

OUTDOOR SAFETY TIPS

Bear Encounters

Bears prefer to avoid people whenever possible, but both black bears and grizzly bears are powerful wild animals and may defend themselves when surprised or feeling threatened. Deliberate attacks on people are very rare. **Always base how you respond in any bear encounter on the bear's behavior, not the species.**



A standing bear is not being aggressive. The bear is trying to get a better look and smell so it can figure out if you are a threat and identify an escape route.

DEFENSIVE BEAR BEHAVIOR — Bears often behave defensively when surprised, feeling cornered or protecting their food or cubs. Their blustery behavior is meant to warn you to stay away. It seems scary, but it's a sign of stress, not an impending attack.

Surprising a bear at close range is both the most common cause of incidents that result in injuries *and the most avoidable*.

CURIOUS BEAR BEHAVIOR — Young bears testing their boundaries or looking for food sometimes boldly approach people on trails or in camp, and may even swat at you.

PREDATORY BEAR BEHAVIOR — True predatory behavior is both very rare and very different from the behavior of a nervous defensive bear. The bear won't bluster, vocalize, charge or try to intimidate you. It will be calm and purposeful, methodically approaching or silently circling or following you with ears erect.

See Next Page for How to Respond



BearWise® Safety Tips

Carry bear spray and know how to use it.



Hike with others (3 or more in grizzly country).

Stay alert and stay together.

Make noise frequently. Clap hands, talk loudly, use a whistle. Be extra alert when conditions make it hard to hear or limit visibility.



Stay on designated trails.

Bears know people use trails and generally avoid them during the day. Going off trail increases your chances of an encounter.

Never run from a bear.

Never climb a tree.

Never approach bears.

Never feed bears.



Keep a Bear Sighting from Turning Into an Encounter

If you see a bear that is not aware of you, do not approach.
Enjoy this special moment, then move away quietly; do not run.

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Black Bear

American black bears live throughout North America, from Alaska and Canada to Mexico.



Learn More: BearWise.org

Grizzly bears live in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, Alaska and Canada.



Grizzly Bear

How To Respond to a Bear Encounter

DEFENSIVE BEAR BEHAVIOR

BEAR BEHAVIOR	YOUR RESPONSE
Sees you, changes behavior, stands up	This is normal bear behavior. If you stand still and do not run, you could prevent a defensive response by the bear. If bear resumes previous behavior, quietly back away.
Huffs, moans, clacks jaws, swats at the ground, ears laid back	Don't run. Group together. Stand your ground, but don't be aggressive. Talk firmly to the bear. Slowly wave your arms. Get bear spray ready.
Moves towards you	Stand your ground. Keep talking. Be ready to use bear spray.
Keeps approaching / charges	Use bear spray when the bear is within 30 feet.
Makes physical contact	PLAY DEAD. Fall to the ground face down, protect your head. When contact stops, lie still. Count to 500 so the bear knows you are not a threat and leaves the area.

CURIOUS BEAR BEHAVIOR

BEAR BEHAVIOR	YOUR RESPONSE
Openly approaches you	Don't run. Stand your ground. Group together. Yell, throw objects (not food). Use bear spray when the bear is within 30 feet.
Makes physical contact	FIGHT BACK aggressively with anything available.

PREDATORY BEAR BEHAVIOR

BEAR BEHAVIOR	YOUR RESPONSE
Slowly, deliberately and quietly moves closer, circles or follows you; ears erect or forward	Behave aggressively. Don't run. Face the bear. Group together. Shout, throw rocks or objects (not food) at the bear. Use bear spray when the bear is within 30 feet.
Makes physical contact	FIGHT BACK aggressively with anything available.

Surprise Bear Encounters at Close Range



If the bear has cubs, a food source or no clear escape route, backing away slowly may convince the bear you are not a threat. **If the bear makes physical contact with you, PLAY DEAD.**

Bear Encounters in Camp



If a bear comes into camp, don't approach it. Group together. Yell, make noise, throw objects (not food) to scare it away. **If a bear enters your tent, FIGHT BACK** with anything available.

Be BearWise® Outdoors. Bear Spray Saves Lives.



How To Use Bear Spray

1. Release safety clip.
2. Hold bear deterrent spray with both hands.
3. Aim downward toward the bear's face.
4. Spray a short burst (2-3 seconds) when the bear is 30 feet away.
5. If the bear keeps approaching, spray again.

CARRY BEAR SPRAY & KNOW HOW TO USE IT

BEAR SPRAY BASICS

- **Buy only canisters** labeled for **BEARS**.
- **No sharing.** Carry your own canister.
- **Carry bear spray in the same place every time.**
- **Use a holster/harness carrier** so you can quickly grab your canister.
- **Practice** grabbing your bear spray and removing safety clip before every hike.
- **NEVER pre-spray anything.** Bear spray is a deterrent, not a repellent.
- **Store safely** in a cool, dry place (never in a vehicle).
- **Check expiration date.** Shelf life is 3 to 4 years.



Learn More:
BearWise.org

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