Hunting in Groups
How did living in groups improve early humans’ ability to hunt?

Living together in groups was also important for hunting. Archaeologists study bones and other remains found in caves and ancient camp sites to learn more about how early humans hunted. Marks, chips, and holes in these bones can leave clues as to the types of tools they used to kill and butcher the animals. The bones also help scientists identify what types of animals hunter-gatherers hunted. For example, large amounts of reindeer and mammoth bones suggest these animals were often hunted. These large animals were most likely popular because they were plentiful in the area and could provide a lot of meat with a single kill. Other parts of the animal were used as well: hides and tendons to make clothes, and bones to make weapons and tools.

Even in a group, hunting could be very dangerous. Early humans had to get close to their prey because they used tools like spears and knives, which were less effective at a distance. The bow and arrow would not be invented for thousands of years! Most hunters were injured frequently, and the patterns of fractures and chips on bones of humans from 150,000-200,000 years ago are nearly identical to those of modern rodeo riders.
Fire eventually became an important hunting tool. Some groups of early humans in Europe may have used fire to drive large animals into swamps, and then left the animals to die rather than risking injury by killing them outright. Of course, fire also served other purposes in early societies. It provided warmth and protection from animals or hostile humans, and turned meals into social gatherings.