

Basic Firearms Handling- Rule #1

Rule 1: Treat all firearms as if they are loaded.

This is a rule, that is too often overlooked. This rule should be followed every time you handle a firearm. If you unload a firearm, and confirm it is unloaded, it should be treated as if it were loaded. Whether you are handling a firearm at the range, your home, gun show, gun shop, or cleaning a firearm, treat the firearm as if it is loaded. This rule can be achieved by following the 4 basic rules of safe firearms handling, pointing the firearm in a safe direction and keeping your finger (primary safety) off the trigger.

Below are some examples of safe firearms handling.

- Anytime you pick up a firearm, handle and manipulate the firearm the same way each time. Establish a good grip, or hold on the firearm, point it in a safe direction and keep your finger (primary safety) off the trigger. One way to establish a good grip on your firearm(s) is to establish touch points. These are areas on your firearm that you touch each time you pick it up. This consistency will help establish safe firearms handling at home, the range, holstering, upholstering or any other relevant place.
- If you are unloading a firearm be sure to keep your finger (primary safety) off the trigger and keep it pointed in a safe direction and follow the proper procedures for unloading that particular firearm.
- Anytime you are going to clean the firearm, even if it is a quick wipe down, unload the firearm first and remove the ammunition from the immediate area. Again, treat the firearm as if it were loaded.
- Anytime someone hands you firearm, you should always check and make sure that it is unloaded. Even if the individual tells you it is unloaded, you should always check for yourself and continue to treat the firearm as if it were loaded.

By following the four basic rules of safe firearms handling, and the examples of safe firearms handling, you are not only ensuring your safety, but the safety of those around you.

Basic Firearms Handling- Rule #2

Rule 2: Never point a firearm at anyone, or anything unless you are ready and willing to kill that person, or destroy that object.

This rule should be followed at all times. If you unload a firearm, verify that it is unloaded. You should always follow the four basic rules of safe firearms handling. Rule #2 should be followed anytime you are handling a firearm, which includes your home, the range, gun show, gun store, or any other relevant place. You should always be aware of where the gun is pointing and ensure that it is pointing in a safe direction, this is called muzzle discipline. Even if you set a firearm down, you should ensure that it is unloaded and pointed in a safe direction. Training aids, or training guns are a great tool to use when training others and ensuring safety when conducting firearms training. These training guns are generally blue, or red, but some are also orange, as well as other colors.

Holstering and unholstering is another area where rule 2 is sometimes violated. If you are drawing your firearm from your holster, make sure that your support hand is out of the way. When holstering your firearm, be sure that there is no material that can snag on the firearm, and that, your support hand is out of the way, and do not point the firearm at any other part of your body. Take extra care when utilizing a holster that does not retain its shape. Holsters made from neoprene, nylon and even some leather holsters will collapse when the gun is drawn and this requires some assistance with the support hand to open up the holster before the firearm can be placed into the holster.

This is where people will often times point the firearm at their own hand, or fingers, which is a violation of rule 2.

Flagging and sweeping are two terms that you and others that own, or work around firearms should know.

- Flagging is when a firearm is being pointed at something, or someone, even if it is unintentional.
- Sweeping is similar to flagging, except it is when you pass the muzzle of a firearm by someone or something.

Practice muzzle discipline and always point a firearm in a safe direction at all times.

Rule 3: Keep your finger (primary safety) off the trigger until you are ready to shoot

This cannot be stressed enough. Use the touch points as discussed in Rule 1 to help when you are handling a firearm, as well as unloading, or loading a firearm.

Unless a firearm malfunctions, a firearm should not fire unless the trigger is pulled, or in some cases dropped in a very specific way. Keeping your finger off the trigger will help keep that firearm safe. When practicing at the range, your finger should be off the trigger until you are ready to shoot the target. Remember, “your finger lives on the frame and only visits the trigger.” Keeping your finger on the side, or frame of the firearm, as well as using touch points, will also give you a natural point of aim until you are ready to shoot the target.

Rule 4: Always make positive target identification and be sure of what is to the left, right and beyond your target.

You are responsible for every round that is discharged from your firearm. If you are unsure about what is beyond your target, or around your target, do not shoot until you are certain it is safe. Once a firearm is fired, you cannot take it back. Any actions that take place are final.

As stated before, firearms by themselves are not inherently dangerous. The danger comes with carelessness, and improper handling, as well as improper storage of a firearm.