



## FIREARMS SAFETY

Safety is fundamental to all shooting activities. Whether you're practicing at the range, cleaning your gun in your workshop, or defending your family from an attack, the rules of firearm safety always apply.

Safe Gun handling involves the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes—knowledge of the gun safety rules, the skill to apply these rules, and safety-first attitude that arises from the sense of responsibility and a knowledge of potential dangers.

Though there are many specific principles of safe firearms handling and operation, all are derived from four basic gun safety rules.

### FUNDAMENTAL RULES OF FIREARM SAFETY

- 1) **ALWAYS** TREAT EVERY FIREARM AS IF IT WERE LOADED!!!
- 2) **ALWAYS** keep the gun pointed in a safe direction. This is the primary rule of gun safety. A *safe direction* means that the gun is pointed so that even if it were to go off, it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control where the muzzle or front end of the barrel is pointed at all times. Common sense dictates the safest direction, depending upon the circumstances. If only this one safety rule were always followed, there would be no injuries from accidental shootings.
- 3) **ALWAYS** keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot. Your trigger finger should always be keep straight alongside the frame and outside the trigger guard, until you have made the decision to shoot.



When holding a gun, many people have a tendency TO PLACE THEIR FINGER ON THE TRIGGER, EVEN WHEN THEY ARE NOT READY TO SHOOT. This is an extremely dangerous practice. Many negligent discharges are caused when the trigger of a loaded gun is inadvertently pressed by a finger carelessly left in the trigger guard instead of being positioned straight along the side of the gun's frame.

- 4) **ALWAYS Know your target, YOUR BACKSTOP and what is beyond.** Whether you are at the range, in the woods, or in your home, if you're going to shoot you must know what lies beyond your target. In almost all cases, you must be sure that there is something that will serve as a backstop to capture bullets that miss or go through the target. Never fire in a direction in which there are innocent people or any other potential for mishap. Think first, shoot second.

### **RULES FOR USING OR STORING A GUN**

**In addition to these four basic firearm safety rules, you must follow a number of additional rules when you use or store your firearm.**

- 1) **Keep the firearm unloaded until ready to use.** A firearm that is not being used should always be unloaded. For example, at the range, your firearm should be left unloaded while you walk downrange to check your target. Similarly, a firearm that is being stored in a gun safe or lock box should generally be unloaded unless it is a personal protection firearm that may need to be accessed quickly for defensive purposes—see [NRA GUIDE TO THE BASICS OF PERSONAL PROTECTION IN THE HOME, Chapter 2: NRA DEFENSIVE SHOOTING SAFETY](#). Other NRA reference [OUTSIDE THE HOME MANUALS](#).

As a general rule, whenever you pick up a gun, point it in a safe direction with your finger off the trigger, engage the mechanical safety (if the gun is equipped with one), remove the magazine (if the gun is equipped with a removable magazine), and then open the action and look into the chamber(s) to determine if the gun is loaded or not. This also applies to revolvers accessing the action via opening the cylinder, and other types of firearms, i.e. Hinged, lever, bolt, and pump actions to name a few. **\*It is incumbent upon the owner/operator to know and understand his or her firearm and how to operate it safely and responsibly before handling and loading, REFERENCE STATEMENT BY TACTICAL U.**

\* Unless the firearm is being kept in a state of readiness for personal protection, it should be unloaded. If you do not know how to open and inspect the firearm get help from someone who does, and consult the owner's manual that came with the gun.

- 2) **Know how to use your gun safely.** Before handling a gun, learn how it operates. Read the owner's manual for your gun. Contact the gun's manufacturer for the owner's manual if you do not have one. Know your gun's basic parts, how to safely open and close the action, and how to remove ammunition from the gun. No matter how much you know about guns, you must always take the time to learn the proper way to operate any new or unfamiliar firearm. Never assume that because one gun resembles another, they both operate in exactly the same way. Also, remember a gun's mechanical safety device is never foolproof. Guidance in safe gun operation should be obtained from the owner's manual or a qualified gunsmith.

- 3) **Be sure your gun is safe to operate.** Just like other tools, guns need regular maintenance to remain operable. Regular cleaning and proper storage are a part of the gun's general upkeep. If there is any question regarding a gun's ability to function, it should be examined by a knowledgeable gunsmith. Proper maintenance procedures may be found in your owner's manual, as well as in [NRA GUIDE TO THE BASICS OF PERSONAL PROTECTION IN THE HOME Appendix A : Firearms Maintenance](#).
- 4) **Use only the correct ammunition for your gun.** Each firearm is intended for use with a specific cartridge. Only cartridges designed for a particular gun can be fired safely in that gun. Most guns have ammunition type stamped on the barrel and/or slide. The owner's manual will also list the cartridge or cartridges appropriate for your gun. Ammunition can be identified by information printed on the cartridge box and sometimes stamped on the cartridge head. Do not shoot the gun unless you know you have the proper ammunition.
- 5) **Wear eyes and ear protection as appropriate.** The sound of a gunshot can damage unprotected ears. Gun discharges can also emit debris and hot gas that can cause eye injury. Thus, both ear and eye protections are highly recommended (if possible) whenever you are firing live ammunition in your gun. Safety glasses and ear plugs or muffs should also be worn by any spectators or shooting partners during live-fire sessions. Obviously, during an actual violent encounter necessitating the use of a firearm, it likely will not be possible for you to use eye and ear protection.
- 6) **Never use alcohol or drugs before or while shooting.** Alcohol and many drugs can impair normal mental and physical bodily functions, sharply diminishing your ability to shoot safely. These substances must never be used before or while handling or shooting guns.

Note that these effects are produced not just by illegal or prescription drugs. Many over-the-counter medications also have considerable side effects, which may be multiplied when certain drugs are taken together or with alcohol. Read the label of any medication you take, no matter how innocuous, or consult your physician or pharmacist for possible side effects. If the label advises against driving or operating equipment while taking the medication, you should also avoid using a firearm while taking it.
- 7) **Store guns so they are inaccessible to unauthorized persons.** It is your responsibility as a gun owner to take reasonable steps to prevent unauthorized persons (especially children) from handling or otherwise having access to your firearms. You have a number of options for accomplishing this, which are discussed in greater detail in [NRA GUIDE TO THE BASICS OF PERSONAL PROTECTION IN THE HOME Chapter 3: Safe Firearm Storage](#). The particular storage method you choose will be based upon your own particular home situation and security needs.

- 8) **Be aware that certain types of guns and many shooting activities require additional safety precautions.** There are many different types of firearms, some of which require additional safety rules or procedures for proper operation. These are commonly found in your firearm's owner's manual. Also, most sport shooting activities have developed a set of rules to ensure safety during competition. These rules are generally sport-specific; the procedures for loading your firearm and commencing fire, for example, are different in NRA bullseye shooting than they are in NRA Action Pistol competition [NRA GUIDE TO THE BASICS OF PERSONAL PROTECTION IN THE HOME](#) (see Chapter12: Opportunities for Skills Enhancement ).

**\*In summary to handgun safety please understand that Americas enjoy a right that citizens of many other countries do not- The right to own guns. BUT with this right comes responsibility. It is the gun owner's responsibility to store, operate and maintain his or her guns safely. It is the gun owner's responsibility to ensure that unauthorized and untrained individuals cannot gain access to his or her guns. And it is the gun owner's responsibility to learn and follow all applicable laws that pertain to the purchase, possession and use of guns in his or her jurisdiction. Guns are neither safe nor unsafe by themselves. When people practice responsible gun ownership, guns are safe.**

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