

Just Purchased Your Brand-New AR-style Rifle?

February 6, 2025

Purchasing a new AR-style rifle is thrilling, and it's natural for every new owner to want to head straight to the range and start shooting. We share this enthusiasm, but before you do, we suggest taking the following steps to ensure your rifle is safe, reliable, and ready to perform as expected.

We suggest doing the following few items before you fire your weapon (as we do):

1. Inspect.
2. Check functionality.
3. Clean and Lube.
4. Check functionality.
5. Dry Fire Train.
6. Go to the Range and enjoy!
7. Clean, Maintain and Log.



1. Inspect your Rifle

- a. The absolute very first thing you should do is ensure your rifle is clear (unloaded) (unloaded) and safe. ALWAYS assume any firearm is loaded until you verify for yourself that it is not.
- b. This should be the first thing you do with any firearm. New firearms are inspected before packaged and shipped by the factory, but things can come loose during shipping. Always double check that all attachment points are secure and tight with no play or movement where there should be none! This includes handguards, stocks, barrels, grips, castle nuts, bolt carrier group gas key – everywhere one part attaches to another part of your rifle!
- c. Perform a visual inspection as well and make sure there is no obvious damage, misaligned parts, loose parts, dents, dings, etc. Make a note of any damage that is cosmetic – blemishes, light scratches, light tool marks, etc.
- d. Any critical issues you find should be corrected before you attempt to live fire your weapon. If you are not sure how to correct or if you are not sure if it impacts the safety, functionality or performance of your rifle, check with professional.

2. Check functionality

- a. The absolute very first thing you should do is ensure your rifle is clear and safe. ALWAYS assume any firearm is loaded until you verify for yourself that it is not. Yep, you will hear this a lot because it is one of the most basic safety steps for handling any firearm!
- b. Verify the basic functionality of your rifle by pulling the charging handle back and cycling the BCG (Bolt Carrier Group).
- c. Test the Safe / Fire selector switch.
- d. Verify the Bolt catch functions properly.
- e. Verify magazine release (use an empty magazine for this).

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- f. After all this, verifying the loading cycle using a dummy round or snap cap to simulate the actual firing.
 - g. This might seem a little dull and boring to do, but it is much better to identify any issues now and not at the range where a potential malfunction can ruin your excitement at the range.
 - h. If you encounter any issues, be sure to address them before live-firing at the range.
 - i. Once the successful check is complete, you are one step closer to live firing your rifle!
3. Clean and Lube
 - a. Despite being a brand-new rifle, it is essential to clean and lubricate it before firing.
 - b. Again, ensure your rifle is clear and safe before breaking it down to clean and lube.
 - c. Firearm manufacturers often apply greases or oils to protect parts during shipping. These greases and oils can and will collect debris and leave a residue behind. Run some patches or use a bore snake to clean the barrel and apply a light coat of cleaner, lubricant, and protectant (CLP) to key components like the bolt carrier group.
 - d. Proper cleaning and lubrication will ensure smooth and proper operation of your rifle and can minimize wear and tear in critical areas where metal-on-metal contact occurs.
 - e. Neglecting the proper cleaning and lubrication of your rifle can lead to cycling problems or premature wear and tear on your rifle's parts.
 4. Check Functionality
 - a. Again, ensure your rifle is clear and safe.
 - b. Verify the basic functionality of your rifle (again because you just put it back together) by pulling the charging handle back and cycling the BCG (Bolt Carrier Group).
 - c. Again, Test the Safe / Fire selector switch, verify the Bolt catch functions properly and verify magazine release (use an empty magazine for this).
 - d. Again, verifying the loading cycle using a dummy round or snap cap to simulate the actual firing. Pay close attention to your BCG and ensure that it fully seats forward. With brand new rifles, you may need to use the BCG Forward Assist the first few times you chamber a round as it "breaks" in.
 - e. Once again, this might seem a little dull and boring to do, but it is much better to identify any issues now and not at the range where a potential malfunction can ruin your excitement at the range. If you encounter any issues, be sure to address them before live-firing at the range.
 - f. Once the successful check is complete, you are almost ready to live firing your rifle!
 5. Dry Fire Train
 - a. What? Dry fire train? YES!
 - b. Dry fire training is one of the best ways to know your new rifle before you get to the range and send actual rounds down range.
 - c. First and foremost, ensure your gun is clear and safe. Dry fire train away from live ammo and never aim at anything that you do not intend to hit – even when dry fire training! Again, safety first and foremost.
 - d. Invest in some snap caps with rubber bases for dry fire training – this will let you train almost all aspects (magazine loading, cycling, squeezing the trigger, ejecting, etc.) of your new rifle without damaging the firing pin!

