

Getting Permission to Hunt on Private Land

Getting access to a quality hunting spot is one of the hardest parts of deer hunting, especially for a novice who doesn't own land. Though there are a large number of public hunting areas across Indiana, a choice spot to which only a few of people have access is something that most hunters strive for. Access to someone's land is a privilege that can be difficult to earn and should be respected. Traditionally, hunters have visited door-to-door to ask permission for hunting access on private land. Use the following guidelines to plan your visit to a landowner's door step and improve your chances of gaining permission.

Making the Request

1. Once you locate a property, it is acceptable to simply knock on the door and ask directly. You also may be able to get contact information from your county government office.
2. Keep in mind that it is unlikely you'll be successful on your first attempt. Be prepared to visit several landowners before you find someone willing to grant access.
3. Make a good first impression. While you may not need to dress as if you were interviewing for a job, it's not a good idea to introduce yourself in hunting attire, as if you are assuming the landowner will give you permission right away. Convey courtesy in your appearance as well as your words.
4. Make your request well in advance of hunting season. Not only are you likely to be ahead of other hunters in asking permission, but the landowner won't feel that you have rushed him or her to make a decision right away.
5. It might be a good idea to ask for permission to hunt small game first, like squirrels or rabbits. These animals can be a nuisance to landowners and you might be doing them a favor. Use this as an opportunity to demonstrate that you can hunt responsibly. They may be more likely to allow you to hunt large game once you've earned their trust.
6. Provide a business card or your contact information on a piece of paper. Include your name, phone number and a description of your hunting vehicle. Whether they say yes or no, if they change their mind they will know how to find you.
7. Always be respectful, regardless of the landowner's decision. Your impression could impact your opportunity to hunt on neighboring properties, and for future generations to hunt in the area. Do not expect or request an explanation for a rejection and always thank the landowner for his or her time.
8. Make your request alone, without your hunting partner(s) in tow. It is best not to approach someone's home as a "gang." Come by yourself but mention if you intend on hunting with others. Be prepared to give the landowner information about your hunting partners and whether they intend to visit the property on their own.

9. Indiana's [Hunters Helping Farmers program](#) allows farm owners who have an overabundance of deer on their property to connect to hunters looking for access. There may be a landowner signed up in your area.
10. If you are unable to gain access to private land this year, there are still plenty of available hunting opportunities across the state. There are over 670,000 acres of public land that is managed for wildlife and accessible to the general public for hunting. Use the [Indiana Public Hunting Areas Map](#) to find public land near you.

Once You Get Permission

1. Stay on the property where you have permission to hunt. Trespassing can be a real issue if owners of the neighboring property are uncomfortable with hunting or have had issues with disrespectful hunters. If the exact property boundaries are unclear, ask the landowner to mark them or obtain a map of nearby parcels. If you own a smart phone with access to GPS, there are several hunting apps available that show property boundaries with respect to your location.
2. Let the landowner know when you plan to be there and where you'll be, as well as what species you intend to hunt.
3. Leave the property how you found it, if not better. Pick up litter, even if it isn't yours. Pack your spent shells and any other trash. Leave gates how you found them. Avoid leaving ruts in the mud with your vehicle.
4. Alert the landowner if you see anything suspicious or damaged on their property. If you see excessive trash, mention it to the owner, as it might indicate that someone is accessing the property without permission.
5. Don't shoot near or towards any occupied buildings.
6. Get explicit permission from the landowner before you make any alterations to the environment such as cutting shooting lanes or installing tree stands.
7. Maintain a good relationship with the landowner by showing gratitude. It is common for hunters to give the landowner some of their harvest or assist them with property maintenance. Other small offerings such as gift certificates to local restaurants are appropriate.
8. Hunt on private property at your own risk. Under Indiana law IC 34-31-9, a landowner cannot be held responsible for any injury or death resulting from the inherent risks of hunting activities on their land.
9. Be courteous and give the landowner a reason to invite you back next year. Remember, the impression you leave will not be just of you, but of hunters and hunting culture in general. Be an ambassador.