

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO GAME SHOOTING

New to Game Shooting? Or do you perhaps need to brush up on your shooting etiquette?

Alternatively, you may simply need to update yourself on the legal side of shooting or need a refresher, because you've been out of the sport for a while.

Well, the aim of this **Beginners Guide To Game Shooting** is to equip you with everything that you need to know, so that you can enjoy all aspects of your shooting.

Below are four engaging chapters to help you along:

Chapter 1: <i>Game Shooting in the UK - Pheasant, Partridge or Grouse</i>	Chapter 2: <i>Game Shooting Season in the UK</i>
Chapter 3: <i>Game Shooting Laws</i>	Chapter 4: <i>Shooting Etiquette - What should I wear?</i>

Getting the right shooting gear!

Before going any further, it's worthy of note that wearing and using the right shooting gear is both important and necessary, if you are going to enjoy your activities.

To help you with this, you can shop for our range of shooting clothing, footwear and accessories. Our range includes top quality products from many leading brands such as [Percussion](#), [Hoggs of Fife](#) and [Grisport](#), to name a few.



So, what really is Game Shooting?

With the increase in demand for game shooting activity in the UK, certainly over the last decade, more and more novices are researching into the sport. Experts write that that this is an accessible country sport that offers fantastic benefits to the environment, whilst making a great contribution to local economies.

Thousands upon thousands of visitors from overseas countries visit the UK every year to enjoy the countryside and the conditions that the UK can offer for game shooting.

Traditionally, game shooting involved groups of sportsmen walking over rough ground with their [gun dogs](#), basically taking whatever was presented. This was deemed leisurely but with regard to shooting activity it didn't really result in much action. Today, game shooting has become more of a sport and is now probably better organised and managed than it ever has been before.

Driven game shoot -v- Rough game shooting

There are two ways to get involved in game shooting in the UK. These are referred to as driven shooting and rough shooting. Basically, the driven method is more formal than the rough method.

Driven game shooting

This method of shooting is considered formal and is organised therefore on formal shooting ground. The main features of this type of shooting are:

- a team of shooters (also known as 'guns') are lined up in a well organised spot called pegs, to wait for the game to fly. At the beginning of the day, shooters will be allocated a peg number
- gamekeepers will arrange for [beaters](#) and their dogs to move through the woodland (or covert) to flush out the game in the direction of the shooters
- the main aim of the beaters is to get the game birds to fly out high and fast over the guns to create difficult and challenging sporting shots
- driven game shooting is usually confined to pheasants, partridge and grouse
- usually events will be held on large traditional estate grounds
- due to the scale and preparation involved with the organisation of such an event, tickets to shoot are likely to be expensive

Rough game shooting

This is the most common form of shooting in the UK and is also known as 'walked-up' shooting. At these events, shooters will have well trained gun dogs that run into hedgerows and woods to flush out game. [Spaniels](#) and [labradors](#) are the most common breed of dogs that are used for this type of shooting. These gun dogs will also retrieve the shot game.

As there is very little planning and management needed for rough shooting, this is a fairly inexpensive way to shoot. In addition, virtually all quarry species can be walked up.

Success

To be successful at rough game shooting
you will need:



- countryside knowledge
- hunting skills
- trained gun dogs
- good health and flexibility



A good knowledge of the countryside is needed to take advantage of the right angles and views of the quarry, as they fly out of the woodland. Plus, understanding the thicket (a dense group of trees and bushes) in which game can hide will make your shooting day more successful.

Assessing your own fitness and good health is important, (maybe check with your GP before any strenuous activity) due to the amount of walking and quick movement that is needed to shoot the flying quarry. However, training up (or borrowing) an obedient gun dog will reduce the amount of walking needed to flush the quarry and to retrieve shot birds.

Syndicate Shooting

Syndicate shooting is best described as a group of shooters (guns) renting sporting rights from a landowner. The 'guns' organise and manage the shoot themselves. Typically there are two types of syndicates:

1. Groups of professionals or perhaps those in business who employ a gamekeeper. The expectation will be to shoot 200 to 300 birds a day. Such syndicates may shoot once a week.
2. DIY syndicates who shoot on local farm land (with the permission of the landowner, of course). These 'guns' arrange their own game-keeping and may shoot 50 birds a day. Such syndicates may shoot once a fortnight.

What are the benefits of Game Shooting?

