



# SHOTSHELLS

## Pick the Right Load... Not Just Any Load



Today's shotgunners have plenty of choices when it comes to choosing an ideal shotshell load. Whether you're hunting whitetail deer, busting clay targets or flushing ringneck pheasant, research and practice means heading afield with confidence. Here's a guide to choosing the 'right' shotshell load.



▲ Shotgun slugs like the Winchester Supreme Rackmaster (left) and Supreme Elite XP<sup>3</sup> Sabot are ideal choices for whitetail deer hunters.

### WHITETAIL

In the shotgun slug arena, you have two basic choices—standard rifled slugs, and sabot slugs. Sabot slugs wrap the slug in a plastic sabot, which helps increase accuracy and range. Generally speaking, sabot slugs are the best choice for longer-distance shooting when shots will extend past 75 yards, and when employed in specialized slug guns featuring a rifled barrel. Slug loads, like the Supreme Elite Winchester XP<sup>3</sup> or Supreme Rackmaster are two recent additions to the Winchester slug line that provide hard-hitting knockdown power and precision accuracy. The Winchester XP<sup>3</sup> slug is intended only for rifled barrels, whereas the Rackmaster slug can be used in either a rifled barrel or smoothbore barrel.

Standard rifled slugs perform best when ranges are shorter and are used in smoothbore shotguns. Using hollow-point slugs, like Winchester Super-X Rifled Slugs, increases shocking power. Modern shotshells offer sportsmen, women and youth a large selection of high-performance loads designed for a specific task.

Finally, in areas where buckshot is still popular, a buffered load of unplated pellets ranging in size from 000 to No. 3 is recommended.

Take some time and understand your options, sight in your shotgun, and find out which load patterns best. You owe it to yourself, and especially to whatever game you pursue.



▲ Pattern a variety of Winchester loads before turkey hunting. Winchester Supreme Elite Xtended Range loads are denser than lead and produce consistent patterns.

Choices. Every hunter and shooter, whether you're new to the game or a seasoned veteran, has to make choices. What shotshell you decide to load in your shotgun can be as simple or difficult a process as you'd like to make it. With many loads to choose from and for a variety of purposes, it's important spend time understanding shotshell performance on paper, at the range, AND in the field. A combination of all three brings success.

While clay target shooters have a need for specialty loads in competition, similarly, hunters spend their time choosing the ideal shotshell load that will perform in the field. Each shotshell category, wild turkey, waterfowl, upland bird and whitetail have a product line that is suitable for hunters in most any situation. Non-toxic steel-shot loads that meet federal requirements for hunting waterfowl and upland birds, high-density turkey loads, and high-tech rifled slugs for increased range and power are just a few examples of shotshells that hunters pull off the shelves and stuff into their pockets each year.

And what's even better yet, many of these different loads are available in several different gauges, shot sizes and shell lengths, which increase your choices.

In addition to the guidance provided in this article, consider ordering a FREE Winchester Ammunition catalog by calling 1-800-356-2666, ext. 3565, or visit [www.winchester.com](http://www.winchester.com) and download the catalog for the most up-to-date product information.

### WATERFOWL

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, biologists learned that waterfowl could ingest spent lead pellets while feeding in marshes and rivers, and the birds might be exposed to lead poisoning. In the late 1970s steel shot was introduced as an alternative and while other non-toxic shot loads have since been introduced, steel shot remains the most cost-effective and widely-used non-toxic shot for waterfowl and some upland hunting. Steel shot is less dense than lead and therefore loses its downrange velocity and energy faster. Steel shot loads are generally loaded to a higher velocity level to partially compensate for this characteristic. Choose a shot size one or two larger than you would if using lead shot to help offset the density difference. The hardness of steel also helps it keep in a tighter pattern, meaning that more open chokes are recommended for steel than lead. The accompanying table explains this in more detail. Another consideration includes specialty loads like the Winchester Supreme Elite Xtended Range Hi-Density waterfowl loads. The shot in these shells is denser than lead, which makes it harder hitting for deeper penetration, and offers superior performance at longer ranges.

### WILD TURKEY

Wild turkeys should always be shot in the head and neck area, a very small target. For that reason, you need a shotshell that produces the densest pattern possible at ranges between 10 and 40 yards. Magnum 12- and 20-gauge shotshells featuring a denser, heavier payload are the smart choice. In turkey hunting, a combination of pattern density and pellet velocity is needed to successfully take that monster gobbler. Shells that provide consistent patterns and high velocities are ideal.

### PICKING THE RIGHT SHOT SIZE

Game	Shot Size	Choke	Recommended Gauge
Geese	Steel T, BBB, BB, 1, 2	M, IM	10, 12
	XR B, 2, 4	M, IM	12
Ducks	Steel 1, 2, 3, 4, 6	IC, M, IM	10, 12, 20
	XR 2, 4	M, IM	12, 20
Turkey	Lead 4, 5, 6	F, XF	10, 12, 16, 20
	XR 4, 5, 6	F, XF	12, 20
Pheasant	Lead 4, 5, 6, 7.5	IC, M, IM	12, 16, 20
	Steel 4, 6	M, IM	12, 20
Grouse	Lead 5, 6, 7.5, 8	IC, M	12, 16, 20, 28
Partridge	Lead 5, 6, 7.5, 8	IC, M	12, 16, 20, 28
Woodcock	Lead 6, 7.5, 8	IC, M	12, 16, 20, 28
Snipe	Steel 4, 6, 7	IC, M	12, 20
Rail	Steel 4, 6, 7	IC, M	12, 20
Quail	Lead 7.5, 8	IC, M	12, 20, 16, 28, .410
Dove	Lead 7.5, 8	IC, M	12, 16, 20, 28, .410
	Steel 6, 7	IC, M	12, 20
Rabbit	Lead 4, 5, 6, 7.5	IC, M	12, 16, 20, 28, .410
Squirrel	Lead 4, 5, 6	M, IM, F	12, 16, 20, 28, .410

IC = Improved Cylinder • M = Modified • IM = Improved Modified  
F = Full • XF = Extra Full • XR = Xtended Range



◀ Winchester Xpert Steel Hi-Velocity and Super-X Drylok produce ideal patterns on ducks and geese.

Specialty loads like the Supreme Elite Xtended Range Hi-Density turkey loads are ideal for superior performance at longer ranges; and can increase your effective range up to an additional 10 yards. Before turkey hunting, pattern your shotgun with as many different shotshells as you can to find the specific load that produces the tightest and most consistent pattern. Loading up with a round you've patterned on the range provides confidence in the field and is the ethical thing to do as a hunter.

### UPLAND BIRDS

Hunting upland birds in thick, dense cover can mean close range and fast-moving shots. Find yourself shotgunning for birds in open fields, and your shots might be longer. Hunting behind a dog that points, helping you move in close before the flush, or, following a dog trained to flush will also demand different performance characteristics from your upland shotshell. For pheasant hunters who fight tight bramble cover, a combination of an open choke with a smaller shot size will produce the densest pattern, which is ideal. In open crop fields, a tighter choke combined with a shotshell using a larger shot size is the answer. The same is true when hunting other upland birds like grouse, woodcock, quail, and doves. With doves, you might be hunting a feeding field or waterhole where the birds come right to your blind. Or you might be hunting a flyway where pass shooting is the name of the game. Again, different loads are required for a variety of scenarios in the field. Upland hunting can be further complicated when nontoxic (steel) shot is required. Steel loads like Winchester Xpert Upland Game, and Super-X Drylok Super Steel are available in both the shot sizes and different gauges you need to maximize performance.



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