

INTRODUCTION

From the time he picks up a firearm, the shooter becomes a part of a system over which he has complete control. He is the only part of the system that can make a gun safe—or unsafe.

Hunting and target shooting are among the safest of all sports. This booklet is intended to make them even safer - by re-emphasizing and reaffirming the basics of safe gun handling and storage and by reminding each individual shooter that he or she is the key to firearms safety.

You can help meet this responsibility by enrolling in hunter safety or shooting safety courses. You must constantly stress safety when handling firearms, especially to children and non-shooters. Newcomers in particular must be closely supervised when handling firearms with which they may not be acquainted. *Don't be timid when it comes to gun safety.* If you observe anyone violating any safety precautions, you have an obligation to suggest safer handling practices, such as those in this booklet.

Please read this booklet carefully and follow the safety procedures outlined. Firearms safety is up to you. Make no mistake about it.

ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND GUNS DON'T MIX

1 Always Keep the Muzzle Pointed in a Safe Direction

This is the most basic gun safety rule. If everyone handled his firearm so carefully that the muzzle *never* pointed at something he didn't intend to shoot, there would be virtually no firearms accidents. It's as simple as that, and it's up to you.

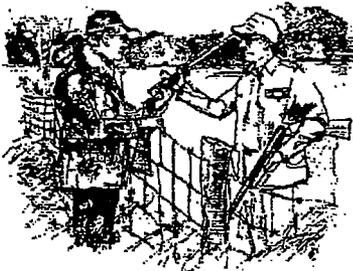
Never point your gun at anything you do not intend to shoot. This is particularly important when loading or unloading a firearm. In the event of an accidental discharge, no injury can occur as long as the muzzle is pointing in a safe direction.

A safe direction means a direction in which a bullet cannot possibly strike anyone, taking into account possible ricochets, and the fact that bullets can penetrate walls and ceilings. The safe direction may be

"up" on some occasions or "down" on others, but never at anyone or anything not intended as a target. Even when "dry firing" with an unloaded gun, you should never point the gun at an unsafe target. Develop safe shooting habits.

Make it a habit to know exactly where the muzzle of your gun is pointing at all times, and be sure that you are in control of the direction in which the muzzle is pointing, even if you fall or stumble. This is *your* responsibility, and only you can control it.





2 Firearms Should Be Unloaded When Not Actually in Use

Firearms should be loaded only when you are in the field or on the target range or shooting area, ready to shoot. Firearms and ammunition should be secured in a safe place, separate from each other, when not in use. It is *your responsibility* to prevent children and careless adults from gaining access to firearms or ammunition. Unload your gun as soon as you are through. A loaded gun has no place in or near a car, truck, or building. Unload your gun immediately when you have finished shooting, well before you bring it into a car, camp, or home.

Whenever you handle a firearm, or hand it to someone, always open the action immediately, and visually check the chamber, receiver, and magazine to be certain they do not contain any ammunition. Always keep actions open when not in use. Never assume a gun is unloaded—check for yourself! This is considered a mark of an experienced gun handler!

Never cross a fence, climb a tree, or perform any awkward actions with a loaded gun. There are other times during nearly all hunting trips when common sense and the basic rules of firearms safety will require you to unload your gun for maximum safety. Never pull or push a loaded firearm toward yourself or another person. There is never any excuse to carry a loaded gun in a scabbard, a holster not being worn, or a gun case. When in doubt, unload your gun!

3 Don't Rely on Your Gun's "Safety"

Treat every gun as though it can fire at any time, regardless of pressure on the trigger. The "safety" on any gun is a mechanical device which, like any such device, can become inoperable at the worst possible time. Besides, by mistake, the safety may be "off" when you think it is "on". The safety serves as a supplement to proper gun handling, but cannot possibly serve as a substitute for common sense. You should never handle a gun carelessly and assume that the gun won't fire just because the "safety is on".