Experts indicate that there are many benefits derived from game shooting. Some experts discuss aspects such as the perceived health benefits of eating game meat, whilst others focus on different benefits such as the ones that follow:

- the whole 'experience' of attending a sporting event and being part of a group
- physical exercise
- the thrill of the hunt
- enjoyment of being outdoors in the countryside
- meeting new people and socialising
- testing your skills against other shooters
- working with gun dogs
- the satisfaction of providing food for your table
- re-engaging with the countryside, especially if you live and work in a town or a city
- de-stressing yourself from business or work life, or other pressures

Game Shooting and the impact on Conservation

In the UK, game shooting is considered a major resource when promoting bio-diversity within the countryside. Bio-diversity includes the process of cataloguing a variety of species within a certain area. Species such as white tailed deer and hares along with plants such as sunflowers are monitored, with details recorded to help keep track of the variety of outdoor life.

How does game shooting help conservation?

The [Green Shoots Mapping and Bag](#) recording website has been designed by British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) to provide a quick and easy tool to map wildlife within shooting sites. This tool can be used by shoot organisers to map out their shooting land and to identify what species are found on their land.

Game shooting helps towards conservation and bio-diversity by:

- identifying, planning and promoting conservation projects
- ensuring responsible shooting through a [Code of Good Shooting Practice](#)
- landscaping management to benefit native species such as plants, butterflies and birds
- pests and predator control
- supplemental feed to help in the breeding of farmland songbirds

The Value of Shooting in the UK



74,000 full time jobs created



UK shooters spend £2.5 billion each year on goods & services



Shooting is worth £2 billion to the UK economy



600,000 people in UK shoot live quarry, clay pigeon or targets



Shoot providers spend nearly £250 million a year on conservation

Image: The Value of Game Shooting in the UK on employment, economy and conservation

Hopefully the information above will have helped to set the scene for you. Now you can go on to enjoy the chapters that follow!

Chapter 1: GAME SHOOTING IN THE UK - PHEASANT, PARTRIDGE OR GROUSE

What really is game shooting in the UK?

Well, what do you prefer? Perhaps pheasant, partridge or grouse shooting?

Basically, these are the three types of wild game that are available to shoot within the UK. According to the Game Act 1831, 'game' includes hares, pheasants, partridges, grouse, moor game (such as red grouse, ptarmigan) and black grouse.

So, in today's shooting circles, game shooting mainly refers to the pursuit of pheasant, partridge and grouse.

In this guide we look at the characteristics and habits of pheasants, partridge and grouse and how they differ.

Game Shooting in the UK

In the United Kingdom, the most popular game shooting activity involves pheasant shooting. It's worth noting that the UK shooting season starts in October and runs until the end of February, (January for Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man) Recent statistics show that this sport contributes up to £32 million pounds to the economy.

In 2015, [The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds \(RSPB\)](#) stated that pheasant and partridge shooting provides benefits to the wildlife. The organisation claims that good shooting practice, as set out by BASC, does "*provide beneficial habitat management for wildlife*". It is suggested that this, in turn, can increase the population of some game birds.

Pheasants

Pheasants are part of the Phasianidae family which are described as heavy, ground living birds. Phasianidae birds include partridge, jungle fowl, chickens, old world quail and peafowl.

The common pheasant is a large chicken like bird that lives on the ground. These birds forage on the ground in fields eating waste grain, seeds and insects. Pheasants tend to run and walk around but will fly when they feel they are in danger from other predators or humans.

There are over 29 different breeds of pheasants in the world. The map below identifies the different types of pheasants and where they can be found in the world:

29 Breeds of pheasants and where they can be found in the world

 Green Pheasant Japan	 Edwards Pheasant Vietnam	 Siamese Fireback Thailand	 Cheer Pheasant India, Nepal	 Copper Pheasant Japan	 Golden Pheasant China, UK	 Lady Amherst's China	 Bronze Tailed Peacock - Indonesia	 Mountain Peacock Malay				
 Blood Pheasant Himalayas	 Vietnamese Pheasant	 Bulwer's Pheasant Southeast Asia	 Reeves Pheasant China									
 Koklass Pheasant Afghanistan/Nepal	 Swinhoe's Pheasant Indonesia	 White Eared China	 Elliots Pheasant South-Eastern China									
 Kalij Pheasant Himalayas	 Salvadori's Pheasant Indonesia	 Tibetan Eared Tibet	 Mrs Humes Pheasant Burma, India									
 Silver Pheasant Southeast Asia	 Crestless Fireback Singapore	 Brown Eared China	 Mikado Pheasant Taiwan									
 Imperial Pheasant Vietnam	 Crested Fireback Borneo	 Blue Eared China	 Common Pheasant UK, Asia									

29 BREEDS OF PHEASANTS & Where They Can Be Found in the World

Both cock and hen pheasants are shot during the season. Both males and females have fairly long legs, a small head, a long neck and a fairly plump body. So, how can we differentiate between the two? The table below should help:

Cock Pheasants (males)
characteristics:

- bright colours
- wattle
- bold white ring-necked
- showy birds with a red face and iridescent green neck
- usually larger than females
- longer tail than females
- tail is a coppery colour with thin black bars
- don't rear young pheasants
- make a loud cackling sound
- average weight 2 to 3 pounds



Hen pheasants (females)
characteristics:

- short tail
- smaller than male
- tail is brown with paler scaling
- cinnamon colouring with brown scaling on the belly
- lays between 8 and 12 eggs per clutch
- average weight is 2 pounds



The common pheasant are usually found on agricultural, land especially on recently harvested fields, looking for seeds and worms. They tend to hide from predators in taller vegetation, hedgerows and bushy areas.

