

GUNSAFE



A Community Firearms Safety
and Responsibility Course for All Adults



Produced as a public education project of the
Second Amendment Foundation,
a tax-exempt not-for-profit foundation

FIVE FUNDAMENTAL RULES OF SAFETY

- 1. Always keep a gun pointed in a safe direction.**
- 2. Always keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.**
- 3. Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.**
- 4. Never point any gun at anything you don't intend to destroy.**
- 5. Never put a trigger lock on a loaded firearm.**

PURPOSE

America was once known as “a nation of riflemen.” Because of our pioneer and rural traditions, men, women and children used to learn from parents, relatives and friends how rifles, shotguns and handguns worked and how to handle them as safely and responsibly as any common tool. However, because of a great population shift from rural living to cities and suburbs, particularly since 1945, there has been a dangerous reduction in general knowledge about firearms.

Additionally, other societal changes, coupled with unrealistic images of guns and their effect in movies and television, have created a climate in which many people either fail to respect guns or have an unreasonable fear of them. That fear unfortunately has fostered a belief that by avoiding all knowledge about firearms, contact with firearms and keeping all guns, including toy guns, out of the home will insure safety. Unfortunately, that frequently leads to tragic consequences. Non-gunowners sometimes find unknown guns among the possessions of deceased friends and relatives-and don't even know if they are loaded or safe to handle.

Children who have been brought up isolated from guns may encounter them in the homes of friends and relatives, including in the homes of law enforcement personnel. Children also find guns abandoned by criminals in school yards, parking lots, parks and elsewhere. They may think they are toys, or otherwise misuse them with unwelcome and even tragic results-or they may bring them to an adult who knows no more than the child how to render the gun safe.

Such a lack of basic, simple, mechanical knowledge about guns and how they work can put emergency response teams and firemen at risk if they are called into situations where loaded firearms could be present.

The purpose of this program is to provide enough basic information about guns and how they work so that the average adult without prior knowledge of guns, especially in urban areas, will have enough basic information to recognize the general type of gun, know how it functions, and how to render it safe.

Based on the premise that some knowledge is always more helpful than ignorance, this program is designed to teach and reinforce basic safety and responsibility rules for gunowners and non-gunowners alike. The program is value-neutral; we neither promote nor discourage responsible, lawful gun ownership.

What you learn in this program may never be needed in practice, but knowledge banked against eventuality is a good investment in safety for you and your family.

A Little History

In many ways, the function of guns has not changed much from the time when gunpowder was invented almost a thousand years ago. Guns-whether firearms or airguns-are nothing more than launching pads for projectiles.

Spring and air-powered guns can be as powerful and deadly as firearms, and should not be treated as toys. Hundreds of years ago, airguns were used by hunters and explorers and as almost silent military arms. Airguns deserve the same respect as firearms, and the same safety rules apply. All firearms involve the use of a combustible propellant. The earliest guns and the newest involve similar components.

The very first guns required that a projectile (ball or bullet) be seated in front of gunpowder that needed to be ignited to propel the projectile. The projectile and powder load had to be inserted from the muzzle end into the tubular launching platform. Replicas of these guns are still used today and are called **Muzzleloaders**. They require the use of black powder or Pyrodex® to drive the projectile out of the barrel.

The very earliest guns used fire (a match or fuse) to ignite the propellant, and the resulting expanding gases drove the ball or bullet toward the target. The matchlocks were replaced by other ignition systems, including a flash from flint striking steel, and later percussion caps made with fulminate of mercury. During the 19th century, it was discovered that the bullet, powder and ignition system could be combined in a single self-contained cartridge.

It was soon learned that these self-contained cartridges could be loaded from the breech, or rear end, of the firearm. This approach, combined with a revolving cylinder (developed years earlier) or other multiple-cartridge magazine systems and Action types led to the 19th century concept of repeating rifles, shotguns and handguns, the same mechanisms we know today.