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- e. Dry fire training will help you know the trigger action of your new rifle. It helps ensure proper functionality and above all else, gets you used to holding your new rifle in the way you will at the range. As they say, practice makes perfect.
 - f. We use dry fire exercises to ensure our rifle functions, to know the trip point of our trigger and to set proper stock length (we use adjustable stocks) and placement for our shooting stance.
 - g. We will go through dry fire exercise until the entire sequence feels natural and comfortable to us.
 - h. Note that there are companies out there that offer laser-based dry fire training systems.
 - i. Laser-based dry fire drills offer several benefits for shooters, including: improved accuracy, enhanced muscle memory, safe practice in any environment, cost-effective training by saving ammunition, ability to practice advanced drills without risk, immediate visual feedback on shot placement, and the potential to identify and correct technical flaws in shooting form; making it a valuable tool for both beginner and experienced shooters to refine their skills without the need for a live range. In later posts, we will provide some reviews of some of the systems that we have used.
6. Go to the Range and Enjoy
- a. The moment you have been waiting for is here and it is time to head to the range!
 - b. As always, follow all the range rules, basic safety requirements and enjoy live firing your new rifle.
 - c. This is a time that you will be able to enjoy yourself and know that you will have no issues because you took the basic steps to ensure proper functioning of your rifle. Get used to the live action of your rifle, properly sight it in and become one with your rifle (as they say 😊).
7. Clean, Maintain and Log
- a. After every live fire event with our rifles, we do a quick field check and clean.
 - b. The field check is a quick safety check to ensure your rifle is clear and safe and that nothing loosened, or any type of issue exists after the live firing.
 - c. The cleaning is essentially a wipe down. It is not a full breakdown and cleaning.
 - d. Once we exit the range, we will do a full breakdown and clean and lubricate our rifle so that it is good to go the next time we want to go to the range.
 - e. One thing that we do is maintain a record, a “shot book”, that details our trips to the range. We record types of ammunition used and load sizes, number of rounds fired, map our results from the live firing and note any adjustments and/or special circumstances from the exercise such as jams, misfires, etc.
 - f. The last part of this shot log is our cleaning and lubrication practices and notes on any changes in our rifle from the last time we used it, changes, scratches, blemishes, damage, etc.
 - g. Many companies offer these types of logs or shooting books, but for us, we use a custom book that we developed over time (combination DOPE Book, Maintenance and notebook), and our shot books travel with each rifle (and handgun) we own and use.

Why does all this extra effort matter?

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Investing in a new AR-style rifle requires proper preparation and discipline to ensure long-term enjoyment. Follow these four essential steps—inspection, function testing, cleaning, and logging—to boost safety, reliability, and performance.

By taking these precautions, you'll enhance your shooting experience and ensure your rifle is range ready. Omitting these steps can lead to loose components, malfunctions, or significant failures. A well-prepared rifle is safer, more reliable and more enjoyable.

Cleaning and lubricating your AR-style rifle removes factory residue, ensuring optimal operation from the start. Detailed inspection and function tests familiarize you with its components, easing troubleshooting and boosting confidence.

Maintain a shot log to track usage and anticipate part replacements, preventing unexpected issues. This practice helps extend the rifle's lifespan and maintain performance over time.

For us at TLN Tactical, this is a discipline that we follow the same as we always follow the safety rules and responsibilities of gun ownership.

Happy and safe shooting!

