

10 things you should NEVER do after a self-defense shooting:

When it comes to armed self defense, it's usually not the shooting itself that trips you up legally. More often than not, it's what you do afterward that gets you in hot water.

Here are 10 things you should avoid after using your gun in self defense.

NEVER:

Call 911 in a panic. No matter how tough you are, your body and brain will be a mess after you pull the trigger and see a body lying on your living room floor. Take a moment to breathe deeply, calm down, and get your thoughts in order before you call authorities. Consider learning 4-square breathing to relax.

Leave the scene. Unless you're in danger, stay put. You may feel an overwhelming need to seek out friends or family or run away, but don't. That could be misinterpreted as fleeing the scene which could give the appearance of guilt.

Move or tamper with evidence. It's natural to want to "tidy up," especially if you're in your home. This is unwise. Touch nothing. If there are others nearby, make sure they do the same.

Have your gun in your hand when the police arrive. Police will be responding to a "man with a gun" or "shots fired" call and won't know who's the good guy and who's the bad guy. They will view anyone holding a gun as a threat and will deal with you as such. In short, reholster your gun or set it down if you don't want to get shot.

Make a statement to police before you talk to your lawyer. Police have a job to do and you need to be cooperative, but you don't want to say too much because anything you say will be used against you. What should you say? There are many opinions on this, but here is one formulation:

“My gun is laying over there, and that is the gun that I used to shoot my attacker in self defense because I feared for my life. I do not want to say anything else until I have had time to talk to my attorney. I want to cooperate with the investigation completely, but I'm very upset right now and I need to talk to my attorney first. I hope you understand.”

Fall for good cop bad cop. You think you're too smart to fall for this routine, but you're not. You'll be upset and you'll want to talk, especially to anyone who appears sympathetic. Law enforcement officers are not necessarily your enemy, but they're not your friend either. Shut up. Talk to your lawyer before you make any statement to police.

Try your case on the spot. Police have more than one way to get you to talk. Aside from good cop bad cop, they might challenge your use of lethal force. You'll want to argue your case, but don't. Again, shut up. You're not a lawyer and you're not in a courtroom, not yet anyway.

Lecture police on the law or your rights. One of the worst things you can do is get belligerent or act superior. Police are human beings and will react like anyone else if you challenge their authority, belittle their intelligence, or talk down to them. No matter what police say, even if they say or do something you believe to be incorrect, this isn't the time to get into a debate.

Fail to use the word "sir." Most police are good, decent people who have a difficult job. Treat them with respect. Phrases such as "yes sir" and "no sir" will go a long way toward showing responding officers that you are the respectable, upstanding citizen you know yourself to be.

Be surprised if you're treated like a criminal. It's best to assume that you will be handcuffed, placed prone on the ground, locked in the back of a cruiser, or even jailed. It takes time to sort out the truth of any shooting, and police are likely to do any or all of these things. Don't take it personally. Don't resist or argue. Cooperate fully and just let it all happen.