Never touch the trigger on a firearm until you actually intend to shoot. Keep your fingers away from the trigger while loading or unloading. Never pull the trigger on any firearm with the safety on the "safe" position or anywhere in between "safe" and "fire". It is possible that the gun can fire at any time, or even later when you release the safety, without your ever touching the trigger again. Never place the safety in between positions, since half-safe is unsafe. Keep the safety "on" until you are absolutely ready to fire.

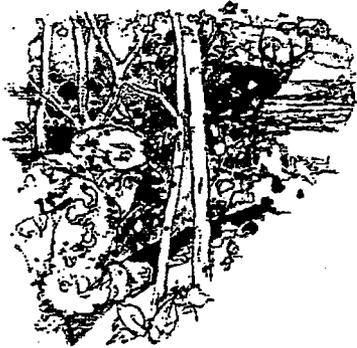
Regardless of the position of the safety, any blow or jar which is sufficient to actuate the firing mechanism of a gun can cause it to fire. This can happen even if the trigger is not touched, such as when a gun is dropped. Never rest a loaded gun against any object because there is always the possibility that it will be jarred or slide from its position and fall with sufficient force to discharge. The only safe gun is one in which the action is open and which is completely empty. You and the safe gun handling procedures you have learned are your gun's primary safeties.

4 Be Sure of Your Target And What's Beyond It

No one can call a shot back. Once a gun fires, you have given up all control over where the shot will go or what it will strike. Don't shoot unless you know exactly what your shot is going to strike. Be sure that your bullet will not injure anyone or anything beyond your target. Firing at a movement or a noise without being absolutely certain of what you are shooting at constitutes criminal disregard for the safety of others. No target or animal is so important that you do not have the time before you pull the trigger to be *absolutely certain* of your target and where your shot will stop.

Be aware that even a .22 short bullet can travel over 1¼ miles, and a high velocity cartridge such as a .30-06 can send its bullet more than three miles. Shotgun pellets can travel 500 yards, and shotgun slugs have a range of half a mile.

Shooters should keep in mind how far a bullet will travel if it misses its intended target or ricochets in another direction.



5 Use Correct Ammunition

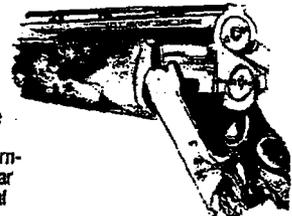
You must assume the serious responsibility of using only the correct ammunition for your firearm. Read and heed all warnings including those that appear in the gun's instruction manual and on the ammunition boxes.

Improper or incorrect ammunition can destroy a gun and cause serious personal injury. It only takes one cartridge of improper caliber or gauge to wreck your gun, and only a second to check each one as you load it. Use only ammunition that *exactly* matches the caliber or gauge of your gun.

Firearms are designed, manufactured and proof tested to standards based upon factory loaded ammunition. Handloaded or reloaded ammunition deviating from pressures generated by factory loads or from component recommendations specified in reputable handloading manuals can be dangerous, and can cause severe damage to guns and serious injury to the shooter. Do not use improper reloads or ammunition made of unknown components.

Ammunition that has become very wet or has been submerged in water should be discarded in a safe manner. Do not spray oil or solvents on ammunition or place ammunition in excessively lubricated firearms. Poor ignition, unsatisfactory performance, or damage to your firearm and harm to yourself or others could result from using such ammunition.

Form the habit of examining every cartridge you put into your gun. Never use damaged or substandard ammunition — the money you save is not worth a ruined gun or very much worse.





6 If Your Gun Fails to Fire When the Trigger is Pulled, Handle with Care!

Occasionally, a cartridge may not fire when the trigger is pulled. If this occurs, keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Keep your face away from the breech. Then, carefully open the action, unload the firearm, and dispose of the cartridge in a safe way.

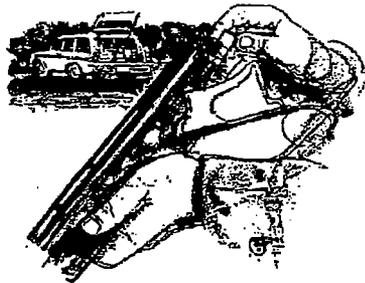
Any time there is a cartridge in the chamber, your gun is loaded and ready to fire — even if you've tried to shoot and it did not go off. It could go off at any time, so you must always remember Rule #1 and watch that muzzle!

