

Just Do It Safely

Knowing and practicing firearms safety is an essential part of owning a gun.



There was a time when a person learned safe gun handling from a parent or other older family member. Sometimes that worked just fine, and sometimes it didn't. I was lucky: My Uncle Taylor was the "gun guy" in our family and he was stern task master when it came to safe gun handling. He didn't much care if I hit the target as long as I did it in a safe, responsible manner. "And, for goodness sakes, try not to shoot yourself. I have enough trouble getting along with your mother as it is," I think he was joking about that part.

One segment of our firearms community are gun enthusiasts. They own quite a few guns and can quote you chapter and verse about a whole lot more guns and assorted gear. Their hobby is shooting and training. But, we have a growing portion of our firearm family who own a gun merely for personal protection. They aren't hobbyists and, for the most part, don't know what they don't know.

Recently, a woman purchased a gun for defense. My guess is that it was a striker-fired semi-automatic without an external safety. She knew that many women carried guns in their purses, so she dropped her new purchase right in there with all the other stuff that lives in women's purses. Then came the day when she was digging around in there for something and the gun went off.

My point is this ... a person doesn't have to be a firearm enthusiast, but they do need to know how to operate their chosen defensive gun safely. They need to understand what is a safe carry method and what isn't. And they need to understand that different types of guns may have different safety concerns. Just because neighbor Fred carries his 1911 with the hammer back doesn't mean that that would be a good idea for me to do with my double-action revolver. And dropping a gun into a purse or pants pocket, with all sorts of other stuff in there, is just not a good idea, nor a safe one.

I sometimes cuss and fuss about this whole tradition that Americans are all just born shooters. Or that some relative can teach us all we'll ever need to know about guns, marksmanship and safety. There is a better way. We are blessed today with a large number of training opportunities, and I wish that more gun owners would take advantage of them.

The National Rifle Association sponsors classes all over the country that focus on gun safety above all other factors, at reasonable prices, too. In addition, there are quite a number of shooting schools around the country do similar professional training.

The very best thing that we can do as firearm enthusiasts is convince the new gun owner to take advantage of this sort of training. It provides a shortcut to developing shooting skills and, more importantly, it teaches the new gun owner to do it safely.