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How to Obtain Permission to Hunt on Private Lands
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How To Obtain Permission To Hunt On Private Lands



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Some of the best hunting, in terms of more game and less competition from other hunters, may be available to you on private land. The following suggestions will help you obtain permission to hunt the private lands that appeal to you.

Remember, you must have written permission from the owner any time that you are hunting on land that is actively farmed, fenced or posted, or on wooded land adjacent to active farmland. Verbal permission is required on all other private lands.

Don't be discouraged by the wording on posted signs

Don't assume that a posted sign means absolutely no hunting. The landowner has to buy whatever

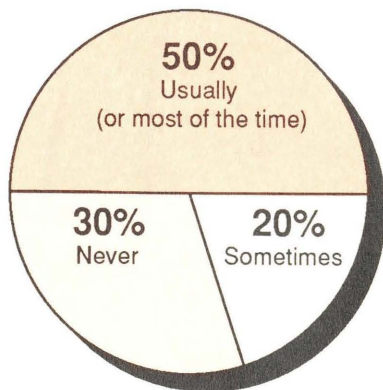
signs are available. He or she may purchase and put up a sign that says "POSTED," "KEEP OUT" or "NO HUNTING" because that was the only kind in the store. What the owner may really mean to say is "PRIVATE PROPERTY," "NO TRESPASSING" or "HUNTING BY PERMISSION ONLY."

Approximately one-half of the landowners who put up signs will allow hunting if the hunter asks permission first.

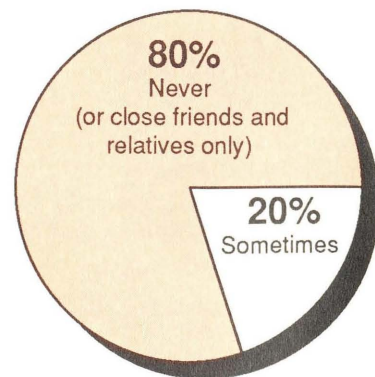
Remember, however, the closer the land is to a large urban area, the less likely you are to get permission to hunt. About 80 percent of the landowners close to cities don't give permission to hunt, whereas in rural areas, 65 to 75 percent of the landowners will give permission to hunt.

Hunting Permission Given If Asked:

Rural Landowners



Urban/Suburban Landowners*



*within 1 hour drive of an urban center of 100,000 population



Don't be discouraged by initial lack of success

Even around cities, 10 to 20 percent of the landowners will allow you to hunt when you ask permission. Consequently, you may have to ask 10 to 20 landowners for permission to hunt before you find one or two who are willing to give you permission. This extra effort on your part, however, will provide you with some excellent places to hunt. Be persistent and remember that a denial is not necessarily a rejection of you personally or of your values.

Ask permission before hunting season begins

When you ask permission before the hunting season begins,

it demonstrates to landowners that you are a responsible person and they need not fear for the safety of their property and their families. Second, the landowners have more time to make a better judgment of your character and are more likely to say yes. Third, you are not in a hurry to find a place so that you have time to find the owner of a property. House-to-house visits may be necessary, or you may have to visit the county courthouse and look at a plat map to find the owner, but a good place to hunt is worth some effort. Many MSU county Cooperative Extension Service offices have plat map booklets for sale. Many times you'll find the best hunting near cities on idle farmland owned by a non-resident, often a professional

who lives in town. Such owners often post heavily because this is the only way they know to control access, and because they erroneously believe that in some way this limits their liability. Your polite and well planned approach prior to hunting season may persuade them to allow you to hunt on their property.

When you ask permission, go by yourself or with a friend

You are more likely to receive permission to hunt if you go alone to ask permission or go with a friend, son, daughter or spouse. This is especially a good idea when you have to seek permission during the hunting season. Whatever you do, don't go in a group of more than three. Most landowners are afraid of a gang of hunters. Wait until you have hunted an area several times and have established yourself as a responsible hunter and a familiar acquaintance before you ask if you can bring a small group of friends.

Never carry your firearm with you when approaching a doorway

When you ask permission to hunt, leave your firearm cased and in your vehicle. If you approach the landowner's buildings on foot, unload your firearm, leave the action open, and lay it on the ground or safely stand it against a nearby fence, gate, tree, etc., where



it is obvious. The landowner will be more willing to talk to an unarmed stranger.

Keep your dogs under control

When seeking permission to hunt with dogs, show the landowner that you can control the dogs. Most people are impressed by a well disciplined and competent looking dog. If you cannot control your dog, learn how or change dogs. Don't take an unruly dog with you under any circumstances. Landowners are reluctant to grant permission to a hunter whose dog or dogs sound as if they are about to tear apart the car or truck, or, worse, are chasing the chickens, treeing the pet cat or urinating on the porch or shrubbery.

Dress for success

How you dress is important. A business suit or dressy casual clothing suggests that perhaps you are not an experienced hunter, while dirty clothing in disrepair may suggest that you are irresponsible. Work shoes, a clean pair of work pants or blue jeans, and a clean work or sports shirt are most appropriate.

