Europe, Asia, and North America are said to have a "circumpolar" distribution.

We often think of the grizzly bear as a mountain wilderness animal. However, considering the grizzly’s size, power, and wide range of food habits, some biologists argue that grizzlies evolved in open forests and plains. For example, the lack of trees on the prairie for cover or escape could explain the bear’s aggressive behavior. With no place to climb or hide, it had to be aggressive defending itself, its young, and its food sources. Contrast such an evolutionary strategy with black bears that spend more of their time in densely forested areas. It is interesting to note that some brown bear populations in other, forested parts of the world have physical and behavioral characteristics more similar to the American black bear than the grizzly.

**Grizzly or Black?**

There are four main physical differences between black and grizzly bears: body shape, face, claws, and tooth length. The first three characteristics can be observed from a distance. The fourth requires looking at the skull of a bear.

- Adult grizzlies generally have a hump between their front shoulders. Black bears do not. When walking on all fours, the highest point of a black bear’s body is its rump; on a grizzly, the highest point is between the front shoulders.
- Adult grizzlies have a dished face profile. Adult black bears have a straight face profile, sometimes called a Roman nose.
- The heads of the two vary. Black bear skull is broad, narrow muzzle; large jaw hinge; female head may be more slender and pointed; tall pointed ears. Grizzly bear skull is massive; heavily constructed; large in proportion to body; high forehead (deeply rising); concave (dish face); domed head; long muzzle; flat nose tip; eyes tiny; short round ears.
- The last major difference between the two bear species can be found with the skull. The upper molar on a black bear skull is less than 1 1/8 inches long, whereas the same tooth in a grizzly’s mouth is longer than 1 1/8 inches.

For Bear Identification Test: [www.fwp.state.mt.us](http://www.fwp.state.mt.us)

**BEARS OF THE WORLD**

There are eight species of bears in the world today. Three live in North America, all in the family Ursidae: the black bear (Ursus americanus), grizzly bear (Ursus arctos), and polar bear (Ursus maritimus). Black bears and grizzlies are both found in the Rockies throughout North America.

**Meet the Bears**

**Black Bears**

Black bears are primarily a forest animal, which helps explain a mother black bear’s behavior when defending her young. When threatened, the cubs will climb trees while the mother runs a short distance or climbs another nearby tree. The female black bear is less aggressive than a female grizzly when it comes to protecting her young.

**Grizzly Bears**

Ursus arctos lives in many different ecoregions, including boreal forest, alpine forest, and tundra. It is one of the few bears that can swim, allowing it to adapt to rapidly changing habitats.

**How to Hunt Safely in Grizzly Country**

"Think grizzly and be prepared": Grizzlies can be found throughout the Northwestern region of the United States and Western Canada (see map). In recent years grizzly bear populations have expanded and bears are recognizing historic ranges.

Be aware that the act of hunting puts you at risk of encountering grizzlies and that elk bugling, game calls and cover scents may attract bears.

If you hunt alone in grizzly country let someone know your detailed plans and have a way to periodically check in. Hunting partners should share details of their hunt plans and have a check in or communication system. If you feel unsafe hunting alone in grizzly country, hunt with a partner.

While hunting in grizzly country pay attention to fresh bear sign. Look for bear tracks, scat and concentrations of natural foods. Use caution when hunting in areas that have evidence of bear activity or areas with scavenging birds such as magpies, ravens or crows.

Communicate with other hunters and let them know when grizzly bears have been seen and/or fresh sign has been observed.

Some bears may have learned to associate gunshots with the availability of a big game carcass or gut pile.

When in close proximity to people, most grizzly bears become aware of human presence and leave the area. If you encounter a bear, assess the situation, stay calm and do not run. Decide if the bear is aware of you and threatening or if it is fleeing and unaware. Keep the bear in sight and back away and leave the area.

Most grizzly attacks are prompted by inadvertently running into a female with young, surprising a bear at close range or being surprised by a bear that is fleeing an another hunter. It is recommended that hunters mentally rehearse a worst-case scenario with grizzly bears. If “the mind has never been there before, the body does not know how to respond.”

Use a weapon only if bear pepper spray is unavailable. Be aware that bears wounded with an arrow, knife or firearm may intensify the level of attack. If you have to kill a grizzly in self-defense, take careful aim and attempt to knock it down by hitting major bones in the front shoulders. Other shots to the vital area will kill the bear. Leave the scene immediately and report the incident.

As a last resort, if physically attacked, play dead. Lie face down, covering your neck and head with your hands and arms. If you have a backpack leave it on to protect your back. Stay face down, never look at the bear and remain still until the bear is gone. Many people have survived bear attacks using this method.

Bears are opportunists and change their behavior in order to take advantage of new food sources. So, if you are hunting or living in grizzly country, always assume that grizzlies are in the area and make sure your camps, cabins and homes are bear proof, and that bear attractants are unavailable or contained.

If you have questions pertaining to hunting or living in grizzly bear country, please call your state or provincial wildlife management agency.

- Boone and Crockett Club — [www.boone-crockett.org](http://www.boone-crockett.org)
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks — [www.fwp.state.mt.us](http://www.fwp.state.mt.us)
- Idaho Fish and Game Department — [www2.state.id.us/fgis游戏](http://www2.state.id.us/fgisgame)
- Wyoming Game and Fish Department — [gf.state.wy.us](http://gf.state.wy.us)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services — [www.fws.gov/ndapg/prrizzly](http://www.fws.gov/ndapg/prrizzly)
- Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee — [www.fs.fed.us/r1/wildlife/igbc/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/wildlife/igbc/)
- Bear Trust International — [www.beartrust.org](http://www.beartrust.org)