

SAAMI TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MANUAL  
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HEADSPACE

DEFINITION

In a firearm, headspace is defined as the distance from the face of a closed breech to the surface in the chamber on which the cartridge case stops.

In the cartridge/firearm relationship, head clearance is defined as the resultant dimension between the head of a fully-seated cartridge and the breech face of a firearm in its closed position. The determination of head clearance is derived from the dimensional characteristics of both the firearm and the ammunition.

In order to assure safety in the cartridge/firearm relationship, dimensional limits have been established for both the cartridge and firearm. These limits are reflected in the dimensions and tolerances shown on the cartridge-chamber drawings in SAAMI Technical Committee Manual, Volume XI.

Gages, commonly referred to as headspace gages, are utilized to confirm the dimensional characteristics of the firearms chamber. Gages, commonly referred to as receiving gages are used to measure the dimensional characteristics of the ammunition. Drawings of typical headspace and receiving gages can be found in SAAMI Technical Committee Manual, Volume XI, Cartridges and Chambers.

Since the limits shown on the chamber drawings are intended to include all firearms, new and used, a prudent manufacturer of new firearms is expected to utilize narrower dimensional limits than those shown on the chamber drawings.