



North Dakota 4-H

Nature Trails

Firearm Safety



Objectives

You will learn about 1) the safe methods needed when handling firearms and 2) the proper care and storage of firearms.

Introduction

Many Americans own firearms. It is very necessary that they be handled properly to avoid accidents. Become familiar with the requirements for safe handling and storage of firearms. All firearms should be treated as if they are loaded. **NEVER POINT A GUN AT ANY PERSON.**

Ten Commandments of Firearm Safety

The following is a list of basic rules to follow when handling firearms.

1. Always **POINT** the muzzle in a safe direction. Be able to **CONTROL** the direction of the muzzle even if you should stumble.
2. Treat every firearm as though it were **LOADED**.
3. **UNLOAD** firearms when they are not in use. Keep the action open when the firearm is stored and carry it in a case to the shooting area.
4. Be sure the barrel and action are **CLEAR** of obstruction and that you have the **PROPER** ammunition for the firearms you are carrying.
5. Be sure of your **TARGET** before you pull the trigger.
6. Never **POINT** a firearm at anything you do not want to shoot. Avoid all horseplay with a firearm.
7. Never **CLIMB** a fence, tree, or **JUMP** a ditch with a loaded firearm. Never **PULL** a firearm toward you by the muzzle.
8. Never **SHOOT** a bullet at a flat, hard surface or at water.
9. Store firearms and ammunition **SEPARATELY**.
10. **AVOID** alcohol and other drugs before or during shooting.

1. Think about each rule for firearm safety. Give one reason for each rule. What can go wrong if you ignore these rules?

REASON	WHAT COULD GO WRONG?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Primary Rules

All firearm accidents could be avoided by knowing and observing the simple safety principles of holding appointing a firearm. You need to learn and **practice** these commandments.

1. *Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.* A “safe direction” means in a direction that, if the firearm discharges, it will not cause injury or damage. Anticipate the worst. Assume your gun may go off. Take precautions so that no one would get hurt if it goes off. Inside a building a firearm should **NOT** be pointed where the bullet might penetrate and hurt someone on the other side. Instead, firearms should be pointed at exterior walls. Safety-conscientious firearm handlers will never point the muzzle of a firearm at another person. They will not allow a gun to be pointed at them. Students of firearm safety should know and recognize when a firearm is not being handled safely. It is their responsibility to inform others.
2. *Make sure the firearm is unloaded before handling it.* Safe firearm handlers check every firearm by opening the action. Look and feel inside the breech or chamber to make certain the firearm is not loaded. **NEVER take another person’s word for safety.** Safe firearm handlers assume the responsibility themselves. “I didn’t know the gun was loaded” is never an acceptable excuse.
3. *Always treat the firearm as though it were loaded.* This is a good basic rule of thumb to avoid the accidents that may happen because of mechanical or human error. Always follow this rule to be prepared for any situation.

Safety at Home

Home is where youth will probably come across a firearm. It is estimated that three out of every four households nationwide possess one or more firearms. How firearms are stored, cleaned and handled in the home needs to be studied by every family.

Safety in the home should begin by locking up all firearms. Store ammunition in a **separate, locked** location. Drawers, closets, under beds or in corners are not safe places to leave guns. Ammunition should not be left within reach.

Firearms kept as collector’s items should always be stored unloaded. Treasured relics and war-time souvenirs should be displayed out of reach or kept locked with other firearms.

Safety in the Field

There are times when you need to be on guard against possible accidents. These times include:

- When you've had just enough experience to think you know all the answers. Accidents in the field can happen if you don't follow all the rules.
- When carrying a gun. Be very careful handling guns around the home, camp or near the car. Be alert for rocks, holes and other hazards when in the field.
- When plinking. Plinking is shooting at informal targets. Beware of the temptation to "horse around." Never allow yourself or your friends to cause a tragedy.
- When you are tired. At the end of a long day's hunt, reflexes may become dulled. Gun carrying is relaxed. Watch for carelessness and try to avoid it.
- When you first spot game. The excitement sometimes causes you to rush into a careless shot. This eagerness cannot be felt in a class or on the training range. It comes naturally when spotting game. When you first see game, double your caution. Be sure to carefully identify your target.
- When a hunting buddy forgets or ignores the safety rules. Tell him immediately. He may be a close friend, but anyone careless with a gun is careless with your life. If he can't improve, be his friend someplace other than around firearms.



You need to learn how to carry firearms when you go out in the field. The safest way to carry is probably the two-hand carry which gives the best control of the gun and the muzzle. With this carry, the small of the stock is gripped with the trigger hand. The fore end is held with the other hand. The gun is carried diagonally across the body with the muzzle pointed up and away. Other carries are the cradle carry, the side carry, the trail carry and the sling carry.



