

# FIREARM SAFETY RULES

Goal: To present basic firearm and hunting safety principles and practices.

## Lesson 1: Basic Firearm Safety Rules

In this lesson you will:

- State the four basic rules of firearm safety.

### Basic Firearm Safety Rules

The lessons you learned as a child - such as don't play with matches and handle knives and broken glass with care - are so ingrained by the time you reach six or seven years old that following them is instinctive.

However, most people don't learn basic firearm safety rules when they are growing up. As a result, there are many young people and adults who don't know how to safely handle guns. Yet,

receiving firearms safety training is as important as other lessons learned during childhood.

The following four rules must be understood as a complete set of rules—there is an order of importance, but every one of them must be followed—always.

#### First: Assume every gun is loaded.

When seeing a firearm, you might want to reach for it, pick it up and point it at something.

Don't touch it. Be thoughtful and patient.

Ask how to handle the gun to make sure it will not fire when picked up—because a firearm is always thought of as loaded.

#### Second: Control the muzzle—point the gun in a safe

#### To help remember these four rules, think of ACTT.

- **Assume** every gun is loaded.
- **Control the muzzle**—point guns in a safe direction.
- **Trigger finger**—keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot.
- **Target**—be sure of your target and what lies beyond.

**direction.** Look at the surroundings and ask where the muzzle should be pointed to make sure it is a safe direction. If the gun goes off, it will destroy what the muzzle is pointed at. Never point a

firearm at yourself or others.  
**Third: Trigger finger—keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot.**

A common childhood interest is playing “cops and robbers.” As a result, nearly everyone who played these games developed the “trigger finger” habit for shooting squirt guns and cap guns—putting the index finger on the trigger to shoot the toy guns as fast as possible.

That is a bad habit. You should unlearn that habit now.

The trigger guard on a firearm has an important purpose: to help prevent unintended firing of the gun.



Control the muzzle—point the gun in a safe direction.



Trigger finger—keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot.

When handling a firearm, keep the trigger finger out of the trigger guard. When holding a firearm, rest the index finger on the edge of the trigger guard or on the frame immediately above the trigger guard.

**Fourth: Target—be sure of your target and what lies beyond.**

Never point a firearm at something you do not intend to shoot. Know identifying features of the game you hunt. Make sure you can positively identify the target and know what lies in front of and beyond it. Never shoot at movement, sounds or colors associated with a game animal you may be hunting. Also, do not use the scope on your firearm as a substitute for binoculars when identifying a person, animals or objects.

Follow these rules and demand that anyone who handles a firearm also follows these rules. Never hunt with someone who does not respect these rules. The result could be serious injury or death to you, another hunter or a nonhunter.

Once the trigger is pulled, the shot can NEVER be taken back.

**Lesson 2: Additional Safety Rules**

In this lesson you will:

- Recognize there are additional firearm safety rules.

In addition to the four rules outlined by ACTT, you also should know the following 10 rules for responsible and safe firearms handling.

**1. Be sure the gun is safe to operate.**

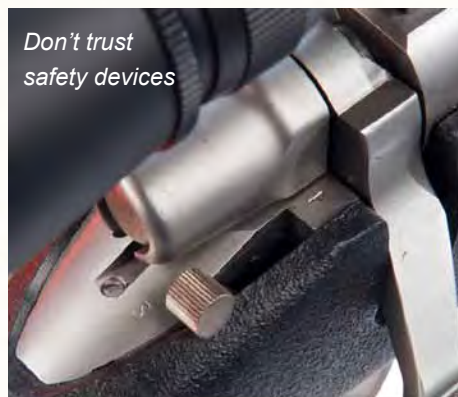
Inspect the firearm before using it. Check the bore to make sure there are no obstructions in the barrel. If something does not work right, be patient and don't apply force. Find out what is wrong. If the problem continues, ask for help from a more experienced gun owner or a gunsmith.

**2. Know how to use the gun safely.**

Read the owner's manual. Know all of the gun's features and how they operate. If you need help, ask a more experienced gun owner to show how to operate the gun safely. Take time to become familiar with a gun before each use. Follow the basic gun safety rules outlined in ACTT.

**3. Don't trust safety devices.**

The purpose of a gun's safety device is to help prevent an unintended firing. Safeties are mechanical devices that are subject



to wear and can fail to operate as designed. Always keep the safety "ON" until ready to shoot, and



incorrect ammunition can damage the firearm and, worse, can cause serious injury or death for the shooter and bystanders.

**5. Wear hunter or blaze orange clothing.**

Hunters who wear hunter or blaze orange clothing are easy to identify in the fields and woods.



remember: it is not a 100 percent guarantee against the gun firing. Control the muzzle and point guns in a safe direction.

**4. Use only the ammunition that is correct for the gun.**

Have only ammunition of the proper size for the firearm. Always use the correct ammunition. Use of

Wear blaze orange for personal safety while hunting. States and provinces have regulations for when wearing blaze or hunter orange is required.