7 Always Wear Eye And Ear Protection When Shooting

All shooters should wear protective shooting glasses and some form of hearing protectors while shooting. Exposure to shooting noise can damage hearing, and adequate vision protection is essential. Shooting glasses guard against twigs, falling shot, clay target chips, and the rare ruptured case or firearm malfunction. There is a wide variety of eye and ear protectors available. No target shooter, plinker, or hunter should ever be without them. Wearing eye protection when disassembling and cleaning any gun will also help prevent the possibility of springs, spring tension parts, solvents, or other agents from contacting your eyes.

Most rules of shooting safety are intended to protect you and others around you, but this rule is for your protection alone. Furthermore, having your hearing and eyes protected will make your shooting easier, and will help improve your enjoyment of the shooting sports.





8 Be Sure the Barrel is Clear of Obstructions Before Shooting

Before you load your firearm, open the action and be certain that no ammunition is in the chamber or magazine. Then glance through the barrel to be sure it is clear of any obstruction. Even a small bit of mud, snow, excess lubricating oil, or grease in the bore can cause dangerously increased pressures, causing the barrel to bulge or even burst on firing, which can cause injury to the shooter and bystanders. Make it a habit to clean the bore with a cleaning rod and patch to wipe away anti-rust compounds in the gun each time immediately before you shoot it. If the noise or recoil on firing seems weak, or doesn't seem quite "right", *cease firing immediately* and be sure to check that no obstruction or projectile has become lodged in the barrel.

Placing a smaller gauge or caliber cartridge into a gun (such as a 20 gauge shell in a 12 gauge shotgun) can result in the smaller cartridge falling into the barrel and acting as a bore obstruction when a cartridge of proper size is fired. This can cause a burst barrel or worse. You can easily avoid this type of accident by paying close attention to each cartridge you insert into your firearm. This is really a case where "haste makes waste".

9 Don't Alter or Modify Your Gun, and Have Guns Serviced Regularly

Firearms are complicated mechanisms which are designed by experts to function properly in their original condition. Any alterations or changes made to firearms after manufacture can make the gun dangerous and usually void any factory warranties. Do not jeopardize your safety or the safety of others by altering the trigger, safety, or other mechanism of any firearm or allowing unqualified persons to repair or modify them. You'll usually ruin an expensive gun. Don't do it!

Your gun is a mechanical device which will not last forever and is subject to wear. As such, it requires periodic inspection, adjustment, and service. Check with the manufacturer of your firearm for recommended servicing.

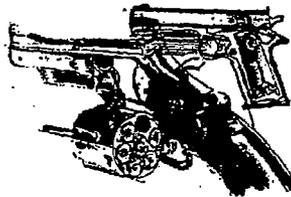


10 Learn the Mechanical and Handling Characteristics of The Firearm You are Using.

Not all firearms are the same. The method of carrying and handling firearms varies in accordance with the mechanical characteristics of each gun. Since guns can be so different, no person should handle any firearm without first having thoroughly familiarized himself with the particular type of firearm he is using, the safe gun handling rules for loading, unloading, carrying, handling that firearm, and the rules of safe gun handling in general.

Just by way of one example, many handgun manufacturers recommend that their handguns always be carried with the hammer down on an *empty* chamber. This is particularly true for older single-action revolvers, but applies equally to some double-action revolvers or automatic pistols. You should always read and refer to the instruction manual you received with your gun, or if you have misplaced it, simply contact the manufacturer for a free copy.

The person with the gun in his possession has a full-time job. He cannot guess, he cannot forget. He must know how to use, handle, and store his firearm safely. *Do not use any firearm without having a complete understanding of its particular characteristics and safe use.* There is no such thing as a fool proof gun.



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