



INSIDER'S GUIDE TO

**SELECTING THE
BEST CALIBER FOR HUNTING
ALMOST ANYTHING**

BY
JOHN McADAMS



Insider's Guide To Selecting The Best Caliber For Hunting Almost Anything

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Introduction

I think most hunters likely agree that the wide variety of different rifle cartridges and shotgun gauges currently available, combined with the confusing and often contradictory information from most online sources these days, can make choosing the best cartridge to hunt with look like an overwhelming task. This is particularly true for people just learning how to hunt or those who are new to firearms in general.

To make the situation even more bewildering, it seems like the big manufacturers are constantly introducing new cartridges each year. It can be really tough to cut through the marketing speak a lot of companies use to sell their products.

Finally, it also seems like you can find plenty of sources saying that a particular cartridge is the best thing since sliced bread as well as many others trashing the exact same cartridge.

From one hunter to another, trust me when I say I've experienced the same frustration too.

Is the 6.5 Creedmoor the real deal? Or is it just a hyped up flavor of the week?

Is the .30-06 still worth hunting with? Or should I use something newer?

Do I really need a .300 or a .338 Win Mag? Or will something else work just as well?

The last thing any hunter wants is to purchase a new rifle or shotgun and find out later that their new firearm is not suited for the type of hunting they do. With all that in mind, my goal with this E-Book is to provide you with several good recommendations on selecting the right caliber (or gauge) for hunting small game (like squirrels, rabbits, quail, grouse, and pheasant), waterfowl (ducks and geese), varmints (like coyotes, foxes, and bobcats), deer, pronghorn, feral hogs, black bear, elk, moose, brown/grizzly bear, wildebeest, kudu, impala, or even thick-skinned dangerous game like cape buffalo.

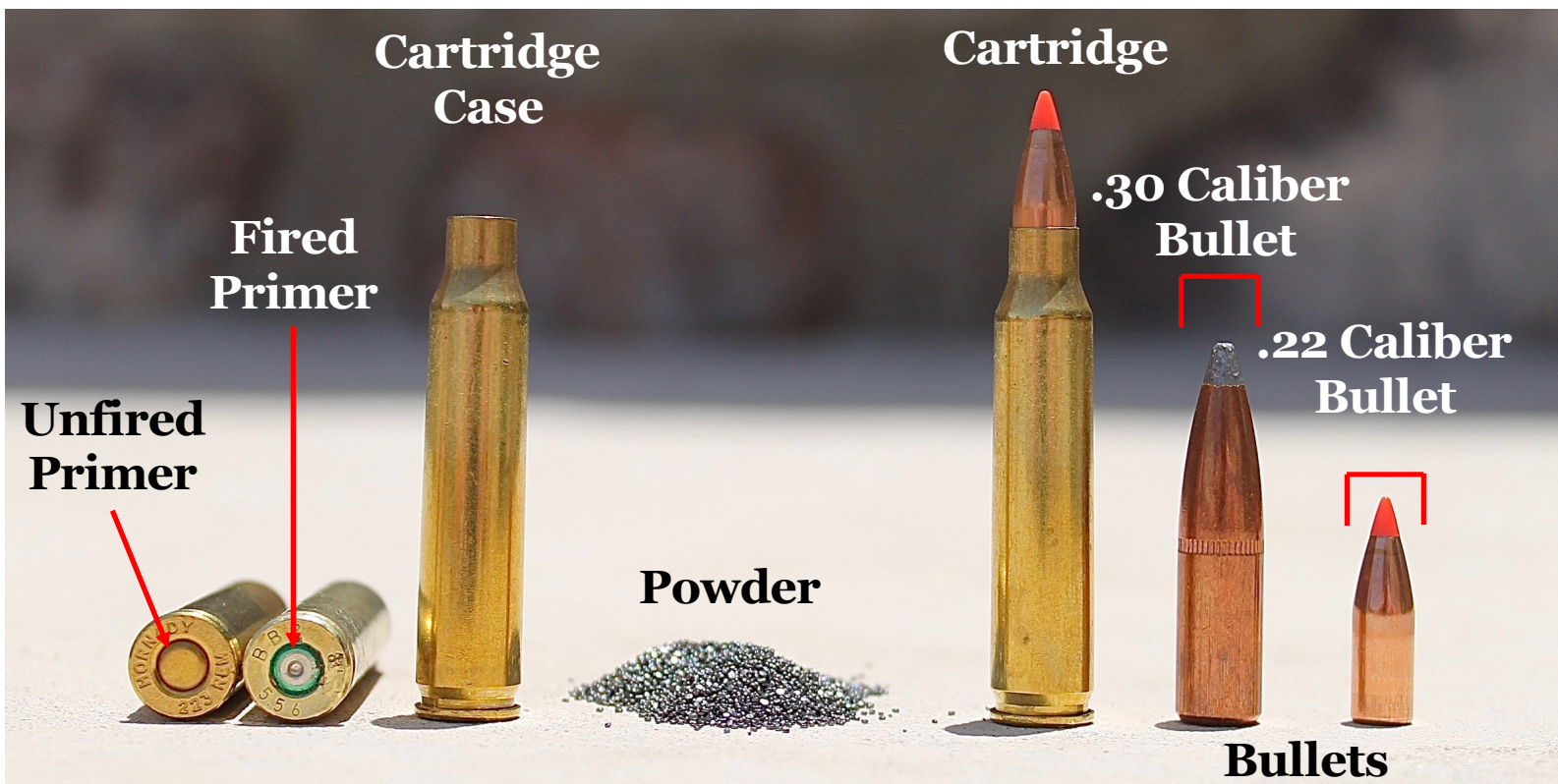
Keep in mind that this is not an all-inclusive list. Countless hunters go afield each year with other cartridges and have great success. The recommendations in this E-Book are a good place to start regardless of whether you're buying your first rifle to hunt whitetail deer with in the piney woods of Georgia or you're an experienced hunter looking for a new rifle for an elk in the mountains of Colorado or cape buffalo in Africa.

