



How to Keep Bears Away

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Reviewed

Three Methods: [Keeping Bears Away When Hiking](#) [Keeping Bears Away When Camping](#) [Keeping Bears Away From Homes](#)

Sharing a habitat with a bear can be exhilarating and nerve-racking. The best approach to co-exist with bears is to understand that they are driven by natural instincts to find food and shelter and to protect their young. Be attentive, loud and smart with food to keep bears away.

Method
1

Keeping Bears Away When Hiking

- 1 Learn to identify types of bears before you go hiking.** Black bears and grizzly bears require different deterrents. Stay alert and avoid coming between a bear and her cub.
 - A black bear can actually be black, brown or cinnamon colored. They are usually smaller, have pointier ears and don't have a hump.
 - A grizzly bear is brown, blonde or even slightly silver. They have a hump on their back, have a dish shaped face and rounder ears. Full-grown, they are bigger than black bears.^[1]
- 2 Purchase a bear bag in which to store your snacks.** Their sense of smell is extremely acute and they are constantly foraging in the summer and fall months.
- 3 Carry bear spray.** It is a type of pepper spray that creates a 30-foot (9 m) cone of spray. It is only to be used when a bear is charging at you to change its direction.
 - Keep your bear spray within arms reach. Learn where the trigger is in advance.
 - Pull the trigger when the bear is within 40 feet (12 m) of you.
 - Never use bear spray as a preventative measure. It is extremely potent and should not be sprayed on equipment.
- 4 Talk loudly when you are out on a hike.** Grizzly and black bears try to avoid this sound. Bear bells are usually too quiet to keep bears away, but human conversation will do the trick.
 - Don't hike alone in bear country. If you don't want to talk, carry a satellite radio and set it to a talk show.
 - Bears are more likely to approach an individual than a group.
- 5 Don't run if you see a bear on the trail.** Bears run up to 35 mph (56 km/h), far faster than humans. They can also follow you up trees or into water.
- 6 Hike with the wind at your back.** The bear will smell you and keep away. If you haven't hidden your food in an airtight, bear-safe container, it could work to your disadvantage.
- 7 Speak in a loud, low voice and open your arms wide to keep bears away.** Stand your ground and make noise, while avoiding eye contact.
- 8 Understand that the best deterrent is to avoid surprising a bear.** They may stand on their hind legs to get a better look at you, but it's best to be confident and stand your ground.

- If a small black bear attacks you, you may be able to fight back.
- If a grizzly bear attacks you, curl up in the fetal position. Keep your hands laced behind your back. If the bear realizes you are not a threat or dead, it may walk away.
- Remember that bear attacks are rare.^[2]

Method
2**Keeping Bears Away When Camping**

- 1 Keep all your food away from your tent.** It is your job to keep bears from identifying humans as a food source. This is dangerous for humans and may result in the bear being euthanized.
 - This includes toothpaste, lotion and deodorant, which often smell like food.^[3]
- 2 Set your campfire and cooking area at least 100 yards (91 m) from your tents.**^[4] Keep the clothes that you cooked in this far away from your tent.
- 3 Buy a hard-shelled, bear-proof canister to store your food.** This is better than hanging your food in a cloth bag. Eat canned and dried foods to minimize the smell.
- 4 Move to a new site if you see bear droppings.**
- 5 Hang your food bag 10 feet (3 m) above the ground and 10 feet (3.0 m) away from a tree.** You will need a good amount of rope to accomplish this.^[5]
- 6 Bang on pots and pans if you see a bear in the area.** Leave the area if you see a number of bears and it is still daylight. Don't hike out in the dark, or you can risk surprising a bear.

Method
3**Keeping Bears Away From Homes**

- 1 Invest in bear-proof garbage cans.** Although they can cost between \$150 and \$300, the special bear locks will keep you from providing bears with an additional food source. Keep your garbage cans locked inside until garbage day to reduce the odor.
 - One study showed that human trash accounts for 70 percent of human-bear conflicts.^[6]
- 2 Cut down your fruit trees.** They are a food source, and bears may come from up to 60 miles (97 km) away to enjoy them.^[7] If you want to keep fruit trees, pick them before they are ripe or just after they ripen.
 - If your town is near a bear habitat and has a lot of fruit trees, organize an event to encourage people to pick their fruit. Removing the temptation for them to eat off neighbors' trees will also keep them further away from you.
- 3 Remove bird feeders.** Bears are omnivorous and enjoy seeds. Black bears are good at climbing, so hanging them high on your trees does not remove the risk of a food-seeking visit.
 - If you still want to hang bird feeders, keep them at least 10 feet (3.0 m) off the ground and six feet from all trees.
- 4 Clean your barbecue after each use.** The meat drippings at the bottom will be especially attractive.
- 5 Leave a radio talk show on when you are away.** Keep it on in your yard. Bears prefer to steer clear of humans and radio noise can tell them another large animal is in the area.

- 6 Install electric fences around beehives and livestock pens.** Although they will need to be more hungry and desperate to attack these food sources near human habitation, they do pose a risk.
- 7 Use ammonia or bleach (not both together) to clean garbage cans and around your house.** Bears don't like the smell of either of these products. For example, leaving a sturdy container with some diluted ammonia in it around your compost can deter them.
 - Better yet, if you are in a bear habitat, avoid keeping a compost pile altogether.
 - Clean recycling containers extremely well or lock them up inside.
- 8 Don't place pet food outside.** This renewable food source can create "nuisance bears" that return frequently for food. It may also provide a higher chance of smell which would bring the bears toward your belongings.
- 9 Close off the area below decks and porches in the winter.** Bolt and reinforce doors on cabins. Bears occasionally break into summer homes to den, especially when they are sure humans have vacated the area.^[8]

Community Q&A

Will spreading fireplace ashes around my trash cans help to keep bears away?



I sincerely doubt it. We put all our fireplace ash and grill ash/gunk/grease in a pile outside our fence and it was clearly rooted through by bears so it had no effect in repelling them.

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Not Helpful 0 Helpful 2

Do black bears prey on dogs and horses?



It is very unlikely that a bear will go anywhere near a horse. Small dogs you may have to worry about but bigger dogs will likely frighten the bear away.

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Not Helpful 3 Helpful 1

Will the bear try to eat me if I play dead?



Truthfully, it will depend upon the bear or grizzly. If he has eaten human flesh prior, then playing dead is not going to help. Bear spray is the better solution.

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Warnings

- Don't use ammonia balloons to deter bears. Bears can be blinded by ammonia, so balloons filled with ammonia near their food sources are extremely inhumane.
- Do not mix ammonia and bleach. This will create toxic vapors. If cleaning bins, etc., use one or the other, not both together.

Things You'll Need

- Radio
- Bear-proof garbage cans
- Electric fences
- Diluted ammonia/bleach
- Bear-proof canisters
- Bear spray
- Bear bag
- Hiking/camping buddies
- Rope

Sources and Citations

1. http://www.backpacker.com/backpacking_101_how_to_keep_bears_away/nature/12175
2. <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/safety/bears.htm>
3. <http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/outdoor-activities/hiking/how-to-keep-a-bear-out-of-your-tent-while-camping.htm>

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