**6. Use safety devices for ear and eye protection.**

When a gun is fired, it makes a loud noise. Frequent exposure to

gunfire, for example, at practice sessions or shooting competitions, can result in hearing loss for shooters and bystanders. Wear hearing protection when shooting guns. Wear eye protection, too, because the gun is fired near your face. Modern ear and eye protection devices can protect you and enhance your shooting and hunting ability.

### 7. Never use alcohol or drugs while hunting or shooting.

Be alert whenever handling a firearm. Do not consume alcohol before hunting or shooting events. Adults should save any celebration involving alcohol for later, when the guns and ammo have been secured. And, do not consume mood altering drugs or prescription medications while hunting and shooting.



### 8. Follow safety rules for handling and shooting firearms.

Never climb a fence or tree or jump a ditch with a loaded firearm. Be able to control the muzzle even if you stumble. Never pull a firearm toward you by the muzzle. Never shoot a bullet at a flat, hard surface or water because it could ricochet and strike you or others. Avoid all horseplay with a firearm. At target practice, be sure the backstop is adequate. Unload firearms when not in use—take down or have actions open. Transport firearms to the shooting area in cases.

### 9. Store firearms and ammunition separately.

Store firearms so they are beyond the reach of untrained children and adults. Also, store

firearms and ammunition in separate locations for safety. The firearm owner should know the laws regarding safe storage and transportation of firearms.

### 10. Different types of hunting and shooting activities may require additional safety procedures.

Hunting involves pursuing different kinds of game animals, hunting in different places and hunting alone or with others. It may also include using various kinds of special equipment such as treestands or boats. These different aspects of hunting may require more specialized safety procedures, and hunters must know and follow them for personal safety. At the shooting range, there are safety rules for every kind of shooting activity for rifle, shotgun and handgun practice or competition. Before engaging in any hunting or shooting event, find out what additional safety rules may apply.

Hunting is a safe sport. This valued tradition will remain safe if every person who handles firearms knows and follows the safety rules. It's also important to require that everyone follows the rules for safe hunting. One mistake with a firearm is one too many.

Be patient. Be alert.  
Hunt safe!

### Lesson 3: What to Do When You Meet a Law Enforcement Officer While Hunting

In this lesson you will:

- Identify proper behavior when meeting law enforcement officers while hunting.

### Duties of Conservation Officers

Wildlife conservation law enforcement officers are responsible for enforcing all laws

### What to do when approached by a law enforcement officer while hunting.

To protect constitutional rights and keep the encounter safe, follow this two-step process:

1. Control the muzzle—keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.
2. Do exactly as the officer instructs.

*Checking to see that hunters are following the laws is an important part of conservation officers' work.*



related to hunting, including firearm laws, in their state or province. Additionally, these officers have authority to enforce federal hunting and firearm laws.

Safety is the most important concern of law enforcement in any encounter, in addition to respecting a citizen's rights.

In the field, conservation law enforcement officers' work concerns a wide variety of situations, including observing hunters to determine if they are complying with the laws and regulations; issuing citations for violations; and arresting and confiscating licenses, tags and hunting equipment from offenders. Other duties include addressing issues such as trespassing, stalking, bullying, theft and vandalism that may occur among hunters, nonhunters and landowners. They work in coordination with other local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

Also, when a hunting-related shooting incident occurs, they investigate the site to collect evidence and interview all participants to determine the likely causes. Their findings support the efforts of prosecutors in cases where evidence suggests there

was illegal or criminal activity, including causing the victim's injury or death.

### **Approached by a Conservation Officer While Hunting**

The way hunters should handle their firearms when approached by a law enforcement officer differs slightly from how they should handle it for safety purposes in other circumstances. The officer wants the encounter to be professional and courteous, brief and safe for everyone involved.

What the hunter should do

when a wildlife law enforcement officer approaches:

1. Control the muzzle—keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.
2. Do exactly as the officer instructs.

Following this two-step procedure when checked by law enforcement will keep everyone safe and allow law enforcement officers to do their job, while protecting your legal rights.

Hunting laws may specify the ammunition, caliber or gauge and the type of firearm or other equipment that may be used to hunt. For waterfowl hunting,

the hunter must use nontoxic shot and the firearm must have a magazine capacity restricted to two cartridges. For other hunting interests, and depending on the state or province, the law may specify the minimum caliber of the firearm, magazine capacity, or require the hunter to submit equipment for inspection.

Checking to see that hunters follow applicable laws is an important part of conservation officers' work. In addition to enforcing laws, conservation officers also work with and for hunters to collect information. By working together with hunters and wildlife biologists, conservation officers can promote safe and responsible hunting.

In most instances during a field check, the conservation officer will ask you to turn over the firearm to him or her for safe handling and to determine if the firearm and ammunition comply with laws and regulations. In the meantime, you should locate the appropriate hunting license and tags or stamps, depending on the type of hunting involved.

This is not seizure of a citizen's firearm. It is momentary control and observation of hunting equipment.

If an officer determines probable cause of a violation of law, the firearm may be seized and kept by law enforcement until a court decides whether or not to return the firearm to the owner.



[OutdoorRoadmap.com](http://OutdoorRoadmap.com)