Also, realize that my game recommendations for each cartridge are not all-inclusive either. Even if I don't specifically mention a particular game animal, just use cartridges I recommend for similar animals (impala to deer, red stag and kudu to elk, etc.).

Finally, I included some very basic information on firearm terminology and cartridge naming conventions at the beginning of this book. I incorporated that information into this E-Book to ensure it was available for those who are new to the firearms world. However, I encourage everyone, even experienced hunters, to read those sections as well as a refresher.

Ready to get started?

Important Terms



Cartridge: A cartridge is pre-assembled ammunition containing the following components: a cartridge case, powder, a primer, and a bullet. It's appropriate to refer to a cartridge as ammo, loaded ammunition, or even a "round" of ammunition. As we'll discuss shortly, a "cartridge" and a "bullet" are two separate things though.

Cartridge Case: This is the container (usually made of brass, steel, or sometimes even plastic) that holds the other components that make up a cartridge. The case is also sometimes referred to as "brass."

Primer: Primers contain a shock sensitive compound that ignites when struck by the firing pin on a rifle, handgun, or shotgun. This compound produces a jet of burning gas which then ignites the powder contained in the cartridge case.

Powder: The cartridge case contains gunpowder, which is the propellant used to push the bullet down the barrel upon firing. When ignited by the primer, the powder rapidly expands and pushes the bullet down the barrel of the firearm.

Bullet: This is the actual projectile fired from a rifle. Since the term specifically refers to the projectile, it's not correct to refer to loaded ammo as a "bullet."

Caliber: Refers to the nominal diameter of a bullet. This can be expressed in either metric (mm) or Imperial units (inches). This is what a person is referring to when they say they have a "six point five millimeter" or a "thirty caliber" rifle. For example, a .30 caliber rifle shoots a bullet approximately .30" in diameter.

Grains: Bullet mass is typically expressed in grains, which is an old unit of mass based upon the mass of an ideal seed of a cereal. There are 7,000 grains in a pound and 437.5 grains in an ounce. Grains are abbreviated as "gr."

Cartridge Naming Conventions



Cartridge names can be confusing, so don't be embarrassed if you're puzzled at first.

Black Powder: This method consists of the caliber of the cartridge in inches followed by the standard load of powder in grains. This is an antiquated naming convention used most often by older cartridges. The .30-30 Winchester uses this naming convention: it uses a .30 caliber bullet propelled by 30 grains of powder, so it received the designation “.30-30”.

Metric Designation: This method uses the nominal (approximate) diameter of the rifle bore followed by the length of the case in millimeters. This is most common with European designed cartridges, though a few American cartridges use the metric method as well. The 7x57mm Mauser is an example of a metric cartridge.

Brand Designation: This is the most common way of naming cartridges in the United States today and consists of approximate diameter of the bullet in inches or mm followed by the entity the cartridge is named for (usually, but not always the company that designed it). The .223 Remington and 6.5 Creedmoor are examples.

Magnum: A magnum cartridge refers to one that's more powerful due to some combination of a longer and/or larger diameter case and potentially a higher pressure loading. The 7mm Remington Magnum is an example.

Note: Caliber refers only to the diameter of the bullet, not the cartridge itself and most cartridges are NOT interchangeable. For instance, the .308 Winchester and .300 Winchester Magnum are both .30 caliber cartridges. However, the .300 Winchester Magnum is more powerful due to the fact that it has a longer and larger diameter case that can hold more powder than the .308 Winchester.

