



10 WAYS TO TURN KIDS INTO HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

Whether hunting, fishing or exploring the natural world, here are 10 tips to help kids embrace the outdoors:

- 1. Let them help.** Kids want to feel part of the process. Give them age-appropriate tasks in preparation for the outing and in the field to impart a sense of responsibility. If they don't catch a fish or harvest an animal, they'll still value the experience. If they're up for cleaning the fish or field dressing a deer and then cooking it, let them help.
- 2. Practice first.** Teach kids to cast on an open grassy spot before heading to a river. Take kids to a shooting range before hunting. Practice helps kids feel more confident and more skillful when it's the real deal.
- 3. Give them good gear.** Skimp on gear and you skip on their chance of success. Age-appropriate hunting and fishing gear is not toy gear, and the cheapest stuff is usually the least effective. When hunting, select a gun with a stock that fits and ammo that doesn't kick. When fishing, lighter tackle and smaller hooks are easier to cast, but they should still be appropriate for the species and the conditions.
- 4. Bring yummy food and drinks.** Hot cocoa and homemade chocolate chip cookies are the perfect antidote to a cold, slow morning in a blind. One of the things that make hunting and fishing trips enjoyable is the special treats to eat.
- 5. Don't sweat the misses.** As a seasoned hunter or angler, it can be frustrating when a kid misses an easy 20-yard shot or can't land a fish on the fifth try. If you don't worry about it, your kid won't either. Be encouraging. Focus on the positive and what to do differently next time rather than dwelling on what they did wrong.
- 6. Make them explorers.** Teach kids about the flora and fauna when you're afield. The more they learn about an ecosystem and the role of wildlife species in it, the better sportsmen they'll become.
- 7. Take advantage of youth programs.** Colorado Parks and Wildlife offers numerous kid-oriented outdoor education programs, hunter safety courses, and youth hunting opportunities. Youth hunting weekends give higher chances of success due to lower hunting pressure.
- 8. Avoid stormy weather.** To help insure a positive experience, wait for a fair forecast. It's challenging enough trying to drop a grouse out of the air without adding inclement weather to the mix.
- 9. Focus on your kid.** Leave your firearm, bow or fishing rod at home. When you introduce a kid to the outdoors, your attention should be on the child. It's important one-on-one time. As they get more experience, you'll be able to participate together.
- 10. Know when to quit.** You may be happy in a deer stand for 8 hours, but kids won't be. If a child gets bored or uncomfortable, it's time to quit, even if you've only been afield for an hour. Better to keep it fun, short and not shoot than to scold your kid for squirming.