The Action Is The Key

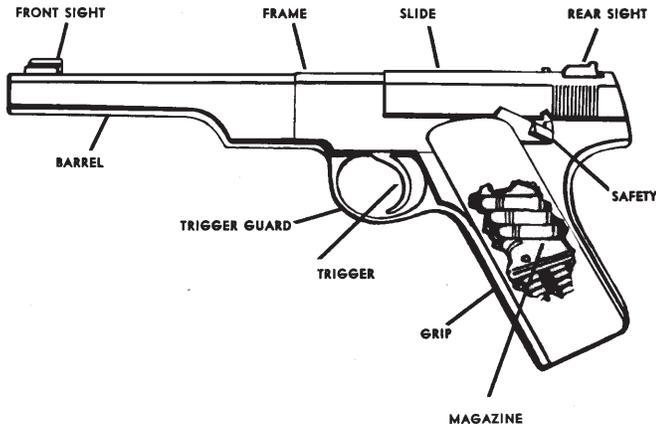
The key to understanding the various types of firearms is an understanding of the **Action** of a particular firearm and how it works. The **Action** includes the mechanism, or moving parts, which load and fire the cartridges. Firearms are defined by **Action-type**, which is the principal way in which one gun differs from another. Knowing how the **Action** works is essential to rendering any firearm safe.

If the Action of a firearm is open, it cannot shoot. Therefore, the first thing to do when picking up a firearm is to open the **Action**. **(If a firearm is passed from one person to another, it should be done so with the muzzle pointing in a safe direction, and with the action already opened if a person knows how to open it. In all cases the finger should never be placed on the trigger or inside the trigger guard until one is ready to actually discharge the firearm.)** Opening the **Action** doesn't mean that further safe handling rules should be ignored. It simply makes it possible to know whether the gun is loaded. The **Action** should remain open until the gun is put away, or properly loaded and responsibly used.

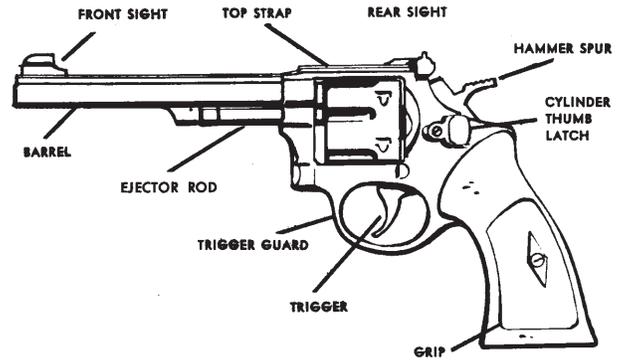
Every Action is opened by some kind of handle, or release lever, that will be different with each type of firearm.

HANDGUN NOMENCLATURE

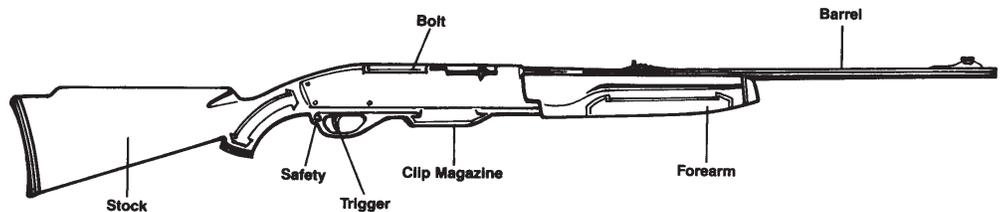
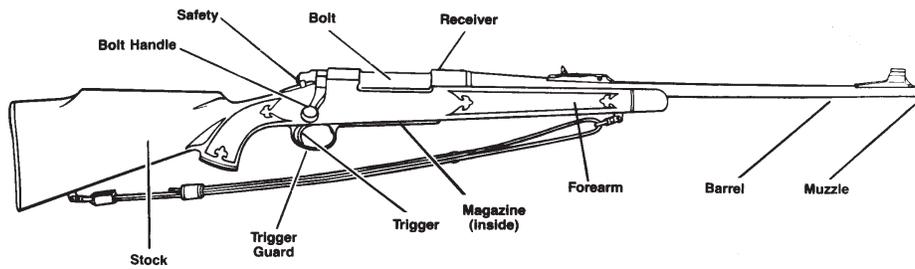
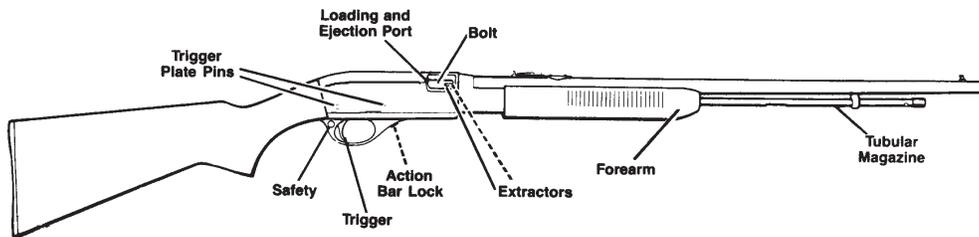
Semi-Automatic



