

**FIREARMS SAFETY  
DEPENDS ON YOU**



**MAKE NO  
MISTAKE ABOUT IT!**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

There is a sentence in a pilot's flight manual that reads, "When you enter the cockpit of this aircraft, you become part of a system over which you have control — both in terms of operation and safe handling. You are the only one that can make the system safe or unsafe."

The same is true of the shooter, whether a hunter, target shooter or casual weekend plinker. 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.

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

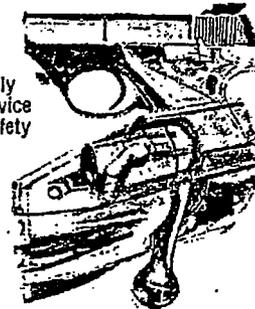
**KNOW YOUR GUN—READ  
YOUR INSTRUCTION MANUAL**

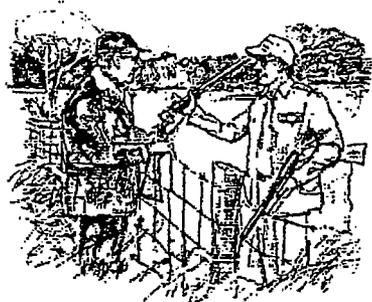
## **1** Don't Rely on Your Gun's Safety. Treat Every Gun as if It Were Loaded and Ready to Fire

The safety on any gun is a mechanical device that serves as a *part* of a complete system of safe gun handling. The safety is not intended to serve — nor can it possibly serve — as a substitute for common sense or safe gun handling.

For example, never pull the trigger on a firearm when the safety is in the "safe" position or anywhere in between "safe" and off. It is possible that the gun could fire anyway, and it is also possible that the gun could fire later when you release the safety — without your ever touching the trigger again. Always place the safety completely in the "fire" or "safe" positions. Never in between. Half-safe is unsafe. Don't play with your safety, putting it on and off. Leave it on until you are absolutely ready to fire.

You and the safe gun handling procedures you have learned are your gun's primary safeties. To rely entirely upon a mechanical device is unsafe. Use your safety safely.





## **2** Never Cross a Fence, Climb a Tree or Jump a Ditch With a Loaded Gun

There are 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.

Anytime there is an added risk that you might lose your balance and drop or lose control of your gun, you should unload. Before climbing a fence or crossing a stream are perfect examples. If you need to climb a slippery hill and certainly if you are going to climb a tree to hunt from a tree stand, you should unload first. Then, should you lose your balance and lose control of your gun, you will not jeopardize your safety or the safety of your companions by dropping a loaded gun which could discharge.

The chances of missing a shot at game by unloading at such times are slim and more than offset by the added safety of unloading.

### **3** Never Load or Carry a Loaded Gun Until You Are Ready To Use It

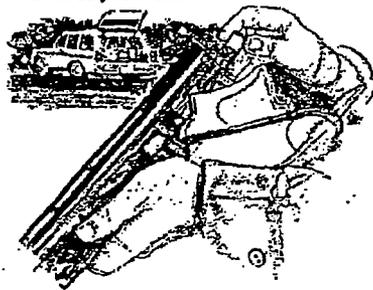
One of the cardinal rules of shooting safety is to load your gun only when ready to use it — and to unload as soon as you are through. A loaded gun has no place in — or near — a car or truck or building. Keep your fingers off the trigger while loading or unloading.

For shotgun shooting, don't load until you've started into the field or are well settled in a blind. Unload before you leave!

Many big game hunters will not chamber a cartridge until they have actually sighted game and decided to shoot. This is especially true when hunting from tree stands.

Target shooters should never load until it is their turn to shoot, and they should unload immediately if there is a delay in the shooting progression.

Think of yourself and your gun as part of a system whose safe operation depends on you. Your gun can't think. You can. Don't load until ready to shoot — and unload as soon as you're done.





## **4** Watch Your Muzzle So the Other Fellow Doesn't Have To

If everyone handled his gun so carefully that the muzzle *never* pointed at something the gunner didn't intend to shoot, we'd have no firearms accidents. It's as simple as that, and it's up to you.

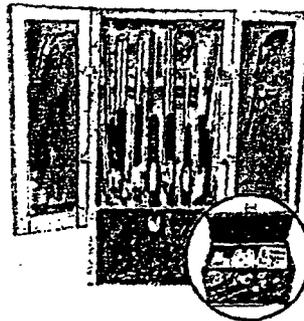
Learn to keep your muzzle always pointed in a safe direction. That may be in the air on some occasions, at the ground on others, but never at anyone or at anything not intended as a target.

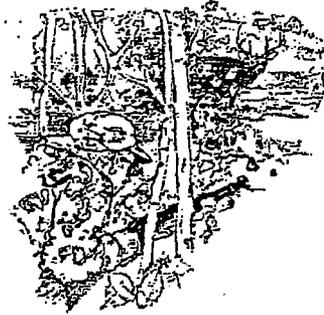
You can always tell an experienced shooter by how he or she handles a gun. A knowledgeable shooter always opens the action on a gun before handing it to someone else and always checks to make sure the gun is unloaded if it is handed to him.

Handle guns so others will want to hunt with you, not away from you. You and your gun are parts of a system whose safe operation depends on you. Your gun can't think, but you can.

