

# Gun Safety

## Safe Gun Handling

There are three rules of safe gun handling.

1. **ALWAYS** point the barrel of the gun in a safe direction. A safe direction is defined as a direction where if the gun discharged, nobody would get hurt. The best direction to point a gun is generally at the ground and to the side. This is known as the Golden Rule of Gun Safety. (Be aware that the 'safe direction' may change as you change direction.)
2. **ALWAYS** keep your finger **off** the trigger until you are ready to fire. There is a natural tendency to place the index finger inside the trigger guard. This **MUST** be avoided. Condition yourself to place your shooting hand index finger along the side of the frame.

If you stumble and begin to fall while holding a firearm, please be aware that your hand and fingers will begin to clench naturally during the fall. That is why you must condition yourself to place your trigger finger outside the trigger guard when handling or carrying a gun.

There is no reason whatsoever that your finger should be on the trigger unless you have safely and appropriately acquired your target and your sight picture and are ready for the trigger squeeze.

3. **ALWAYS** keep the action open and the gun unloaded until you are ready to use it. The action is the moving parts of the gun that allow loading, unloading, firing and extraction of the empty case or shell. If you are not ready to use it, keep the action open and unloaded.

## Gun Safety at All Times

**ALWAYS** treat every gun as if it is loaded and ready to fire. An excuse often heard following an accidental death is that "...I thought it was unloaded." **ALWAYS** handle the gun as if it is loaded, even if you know it is empty.

**NEVER** target shoot or hunt with a firearm when you are too tired or fatigued to continue to pay attention and operate a firearm safely.

**NEVER** point a gun at something or someone that you don't intend to shoot at. Remember this old saying, "Don't point a gun at anything you are not prepared to destroy."

Check the action of the firearm every time you pick it up. Condition yourself to do this. Check that action again, even if you just checked it.

**Wear eye and ear protection as appropriate.** Inviting a hot piece of metal or powder in your eye is not a very good idea, and can cause serious injury. ALWAYS wear protective glasses. You should have ear plugs or ear protection muffs and use them according to the instructions.

**NEVER TAKE A GUN AWAY FROM SOMEONE BY PULLING ON THE BARREL!** If they have their finger on the trigger, pulling on the barrel could discharge the gun and injure you. This is the most common type of accident among young people.

**NEVER** use alcohol and drugs before or during shooting. Alcohol or drugs can impair judgment. Mistakes are more likely to happen under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Be vigilant about safety, don't drink alcohol or use drugs or use some prescription drugs while handling a gun. Alcohol or drug use before or during the handling and/or firing of a gun will drastically increase the likelihood of accident, injury, or death.

Be especially careful when shooting into water and avoid ricochets. Bullets can skip off the surface of water and then **change direction** too! Don't shoot into water whenever possible. Don't shoot heavily metal objects such as junked cars, old propane tanks, and abandoned refrigerators. Ricochets have been deadly in this type of situation.

NEVER rely solely on the safety device of the gun.