.22 Long Rifle



Overview: Many people begin their hunting career pursuing small game like squirrels and rabbits using a rifle chambered in .22 Long Rifle (.22LR). The cartridge is almost perfect for that sort of hunting: recoil is virtually non-existent, it doesn't have a loud report, and it's more than powerful enough to ethically take most small game at short range. The .22 Long Rifle also an outstanding choice for target shooting or plinking and is probably the single most common cartridge in use today. The .22LR is not powerful enough for hunting big game like deer though. Most states also prohibit the use of the cartridge for hunting big game for that exact reason. So, while the .22 Long Rifle is ideal for small game hunting and target shooting, you'll need to use something else for deer, feral hogs, etc.

Caliber: .223"

Typical Bullet Weights: 32gr, 36gr, 38gr, 40gr

Good For Hunting: Small Game & Varmints

Comments: The .22LR is an extremely popular option for young, small framed, or inexperienced hunters who want to get some practice afield before moving up to something bigger and more powerful. That said, there are plenty of very seasoned hunters who still use the cartridge for pursuing small game, so the .22 Long Rifle is not limited to young or brand new hunters by any stretch.

.22 Long Rifle Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Federal Champion 36gr Copper Plated Hollow Point](#) (Small Game, Varmints)

[CCI Stinger 32gr Copper Plated Hollow Point](#) (Small Game, Varmints)

[Click here for more 22LR ammo recommendations](#)

.223 Remington/5.56x45mm NATO



Overview: Most commonly associated with the AR-15 and M-16 rifles, the .223 Remington and 5.56x45mm NATO cartridges are also available in a number of other bolt-action and semi-automatic rifles. Both are small caliber, high velocity cartridges with a very flat trajectory and very little recoil. With those things in mind, they're extremely popular and effective for predator and varmint hunting. The same goes for self-defense and in preparation for a potential survival situation.

The .223 and the 5.56 NATO are also capable of incredible accuracy, so both are commonly used by competitive shooters. Additionally, modern ammunition has made both cartridges much more effective for hunting bigger game like deer and hogs than was the case a few years ago.

Caliber: 5.56mm/.224"

Typical Bullet Weights: 40gr, 50gr, 55gr, 62gr, 64gr, and 77gr

Good For Hunting: Varmints, Deer, & Feral Hogs

Comments: The .223 Remington and 5.56 NATO cartridges are very similar, but are not identical and are not interchangeable in all rifles. If you have a rifle chambered in 5.56 NATO, you can safely shoot .223 or 5.56 ammo in it. If your rifle is chambered in .223 Remington, then you should only shoot .223 Remington ammo in it. For this reason, it's probably better to purchase a rifle chambered in 5.56 NATO.

223 Remington/5.56 NATO Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Hornady Superformance Varmint 53gr V-Max](#) (Varmints)

[Federal Premium 55gr Barnes TSX](#) (Varmints, Deer, Feral Hogs)

[Click here for more 223/5.56 ammo recommendations](#)

.243 Winchester



Overview: Built by necking down a .308 Winchester case to shoot .243” bullets, the .243 Winchester has a much higher velocity, a flatter trajectory, and less recoil than the .308 Winchester. Capable of shooting heavy as well as light bullets with very good accuracy, the .243 Winchester is a great varmint hunting cartridge and also bridges the gap between traditional varmint cartridges like the .223 Remington and popular big game hunting cartridges like the .308 Winchester and .30-06 Springfield.

Caliber: 6mm/.243”

Typical Bullet Weights: 55gr, 85gr, 90gr, 95gr, and 100gr

Good For Hunting: Varmints, Pronghorn, Deer, & Feral Hogs

Comments: Known for outstanding accuracy, a very mild recoil, and superb performance on deer sized game, the .243 Winchester is one of the most popular deer hunting cartridges in the United States. It’s especially popular with smaller framed hunters like children, but quite a few adults use it as well.

The .243 Winchester is the smallest legal cartridge for deer hunting in many states. It’s great on deer, but I don’t recommend using it on larger game. So, if you want a great deer rifle that’s also well suited for predator and varmint hunting, the .243 is a very good choice. However, I recommend getting something a little bigger if you want to use that same rifle for hunting bigger game.