## **5** Keep Guns and Ammunition Separately and in Locked Storage

There's really only one basic way to safely store guns and ammunition. They should both be kept locked, separate from one another, with the keys under the control of a responsible adult. Casual visitors and children should find it impossible to handle either without the direct approval, action and supervision of an experienced person totally informed in the principles of safe gun handling. This may take some extra time and effort on your part, but consider the potential consequences of the wrong hands putting guns and ammunition together.





## **6** Don't Shoot Unless Absolutely Sure of Your Target and What is Beyond It

You can't call a bullet back. And you can't change its direction.

Once you've pulled the trigger on your rifle, shotgun or handgun, you have given up all control over where the bullet will go or what it will strike. Every shooter — whether a big game hunter, upland gunner or plinker — owes it to himself and to everyone within range of his firearm to be absolutely sure of his target. Make certain there are no hunters, buildings or other objects behind or near your target.

And make absolutely sure of the target itself. Particularly during the low-light periods of dawn and dusk, it is easy to mistake one shape for another. Scientists call it "Early Blur," and it is one reason you should be totally sure of your target before pulling the trigger.

Firearms safety is up to you. Make no mistake about it.

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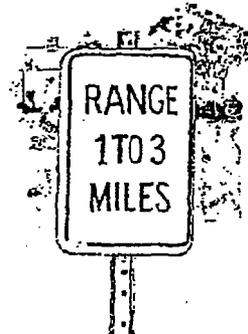
**7 Know the Range of Your Gun.  
Remember, Even a 22 Rimfire Can  
Travel Over One Mile**

All shooters hope they will hit what they are aiming at when they pull the trigger. Safe shooters also consider where their shot might go if they miss.

Shooters should keep in mind how far a bullet will travel if it misses its intended target or ricochets in another direction. A 22 short can travel 1½ miles, and a high-velocity cartridge such as a 30-06 can send its bullet more than 3 miles.

Shotgun pellets can travel 500 yards, and shotgun slugs have a range of one-half mile.

Before firing at game or other targets afield, shooters should be certain there are no roads, buildings or livestock in the course of fire, should the bullet go astray. Guns and ammunition cannot think. You can.





## **8** Always Wear Eye and Ear Protection When Shooting

Most rules of shooting safety are intended to protect you and others around you, but there are two rules that are for your protection alone.

These rules involve the wearing of eye and ear protection. Eye protection can take the form of inexpensive plastic safety glasses, sunglasses, the shooter's own prescription lenses or specialized shooting glasses. They guard against twigs, falling shot, clay target chips and the rare ruptured case or firearm malfunction.

Heavy repeated exposure to shooting noise is not only uncomfortable at the time, it can also cause permanent hearing loss that may not be detected until it is too late.

There are a wide variety of hearing protectors available, ranging from throwaway or reusable ear plugs to sound-deadening muffs that cover the entire ear. No target shooter, plinker or hunter sighting-in should ever be without them.

Obey the safety rules that are intended to protect you. Wear ear and eye protection.

**9 Always Be Sure the Barrel is Clear of Obstructions. Only Carry Ammunition of the Proper Size for the Gun You Are Using**

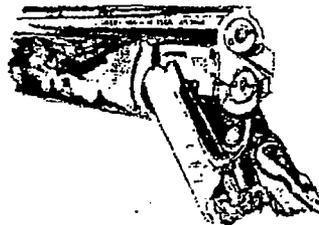
It might be mud, snow or a shotshell wad. It could even be a cleaning patch or the wrong size ammunition placed in your gun's chamber by mistake. All are obstructions that can block a gun barrel and cause serious injury to the shooter if not detected. These obstructions may have become lodged in your gun barrel by careless gun handling — as in the case of mud or snow. Or, they may have been left there accidentally by someone else.

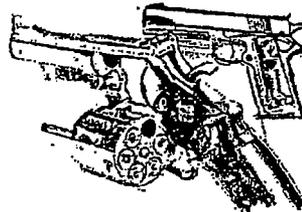
Proper safety procedures require that all gun barrels be checked for obstructions before firing.

Carry only the proper ammunition for the gun you are shooting. Mixing ammunition causes problems. A 20 gauge shotshell, for example, will pass through the chamber of a 12 gauge and lodge in the barrel.

Never allow different types of ammunition to get mixed up in the pockets of your hunting or shooting coat.

It is a simple and basic safety step to check your barrel for obstructions before shooting — for your own safety and to prevent damage to your gun.





## **10** Always Carry Handguns With the Hammer Down on an Empty Chamber

Handgun safety is largely a matter of common sense and the development of safe habits. For example:

- Carry loaded revolvers with empty chamber under the hammer.
- Carry loaded pistols with the magazine inserted but with an *empty* chamber.
- Always empty handguns before carrying into a house, car, boat or RV.
- Never point a handgun at anything you don't intend to shoot.
- Never handle a handgun without opening it yourself to check to see if it's loaded.
- Always open your handgun and keep it open after firing.
- Be sure of your backstop and what lies beyond it before you shoot.

Refer to the instruction manual you received with your gun.

**S A A M I**

SPORTING ARMS AND AMMUNITION MANUFACTURERS' INSTITUTE, INC.  
Safety Series, 1075 Post Road, Riverside, CT 06878