Pheasants are fairly predictable birds and therefore shooting them is easier than other game birds. Having the right shooting technique and skill is essential when dealing with high flying pheasants.

As you become more skilled you will, of course, become more successful. When this happens it may be useful to explore some [perfect pheasant recipes](#) to give you some inspiration!

Partridge

Partridge is another favourite game bird to shoot in the UK. This medium-sized non-migratory game bird is popular throughout Europe, Asia and also some parts of Africa. These birds are often reared on game farms and then released for the purpose of hunting.

There are over 50 different breeds of partridge in the world, including the mountain bamboo partridge found in Bangladesh and the Hainan partridge found on the Hainan Island of China. However, in the UK, the most popular species of partridge for shooting are grey partridges and red-legged partridges.

Grey Partridge

The grey partridge, a beautifully coloured bird, has declined in numbers over recent years and, as a result, in 2015 this bird was placed on the "Birds of Conservation Concern" Red list. They are now considered at risk.

To help to increase numbers, the [Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust](#) have created a plan to reduce the amount and spread of pesticides on agricultural land. This will help certain types of weeds and insects to thrive creating food for young and adult grey partridge. The grey partridge is usually found on the edge of cereal fields where they can have constant access to seeds.

Grey partridge characteristics:

- a medium sized game bird
- fairly plump birds
- distinctive orange face
- a chestnut tail
- mainly a ground-bird but occasionally glides
- hens lay approx 20 eggs
- it builds ground nests
- young birds live on insects until 10 days old
- adult birds live on seeds and leaves
- not as popular in Northern Ireland
- seen all year round



Grey Partridge



Red-Legged Partridge

Red-legged partridge

The red-legged partridge is slightly larger than the grey partridge. Its distinctive colouring of a large white chin and throat patch, with a black border, makes these birds easy to spot. The red-legged partridge is most commonly seen in Spain and France but has recently been introduced to the UK from Europe.

Red-legged partridges prefer to run away from predators rather than fly, but if necessary they will fly short distances.

This game bird is bred for shooting and for the sale of meat.

Reg-legged partridge characteristics:

- usually seen in groups
- eats seed and roots
- the young eat insects
- seen all year round
- a fairly round game bird
- grey breast and buff belly
- red legs
- lays eggs in ground nests
- thrives on dry, sandy soil
- breeds in hot temperatures

A good technique is needed if you are to be successful at shooting partridge. They can be deceiving and are less predictable than pheasants.

Grouse



Capercaillie



Black Grouse



Red Grouse



Ptarmigan

A grouse is similar to a partridge in its appearance. This is due to its rounded body it's short yet broad wings and its small head.

These medium to large sized game birds are generally found in heather, rushy areas, rough grass and woodland edges. There are several different breeds of grouse which include Black Grouse, Capercaillie, Ptarmigan and Red Grouse.

Under the "Birds of Conservation Concern" listings, the grouse is currently at an amber status, due to a decline in numbers. It is suggested that this is linked to disease and loss of heather moorland.

Grouse characteristics:

- found in upland heather moors
- seen all year round
- eat heather, seeds, berries and insects
- weighs between 0.3 to 6.5kg
- males are larger than females
- feathered legs

Ptarmigan characteristics:

- slightly larger than grey partridges
- found on the highest mountains of highlands of Scotland
- seen all year round
- eats shoots, leaves, leaf buds, berries and insects

Red grouse characteristics:

- medium sized game birds
- plump bodies with a short tail
- measure between 33 and 38cms
- legs and feet are covered in feathers
- reddish-brown in colour
- males have a red eyebrow wattle
- they are feisty birds that compete for an area of moorland
- females nest in bilberry bushes and heather for protection and camouflage

Capercaillie characteristics:

- the largest of the grouse family
- usually found in Scotland
- numbers are depleting
- male weighs up to 4kgs and has chocolate coloured back and wings, a metallic green breast, white markings on the wings and crimson markings above the eyes
- females are smaller than males, they sit on eggs and are usually a shade of dark and reddish-brown blend with chestnut breast which is flecked with white
- they eat buds, shoots, seeds and berries

Black grouse characteristics:

- almost extinct in many areas of the UK
- currently on the "red list"
- are also known as black game

All being well, what you have read above has been of some interest to you. If so, now please continue with your next chapter.

