

Age-Old Rules On Posture and Suggestions For Hunting Comfortably From a Tree Stand

When growing up, how often did you hear the scolding words, “Sit up straight! Don’t slouch!”?

Maintaining good posture is one of the many rules and regulations that we tend to heap in the garbage pile of disciplining words, yet behind those words is knowledge. Maybe if mothers would have told their budding young outdoorsmen that super hunters who sit up straight get more Boone and Crockett deer, we would have taken their words to heart.

Not only is this an attention-grabbing statement, but it’s true. Proper posture is extremely important in the tree stand because hunters who practice good posture are able to remain motionless longer. Hunters with bad posture often experience fatigue and pain, which causes the hunter to move more often.

Although 75% of adults suffer from back pain at some point in their lives, the enjoyable sport of hunting shouldn’t be a source of that pain. Sitting motionless up in a tree is not exactly natural or easy, but if we know our bodies and pay special attention to our position in the stand, we can hunt longer and more comfortably.

Good posture is also good prevention. If you have poor posture, your bones are not properly aligned, and your muscles, joints and ligaments take more strain than nature intended. Faulty posture leads to fatigue, muscular strain and inevitably pain. These conditions result in missed shots and dangerous situations up in a tree. In contrast, proper posture helps hunters stay alert, feel confident about their position and ready to take the shot.

According to the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, good posture produces several positive outcomes.

Proper posture...

- aligns bones and joints so that muscles are being used properly.
- decreases the abnormal wearing of joint surfaces that could result in arthritis.
- decreases the stress on the ligaments holding the joints of the spine together.
- prevents the spine from becoming fixed in abnormal positions.
- prevents fatigue because muscles are being used more efficiently, allowing the body to use less energy.
- prevents strain or overuse problems.
- prevents backache and muscular pain.

Once you climb safely into your stand, take your time getting situated. Decide where you need to place your weapon then follow the suggestions below for good posture and a comfortable hunt.

- Hold your head up straight with your chin in. Do not tilt your head forward, backward or sideways.
- Keep your earlobes inline with the middle of your shoulders.
- Hold your shoulder blades back.
- Keep your chest forward.
- Hold your knees straight.
- Stretch the top of your head toward the ceiling.
- Tuck your stomach in. Do not tilt your pelvis forward or backward.
- The arches in your feet should be supported.

A tree trunk is definitely not a good backrest, so consider taking along two cushions -- one to sit on and one to rest your back against. You may also want to consider a rolled-up towel, which can serve as a lumbar support.

If you're sitting in a stand that doesn't have back support, use the following techniques to find your correct sitting posture.

1. Sit up with your back straight and your shoulders back.
2. Make your normal back curves are present while sitting.
3. Distribute your body weight evenly on both hips.
4. Bend your knees at a right angle. Keep your knees even with or slightly higher than your hips. Your legs should not be crossed.
5. Keep your feet flat.

Here's a quick way to find good seating posture in a stand:

--Sit at the end of your seat and slouch completely.

--Draw yourself up and accentuate the curve of your back as far as possible. Hold for a few seconds.

--Release the position slightly (about 10 degrees). This is a good sitting posture

Some stand designs may not allow you to apply all of these rules, but try to follow as many as possible. Even the most minor improvements in posture can lead to a more pleasant and productive hunting experience.

Information compiled from The American Physical Therapy Association and The Cleveland Clinic Foundation.