Revolver



LONG GUN NOMENCLATURE



MAGAZINE

The magazine is a device which holds extra cartridges in a firearm. There are internal and external detachable magazines and tubular magazines. If the magazine is not removable, as is the case with most tubular magazines and some box magazines, operate the action until all cartridges are extracted. Be sure to keep your fingers away from the trigger while this is being done. If the action does not lock open when the magazine is empty, insert a block of rubber, hard plastic or wood into the action to keep the bolt carrier away from the breech face

ACTION TYPES

Hinge Action (Used on single-barrel and double-barrel rifles and shotguns, and some handguns.)

The hinge on a hinge action firearm operates just like a hinge on a door. On many hinge-action guns the barrel will tip down to reveal



the chambers. In others, such as the rolling block type, the barrel remains in place, but the rear of the action breaks opens backward.

Either type of action will open by means of a release lever located at the rear of the barrel or beneath the barrel as part of the rear part of the trigger guard, or by means of a release button



directly in front of or behind the trigger guard. **To open** either type of hinge -action, the release lever or button is pressed and the barrel or barrels are pressed downward (or the breech will open backwards). A quick glance usually will tell you if it is loaded, but it is safer to insert the finger into the chamber to be sure there is no cartridge in place. Hinge-action guns have no magazine and cartridges are loaded singly directly into the chambers.

A sub-category of hinge-action firearms includes



some break-open revolvers and a few single-shot and semi-automatic pistols in which the barrel tips

down. The barrel of a single-shot hinge-action pistol will tip down to reveal the chamber; if a cartridge is in place it can be removed with the other hand.

In the case of the hinge-action break-open revolver, the release lever will also cause the rear of the cylinder



(magazine) to be tipped up so that the cartridges or empty cases can be removed by tipping them out onto a table, or by pulling them out individually with the fingers.



In the case of the semi-automatic pistol with tip-up barrel, the magazine



release on the grip or frame should be pressed and the magazine removed before the barrel is released to tip up and expose the chamber.

Bolt Action (Used on rifles and shotguns, as well as a few special handguns and airguns.)



A bolt action firearm operates in the same manner as a door bolt and may even look very similar. The bolt

handle should be lifted up and pulled all the way back. It is then possible to see and even feel the chamber with the finger to see if it is loaded. If the gun is loaded a cartridge will normally be extracted when the bolt is pulled back.

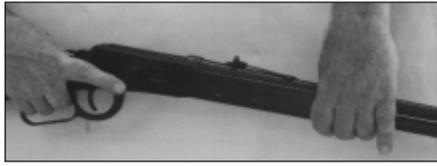


Occasionally the extractor won't

work properly. For that reason, the chamber should actually be checked by sight and finger touch to be certain it isn't loaded. While the action is open locate the magazine if there is one and check to be certain it, too, is unloaded. If the external box magazine protrudes below the stock or barrel, it should be removed by pressing the magazine release button located above the magazine.

Lever Action (Used on rifles, and some airguns.)

