

Minnesota Youth Firearms Safety

Hunter Education Course

Note to the parent

If the student is under 18 years of age, this document must be signed by a parent or guardian and brought to the Field Day, along with all other necessary documentation.

As the parent or guardian of a child who is getting into the sport of shooting and/or hunting, it is your responsibility to ensure that the child has the necessary capabilities to handle a firearm safely and responsibly; and acts in a responsible manner every time they handle a firearm. It is recommended that you enroll in a Firearms Safety Course along with the child, to learn (or re-learn) all the rules of safe firearms handling, and hunting safety.

It is also your responsibility to ensure your child has the proper equipment, has ample opportunities and learns proper attitudes and behaviors while hunting. A fair portion of youth-related firearms or hunting incidents involve youth using firearms that are either the wrong size or intended for a more experienced shooter.

An appropriate First Rifle for a child would be a .177 or .22 caliber single shot rifle. These small caliber rifles are generally short, lightweight, and will have very little kickback. As such, they are the perfect choice for a first-time rifle shooter, on which they can learn and practice firearms safety. When the child is ready to shoot big game, consider a bolt-action .243 caliber rifle, which many manufacturers offer in a 'youth' model. In the case of a shotgun, a youth-model pump action shotgun is a good choice for a beginner.

Until you feel they are comfortable and ready to use their firearm, it is advisable to limit them to a single shot at a time. Whatever you choose is appropriate for your child's first firearm, make sure he or she has ample chance to practice with that firearm in a controlled setting. The Minnesota DNR can offer you resources to help teach your child the proper skills. For more information, you can contact the DNR at 1-888-MINN-DNR.

When hunting with a young hunter, it can be tempting to go after game yourself. Do not let the hunt become about you. A child's first hunt should be all about them. Most mentors will avoid taking a firearm into the field, so that they can solely focus on the young hunter they are accompanying.

Children should not hunt alone, but you should make yourself scarce during their hunt. When walking through the woods or field, let the child lead the way. When in a stand or blind, accompany the child, ensure they are aware of other hunter's locations and ensure they obey the rules of firearms safety.

It is very easy for a child to develop a competitive attitude towards hunting. This can lead to very dangerous situations in the Field. Having a mindset that success in hunting is measured only by the amount you bag or the size of the buck you harvest, can result in hunters who will do anything to take game.

When in the field with a young hunter, it is important that you display proper attitudes and behavior toward the hunt. Teach the child that success in hunting is measured in many different ways, and that the thrill of the hunt, being outdoors and enjoying nature, are all a part of the hunting experience, and are more important than the game you harvest.

By instilling these values in the young hunter, you will help pave the way to a responsible, ethical and safe sportsman who will enjoy and further the hunting and shooting traditions.

As a parent or Guardian of this student who is under the age of 18, I will help my child learn and follow the rules of firearms safety and safe hunting practices, by following the suggestions contained within this document.

Parent's Name: _____ Parent's Signature: _____

Child's name: _____ Date: _____