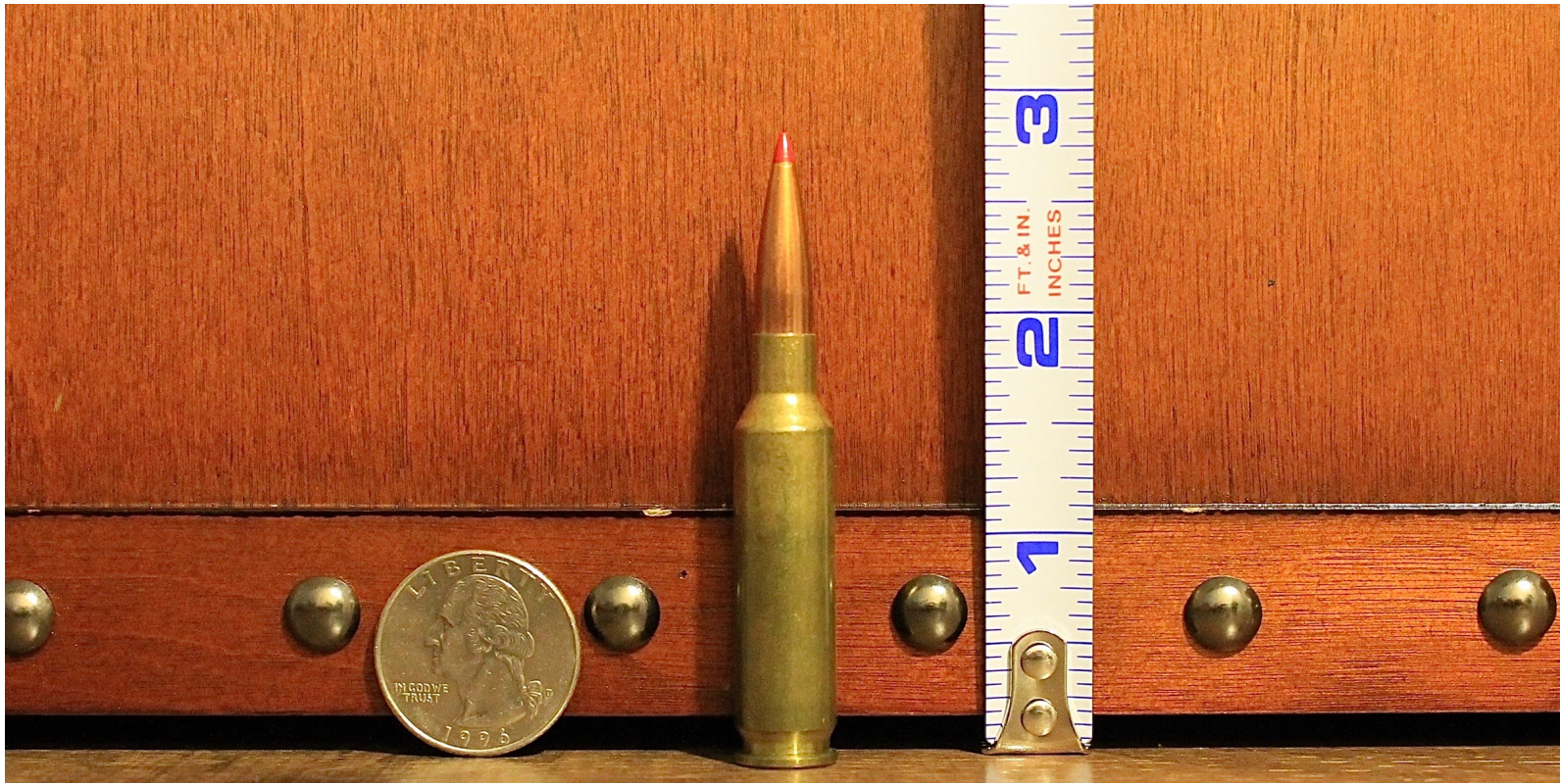
243 Winchester Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Hornady Superformance 58gr V-Max](#) (Varmints)

[Federal Power Shok 100gr SP](#) (Deer, Feral Hogs)

[Click here for more 243 Winchester ammo recommendations](#)

6.5 Creedmoor



Overview: The 6.5 Creedmoor was originally designed for long range competitive shooting as an alternative to the .308 Winchester. Specifically, the designers wanted to build an ideal long range shooting cartridge that was just as accurate as the .308 at long distance, but with less recoil, less wind drift, and a flatter trajectory. For those reasons, the 6.5 Creedmoor has seen a great deal of success in the hands of competition shooters and is also now one of the most popular hunting cartridges used in North America.

Caliber: 6.5mm/.264"

Typical Bullet Weights: 120gr, 127gr, 140gr, 143gr, and 147gr

Good For Hunting: Pronghorn, Deer, & Feral Hogs

Comments: The 6.5 Creedmoor has seen a massive surge in popularity in recent years as hunters have started to realize that it's such a sweet shooting and mild recoiling cartridge. Those characteristics make the 6.5 Creedmoor a great choice for new hunters. The cartridge is absolutely perfect for deer sized game.

Some hunters are tempted to use it for hunting bigger game. However, while it can indeed be effective for those uses, it's a little on the light side really big game like elk and moose. So, extra care must be taken with bullet selection, shot placement and shot angles when hunting those species.

6.5 Creedmoor Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Barnes VOR-TX LR 127gr LRX](#) (Deer, Pronghorn, Feral Hogs, Bear, & Elk)

[Hornady Precision Hunter 143gr ELD-X](#) (Deer, Pronghorn, Feral Hogs)

[Click here for more 6.5 Creedmoor ammo recommendations](#)

.270 Winchester



Overview: First introduced back in the 1920s, the .270 Winchester has a long track record of success in the hands of North American hunters. With initial loads for the cartridge pushing a 130gr bullet at a screaming fast (for the 1920s anyway) velocity of 3,140 feet per second, the .270 caught on with hunters looking for a flat shooting hunting cartridge that was very effective on thin-skinned game. The .270 is still incredibly popular today and is arguably the best deer hunting cartridge in use.