A lever action firearm can be identified by the metal handle which is located as part of the rear portion of the trigger guard. This type of action



is so named because it operates just like a lever. To open the action the

lever (handle) is pulled down and away from the stock. It is then possible to see and feel the chamber to be certain the gun is unloaded.

While the action is open locate the magazine and check to be certain it, too, is unloaded. It

may be necessary to operate the

lever to open and close the action

several times to be



sure the magazine is empty. If after two or three operations of the lever no cartridge is ejected, it

can be safely assumed that the magazine is empty. **Keep the finger away from the trigger**

and the barrel pointed in a safe direction while doing this.

Pump Action (Used on rifles and shotguns, and some airguns.)

A pump action firearm is also referred to by



several other names.

Sometimes it is called a

slide or trombone action because the wooden forend located below the barrel is pumped back and forth in order to operate the action.

When forend is pulled back toward the trigger guard, it will open the action. If the gun is

cocked, loaded or not, a release must be



pressed before the pump will operate. The release is usually located just in front or just behind the trigger guard. When the action is open, it is easy to tell by sight and touch that it isn't loaded. While the action is open locate the magazine and check to be certain it, too, is unloaded. If you do not know how to empty the

magazine safely, it may be necessary to pump the forend back and forth several times to be sure the magazine is unloaded and empty.

Keep the finger away from the trigger and the barrel pointed in a safe direction while doing this.

Semi-Automatic or Auto-Loading Action (Used on rifles, shotguns and handguns.)



The action of a semi-automatic firearm (frequently incorrectly referred to as an "automatic" since

it loads the next shot from the magazine automatically but requires a separate pull on the trigger to fire each shot) is opened by pulling back a handle on rifles and shotguns, or the slide on handguns. Most semi-automatics will lock open when pulled fully to the rear but some must be held open in order to look inside to see if they are unloaded. With semi-automatic pistols and semi-automatic rifles with detachable

magazines, always remove the magazine before drawing



the slide back to open the action. If the semi-automatic rifle has an internal box magazine, open the action by drawing back the bolt handle, then try to remove any cartridges which are visible in the magazine.

While the action of the semi-automatic rifle or shotgun is open, locate the magazine and check to be certain it, too, is unloaded. If you do not know how to unload an internal magazine, it may be necessary to work the bolt handle back and forth several times to be sure the magazine

is empty, particularly on semi-automatic shotguns with tubular magazines. **Keep the finger away from the trigger and the barrel pointed in a safe direction while doing this.**

HANDGUNS

Generally speaking, there are four types of handguns: semi-automatic and single-shot pistols, revolvers and derringers. Most of the single-shot and derringer models are of the hinge-action type.

Semi-Autos

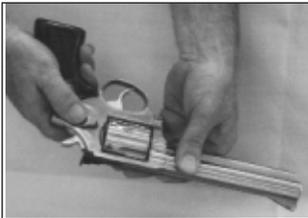


The semi-automatic pistol operates much the same as a semi-automatic rifle and shotgun. The action is opened by grasping the slide and pulling it to the rear.

When the slide is locked back, the magazine is removed. Visual inspection of the chamber will show if it is unloaded.

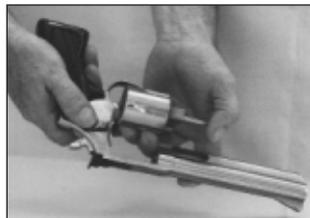


Revolvers



The revolver is easily identified because of the cylindrically-shaped magazine. The magazine which is called a cylinder, acts as the chamber

when properly aligned with the barrel. Opening the action of a revolver is done in different ways depending on the make and model. Many revolvers have a latch type handle or release on the side which allows the cylinder to swing out. Some have a release at the top which lifts up, hinging beneath the barrel just in front of the cylinder. In both of these cases, the complete cylinder is exposed and it is easy to see if it is loaded.



