



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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## Who is Responsible?

Dear Student, Parent or Guardian:

In Montana, everyone born after January 1, 1985, who wants to hunt, must provide a certificate of completion from a hunter education course before purchasing a license. However, under our apprentice law, youth from 10 through 17 years of age may hunt for two years without having to take hunter education.

### **History:**

In 1957, the Montana Legislature passed a bill requiring all youths 12 through 17 years of age be certified as having successfully completed a state Hunter Education Course to purchase any resident hunting license. In November of 2003, the Legislature passed a bill requiring any person who was born after January 1, 1985, to provide a certificate of completion from a hunter education course before purchasing a license. Then in 2015, the Legislature passed an apprentice hunter bill allowing youth from 10 through 17 years of age to hunt for two years without having to take hunter education.

The Hunter Education Course includes basic information and skills related to the safe handling of firearms; as well as basic instruction in wildlife management, game identification, field care of game, landowner/hunter relations, and Montana's hunting laws and regulations. The course emphasizes safety, responsibility, respect, and ethical conduct when hunting and handling firearms. Where facilities are available, live-firing of BB guns, air rifles, or other firearms is sometimes included as part of the course. However, it is not offered in all instances. Even where live-firing is offered, it is not the purpose of this course to turn-out qualified marksmen. That is the responsibility of the student, parent(s) and local shooting clubs. Even if the student does not plan to hunt, we strongly recommend that he or she complete the course to obtain the important information and skills related to the safe handling of firearms

### **Archery:**

Since 1987, anyone wanting to hunt during the bow and arrow season must successfully complete a National Bowhunter Education Foundation (NBEF) Bowhunter Education Course, in addition to a hunter education course. Although the two courses are similar in appearance, their contents are as distinctly different as the hunting tools they employ.

The Bowhunter Education Course includes basic information on archery equipment, the proper use of a bow and arrow, proper shot placement, hunter ethics, and skills needed for blood trailing. Bowhunting marksmanship is not part of this course. It takes several months of training and dedicated practice to learn how to properly use bowhunting equipment, which is the hunter's responsibility. Safety, responsibility, respect, and ethical conduct are the primary topics in this course.

The Montana Hunter and Bowhunter Education courses are taught by volunteer instructors who give freely of their time and talents to promote safety and responsibility when using hunting equipment. They put many hours into these programs and receive no pay. Without these volunteers, Montana would not have such high quality hunter and bowhunter education programs to prepare our young and novice hunters.

In order to pass these courses, the student is responsible to:

- 1) Attend **all** class sessions;
- 2) Pass the written examination with a satisfactory score;
- 3) Satisfy the instructor(s) as to the student's ability and attitude. **(With reference to attitude, even if the student attends every class and passes the examination, he or she will not be certified unless the instructor(s) is satisfied that the student will be a safe and responsible hunter.)**

A major part of this course is to instill personal responsibility in each participant. If any student needs special assistance; i.e. attention to a physical impairment such as hearing, vision, or reading comprehension, please contact the instructor. Every effort will be made to accommodate the special need.

All adults and parents are welcome and encouraged to participate in any or all of the classes. Thank you for your understanding and support of your local volunteer instructors, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and these worthwhile programs.

Sincerely,

*Wayde Cooperider*

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