

*Commandment 2:* Firearms should be unloaded when not actually in use. Unload as soon as you're finished shooting – before you walk to the car or the camp, before you do anything else – and make sure it is completely unloaded – no shells in the chamber or magazine. Never let a loaded gun out of your sight or out of your hands. Always check a gun that you are handed or pick up – don't just assume it is unloaded.

*Commandment 3:* Don't rely on your gun's safety. Your gun is a mechanical device and it could fail. Don't touch the trigger until you are ready to fire – take special notice of where your hands are on your gun when loading or unloading. And don't pull the trigger when the safety is on – or in between safe and fire.

*Commandment 4:* Be sure of your target and what's beyond it. Too many hunters have had accidents by being short-sighted - not paying enough attention to what was behind that prize buck. Never shoot at a sound, or movement or a patch of color. A hunter in camouflage has too many times been mistaken for a target by a shooter too quick on the trigger. A bullet goes great distances at great speeds. Pay attention to where your bullet will go and what it will hit if it overshoots your target or ricochets.

*Commandment 5:* Use proper ammunition. It only takes one shell that's the wrong size to hurt or kill someone or destroy your shotgun. Make sure you know the exact gauge your gun takes, and never mix ammunition. Read your gun's instruction manual and all the instructions on a box of ammo. Make sure you look at your shells closely before loading and make absolutely sure you're loading only the caliber your gun will take. Also, never use ammunition that has been reloaded by someone else. Many shooters handload as a hobby or to save money. Handloaded ammunition that doesn't meet factory standards can be very dangerous – you could severely damage your gun or get hurt with ammunition that has the wrong powder, too much powder or the wrong load. Be very careful!

*Commandment 6:* If your ammunition doesn't fire when you pull the trigger, handle with care. Go back to the first commandment and make sure your muzzle is pointing in a safe direction – that gun could go off at any time – and treat it as such. Keep your face out of the breach, put the safety on and carefully open the action, unload and dispose of the cartridge safely. Anytime there is a shell in the chamber, your gun is loaded and ready to use. Take care and understand that your gun could fire without warning.

*Commandment 7:* Always wear eye and ear protection when shooting. Wear shooting glasses to protect from falling shot or clay target chips, even twigs and branches in the field. Always protect your eyes when you clean your gun, so that parts under pressure like springs or cleaning solvents stay clear of your eyes. Your hearing can be permanently damaged from shooting noise – so be sure to wear a headset on the range and use earplugs in the field, especially in small spaces like duck blinds.

*Commandment 8:* Be sure the barrel is clear of obstructions before shooting. Look closely and make sure there's no mud, snow or even excess lubricant or grease in the bore, and no ammunition in the chamber before you load your gun. Even the smallest obstruction could cause your barrel to bulge or burst when you fire. And when you fire, trust your gut. If you think the noise