Chapter 2: GAME SHOOTING SEASON IN THE UK

If you are looking for the **Game Shooting Season dates** and locations for the UK, then look no further!

This guide also outlines when it is okay, legally, to shoot pheasant, partridge and other game in Wales, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man.

First of all, something to be aware of. According to the [Game Act 1831](#), any person who shall kill or take any game (including hare, pheasants, partridge, grouse) or use any dogs, gun, net or any other instrument to kill game on a Sunday or Christmas Day will be convicted under the [Criminal Law Act 1977](#).

It is also a criminal offence under the [Criminal Justice Act 1982](#) to pursue any game outside of their shooting season. If you are seen shooting game outside of the season, you will be convicted and, as part of your punishment, you will have to pay a sum of money for every head of game killed.

The Game Shooting Season

The table below outlines the Gamebird and Waterfowl shooting season, according to location:

Species	England and Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Isle of Man
Pheasant	Oct 1 – Feb 1	Oct 1 – Feb 1	Oct 1 – Jan 31	Oct 1 – Jan 31
Grey Partridge	Sep 1 – Feb 1	Sep 1 – Feb 1	Sep 1- Jan 31	Protected (ban in force)
Red-legged Partridge	Sep 1 – Feb 1	Sep 1 – Feb 1	Sep 1- Jan 31	Sep 13 – Jan 31
Red Grouse	Aug 12 – Dec 10	Aug 12 – Dec 10	Aug 12 – Nov 30	Aug 25 – Oct 31 *

Black Grouse	Aug 20 – Dec 10 (Somerset, Devon and New Forest: Sep 1 – Dec 10)	Aug 20 – Dec 10	—	—
Ptarmigan	—	Aug 12 – Dec 10	—	—
Duck & Goose inland	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Sep 1 – Jan 31 – Ducks July 1 – Mar 31 – Geese**
Duck & Goose below HWM (see below)	Sep 1 – Feb 20	Sep 1 – Feb 20	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Sep 1 – Jan 31- Ducks July 1 – Mar 31 – Geese**
Common Snipe	Aug 12 – Jan 31	Aug 12 – Jan 31	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Sep 1 – Jan 31
Jack Snipe	Protected	Protected	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Protected
Woodcock	Oct 1 – Jan 31	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Oct 1 – Jan 31	Oct 1 – Jan 31
Golden Plover	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Protected
Coot/Moorhen	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Sep 1 – Jan 31	Protected	Protected

* MHW-Mean high water

You should note too, that there are restrictions on shooting in the Channel Islands. For more information please visit the [BASC shooting season](#) website.

Destroying or Injuring Game

The law states that any person found to have used poison or a poisonous ingredient on the ground, where game can usually be seen, will be convicted under the Criminal Justice Act 1982 and will pay a sum of money for every head of game killed.

Above are (hopefully) some useful pointers but it's always worth asking or checking out anything that you may be unsure of. Best to be safe rather than sorry!

You can now move on to your next chapter!

Chapter 3: GAME SHOOTING LAWS

In today's society, extra vigilance and care is necessary, which is why it is important to be up to date with **game shooting laws**.

You have probably heard the famous saying 'where there's a blame there's a claim', so be careful that you don't fall into this trap and are blamed for not taking care when out game shooting.

Without the appropriate duty of care and attention you may possibly end up with a big problem on your hands!

This chapter has been split into a number of sections for easy access:

1. [Shotgun Certificate](#)
2. [Shotgun Exemptions](#)
3. [Age restrictions](#)
4. [Shotgun safety](#)
5. [Shooting Season](#)

To start with, a very important point is that if you are invited to a shoot on private land, then the occupier has a duty of care to ensure that you are safe whilst you are on their land.

Let's Get You Started!

The main legal acts that you need to be aware of are:

Firearms Licensing Law 2016
Highways Act 1980
Health and Safety at Work At 1974

Game Shooting Laws Introduced

It goes without saying that, as a shooter, the laws that govern you must be adhered to. Further, the [Code of Good Shooting Practice](#) sets out the standards - and provides advice - to ensure that shooting is conducted in the right way and that best practice is followed.

The laws that govern you will depend upon your location. Northern Ireland has its own firearm laws, and similarly there are certain differences in law between England, Wales and Scotland that you have to look out for. (For example, the dates of the legal shooting season)

What you are allowed to shoot - and when - will vary too, depending upon your location. Therefore, if you intend to shoot outside of an organised event, you really should check seek advice about any specific laws that may impact upon you. For more specific advice and guidance about this, you can contact [The British Association for Shooting and Conservation \(BASC\)](#). BASC's dedicated firearms team will be able to offer you specific and up to date advice, relating to your own location.

In addition, if you'd like more information about specific firearms laws and safety, there is a useful guide by the Home Office entitled "[Collection Firearms](#)" which was last updated on the 6th July 2016.