Cradle Carry



Shoulder Carry



Side Carry



Trail Carry

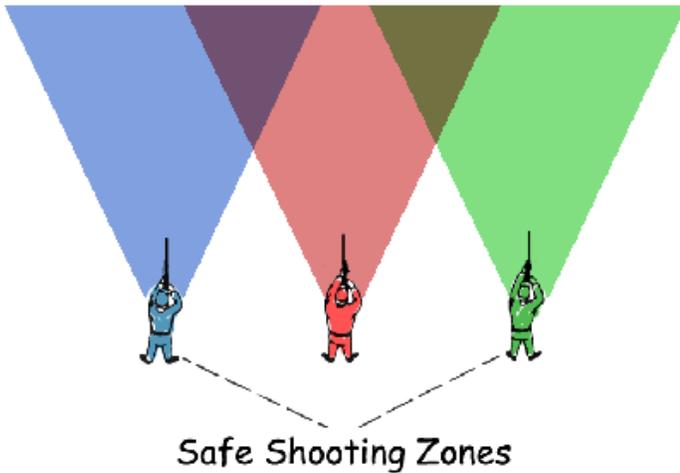


Sling Carry

In all carries the following rules apply:

1. **Keep the muzzle under control** and pointed away from all people, animals and your self.
2. **Keep the safety on** until ready to fire. **BE CAREFUL!** Most safeties block the trigger and nothing else. A hard blow in the right place can still fire the gun. A safety can wear out or it may not work. Handle every gun as if it were loaded and the safety off.
3. **Keep the fingers outside the trigger guard** and not on the trigger. Fingers should only touch the trigger when firing. Covering the trigger guard with the hand will help prevent other objects from hitting the trigger.
4. When target practicing, **all firearms should be left unloaded until shooters are ready to fire** at the targets. Placement of targets is also important. Make sure that nothing behind the targets can be injured or damaged or cause bullets to ricochet.

Watch Where You Shoot



If you are hunting with other people, everybody should agree BEFORE the hunt on the area each shooter will cover. Don't move to any other position. This is very important. Care must be taken so that others are not mistaken for game.

This illustration shows the common shooting zones used with two or more hunters.

Never shoot at a bird that flies back across the line of hunters. If a bird flies low between two hunters, forget the shot. Never let any gun point at another hunter. If you are following game with your gun, shoot only in your zone. Never swing your gun out of your zone. Keep your muzzle under control. Don't shoot if you can't see the target clearly.

Obstacles in the field can cause safety problems. Weather can produce hazards to the shooter. Wet, slippery ground is a danger. Mud, snow and ice can make walking difficult. Formations and obstructions such as steep banks, downed timber or ditches all need to be handled carefully. Crossing a fence, entering a boat or climbing a tree are particularly dangerous when carrying a gun.

Unload your gun when traveling on slippery ground, steep hillsides, uneven or unstable ground. If you should fall, hold the gun securely. DON'T throw the gun away from you. Afterwards, check the action and barrel for damage, dirt and obstructions.

When hunting with another shooter, unload your gun and open it before handing it to your companion. Take both unloaded guns while your partner crosses a fence. Never point the gun at another person.

When entering and leaving a boat, handle your gun by the muzzle. In the boat, guns should be held carefully. Always point them in a safe direction.

Exercise

1. Why would the shoulder carry be dangerous if you were in front of someone?

2. Why would the side carry be dangerous if you were behind someone?

3. Why is the two-handed carry also called the "ready" carry?

Transporting Firearms



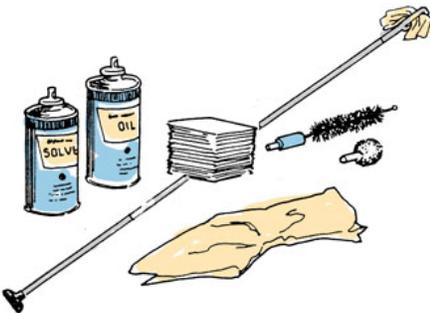
Transport firearms in a case in the trunk.

You are responsible for your firearm at all times. A firearm should be unloaded before it is put into a vehicle. The best way to transport a firearm in a vehicle is unloaded, inside a case, in the trunk. This keeps it safe and out of sight.

Firearms should not be leaned against automobiles, trees, fences or other insecure rests. Firearms that are taken care of properly are not only safer, but also last longer and need fewer repairs.

Gun Cleaning and Storage

A gun should be cleaned inside and out if it has been exposed to mud, sand, rain or snow. If moisture has formed on the metal parts (sweating occurs when a cold firearm is brought into a warm home) or if the gun has been stored uncovered and exposed to the air for a long time it should be cleaned before it is used.



Cleaning equipment should include a cleaning rod, flannel patches, powder solvent and light gun oil. A cleaning cloth treated with silicone is also advisable. Always check to be sure that the gun is EMPTY. Make sure that no ammunition is nearby.

Clean the firearm from the breech end (rear of the firearm). Too much oil or grease can be dangerous – just a few drops will do for most jobs. Too much oil on the safety can stop its action.

Fingerprints left on a firearm work as an acid and can corrode the metal.



Clean barrel and metal parts with good commercial solvent.



Clean bore until dry patch comes through as clean as possible



Run oily patch through barrel



Bore should be cleaned through breech end where possible



All metal parts should get a light coat of oil



Store guns in a horizontal position



After storage run clean patch through bore before firing



Remove all excess grease and oil

When storing firearms, make sure they are UNLOADED. Store firearms in a locked cabinet. Be sure to store ammunition separately in a locked compartment. When different types of ammunition are store together, each kind should be kept separate. Each kind should be in its own container to avoid mixing.

Exercise

1. Circle the unsafe firearm practices in each of the following situations.