Caliber: 6.8mm/.277"

Typical Bullet Weights: 130gr, 140gr, and 150gr

Good For Hunting: Pronghorn, Deer, Feral Hogs, Black Bear, & Elk

Comments: Equally at home in the hands of eastern whitetail hunters and mule deer hunters out west, the .270 is most commonly used for deer hunting and has plenty of reach for shots out to several hundred yards.

Additionally, many hunters use the .270 for bigger game like black bear and elk. It's certainly capable of getting the job done on larger game. However, I highly recommend using premium quality 130 grain mono-metal bullets (like the Barnes TTSX) or 150 grain lead core bullets (like the Nosler Partition) if you plan on using the .270 Winchester for hunting larger game. The same goes for hunters who want to take a .270 on a hunt in Africa.

.270 Winchester Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Barnes VOR-TX 130gr TTSX](#) (Pronghorn, Deer, Hogs)

[Nosler Trophy Grade 150gr Nosler Partition](#) (Deer, Hogs, Bear, Elk)

[Click here for more 270 Winchester ammo recommendations](#)

7mm-08 Remington



Overview: Built using the same principles as the .243 Winchester, the 7mm-08 Remington uses a .308 Winchester case necked down to shoot .284" bullets. The 7mm-08 has less recoil and a flatter trajectory than the .308, but is more powerful and uses larger diameter and heavier bullets than the .243. For these reasons, the 7mm-08 Remington is a very popular deer hunting cartridge that's also capable of ethically taking down bigger game in a pinch.

Caliber: 7mm/.284"

Typical Bullet Weights: 120gr, 140gr, and 150gr

Good For Hunting: Pronghorn, Deer, Feral Hogs, Black Bear, & Elk

Comments: The 7mm-08 Remington is a very well designed and balanced cartridge with a trajectory very similar to the 6.5 Creedmoor, but using slightly larger diameter bullets. The 7mm-08 is another sweet shooting and mild recoiling choice for newer hunters and it's also popular among experienced hunters who want a light recoiling cartridge in a lightweight and easy to carry rifle.

Most commonly used for deer hunting, the 7mm-08 is capable of taking every species of game in North America except for the biggest bears when using premium bullets and with careful shot placement. However, while it will certainly get the job done, I recommend using something more powerful if you plan on regularly hunting elk.

7mm-08 Remington Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Barnes VOR-TX 120gr TTSX](#) (Pronghorn, Deer, Hogs, Black Bear)

[Nosler Trophy Grade 140gr AccuBond](#) (Pronghorn, Deer, Hogs, Black Bear, Elk)

[Click here for more 7mm-08 Remington ammo recommendations](#)

7mm Remington Magnum



Overview: Introduced in the early 1960s, the 7mm Remington Magnum offered a significant ballistic advantage over other popular cartridges of the time and was an instant hit among hunters looking for flat-shooting and hard hitting magnum performance. Like the 7mm-08, the 7mm Rem Mag uses .284" bullets, but the Rem Mag is a larger and more powerful cartridge that's capable of firing heavier bullets at a faster velocity. That extra power does come at a price and the 7mm Rem Mag does have noticeably more recoil than the 7mm-08 though.

Caliber: 7mm/.284"

Typical Bullet Weights: 140gr, 150gr, 160gr, 162gr, 175gr

Good For Hunting: Pronghorn, Deer, Feral Hogs, Black Bear, Elk, & Moose

Comments: The 7mm Remington Magnum is a very powerful cartridge that's great for hunters pursuing larger game and/or those who want the ability to ethically take longer range shots. For these reasons, the 7mm Rem Mag remains extremely popular for hunting all manner of big game in North America.

However, while there's nothing wrong with using it for hunting deer in thicker conditions where shorter range shots are the norm, it has more horsepower than is really necessary for that sort of hunting. With all that in mind, the 7mm Rem Mag is popular among western hunters and those who want a very versatile hunting rifle.

7mm Remington Magnum Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Barnes VOR-TX 140gr TTSX](#) (Pronghorn, Deer, & Hogs)

[Nosler Trophy Grade 160gr Partition](#) (Bear, Elk, Moose)

[Click here for more 7mm Remington Magnum ammo recommendations](#)

.308 Winchester



Overview: The .308 Winchester is a very efficient, accurate, and versatile cartridge that was originally designed as a replacement for the .30-06 Springfield by the U.S. Army. The .308 Winchester offers performance nearly on par with the legendary .30-06, but does so in a slightly smaller package and with a little bit less recoil. Not surprisingly, the .308 Winchester is also a tremendously effective cartridge that's enormously popular with big game hunters all over the world.