Interestingly, since 1st August 2007, there has not been a requirement to hold a game licence to kill game in England and Wales (BASC). However, a game licence is necessary if you are shooting in the Isle of Man. (The requirement for a game licence in Northern Ireland has been abolished since 2001)

Although a general licence is not necessary, a game shooter is advised to seek out and study the information that is available (about licences in general) for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, by checking out the [BASC](#) website.

Shotgun

A shot gun is described by the firearms licensing law as:

“a smooth-bore gun (not being an air gun) which has a barrel not less than 24" in length and does not have any barrel with a bore exceeding 2 inches in diameter”

Naturally this is important, so for more information and further details about the definition of a shotgun, please do visit [Guidance on Firearms Licensing Law](#).

Useful definitions:

Firearm: a lethal barrelled weapon of any description, from which any form of ammunition can be fired

Ammunition: shot, bullet or missile

Shotgun Certificate

A shotgun certificate is necessary if you intend to buy or acquire a firearm or shotgun. Also, a shotgun certificate will be needed to buy ammunition.

Once a certificate has been granted, it is valid for 5 years.

To apply for a shotgun certificate you will need to complete a shotgun certificate application form from the firearms licensing unit of your local police force. To contact your local force please visit the [Police Force](#) website.

As part of this process, you will receive a visit from a police officer at your home to clarify certain safety requirements. Below is a list of what the police officer will be looking for when checking your suitability for a shotgun certificate:

- where the shotgun will be stored – it is good practice to buy a shotgun cabinet
- a list of existing shotguns and firearms in possession - and how they are stored
- to see the land where the shotgun will be used on
- to check if you have permission to shoot on the land
- to check if you have any previous convictions including motoring offences, cautions and bind overs
- to see if you have any specific health questions
- to ascertain the reason why you want a gun and to ensure that you will not endanger the peace or public safety

To complete your application you will also need to obtain 4 photos of yourself, such as a passport photo, and details of a person who has agreed to be a referee. The referee must be resident in Great Britain, have known you for a minimum of 2 years and must be of good character. Unfortunately, a family member cannot be used, neither can serving police officers, police support staff or registered firearms dealers.

Shotgun Exemptions

There are a number of exemptions that apply whereby a certificate is not needed to use a shotgun. Under the Firearms Act 1968 exemptions can be grouped into two sections:

1. Possession, purchase and acquisition
2. Possession only

Possession, purchase and acquisition

The first example of an exemption relates to any person who possesses, purchases or acquires firearms in the ordinary course of a business. (e.g. dealers and their servants, such as employees) However, a dealer or their servant who possess firearms unrelated or unconnected to the business must then have a firearms certificate/shotgun certificate

Secondly, visitors to Great Britain must complete a visitors' permit to enter Great Britain. This permit will allow them to possess a firearm or shotgun, to purchase or acquire ammunition and shotguns whilst in Great Britain. For more information visitors' rights please visit section 6.15 of the Firearms Act 1968.

Possession only

A chief officer of police may, in some circumstances, issue a permit authorising an individual to possess a shotgun or firearms without a certificate. For example, possession permit for a relative or the executor of a deceased person which forms part of the estate.

An individual may borrow a shotgun from the occupier of private premises and use it on those premises but only in the occupiers presence.

A person over the age of 17 may borrow a rifle from the occupier of private premises and use it on the private premises in the occupiers or servants' presence.

Shotgun age restrictions

In order to own and possess a shotgun you must be 18 years old or older. There are however a number of circumstances where young people can use a shotgun with restrictions. These circumstances are listed below:

Young persons and firearms law

	Under 18	Under 17	Under 15	Under 14
Purchase any firearm or ammunition	No	No	No	No
Receive shotgun as a gift	Yes	Yes	No	No
Possess assembled shotgun	Yes	Yes	No*	No*
Receive firearms certificate	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

**Under 15 and 14's can possess an assembled shotgun if under the supervision of someone 21 years or over - and on private land.*

Shotgun Safety

Below are other factors to consider when using and storing a shotgun:

- Never leave a shotgun unattended or unsupervised
- The use of lead shots are prohibited in certain areas

If transporting a shotgun, make sure that the following are observed:

- Your vehicle is locked
- The shotgun out of sight
- your gun should ideally have a trigger lock or cable
- Consider removing the gun's fore-end and keep this with you at all times

There are various reasons why the police may take your shotgun certificate away from you. It's also important to be aware that many of these reasons may result in a criminal offence too! So, it's worth spending time finding out how you can avoid these situations.

