

How to Choose the Best Knife for Hunting

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Choosing the best knife for hunting is not an easy task, because there's a plethora of models available, especially over the internet. Sometimes you can get confused, they all seem to look the same after all, so why bother choosing? Just flip a coin and pick one. Well, keep reading and I will show you how to distinguish a good hunting knife from a "lemon".

First things first, you should establish what kind of knife you want and obviously, a budget. Keep in mind that a decent hunting knife can cost you anywhere between \$50 and \$1000 or more. Yes, there are knives that cost that much, folks. But a hunting knife being essentially a tool, it makes no sense to break the bank.

A good hunting knife must perform flawlessly its main task: skinning the animal and dressing game, i.e. splitting the ribcage and cutting through bone and cartilage. So, the general rule of thumb is that a hunting knife must be pretty strong, for achieving its main goals.

Let me give you a tip: when talking about hunting knives, bigger doesn't necessarily mean better. It all depends on the size of the animal you wish to hunt. A big knife is useless when dressing small game, as you can easily imagine. If you're hunting rabbit, you can't use the same type of knife like someone who's into big game hunting, like deer for example. Regardless, as a general rule, a good hunting knife has a blade length of ~4 inches, give or take, unless you're hunting elephants or the like.

After you've decided about what size of knife you will require, you must consider how often you will go hunting. If you're a regular hunter, that spells fixed blade knife. If you're hunting occasionally, well, a folder is the way to go.

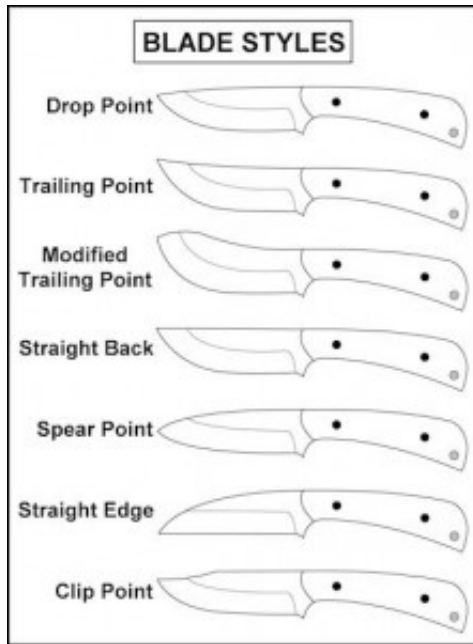
Types of Hunting Knives

So, there are basically two types of hunting knives:

- fixed blade knives

- folders

As a general rule of thumb, fixed blade knives are the best ones from all points of view except for one (they are not that easy to carry around due to their size):



- they are stronger
- they are cheaper
- they are more reliable

All these benefits derive from the fact that a fixed blade knife has no moving parts, like a folder knife has. Folders are more versatile and easier to carry around.

If you go for a folder knife, don't get cheap, because cheap folders are not built to last. You should choose a reputable company and pay extra attention (and money eventually) at the locking mechanism of the blade. Yes, you must go for a strong lock-back folder knife, with a thick blade and a grippy handle. Also, a partially serrated blade works best in a folding knife, making it very versatile, especially when cutting through cartilage and tendons.

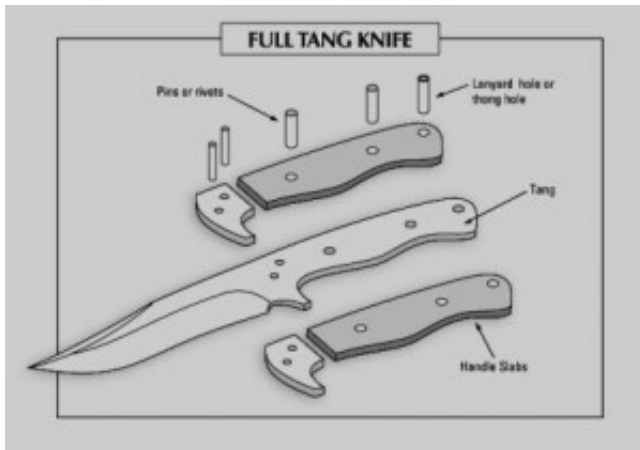
If you're a dedicated hunter, a solid fixed blade knife is the name of the game for you, there's no compromise here. For regular, heavy duty jobs, a folding knife is usually not enough.

So, what are the basics in choosing a good fixed blade knife?

Well, there are three types of blades used in hunting knives: the clip point, the drop point and the skinning blade. One must choose according to his/her needs; from these three, the clip point is the more versatile solution, the other two are "niche" knives.

What makes a good hunting knife?

1. The blade must feature a full tang design, meaning that the handle and the blade are made of one continuous piece of steel. This makes for a strong, unbreakable knife, if used properly. Stay away from partial tang designs, they are prone to failure and they are definitely not worth it.



2. Pay attention to the steel used in manufacturing the knife. Usually, there are two types of steel used in the construction of hunting knives: carbon steel and stainless steel and each one has its advantages and disadvantages. Technically speaking, there's a third kind, namely high carbon stainless steel, which has the best of both worlds, but it's quite expensive.

A carbon steel knife is cheaper, rugged and durable, easy to sharpen and strong, yet it is prone to rusting. A stainless steel hunting knife doesn't require so much attention and it's the ideal choice, especially if you go for a high quality blade.

Stainless steel blades are the popular choice amongst hunters everywhere, even if they're a little bit harder to sharpen and they don't keep an edge as well as a carbon steel does, but they are close enough in my book.

3. If you choose to go for carbon steel, you can easily prevent the blade from rusting by applying a silicon containing wax over it or you can go old school and keep it oiled at all times. This kind of steel requires maintenance and a hunting knife will see some dirty action during its lifetime. My advice is to play safe and go for a stainless steel blade, or, if you're loaded, you can choose the high end option, i.e. the high carbon stainless steel version, used by expensive knife makers.

4. The handle of the knife must be very comfortable for your hand, to provide good grip under wet conditions and also be made of a strong material, that doesn't deteriorate in humid conditions. Hence, stay away from leather handles, even if they look cool; also, avoid bone and wooden handles, because they are fragile and/or slippery when wet. The best choice for a hunting knife handle is a synthetic material, like polymer, nylon, rubbery plastic, stuff like that. The handle must be sturdy and feel strong and heavy in your hand.

Keep in mind that a high-quality hunting knife, well maintained, will last you for a life time. All you have to do to keep it in shape is to clean the blade and handle thoroughly after using it and store it in a clean, dry place. You can use a commercial cleaning solution that contains a lubricant/protector in its composition, even if you're using a stainless steel blade. Stainless steel blades are not immune to rusting after all, just more resistant.

These are the basics in choosing the best knife for hunting. The rest is up to you, it all depends on your personal preference and budget. As per any other thing in life, you get what you paid for.

Keep your knife sharp and your eyes peeled!



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