot, gut their animal and be all in, but the reality is some of these students have never really been in the outdoors or hunted before. So don't force your student to do anything they aren't comfortable with. Also, remember just because you can see the animal and it looks like a great shot to you, doesn't mean the student can see what you do.
- ***Skills with the required firearm:*** Just because the student you are mentoring has passed hunters education does not make them proficient with the firearm they have. Make sure your student is safe with their firearm. Pay attention to what they are doing. Don't be afraid to hold their ammo and give it to them when they are ready to shoot. You are the mentor, and yes their parent is there but you are in control. Don't do what you aren't comfortable with. If the student is unsafe with their firearm, take time to teach them and remind them about TAB +1. Take them back to camp if necessary.

- ***Stay within arm's reach of your student at all times:*** This allows you, the mentor, to redirect any unsafe action, answer questions, help with animal identification, and help with animal location after the kill.
- ***Ethics and decision-making:*** It is assumed you will be by the side of your young hunter as they make their hunting choices. However, the old adage about not being able to un-pull the trigger is as true today whether you are mentoring children or adults. Make sure your student understands the rationale behind the decisions made in the field.
- ***Talk them through it:*** Talk (quietly) them through the stages of the hunt. As an experienced hunter, you have probably forgotten you once had to learn many of the things you now know. Example: To a young hunter, a finishing shot to the head of an animal may seem awful brutal. Offering explanation can help them understand that a kill shot is a humane thing to do, and respectful to the animal.
- ***Expect Emotions:*** Hunting causes a range of emotions for new hunters, especially when an animal dies, and it will be worse if your student pulled the trigger. If they tear up, don't tease or shame them. Instead, explain this animal gave up its life to sustain your own. Discuss the circle of life and how your student contributed to it.

New hunter camps, whether for children or adults, focus on teaching students about **RESPECT**. So help us teach them about:

- **Respect for the Outdoors:** help them become good stewards of the environment.
- **Respect for the Outdoor Tradition:** help them learn to love and be comfortable with a variety of activities in the outdoors so they can enjoy it and pass it on.
- **Respect for the Landowner:** help them learn they are a guest and should leave the land better than they found it. Also, to ask permission to hunt on private property and to respect private property and no trespassing signs.
- **Respect for the Law:** help them learn the laws and regulations that govern hunting and fishing that protect and conserve our resources. Teach them the game and fish officers deserve respect, how to act around them and to unload their firearms when they approach.
- **Respect for the Resource:** help them become familiar with the equipment involved and practice to become proficient and knowledgeable of their abilities.
- **Respect for the Firearm:** teach them firearm safety, practice safe firearm handling at all times and promote safety for themselves and others at home and in the field.

- **Respect for themselves and non-hunters:** teach them to conduct themselves in a way to ensure the future of outdoors activities, to use good manners in the outdoors and set a good example for others.
- **Respect for the Future of the Outdoors:** Teach them that enjoying the outdoors is a privilege and not a right.

Remember by passing along the hunting tradition to the next generation, you will have done your part to keep the sport alive.