It's a certainty then that care needs to be taken! Below are some other ways in which you could lose your shotgun certificate. (which, remember, could also be considered a criminal offence) These include:

1. Trespassing with firearms (such as entering a building as a trespasser with a firearm, without a reasonable reason)
2. Having previous convictions of crime
3. Firing an air weapon beyond the boundaries of private land

Shooting Season

During the shooting season, and when at your own location, you can shoot certain species of game birds, quarry birds or waterfowl within the law.

However, there are restrictions that you must be aware of when shooting certain species. For example, you can't shoot some waterfowl above a high water line. By ignoring or not being up to date with shooting restrictions you may be fined or jailed, especially if it is considered that you have been hunting illegally and/or causing unnecessary suffering to animals!

Do remember that shooting birds outside of the official shooting season is illegal. A shooting season helps to ensure certain species breed successfully. For more information and specific dates check out our Shooting Season chapter [here](#).

Again, it's always worthwhile making further enquiries about anything you feel unsure about. You can always contact your nearest police station or an organisation such as BASC to clarify key points.

The next chapter will now discuss shooting etiquette- Enjoy!

Chapter 4: SHOOTING ETIQUETTE - WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

Following shooting etiquette from the outset will ensure you enjoy your whole experience!

In this chapter, we focus upon essential items of shooting clothing and suitable footwear. We'll also explore some interesting items that you might find useful to take with you when attending game shooting events.

Of course, starting out with a new hobby can be expensive - and game shooting is no different!

Game Shooting Etiquette

When choosing your shooting clothing, you'll need to think about how formal - or informal - the events you'll be attending will be.

If you've been invited to a formal event, it's best to clarify with the organiser what the expectations are with regard to etiquette. There may, for example, be guidance on specific colours or fabrics such as tweed clothing. However, safety and comfort should always be the main priority.

1. Sturdy shooting boots

A tough pair of sturdy leather shooting boots with plenty of ankle support is recommended. Wellington boots can be worn, but there is generally a lack of ankle and foot support with these that renders them unsuitable for use on uneven ground.

When thinking about buying a pair of shooting boots, remember to take into account how waterproof they will be and to what degree they are 'breathable'. Remember that you might be standing on damp wet ground for long periods of time or walking through long grass from time to time, so deep sole units are essential!

We have put together an infographic guide for a 'first-time shooter', which covers what you should be looking for when buying a pair of shooting boots. We hope you find it useful!



SHOOTING BOOTS CHECKLIST

CONSTRUCTION

A waterproof and breathable membrane is essential for keeping your feet dry and comfortable all day. Our recommended membranes include Sympatex and Spo-Tex

ANKLE SUPPORT

For uneven ground and difficult terrain such as heather, wear boots that offer plenty of ankle support.

BELLOWED TONGUE

A stitched bellowed tongue will prevent water and debris from entering the boot.



DURABLE SOLE UNIT

For difficult slippery and rough ground choose boots that have plenty of grip such as a Vibram sole.

THICKNESS OF SOLE UNIT

Extra chunky sole units will keep dampness out especially when standing in one spot for long periods of time. A thicker sole unit will protect your toes when walking through undergrowth.

MATERIAL

Choose the material carefully. Leather is recommended due to its strength and tear resistance. Fabric boots are more likely to snag and tear when walking through brambles and twigs.

2. Shirt



When attending events, wearing a traditional [check shirt](#) (usually green or brown checks) is highly recommended. Such a formal check shirt, along with a suitable tie, is usually expected at formal driven events. A patterned [silk tie with game birds](#) on it or, if you prefer, a plain silk tie may be worn as both are deemed acceptable. Wearing a shirt and tie such as these is considered a sign of respect towards the quarry and to the people who invited you to the event.

If attending a grouse shoot, darker colours are better to avoid being spotted by the quarry.

As you would imagine, there are many different colours and styles of check shirts available. These range from bold, bright colours to more subtle checks and are available in either 100% cotton or a polyester cotton mix. Of course, there are many benefits when wearing 100% cotton shirts. Cotton absorbs sweat very easily, therefore drawing moisture away from the skin. Cotton is also very soft and is a stretchy fabric, making it extremely comfortable to wear. However, there are some disadvantages to wearing cotton. Firstly, cotton will shrink and therefore it is recommended that you buy one size bigger and then wash the item before wearing it. Also be aware that cotton can wrinkle very easily, but it really is perfect material to wear under a shooting vest or gilet!

A polyester cotton mix check shirt is also a common shirt to wear at an event. Usually with a ratio of 65% cotton to 35% polyester, this mix offers the wearer the benefits of cotton but also the added benefits that polyester offers. What's good is that polyester is a man-made, strong fibre that will not wrinkle and will not shrink! As polyester is a synthetic fibre, the air will be trapped in the fabric, making it uncomfortable to wear during Summer months.

