



# Arizona Elk Application Guide

Nonresident Step-by-Step Application Walkthrough — Bonus Points | Hybrid Draw (20% Max-Point + 80% Weighted Random)

This guide covers everything a nonresident archery elk hunter needs to apply in Arizona. Verify all deadlines and fees at the official state agency website before applying.

## HUNTER INFORMATION

Your Name	_____	State Account / Username	_____
Application Year	_____	Points Currently Held	_____
Preferred Unit / Region	_____	Backup Unit / Region	_____

## KEY DATES

MILESTONE	TYPICAL WINDOW	YOUR DATE	NOTES
Application Opens	January 2026		Set calendar reminder now
Application Deadline	February 3, 2026 at 11:59 PM Arizona Time		DO NOT miss this deadline
Draw Results	Late February / Early March 2026 (approx. Feb 23)		Check email and state portal
License / Payment Due	After draw results		Pay promptly or forfeit tag
Archery Season Opens	Early–Mid September		Confirm year-specific dates

## POINT SYSTEM — HYBRID BONUS POINT SYSTEM — LONG-TERM GAME

Arizona uses a HYBRID BONUS POINT system with two draw passes. PASS 1 (Bonus Point Pass): Up to 20% of tags go to applicants with the HIGHEST bonus point totals. PASS 2 (Weighted Random): Remaining 80% of tags distributed via weighted random draw — each bonus point = additional entries. Formula:  $(points + 1)^2$  determines your "weight." NEW APPLICANTS CAN STILL DRAW — even with zero points. Every year, people draw premium units out of the random pass. NONRESIDENT CAP: 10% of total tags per hunt code. This cap can be reached in Pass 1, leaving zero NR tags for Pass 2. Research which units hit the NR cap early. LOYALTY BONUS: Apply for five consecutive years = earn a lifetime bonus point for that species. EXTRA BONUS POINT: Complete the in-person Arizona Hunter Education course (+1 permanent point, \$300 NR). Point creep is real — most quality units jump roughly 1+ point per year. Top units (9, 10, 23) require 20–28+ NR bonus points. Mid-tier units: 7–15 points. Late archery and late rifle hunts often draw at 5–10 points for nonresidents.

*Strategy tip: Buy your \$160 license at the very END of the application window (Feb 2–3) so it covers the following year's application as well — it is valid for 365 days, not calendar year. This saves \$160 every two years. Apply for antelope as an add-on for just \$15 more since you already bought the license. List the harder-to-draw unit as your first choice in the random pass — that's where the real odds improvement happens.*

## COST SUMMARY



ITEM	COST (APPROX.)	PAID?	DATE PAID
Hunting License	~\$160 (nonresident hunting/fishing combination — valid 365 days)		
Elk Tag / Permit	Varies by unit — \$400–\$600+ for most nonresident elk tags		
Application Fee	\$15 per species (nonresident, non-refundable)		
Archery Permit (if required)	Varies by state		
Conservation / Habitat Stamp	Varies by state		
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED</b>	~\$575–\$800+ if drawn		

### APPLICATION STEP-BY-STEP

#### Step 1: Purchase Your Arizona License

Buy a nonresident hunting/fishing combination license (\$160) at azgfd.com. Strategy: Buy on February 2–3 so the 365-day license covers next year's application window too.

#### Step 2: Log In to the AZGFD Draw Portal

Go to azgfd.com and access the Draw Application Portal. Create or log into your account.

#### Step 3: Select Elk Application

Choose elk from the species list. The application window for elk is January–February 3, 2026.

#### Step 4: Enter Up to Five Unit Choices

Arizona allows up to 5 choices. First and second choices count in both draw passes. Choices 3–5 are only relevant for any leftover tags. 1st: \_\_\_\_\_ 2nd: \_\_\_\_\_ 3rd: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Step 5: Add Antelope (Optional)

For just \$15 more, add an antelope application while you already have the license. Easy additional opportunity.

#### Step 6: Pay \$15 Application Fee Per Species

The \$15 application fee per species is non-refundable. If you draw, the tag cost is automatically charged.

#### Step 7: Submit by Deadline

Deadline: February 3, 2026 at 11:59 PM Arizona Time. Arizona does not observe DST — double-check your timezone. Screenshot your confirmation.

#### Step 8: Check Draw Results

Results typically released late February (historically around February 23). Check the AZGFD portal. If you don't draw, your bonus point is automatically applied for next year.

### UNIT RESEARCH NOTES



Trophy archery units: 23N, 3A–3C, 1, 9 — require 20–29+ NR points. Mid-tier archery: Unit 5A, 5B, 4B — draw at 10–16 NR points. Late rifle: Unit 23 (Nov 27–Dec 3) requires 21–22 NR points. Unit 5A late rifle: 7–8 NR points — one of the most accessible mid-quality hunts. "Opportunity" hunts (cow elk, certain antlerless): 4–5 NR points — great for meat in the freezer. New 2026 changes: Unit 5B adds early rifle; Unit 5A adds early muzzleloader. Units 7E/8 early rifle removed; Units 9/27 early rifle added. Check 2026 hunt booklet.

UNIT / REGION	PUBLIC LAND	TROPHY POTENTIAL	TERRAIN	MY NOTES
Units 3A–3C	Moderate–High	Trophy	High elevation / forest	20–24 NR pts early archery
Unit 5A	Moderate	Mid-tier	Mixed terrain	7–8 NR pts late rifle
Unit 5B	Moderate	Mid-tier	Mixed terrain	New early rifle 2026
Unit 23 / 23N	High	Trophy	East AZ mountains	21–27+ NR pts; elite bulls
Opportunity units	Moderate	Moderate	Varies	Cow/antlerless; 4–5 pts

### SEASON DATES (CONFIRM ANNUALLY)

Early archery: September 11–24, 2026 (varies by unit — confirm). Rut archery / October archery: September 25 – October 1 (select units). Early muzzleloader: September (varies by unit — some units alternate rifle/ML each year). Early rifle: September (select units only — check 2026 hunt booklet). Late rifle: November 27 – December 3, 2026 (most late rifle units). Cow / antlerless: September through December across multiple weapon types. Confirm all dates and weapon types for each specific unit at azgfd.com.

### STRATEGY NOTES & REMINDERS

Arizona is the long game for trophy bulls — start building points now. Even with zero points, you have a real chance every year in the random pass. For first-time applicants, target late archery or late rifle hunts in mid-tier units — these draw at 5–10 points and produce quality bulls. Use the license-timing strategy (buy at end of window for 365-day coverage). Add antelope to your application for just \$15 more — no reason not to. Track which units hit the NR 10% cap in Pass 1 — those units leave nothing for you in Pass 2. GoHunt has the best Arizona draw odds breakdown available. Apply at azgfd.com.

### MY NOTES

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**Always verify current regulations at the official state agency website. Use GoHunt and OnX Hunt for research. More at [huntinggrowth.com](http://huntinggrowth.com)**