

## Choosing the right hunting knife.

A quality hunting knife is made from a combination of well thought out design elements that come together in a single piece, each complementing and building on the strengths of the others. These elements, when assembled with attention to fit and finish, produce a final product that any hunter will be happy to own. I discuss these different elements below which I have found work well for me and seem agreeable to my fellow hunters as well.

**Blade shape:** Unless you plan on actually stabbing your prey, many of the hunting knives on the market are improperly shaped for real use in the field. A knife with a Bowie style blade or a military/survival type shape can serve well as an all around utility knife and can certainly serve in the hunting capacity, but if hunting is what you are doing, why not use a knife with a blade that suits that purpose. There is no reason to settle for second best.

The main purpose of a hunting knife is for field dressing of game. With this in mind, a blade with substantial "belly" is the preferred shape. This would mean a blade that is wider than most with a slightly exaggerated curve that provides good length for slicing, scraping and separating of tendons and ligaments. A very sharp point is actually not preferred as this will require the blade to narrow as it terminates at the point and the inch or so before the point will be too narrow for fully effective use. Instead, a blade with a more abrupt point that retains the bulk of its body all the way to the tip is best, as this will allow the full length of the blade to be employed in the dressing. These knives are often known as "skinners". An excessively sharp point can actually work against the user by reducing the slicing capacity at the tip where it is needed most. Such a sharp point can also encourage errant "poke throughs" that can spoil a nice hide. I have not found that blood grooves in a blade make any noticeable difference and therefore do not comment for or against them. If you think they help, go for it. My only concern is that there has been valuable blade material ground away in favor of some questionable advantage. Personally, I don't look for this feature.

On the other hand a gut hook is definitely an advantage and I do use knives with this feature. The gut hook will speed the opening of a kill tremendously. Just make sure you maintain the edge religiously to prevent tearing.

Saw teeth on a hunting knife are not typical of the hunting knives I use. These are not found on the best hunting knives and when they are seen, the teeth are usually not sharp enough, fine enough or of sufficient linear length to be taken seriously. I view saw teeth on a hunting knife more as a gimmick. Your saw should come from a field dressing kit and be one that accepts interchangeable blades of varying teeth count. No two inches of overly coarse teeth on the back of a hunting knife can substitute for a good bone saw.

**Blade Length:** There is no reason to consider a hunting knife with an inordinately long blade. In my opinion, a blade length of around 4-5 inches works best. This length is the perfect balance between providing enough reach and working material to get the job done, but not so much that control is sacrificed. Precise strokes are best and a blade longer than this recommended length can be harder to maneuver where needed.

**Handle:** There are 3 characteristics of a handle that I look for in a hunting knife. These are: handle shape, handle material and blade guard. The handle shape should have contours pronounced enough to provide a solid grip in a gloved hand. Finger grooves do nicely here, but other shapes will work also. You need to experiment with different knives according to the size of your own hand, but generally speaking grooves will prevent the knife from slipping in your hand. The handle should have an oval shape from top to bottom which will prevent twisting and to allow extra purchase for prying motions when separating joints.

The handle material should also contribute to the solid grip and many hunting knives have a rubberized grip or other soft material which does work well. A stippled surface can assist in the grip and this should be considered if possible. Some of the harder materials such as G-10 or even plain aluminum will work well but benefit from contouring, grooving or a palm swell. As the handle becomes wet from snow, rain or blood, the surface should not be overcome by this and begin to get slippery.

I also like a blade guard on my knives. A single guard on the underside is sufficient. Even with the best handle shape and material, one can still come into trouble through carelessly relaxed hand tension or unexpected sticking during a fore stroke. A blade guard will prevent injury from this user error.

**Weight:** The weight of the hunting knife is a balance between being as light as possible without sacrificing power. A light knife will be livelier in the hand and easier to control. Fine detail work (what there is of it) will be accomplished easier and the knife can be carried for long periods without being intrusive. On the other hand, the blade does need enough heft to accomplish its purpose. I find that hunting knives in the 3-5 ounce area serve me well.

**Sheath:** This implies that the hunting knife is not a folder. I absolutely do not believe fixed blade hunting knives are inherently better than folders. Nevertheless, a folder does start somewhat behind the eight ball in this arena and must be well executed to be a contender. There are many of these.

If you are using a fixed blade hunter, the sheath will most likely be some kind of nylon arrangement. This is the standard, generic sheath and works well. A leather sheath should be left at home. No sheath that traps or hold moisture should be considered. A Kydex sheath is a fine option as well, as long as it is not fully enclosed to retain water that may get inside. The sheath should not rattle or make noise that will give you away while stalking or in concealment. I prefer a sheath with a loop at the handle near the butt that keeps the handle near my body and not sticking out to catch on something when walking through brush or bending.

Steel: Most of the hunting knives I use are made from 420 or 440 High Carbon steel. A blade of D2 tool steel works well too. The steel used in modern knives these days is well ahead of where it was even 25 years ago. With regular care that includes drying the knife at the earliest opportunity after becoming wet and storing the knife with a coat of light oil, most of the knives on the market today will last as long as you need them.

I recognize there are many other aspects of hunting knives that could be addressed. This article is not intended as an exhaustive treatment of all facets of the hunting knife. However if you us these general guidelines when purchasing your next hunting knife, I am confident you will have found a reliable tool that you can own with pride.

[Hunting Knives](#)

## About the Author

[Knives Town.](#)

[Buck Knives](#)

Source: <http://www.articletrader.com>