

Shotgunning

August 14, 2017

There is plenty to consider when hunting with a shotgun. And, since it *is* a shotgun, you don't need to concern yourself with the myriad of issues associated with long range shots, sniping, or the ballistic calculator stuff. All you really need to know is:

1. What will you be hunting?
2. What gauge shotgun is being used?

Shotgun shell manufacturers have taken just about all of the guesswork out of the shotgun shell purchase, but that still leaves plenty to consider when it comes to reloading. Here's some useful information as it pertains to shot size, prey, and barrel choke.

Shot Sizes

In a nut shell, the smaller the number, the bigger the shot... here's a picture for us visual learners.

Shot Sizes															
U.S. STANDARD DESIGNATIONS															
SHOT SIZES															
Shot Number	12	9	8	7½	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	B	BB	BBB	T
Diameter (in.)	.05	.08	.09	.095	.10	.11	.12	.13	.14	.15	.16	.17	.18	.19	.20
Number of Lead Pellets per Ounce	2,385	585	410	350	300	225	170	135	n/a	90	n/a	n/a	50	n/a	n/a
Number of Steel Pellets per Ounce	n/a	n/a	577	490	420	317	243	192	154	125	103	86	72	61	53
BUCKSHOT SIZES															
Shot Number	4	3	1	0	00	000									
Diameter (in.)	.24	.25	.30	.32	.33	.36	<i>Shot size can be adjusted for the game being hunted. As pellet diameter decreases, more shot can be placed in a standard shotshell load. The smaller the shot number, the larger the shot size.</i>								
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Which Shell, Gauge, and Load?

Well, it really depends on what you're hunting. I prefer shotguns so I'll stick to that. Here's another image for the folks like me that like visuals instead of some schmuck droning on.












	SHELL	GAUGE	LOAD
PHEASANTS 	2 3/4 inch	12 gauge	1 1/4 ounces of No. 6 shot (lead), 1,300 fps 1 1/8 ounces of No. 3 shot (steel), 1,500 fps
DUCKS 	3 inch	12 gauge	1 1/4 ounces of No. 2 shot (steel), 1,450 fps
GEESE 	3 inch	12 gauge	1 1/2 ounces of No. 4 HEVI-Shot (tungsten-iron), 1,400 fps
TURKEYS 	3 inch 3 inch	12 gauge 20 gauge	1 3/4 ounces of No. 6 HEVI-Shot (tungsten-iron) 1 1/4-1 1/2 ounces of No. 6 Heavyweight or HEVI-Shot (tungsten-iron), 1,100 fps
DOVES 	2 3/4 inch 2 3/4 inch 2 3/4 inch	12 gauge 12 gauge 20 gauge	1 ounce of No. 7 shot (steel), 1,300 fps 1 1/8 ounces of No. 7 1/2 or No. 8 shot (lead), 1,180 fps 7/8 ounce of No. 8 shot (lead), 1,200 fps
QUAIL 	2 3/4 inch	20 gauge	7/8 ounce of No. 8 shot (lead), 1,200 fps
RUFFED GROUSE 	2 3/4 inch	20 gauge	7/8 ounce of No. 7 1/2 shot (lead), 1,200 fps
WOODCOCK 	2 3/4 -inch	28 gauge	3/4 ounce of No. 8 shot (lead), 1,200 fps
DEER (RIFLED BARREL) 	2 3/4 inch	20 gauge	Sabot slug with premium bullet, 1,500-1,600 fps
DEER (SMOOTHBORE) 	2 3/4 inch	12 gauge	1-ounce slug, wad attached, 1,600 fps
PRACTICE 	2 3/4 inch	12 gauge reloads	7/8 ounce of No. 8 1/2 shot (lead), 1,200 fps

Image from Accessible Hunter

Shotgun Chokes

A choke in your shotgun can be beneficial depending on what you're doing and how good your aim is. As the image below explains...

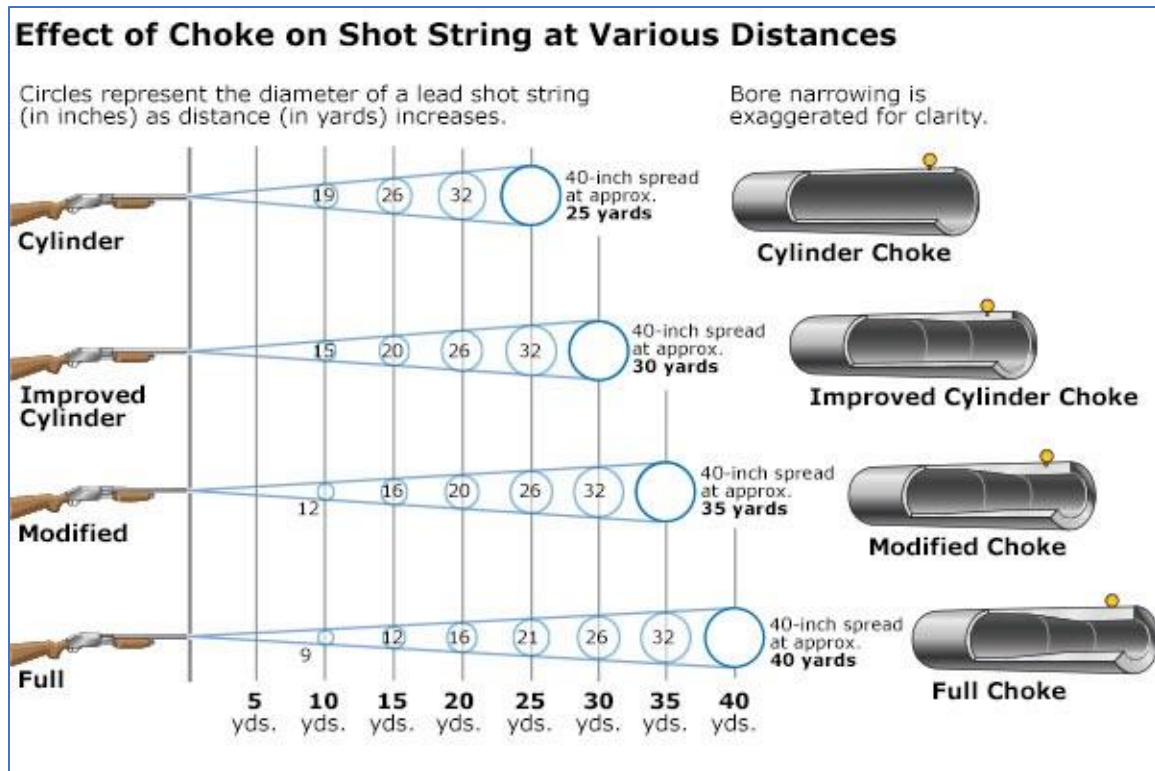


Image from Bass Pro Shops

I prefer to use a full choke for two reasons. 1.) I'm a pretty good shot, and 2.) I like a nice tight pattern for the longest amount of distance. Duck and geese don't always fly right over your blind ten to twenty yards off the deck! Ever try and hit a wood duck as it's zig zagging it's way through a cypress swamp? Without a full choke, you're more likely to scar a tree or take off a tree limb from repeated misses than you are to put enough shot into the duck and bring it down. Also, bird dogs, especially young impetuous bird dogs, don't always wait for the handler to give the command to flush the pheasant, dove, or quail. Thus, the ability to accurately make the long range shot with a tight pattern is a necessity for a successful hunt.