



## Elk Hunting Gear List

Complete Backcountry Archery Elk Setup — HuntingGrowth Approved

This is a gear system built and refined through years of Western backcountry elk hunting. Every item earns its weight. Use this as a pre-hunt checklist and as a guide when building your own system. Fill in your own gear and brand in the "My Gear / Brand" column.

### ARCHERY SYSTEM

■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	Compound Bow	Your bow	Minimum 60 lb draw; properly tuned and set up
■	Arrows (field tips + broadheads)	Quality carbon arrows	Practice with same weight you will hunt with
■	Fixed-blade or mechanical broadheads	Your preferred head	Shoot your broadheads before season — always
■	Arrow rest	Drop-away or whisker biscuit	Tested; no adjustments in the field
■	Bow sight (multi-pin or single)	Your sight	Know your pins to 60+ yards; practice awkward positions
■	Peep sight + D-loop	D-loop preferred	Inspect for wear before every trip out
■	Stabilizer	Light / hunting length	Reduces vibration; keep compact for terrain
■	Release aid (wrist or handheld)	Your release	Always pack a backup release
■	Quiver (bow or hip mount)	Your choice	Silent, secure, with arrow protection
■	Hard bow case (for travel)	TSA approved	Protect your bow; required if flying
■	Extra nocks, inserts, fletching	Matching your arrows	Minor repairs can save a hunt
■	Allen wrench / multi-tool kit	Compact	Minor field adjustments when needed
■	Archery target (for camp practice)	Rinehart or Block	Tune in at elevation; conditions change your form

### PACK SYSTEM & FRAME

■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	Hunting pack (4,000+ cu in)	Kifaru / Mystery Ranch / Stone Glacier	Fits 5'10" torso; built for heavy meat loads; Kifaru packs are among the most
■	Day / attack pack	Lightweight 20–30L	For final approach away from base camp
■	Pack rain cover or liner	Matching your pack	Keep gear dry; contractor bag inside as backup
■	Trekking poles (collapsible)	Carbon preferred	Saves your knees; doubles as shelter support
■	Dry bags / stuff sacks	Sea to Summit or similar	Organize by category: sleep, clothing, food, first aid

### SHELTER & SLEEP SYSTEM



■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	Tent or bivy	Lightweight, 4-season rated	Match shelter to your coldest expected overnight temp
■	Sleeping bag	15–25 deg F rated	Down or synthetic; compress for pack weight
■	Sleeping pad (insulated)	Thermarest NeoAir or similar	R-value 4+ for September mountain temps
■	Tarp / emergency bivy	Silnylon or Mylar	Backup shelter; minimal weight penalty
■	Pillow (compressible)	Ultralight foam or inflatable	Small luxury that improves daily recovery

## CLOTHING SYSTEM

*Build a layering system, not a pile of clothes. Base layer, mid layer, insulation, shell.*

■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	Merino wool base layer top	Sitka / Kuiu / First Lite	Anti-microbial; regulates temp; ideal early season
■	Merino or synthetic base layer bottom	Matching system	Lightweight; wicks moisture from skin
■	Mid-layer fleece or softshell	Sitka Jetstream or similar	Quietest layer; worn most while moving
■	Insulated puffy jacket (packable)	Down preferred	Best warmth-to-weight; keep it dry
■	Rain jacket (lightweight)	Gore-Tex or similar	Packable; essential for afternoon storms
■	Rain pants	Lightweight, packable	For storms or pushing through wet brush
■	Hunting pants (quiet fabric)	Kuiu Kutana / Sitka Intercept / Born	Quiet stretch fabric is critical for close encounters. Kuiu Kutana offers ex
■	Hunting shirt / layering shirt	Camo; breathable	Fits over base; works as a mid-layer
■	Merino socks — 2 to 3 pairs	Darn Tough or Smartwool	Change daily; your feet are your vehicle
■	Gaiters	Low or mid height	Keeps debris and moisture out of your boots
■	Hunting boots (fully broken in)	Kenetrek / Crispi / Schnee's	Most important decision; break in fully before season
■	Camp shoes / sandals	Crocs or Chacos	Give feet a break; prevents trench foot
■	Warm hat (insulated)	Wool or fleece	Heat escapes your head — always pack one
■	Sun hat / ball cap	Camo; breathable	Long glassing days require face and eye protection
■	Gloves — liner + insulated pair	Layered glove system	September cold snaps happen; be ready
■	Leukotape / gaiter tape	Leukotape preferred	Tape your heels before every hunt — no exceptions
■	Buff / neck gaiter	Merino or synthetic	Sun protection, cold, and dust in equal measure

## OPTICS & NAVIGATION



■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	Binoculars	10x42 recommended	Your single most important tool in open elk country
■	Rangefinder	1,000 yard capable	Know the exact distance before you draw — always
■	Spotting scope + tripod	Optional; for open country	Worth the weight when glassing big terrain
■	Phone with OnX Hunt or FarOut	OnX Hunt preferred	Download offline maps before leaving cell service
■	Dedicated GPS / satellite communication	Garmin inReach Mini 2	Backup nav + two-way messaging + SOS capability
■	Topographic map (paper backup)	USGS topo	Never rely solely on electronics in the backcountry
■	Compass	Quality baseplate	Know how to use it without a phone battery

