

CATEGORY: FISHING, HUNTING AND WILDLIFE VIEWING

ACTIVITY — HUNTER EDUCATION COURSE

Description —

Many states require first-time hunters to take a hunter education or safety course before purchasing a hunting license. These courses teach hunting techniques, firearm and hunter safety, survival, first aid, and ethical behavior. They equip members and local citizens with practical basic hunter skills training and information on responsible hunting.

Benefits —

Chapters can provide a public service by offering hunter education and safety course several times a year to the community and chapter members. Hunter education courses typically attract non-members (for example, hunting families with younger novice hunters), and provide a great tool for member recruitment. Hunting courses also reinforce the connection between hunting and wildlife management and conservation.

Key Steps —

- Contact your state fish and wildlife agency for certified, trained hunter education instructors in your area, or recruit members who are willing to volunteer and receive hunter education instructor certification from the state.
- Select your classroom accommodations, such as your chapter house or a local fire hall, community center, or police station. Set up dates and reserve instructors.
- Inventory your gear and supplies. Ask the state fish and wildlife agency's outdoor/hunter education program if they can provide additional materials, instructors, and other services.
- Promote and advertise the course.
- Notify the agency's outdoor/hunter education staff of course details so that they can promote and certify it.
- If you intend to provide an *optional* live-fire component to the class, arrange to secure adequate shooting ranges.
- Consider providing meals, or selling concessions, snacks, and beverages.
- A youth hunt could be organized to reward recent hunter education course graduates. Refer to the **Youth Hunt** outdoor recreation activity description.
- If you will be handling firearms in the classroom, closely monitor their use. Be sure that no live ammunition is accessible; consider using de-activated (firing pins removed) firearms.
- If you plan to live-fire firearms and archery gear, have adequate shooting ranges and range safety officers available, along with shooting vests, shooting gloves, and protective ear and eyewear.

- Ensure that the class size does not exceed the capacity of your facility. Have a first aid kit on hand.

Who Can Help —

Volunteers: All volunteer instructors must be certified hunter education instructors by your state agency. A course typically requires one instructor for every 10 to 15 participants. If the activity involves shooting, some volunteers should be National Rifle Association-certified instructors. Plan to have one volunteer instructor per two shooting participants, and at least one range safety officer in control of live-firing at all times. Certain state agencies may limit live-firing during hunter education courses. Consider adding two more member volunteers to handle administrative tasks, such as registration and meals.

Partners/Sponsors: State fish and wildlife agency outdoor/hunter education departments, shooting retailers, and area sporting goods businesses.

Technical and Other Support: State fish and wildlife agencies' volunteer hunter education instructors, conservation officers and wildlife biologists, and NRA-certified firearms instructors.

Dollars and Cents —

Expenses: Expenses are typically low. Primary expenses include food and ammunition for the live-fire option.

Revenue: Your state fish and wildlife agency will cover the cost of the curriculum and supply volunteer instructors with audio visuals, student training manuals, and graduate certificates and cards. Consider contacting area retailers for donations such as food, or ammunition, if a live-fire component is offered. In most states, you cannot charge the students for hunter education courses beyond the expense of facility rentals. Check with your own state. Even if your state allows you to charge for facility rental, try to host the course at a free facility to keep student costs at a minimum.

Getting the Word Out —

Advertise this event through your state agency and chapter bulletin boards, newsletter, and Web sites, as well as through other area League chapters. Consider posting fliers in local shooting retailer and sporting goods stores. Send a pre-event media release to local newspapers' events or calendar sections; then, send a post-event release with photos of citizens participating in the course. Provide students with information about the League's mission, your chapter's accomplishments, and membership. Take advantage of those non-members attending this educational event by promoting the League and recruiting them or their parents as new members.

Chapters With Successful HUNTER EDUCATION COURSE Activities —

Rockville, MD	Delta, OH	Michigan City, IN
North Manchester, IN	Loudoun County, VA	York, PA
Greater Seattle, WA	Mahaska County, IA	Beloit, WI

Note: For the most current specific chapter contacts, refer the *IWLA National Directory* or IWLA Web site (www.iwla.org).