Caliber: 7.62mm/.308"

Typical Bullet Weights: 150gr, 168gr, 178gr, 180gr

Good For Hunting: Pronghorn, Deer, Feral Hogs, Black Bear, & Elk

Comments: It doesn't have quite the horsepower of the .30-06, especially with heavier bullets, but the .308 Winchester is still powerful enough to get the job done on most species of big game. However, the smaller physical size and reduced recoil of the .308 Winchester cartridge makes it a better choice for use with lighter and easier to carry rifles.

The .308 Winchester is an awesome choice for those who primarily hunt game like deer, hogs and black bear and it will also work just fine on the occasional hunt for bigger game like elk or possibly even moose. However, I'd personally lean towards something a little more powerful if you plan on regularly hunting elk.

308 Winchester Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Hornady Precision Hunter 178gr ELD-X](#) (Pronghorn, Deer, & Hogs)

[Nosler Trophy Grade 165gr AccuBond](#) (Pronghorn, Deer, Hogs, Bear, Elk)

[Click here for more 308 Winchester ammo recommendations](#)

.30-06 Springfield



Overview: Developed by the U.S. Army for use with the 1903 Springfield rifle, the .30-06 Springfield first came on the scene in the early days of the 20th Century. It offered a big step up in performance compared to the other options available at the time and it didn't take long for the revolutionary new .30-06 to catch on with the civilian hunting and shooting communities as well. Hunters have used the .30-06 to harvest every species of North American big game over the course of the last 100+ years. The .30-06 Springfield is still one of the most popular rifle cartridges in use all over the world and remains the standard against which new rifle cartridges are measured against.

Caliber: 7.62mm/.308"

Typical Bullet Weights: 150gr, 168gr, 178gr, 180gr, 200gr, 220gr

Good For Hunting: Pronghorn, Deer, Feral Hogs, Black Bear, Elk, & Moose

Comments: The .30-06 Springfield is an incredibly versatile cartridge that's equally at home in the hands of a whitetail hunter in a tree stand, on an elk hunt in the Rocky Mountains, hunting moose up in Alaska, or even on safari in Africa. The cartridge offers a good mix of a flat trajectory, excellent terminal performance, and acceptable recoil. For these reasons, the .30-06 Springfield is terrific for a hunter who wants a single rifle to hunt as wide a variety of big game as possible.

30-06 Springfield Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Hornady Precision Hunter 178gr ELD-X](#) (Pronghorn, Deer, Hogs, Bear, Elk)

[Nosler Trophy Grade 180gr AccuBond](#) (Pronghorn, Deer, Hogs, Bear, Elk, Moose)

[Click here for more 30-06 Springfield ammo recommendations](#)

.300 Winchester Magnum



Overview: Introduced shortly after the 7mm Remington Magnum in the 1960s, the .300 Winchester Magnum was in the same league of the 7mm Rem Mag performance wise and was also a big hit with those wanting a hard hitting magnum cartridge with lots of reach. Like the .308 and the .30-06, the .300 Win Mag uses .308" bullets, but the Win Mag is a larger and more powerful cartridge that's capable of firing heavier bullets at a faster velocity. So, the .300 Win Mag is a little better suited for hunting larger game and for taking longer range shots, but also has more recoil.

Caliber: 7.62mm/.308"

Typical Bullet Weights: 150gr, 165gr, 180gr, 190gr, 200gr, 212gr

Good For Hunting: Pronghorn, Deer, Feral Hogs, Black Bear, Elk, & Moose

Comments: The .300 Winchester Magnum is an outstanding choice for hunters pursuing really big game like bear, elk, and moose as well as those who want a little bit more reach.

The .300 Win Mag offers performance very similar to the 7mm Remington Magnum and there's a tremendous amount of overlap in their capabilities. However, since the .300 Win Mag uses larger diameter and often heavier bullets, I think it's a better choice for game like elk and moose. Not surprisingly, the .300 Win Mag is especially popular with hunters in Alaska, Canada, and in the western United States.

300 Winchester Magnum Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Remington Core Lokt 180gr Pointed Soft Point](#) (Deer, Hogs, & Bear)

[Barnes VOR-TX 180gr TTSX](#) (Pronghorn, Deer, Hogs, Bear, Elk, Moose)

[Click here for more 300 Win Mag ammo recommendations](#)

.338 Winchester Magnum



Overview: Developed in the 1950s by shortening and necking down a .375 H&H case to use .338” bullets, the .338 Winchester Magnum is an outstanding medium bore cartridge that offers a good balance of power, a reasonably long effective range, and manageable recoil. Indeed, the .338 Win Mag is the very definition of a “medium bore.” A favorite among hunters in the western United States and Alaska, the .338 Win Mag is very effective on elk, moose, black bear, and brown/grizzly bear. It’s not restricted just to bigger game though and plenty of hunters use it on game like deer as well. Basically, it’s great for hunting almost any species this side of cape buffalo.