3. Tie

A tie can be optional at some shoots but wearing one is considered essential at formal events. Shooting ties are available in various fabrics and styles. The most popular fabric for a [country tie](#) is silk, which is simply a perfect fabric for providing radiant and rich colours. Plus, silk encourages a tie to sit smoothly on your shirt! These ties are available in plain colours or can be patterned. Many patterned ties sport game birds on them which are beautifully printed and are definitely worth considering. The downside to silk ties however, is that they are difficult to keep clean. A spill or stain will be very difficult to remove.

Having said that, silk shooting ties offer a classic formal feel and really are perfect for all seasons!

4. Breeks and Trousers

If you are to attend a formal shooting event, then there often is an expectation that you will wear tweed breeks or trousers. [Tweed breeks](#), also known as plus twos, or plus fours, are a traditional attire, usually worn with long knitted socks up to the knee.

Tweed is preferred due to its style and durability. It is a rough-surfaced woollen cloth material that is usually handwoven with traditionally mixed bright colours. Tweed clothing is an icon of British country clothing as it is able to deal with harsh climates. There are many different types of tweed fabrics available, with the most popular being Harris Tweed and Donegal Tweed. However, tweed fabric can be difficult to maintain and keep clean, which is why many manufacturers now coat the fabric with a protected solution called Teflon. This also means that any spills or stains on these Teflon coated garments will now be easy to brush or wipe off.



So, usually, tweed breeks and trousers are worn for formal events. For less formal shooting events however, many people prefer to wear moleskin trousers. Moleskin is a heavy cotton fabric that is extremely comfortable to wear and it is called moleskin as the texture feels similar to the skin of a mole. It's true to say that Moleskin trousers are very popular all year round. Due to the weight and construction of the fabric, moleskin trousers are truly great for retaining heat and are therefore simply ideal for those cold winter months! Interestingly, the high cotton content makes this fabric breathable, which is why they are also great for summer months too!

Moleskin fabric is very durable and hard wearing, which is why shooters really do like to wear moleskin trousers.

5. Socks and Stockings

If wearing breeks (or plus twos or plus fours) then long knitted stockings/socks up to the knee will be necessary. In addition, to prevent the stockings/socks from falling down, garters are usually worn.

There are many different styles of shooting sock available including cable and knitted stockings. Cable stockings include a cable stitch up the side of the socks, whilst knitted stockings offer great comfort and warmth. Both styles feature a knitted terry turnover top!

On those colder shooting days, it is an idea to wear two pairs of socks. Silk liner socks offer extra warmth without having bulk. Silk fabric is a lightweight fibre that has natural thermal properties. This is a natural fibre which will draw moisture from your feet, keeping them dryer and warmer all day. Alternatively, try a tactel liner sock such as [1000mile tactel liner](#). These socks will really grip your foot, reducing friction and, as a result, will prevent blisters from forming.

6. Hat

Another decision you'll need to make is which hat to wear. A traditional choice is a tweed flat cap! Tweed fabrics offer great warmth and comfort, especially when lined with satin. It's worth knowing that many shooting hats come complete with a waterproof and breathable inner lining for extra protection. Alternatively what about a baseball cap or beanie hat? Many baseball caps come with ear flap protectors for windy shoot days, or perhaps you might think that a waterproof beanie is more suitable. Whatever you prefer, remember to choose an appropriate colour such as green, black or brown.

7. Jacket or Coat

If you're attending a winter shoot, then a warm waterproof and breathable coat will be needed. During late summer or early autumn months perhaps a jacket may be more suitable than a coat.

A coat is longer than a jacket and offers more warmth. Another key difference is that usually a coat will go down to your thighs but a jacket will only go down to your waist.

Often, and traditionally, a tweed jacket is made from soft country colours such as browns and greens. There are many benefits to wearing tweed, including:

- outstanding warmth
- it will stand the test of time
- it is durable

Many tweed shooting jackets available today are protected with a teflon coating. Do remember that tweed, if wet or dirty can be very difficult to clean! A teflon coating provides a clear barrier that allows water, mud and dirt to easily be wiped off!

If tweed is not for you, don't despair! There are many other waterproof and breathable shooting coats and jackets that may be more suitable, which are made from polyester. Polyester jackets are easier to maintain and these are generally cheaper than [tweed jackets](#).

Raglan Sleeve

A useful [shooting jacket will have a number of features](#), including various sized pockets and a waterproof and breathable membrane.

When choosing a jacket or coat, the style of sleeve should be an important issue. Many jackets and coats will feature either what is called a 'set in' sleeve, and others a 'raglan' sleeve. A raglan sleeve is most commonly found on sports clothing as well as jackets, as it allows more freedom of movement. The sleeve is made from one continuous piece of fabric from the nape of the neck to the underarm, in turn creating more space for movement and ideal for wearing extra bulky garments under the jacket. Many traditional tweed jackets are designed with a raglan sleeve.