## MEAT CARE & PACK OUT

■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	Game bags — 4 large + 1 small	Caribou Gear or Seek Outside	Breathable; protect meat from flies and dirt
■	Fixed-blade knife	Quality steel; 4"+ blade	Skinning, quartering, and caping
■	Replaceable blade knife	Outdoor Edge or Havalon	Sharp blade every cut; carry 10+ extra blades
■	Bone saw	Outdoor Edge Griz Saw	Lightweight; handles pelvic bowl and chest cuts
■	Nitrile gloves	Pack 6+ pairs	Hygiene and warmth during field dressing
■	Paracord / cord — 50+ feet	Z-line or paracord	Hang meat, camp rigging, emergency use
■	Hanging straps + carabiners	Webbing system	Hang meat off the ground to cool
■	Large cooler (for truck)	100+ quart	Waiting at the trailhead; get meat on ice fast
■	Ice / dry ice plan	Know your nearest supplier	Research before you leave home — not after

## SAFETY, FIRST AID & SURVIVAL

■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	Satellite communicator	Garmin inReach Mini 2	Two-way messaging; SOS; this is non-negotiable
■	First aid kit (trauma capable)	SAM Splint + Israeli bandage	Know how to use everything in your kit
■	Fire starting kit	Lighter + matches + firestarter	Multiple redundant methods; waterproof everything
■	Emergency whistle	Fox 40 or similar	Louder than your voice; carry on your person
■	Headlamp + extra batteries	Petzl or Black Diamond	You will hike in the dark — count on it
■	Backup flashlight	Small LED	Electronics fail; redundancy saves hunts



■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	Emergency space blanket	Heavy-duty mylar	Compact; can save your life if temps drop fast
■	Water filter	Sawyer Squeeze or MSR Trail Shot	Treat all backcountry water — no exceptions
■	Water bottles / hydration bladder	3–4L capacity total	Hydration is a direct performance multiplier
■	Pain relief / anti-inflammatory	Ibuprofen preferred	Mountains are hard on joints and feet — expect it
■	Blister kit	Leukotape + moleskin	Address hot spots immediately; never wait
■	Sunscreen + SPF lip balm	SPF 30+ minimum	Elevation amplifies UV exposure significantly
■	Bear spray (grizzly country)	UDAP or Counter Assault	Carry it, know how to use it, within reach at all times
■	Emergency plan (written + shared)	Left with trusted contact	Someone at home knows where you are and when to call

## CAMP GEAR & NUTRITION

■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	Stove + fuel canister	Jetboil or MSR PocketRocket	Hot meals and coffee restore morale and recovery
■	Cookpot (titanium)	700–1,000ml	Light; multi-use for food and boiling water
■	Utensil	Titanium spork	Leave extra weight at home — every ounce matters
■	Freeze-dried / calorie-dense food	Mountain House or Backpacker's Pantry	3,000–4,000 calories/day minimum; don't undereat
■	Caffeine source	Instant coffee or caffeine tabs	Pre-dawn starts demand fuel — plan for it
■	Electrolyte packets	Nuun or Liquid IV	Altitude + exertion = fast dehydration
■	Water purification tablets	Aquamira or Potable Aqua	Backup to filter; ultralight insurance
■	Bear canister or hang system	Required in some areas	Know regulations for your unit before you go
■	Trash bags	Pack it in; pack it out	Leave elk country better than you found it
■	Hand warmers	HeatMax or similar	Cold glassing sessions and pre-dawn starts
■	Duct tape (small roll)	Wrapped around water bottle	Fixes nearly everything in a pinch
■	Zip ties — assorted sizes	Pack 10+ minimum	Gear repairs; quiver mounts; pack buckles

## ELK CALLING SETUP

■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	Bugle tube	Carlton's or Phelps	Learn to locate and challenge bulls; practice year-round
■	Cow calls — diaphragm (3–5)	Assorted pitches	Most important call; practice until it feels natural



■	ITEM	MY GEAR / BRAND	NOTES / WHY IT MATTERS
■	External cow call (backup)	Primos or Carlton's	Wind, cold, or fatigue — always have a backup
■	Call lanyard	Keep calls organized	Silence matters; no rattling or jingling
■	Calling instruction resource	Video / podcast / mentor	Study elk language all year — not just September

### PACK WEIGHT PHILOSOPHY

Backcountry base camp setup (shelter, sleep, food, clothing, bow): Target 40–55 lbs loaded. Day/attack pack for final approach: 20–30 lbs. Know your gear. Test your gear. Trust your gear. Gear failures end hunts. Preparation wins them.

For current gear reviews and recommendations: [huntinggrowth.com](http://huntinggrowth.com)