Caliber: 8.6mm/.338”

Typical Bullet Weights: 200gr, 210gr, 225gr, 250gr

Good For Hunting: Deer, Hogs, Black Bear, Elk, Moose, & Brown/Grizzly Bear

Comments: While the .338 Winchester Magnum has more recoil and a little more arching trajectory than the smaller .300 Winchester Magnum, it’s still an excellent all-around hunting cartridge. I’d recommend the bigger .338 Win Mag for hunters primarily focused on bigger game like elk or moose, in areas where encounters with bigger bears are more likely, or for those who just want or need harder hitting performance. As long as you accept the slight disadvantages of the cartridge with regards to recoil and trajectory, the .338 Win Mag should serve you well afield.

.338 Winchester Magnum Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Barnes VOR-TX 225gr TTSX](#) (Deer, Hogs, Bear, Elk, Moose)

[Remington Core Lokt 225gr Pointed Soft Point](#) (Deer, Hogs, Bear, Elk, Moose)

[Nosler Trophy Grade 250gr Partition](#) (Deer, Hogs, Bear, Elk, Moose)

.375 Holland & Holland Magnum



Overview: First released all the way back in 1912, the .375 Holland & Holland Magnum still ranks as one of the most popular and effective all-around hunting cartridges in the world. Combining a good mix of power, accuracy, a reasonably flat trajectory, and manageable recoil, the .375 H&H is an incredibly versatile cartridge. It's especially popular in Africa, but has also seen lots of use in elsewhere and a hunter with a .375 H&H could conceivably hunt any species of big game on earth.

Caliber: 9.5mm/.375"

Typical Bullet Weights: 250gr, 260gr, 270gr, 300gr

Good For Hunting: Deer, Feral Hogs, Black Bear, Elk, Moose, Cape Buffalo

Comments: The .375 Holland & Holland Magnum is an excellent choice for hunters who want an extremely versatile rifle that's effective on extremely large game like moose, brown bear, and cape buffalo, but who may also want to use that same rifle on smaller game like the many species of African antelope or even deer. Not only is the cartridge is powerful enough to legally and ethically take even the biggest species of game like cape buffalo, but also has surprisingly good extended range performance. So, it's excellent for close in work as well as on shots out to 200-300 yards. Recoil is not excessive either and the .375 H&H is usually right at the upper end of what most hunters can handle without accuracy degrading.

.375 H&H Magnum Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Barnes VOR-TX 300gr TSX](#) (Bear, Elk, Moose, Cape Buffalo)

[Hornady Dangerous Game 300gr DGX Bonded](#) (Bear, Elk, Moose, Cape Buffalo)

[Click here for more .375 H&H ammo recommendations](#)

.458 Winchester Magnum



Overview: Built by shortening and necking up a .375 H&H case to shoot .458” bullets, the .458 Winchester Magnum suffered through some growing pains in the years following its introduction. The initial issues with the cartridge have been fixed though. When using modern factory ammunition, the .458 Win Mag is extremely powerful and is capable of cleanly and ethically taking the biggest and toughest species of game on the planet. Not surprisingly, the .458 Win Mag is a favorite among professional hunters and game rangers who need a seriously heavy hitting “stopping” cartridge for use on thick-skinned dangerous game.

Caliber: 11.6mm/.458”

Typical Bullet Weights: 400gr, 450gr, 500gr

Good For Hunting: Moose, Brown/Grizzly Bear, Cape Buffalo, & Bison

Comments: The .458 Winchester Magnum is an outstanding choice for hunters pursuing extremely big and/or dangerous game like brown bear or cape buffalo. The .458 Win Mag offers a big step up in power over the .375 H&H. However, that power comes at the expense of significantly more recoil. Additionally, the .458 Win Mag performs best at ranges inside 150-200 yards. Hunters who can’t deal with the recoil of the .458 Win Mag and/or those who need better performance at longer range should go with the .375 H&H (or something similar) instead.

.458 Winchester Magnum Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Federal Premium Cape-Shok 500gr Swift A-Frame](#) (Bear, Moose, Cape Buffalo)

[Hornady Dangerous Game 500gr DGX Bonded/DGS](#) (Cape Buffalo)

[Barnes VOR-TX 450gr TSX](#) (Bear, Moose, Cape Buffalo)

Shotgun Overview



I'd be remiss if I didn't talk briefly about shotguns in this E-Book.

Shotguns are capable of firing loads consisting of several hundred very small pellets at once. While they start off very tightly packed together when loaded in a typical shotgun shell, shotgun pellets gradually disperse upon firing as they travel downrange. Picture a cone that increases in diameter to help visualize what a shotgun shot pattern looks like.

This means shotguns generally have a relatively short effective range and are not as precise as a rifle. However, these same characteristics also make a shotgun ideal for shooting at moving game like a flying bird or a running squirrel.