Set in Sleeve

If you're looking for a longer coat with a raglan sleeve, then a [long wax coat](#) may be suitable. This style of coat will offer great protection in the most extreme weather, whilst allowing you to continue to shoot.

A set-in sleeve is generally chosen because these types of coats offer a more professional and formal appearance. They are often used for mingling at formal events. The location of the seam on a 'set in' sleeve may restrict arm movement, hence making it difficult to move your arms up and down in a smooth motion. So, whilst these coats are not always the best item to wear for actual shooting activity, they do look really good when socialising at an event!



When buying a shooting jacket make sure you have plenty of space to move your arms smoothly and also make sure the pockets are big enough to hold all of your cartridges.

8. Shooting Waistcoat

During warmer shooting days, a [shooting waistcoat](#) or vest is preferred rather than a jacket. At formal shoots however, many game keepers will prefer that you wear a three piece suit which includes a matching jacket, waistcoat and trousers/breeks. It is always a good idea to contact the game keeper, prior to the shoot, to fully establish what their requirements might be.

As you might imagine, there are many different types of shooting waistcoats available, including tweed teflon coated waistcoats, polyester vests and fleece gilets. If you're considering buying a shooting waistcoat from a 'bricks and mortar' shop (rather than online) do remember to take your existing shooting jacket with you, so that you can try it on over your prospective waistcoat, to ensure comfort.

Wearing a shooting waistcoat with a cotton or nylon inner layer, will allow better slide and therefore better movement.

9. Belt or Braces

Most shooters will wear a belt or braces which, put simply, are worn to prevent your trousers or breeks from falling down! Nobody wants that! If you prefer to wear braces, buy braces with strong metal clips that will clasp securely to your trousers. There are many different styles of [shooting braces](#) available, from colourful and plain to country themed! Alternatively, you can buy braces with button and leather ends.

10. Bag

[Shooting bags](#) is a very useful piece of equipment to carry extra shotgun cartridges, snacks and waterproofs. During driven shoots, you can leave the bag in your car ready for when needed.

11. Stick

A stick or hiking staff ([beating stick](#)) is a practical tool to help navigate yourself through muddy ground, undergrowth, or simply to help you take the strain when walking up and down difficult terrain.

12. Ear Protection

Ear (or hearing) protectors will offer you essential protection to your ears! There are different protectors available including disposable ear plugs, digital headphones or moulded plugs. Digital headphones are perfect for colder months as they offer extra warmth, but unfortunately they can be too warm during warmer days. Disposable or moulded plugs would be more suitable on these days.

13. Thermals or Baselayers

Wearing layers whilst on an informal shoot will allow you to remove and add layers when and as the weather changes! Microfleeces are lightweight and warm but don't add extra bulk and are perfect for wearing under a shooting waistcoat or jacket.

Do remember that if you are attending formal shoots, to some degree, you are restricted to what you can wear. So, for extra warmth, you will need to wear baselayers which are worn against the skin, underneath your check shirt, along with long johns worn under your trousers. When buying base layers, do consider choosing thermal t-shirts that are designed with a raglan sleeve, as this will give you more freedom of movement. Remember, it is useful to choose [Baselayers](#) or thermal underwear to wear, such as long johns, because these will draw moisture away from your skin, keeping your body warmer for longer.

14. Gloves

It's important to protect your hands whilst shooting with a pair of good quality [shooting gloves](#). Warmth and fit are the key features to consider when looking to buy shooting gloves. Fleece gloves offer great warmth but be sure to buy fleece gloves with a leather or synthetic palm/fingers, for that extra grip! Leather and neoprene gloves will however give a better tight fitting but may need a thermal liner for extra warmth.

Well ladies and gentlemen, as you can see we consider the 14 items above to be essential! However, there are some extra items that we think you may need to take along with you to shoots. These include the following:

- *Waterproof Over Trousers* - depending on the weather, they are always handy, so it's good to keep a pair in your shooting bag
- *A spare Waterproof Coat* - be prepared for extreme weathers!
- *Towelling Scarf or Neckgaiter* - to protect your neck from those harsh, windy conditions
- *A towel* - to wipe down your shotgun when it's raining and to dry off your hands when sweaty
- *Insect Repellent* - to deter midges and other insects, especially during humid conditions
- *Indoor Shoes* - for your 'after shoot' meal or drinks
- *A cartridge Belt* - to carry - and have quick access to - extra shotgun cartridges
- *Leg Gaiters*
- *Shatterproof Sunglasses*
- *Cash (for meals/to give Tips, etc)*

We do hope that you have found this guide to be helpful. If you have any views, or if you would like to contact us with any queries or questions, we will be delighted to hear from you!

Thank you - and we wish the very best of times outdoors, pursuing your activities!

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