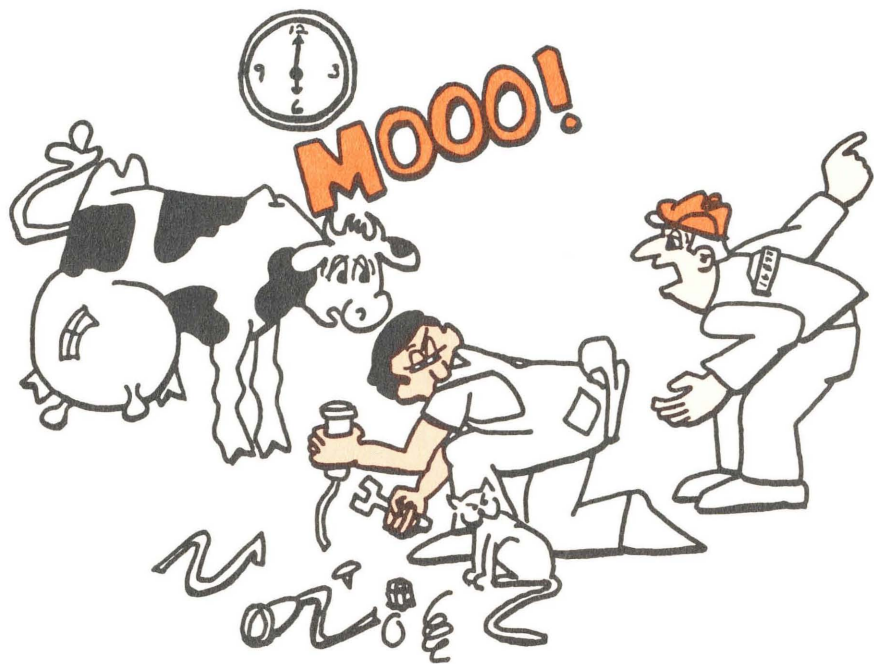
Obtaining permission to hunt one species may be difficult while obtaining permission to hunt another species may be easy

It is often difficult to obtain permission to hunt pheasants in many areas in Michigan, yet it is usually easy to get permission to hunt other small game, such as rabbits, squirrels and grouse. Getting permission to hunt deer in a few areas in Michigan may be difficult, yet in those areas where deer are numerous and cause serious crop damage, landowners may welcome deer hunters who ask permission. In general, the more sought after a species is in an area, the greater the difficulty in obtaining permission to hunt for it. Keep in mind, however, that once you're granted permission to hunt and have established a reputation and an acquaintance with the landowner, your chances to get permission to hunt other species improve.



When you first ask permission to hunt, ask permission for only one hunt and be flexible

Keep in mind that the landowner may deny permission for one particular day, especially opening day if family and friends are hunters. You may receive permission to hunt later in the season if you ask permission for a later date. Also remember that once you have established yourself as a responsible hunter and are familiar to the landowner, the landowner may invite you to ask permission again next year and may even allow you to bring friends.



Try to ask permission at a time convenient to the landowner

Put yourself in the landowner's position: if you are busy, it is much easier and quicker just to say no than to try to estimate the potential behavior of a stranger asking to hunt. Therefore, try to ask permission when the landowner is least busy. For example, the ideal time to approach farmers is late summer, but avoid times when a farmer is cutting hay or harvesting winter wheat. Don't approach dairy farmers in the early morning or early evening—they are busy milking cows. If the landowner is a non-resident, visit or call during

the early evening or on a Sunday afternoon rather than during working hours. A visit is better

Use polite persuasion on landowners reluctant to grant permission

When you ask permission and a landowner refuses or seems to be reluctant to say yes, say that you will be very careful and you will obey all conditions he or she establishes for your hunt. Ask if it would be possible to hunt at another time if the time requested isn't satisfactory. Obviously, if the landowner shows any signs of becoming impatient or hostile, thank him or her for listening, offer a compliment on how

desirable the land looks for a hunter, and pleasantly say good day. Remember, some people change their minds at the last minute.

Once you have received permission to hunt, be a gracious guest

- Thank the landowner before you begin your hunt.
- Invite the landowner to go hunting with you. You may wish to do this when you ask to hunt, particularly if the landowner is somewhat reluctant to give you permission. Instead of saying no, he or she may decide to join you. This can be to your advantage because the landowner often knows where the game is and may be able to provide access to adjacent land.
- Sincerely compliment the landowner—ask for advice on how to best hunt the land. Besides complimenting the landowner by asking for advice, you are demonstrating your respect for his or her knowledge of the property, and you may gain information that will make your hunt more successful. If you are interested in or curious about anything on the landowner's property, politely inquire about what interests you.
- Return the favor of permission with another favor, whenever possible. For example, if you are successful on your hunt, always offer to share your game with the landowner. A special trip back, if at all possible, to offer the landowner a choice cut of meat wrapped and ready for freezing is particularly appreciated. If you have hunted a farm for several years, a small gift as a token of appreciation is most appropriate.
- Leave the property as you found it. Do not litter. Pick up your spent shells. Leave gates as you found them and do not damage fences by stepping on and bending wire or rails. Do not trample crops.
- Never leave private property without at least thanking the landowner and informing him or her that you are leaving the property. Always ask permission before returning.



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