Shotguns are capable of firing loads consisting of hundreds of very small pellets (birdshot), a handful of larger pellets (buckshot), and even a single projectile (a slug). Just as the names suggest, those different loads are best suited for hunting specific kinds of game: larger game like deer for buckshot or slugs and smaller game animals and birds like rabbits, squirrels, dove, pheasant, and ducks for birdshot.

There are varying sizes of buckshot and birdshot that are described by a number like "number 4 buckshot" or "number 6 birdshot." It's counterintuitive, but a smaller number means a larger diameter individual pellet, e.g., number 5 shot is bigger than number 6 shot.

Shotgun naming conventions are also especially bewildering, so don't worry about the details too much right now. Just know that 12 gauge and 20 gauge shotguns are by far the most common and both are excellent choices for hunters. We'll discuss both 12 and 20 gauge shotguns in more detail later in this book.

12 & 20 Gauge Shotgun

20 Gauge Shell

12 Gauge Shells



Overview: A 12 gauge shotgun (white and red shells in the photo) is larger and generally more powerful than a 20 gauge (yellow shell in the photo). However, a 20 gauge shotgun is still very effective and often has quite a bit less recoil than a 12 gauge shotgun. There's a tremendous amount of overlap in the capabilities of 12 and 20 gauge shotguns, but 12 gauge shotguns are generally considered to be better choices for larger and/or tougher species of game like geese and turkey.

Caliber: .615" (20 Gauge) & .725" (12 Gauge)

Good For Hunting: Small Game, Waterfowl, Deer, & Feral Hogs

Comments: Shotguns have their limitations, but they can be extremely versatile. Indeed, it's quite often possible to hunt an incredibly wide variety of game with a single shotgun just by changing the exact load used. Size 7 1/2 or 8 shot is great for quail and dove, size 6 shot is good for rabbit, grouse, and squirrel, size 5 shot is nice for hunting pheasant, and size 4, 5, or 6 shot are all well-suited for turkey. Waterfowl like ducks and geese generally require even bigger 2 or 1 size shot. Instead of standard 2 3/4" shells, many hunters also use 3" or 3 1/2" magnum 12 gauge shells for hunting waterfowl (especially geese). Likewise, number 4 buckshot, 00 buckshot, and slugs are all quite effective on big game like deer.

Hunting Ammunition Recommendations:

[Federal Speed Shok Waterfowl 12 Gauge 3" #2 Shot](#) (Waterfowl)

[Remington Slugger 12 Gauge Rifled Slug](#) (Deer, Hogs)

[Winchester Super X 12 Gauge Buckshot](#) (Deer, Hogs)

[Winchester Super X 20 Gauge 7 1/2 Shot](#) (Small Game)

Learn More About Hunting Guns

We've talked a lot about some of the best cartridges and gauges for various hunting situations in this E-Book. While selecting the appropriate cartridge is extremely important, that's just one step in choosing the best firearm set-up for a hunt, not the entire process.

Far too many hunters obsess about choosing the right cartridge, but go afield with rifles, sighting systems, and ammunition wildly inappropriate for the sort of hunting they're doing. The rifle, cartridge, scope, and ammo are all essential elements in getting properly outfitted for a hunt and must work properly in concert with each other for success.

Make no mistake: a miss or a wounded and lost animal are the most likely results if you use the wrong rifle, cartridge, sighting system, and/or ammunition on a hunt. Don't be that guy who misses out on the buck or bull of a lifetime because you were using the wrong rifle set-up.

In fact, you owe it to yourself and to the game you're hunting to use the absolute best tool for the job.

Would you like to learn more about choosing the best rifle set-up for the sort of hunting you do?

You've probably noticed how hard it can be to find reliable information on that topic though. Just like with cartridges, the hunting world is full of trolls and shills singing the praises of some rifles and trashing others. In fact, far too many of the mainstream hunting resources out there are provide information that's inadequate (at best) , or (at worst) detrimental to your odds of success.

Don't you wish there was something better?

Well there is: the Hunting Guns 101 training.

In the Hunting Guns 101 training, I'll show you my proven method for determining what sort of performance you need from your rifle on a particular hunt and I'll show you how to sort through all the confusing techno-babble and marketing jargon out there to prioritize the correct rifle, sighting system, and ammunition characteristics to deliver that performance you need.

The end result is that you'll use the absolute best tool for the hunts you're planning that will improve your odds of success afield.

This training will work regardless of whether you're hunting whitetail deer on the back 40, traveling to another state to hunt elk, flying to Africa to go on safari, or have some other hunt planned. Nowhere else will you find such a comprehensive, easy to digest, and unbiased resource for learning how to choose the best hunting rifle set-up.

If that sounds appealing to you, [click here to add Hunting Guns 101 directly to your cart](#).

Or, [click here to read more about the Hunting Guns 101 in-home training package](#).

-John McAdams