



# Firearms Safety

WEEK 11: 3 AUGUST, 2020

## WEAPONS SAFETY RULES

Responsible gun ownership means learning and practicing behaviors that will help prevent needless injury, death, and theft. There are 4 Rules of Gun Safety that must be followed 100% of the time. When the rules are followed accidents can be minimized. Being a gun owner means that you have made a commitment to knowing these rules and living them.

### Rule #1 - Treat every weapon as if it were loaded:

An individual who properly inspects and shows a gun to be clear before further handling is seen as a responsible and knowledgeable participant at the range. Never assume that someone has handed you an unloaded gun. Never accept a firearm that you are unfamiliar thinking that you can fiddle with it until you figure it out. You will never be wrong to ask for assistance and a demonstration of safe and correct usage of that firearm.



### Rule #2 - Never point your weapon at anything you do not intend to shoot:

Situational awareness is critical to firearm safety. Before you make contact with the firearm consider your environment and determine your safe direction. It is your responsibility to ALWAYS keep the gun pointed in a safe direction 100% of the time whether you are loading, reloading, shooting, showing clear, or laying the firearm down on the bench. Don't ever let the muzzle cover anything you aren't willing to shoot, including: Any body parts you want to keep attached. Any friends you want to keep (they will definitely be less friendly after you shoot them). The thin wall of the room, on the other side of which you can't see who is there.



### Rule #3 - Keep your finger straight and off the trigger (and if available, the weapon on safe) until you are aimed in on your target and ready to fire.

Trigger finger discipline is a learned skill and is vitally important to maintaining the safe condition of the firearm at all times. From the moment you make physical contact with the firearm your finger must be kept straight and rest along the side of the frame. Only when it is appropriate to shoot, your sights are on target, and you have made the decision to shoot, should you move your finger onto the trigger.



### Rule #4 - Know your target and what lies beyond:

You are responsible for everything that a round you shoot impacts. This means another big dose of situational awareness BEFORE you make the decision to shoot! This means never point or fire at anything you can't

clearly identify as a target or that would be a danger if your bullet strays, ricochets, or over penetrates.



If you're confused, unsure, or uncomfortable, choose to opt out of shooting. Not taking the shot is the best and safest thing to do. If you feel that the course of fire, target placement, or speed of the drill would result in your potentially breaking any of the Firearm Safety Rules, it is your obligation not to take the shot. If at any time during a class, event, or practice session you find that you are unsure that your actions could become unsafe give yourself permission to PAUSE! An individual who can stay in control of themselves and their firearm to maintain the safety of all is someone who is greatly respected at a range. Take a "tactical time out," a mini break, or ask for further clarification when you need it. Shooting is fun, safe, and a place for you to invest in yourself.

## CHOOSING THE PROPER FIREARM

No two sets of hands are the same. What is comfortable for one may not be comfortable for all. Firearms are not one size fits all. Firearms come in an array of sizes, calibers, platforms and prices. It is almost as important to understand what you are capable of shooting and handling as it is to know and understand the safety rules. If a firearm is hard to handle due to size, recoil, length or weight, a negligent discharge is more likely to occur.



Here are a few suggestions to consider:

**The purpose.** Not all firearms serve the same purpose. Main point on this one...know why you're buying THAT gun.

**Ease of maintenance.** This is huge for beginner shooters. When in doubt, ask the guy behind the counter. There is no shame in asking to have the expert disassemble and reassemble the firearm and then help you through the process. Everyone was a beginner at some point.

**Size and Comfort.** Yes, in this case size DOES matter. Not only size of the firearm itself, but caliber size and recoil amount. If you cannot comfortably hold, handle and aim the firearm it may not be right for you. A firearm that can be properly handled is safer than one that isn't.

**Limitations.** This ties in with purpose. Not all guns are created equal and not all guns will perform the same. This goes for the quality of gun you buy as well as intended use.

**Storage.** Know and prepare for how you will store your weapon. Safe and secure storage of your firearm is one of your most important responsibilities. It is a full-time responsibility. Your safety and the safety of others requires that you always secure and store your firearm in a manner that will prevent unauthorized access. So when purchasing a weapon, also purchase a trigger lock, safe, or other safe storage option.

**Final note:** Get training. Proper and safe use of firearms can be rewarding, but improper use has been and will continue to be fatal. The better trained you are the more you can enjoy a day at the range.



## RECREATIONAL SHOOTING

**When you're ready to head out to the range, take a moment to check this list of things to consider for your safety.**

Use correct ammunition. Read and heed all warnings, including those that appear in the gun's instruction manual and on the ammunition boxes. Examine every cartridge you put into your gun. Never use damaged or substandard ammunition.

If your gun fails to fire when the trigger is pulled, handle with care! 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.

Always wear eye and ear protection when shooting. All shooters should wear protective shooting glasses and some form of hearing protectors while shooting. There is a wide variety of eye and ear protectors available. No target shooter, plinker or hunter should ever be without them.

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. Make it a

habit to clean the bore and check for obstructions with a cleaning rod immediately before you shoot it.

Learn the mechanical and handling characteristics of the firearm you are using. Not all firearms are the same. Since guns can be so different, never handle any firearm without first having thoroughly familiarized yourself with the particular type of firearm you are using, the safe gun handling rules for loading, unloading, carrying and handling that firearm, and the rules of safe gun handling in general.

For information about recreational shooting on Camp Pendleton, contact the MCCS Pistol and Rifle Range at 760-212-1973 or visit them on the web at [mccscp.com/shoot](http://mccscp.com/shoot)



### CAMP PENDLETON SAFETY CENTER

The Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton Safety Center's mission is to promote the combat readiness of operating forces by providing safety support services. Our goals are to train all Marine Corps Base commands and organizations in occupational safety and health; mishap reduction and Federal Employees' Compensation Act costs through an aggressive safety program, and to exceed the reduction goals set by the Secretary of Defense, and Headquarters Marine Corps Safety Division. Our customers are Base personnel, the operating forces, extended Marine Families, tenant commands, and occasional Reserve components.

Have a question? Email us at: [Cpen\\_safety\\_help@usmc.mil](mailto:Cpen_safety_help@usmc.mil)

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