Some revolvers have cylinders which cannot be swung out or lifted up and must be loaded and unloaded through a loading gate on the side. In order to determine if a revolver of this type is loaded the hammer should be



pulled back slowly, being careful that the gun is pointed in a safe direction, to "half-cock" position. This can



be determined by the first click which is heard as the hammer is drawn back. The loading gate on the side, just behind the cylinder is swung out and the cylinder rotated slowly. If cartridges are in the cylinder they may be removed one at a time by forcing them out with the ejector rod which is located alongside the barrel.

Muzzle Loading Firearms



The term muzzleloader is an obvious one because of how the gun is loaded-

through the muzzle. Powder is poured into the barrel and a lead ball or bullet is put into the barrel on top of it. A small hole (flash hole) located at the closed end, usually at the side, just above the trigger, allows a flame or spark to enter the barrel, ignite the powder and fire the gun. Depending on the type of muzzleloader the flash hole is located on the barrel in different places and in different ways, but the end result is the same.

It is possible for a muzzle-loader to have been loaded many years ago,



stored in different ways throughout the years and still be loaded and dangerous. One simple procedure will prove whether or not a muzzleloader is loaded. Insert a wooden dowel which is longer than the barrel, into the muzzle



until it will go no further. Mark the dowel at the muzzle. Remove the dowel and position it on

the outside of the barrel with the mark at the muzzle. The dowel should reach the flash hole. If it does not, the gun may be loaded and dangerous-take it to a gunsmith right away. (This technique applies to muzzleloading handguns as well.)

CAUTION: War Souvenirs

There are many different types of foreign-made guns, some of which operate very differently from American-made guns. If you are not sure how to open the action and make the gun safe, wait until a qualified person shows you how.

Exceptions to the Rule



Double-action-only (DAO) pistols such as those made by Glock and Smith & Wesson do not have a separate safety lever. To open the action, remove the magazine first, then pull the slide to the rear all the way, which should eject any cartridge still in the chamber. Check visually and manually to see if a cartridge has been left inside the chamber. When you remove the magazine, the slide will not lock open

automatically. You will have to pull the slide back and manually lift the lock-open lever, or insert a block or other object in the ejection port to hold the action open.



Some of the Smith & Wesson Sigma series pistols have an unusual magazine release system.



There is no magazine release button or catch. Instead, the bottom of the magazine must be inched together from both sides to remove the magazine. These pistols also have no automatic lock-open feature and should be wedged open to prevent firing.



Some small pocket pistols do not have safety levers or lock-open levers, and the magazine release latch may be underneath the grip. Keeping the finger away from the trigger and trigger guard, remove the magazine, then pull the slide back and prop back the slide by inserting a block or pencil stub in the ejection port.

FIVE FUNDAMENTAL RULES OF SAFETY

1. Always keep a gun pointed in a safe direction.
2. Always keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.
3. Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.
4. Never point any gun at anything you don't intend to destroy.
5. Never put a trigger lock on a loaded firearm.

WANT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GUNS?

Here are a number of other sources:

1. If time permits, contact the manufacturer of the particular firearm(s). The name of the maker and their address should be stamped on the gun, usually the left side.
2. Contact your local police or sheriff's department, using non-emergency phone number, or the nearest office of your state fish & game or conservation department.
3. Contact a federally licensed gun dealer or gunsmith; addresses and phone numbers are listed in your phone directory, usually under the heading "Guns & Gunsmiths."

FOR ADDITIONAL SAFETY INSTRUCTION

Contact any of the sources above, or:

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

11250 WAPLES MILL ROAD

FAIRFAX, VA 22030; PHONE: (703) 267-1000

The NRA offers a wide range of firearms safety courses for adults and young adults through certified instructors, as well as specialized school programs like Eddie Eagle and police training programs.

NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION

11 MILE HILL ROAD

NEWTOWN, CT 06470; PHONE: (203) 426-1320

NSSF offers a community-oriented safety and firearms responsibility program called "HomeSafe," which focuses on various methods for the safe storage of firearms, including vaults and trigger and action-locking mechanisms.

Additional Copies of "GunSafe" are available from:

Second Amendment Foundation

12500 NE 10th Place

Bellevue, WA 98005

Phone: (425) 454-7012 Fax: (425) 451-3959

www.saf.org