

## SHOOTING A GUN

**1. Seek Proper instruction.** Attend a reputable firearms safety handling course or seek private instruction before attempting to use a firearm. Before handling a new gun, learn how it operates. This includes knowing its basic parts, how to safely open and close the action, and how to safely remove any ammunition if loaded. Remember, a firearm's mechanical safety device is never foolproof. The safety device can never replace safe firearm handling.

**2. Wear eye and ear protection as appropriate.** Firearms are loud. They can also emit debris and hot gases that can cause injury. For these reasons, safety glasses and ear protectors are recommended.

**3. Be sure your gun and ammunition are compatible.** Only cartridges or shells designed for a particular gun can be safely fired by that gun. Most guns have their cartridge or shell type stamped on the barrel. Ammunition can be identified by information printed on the box and stamped on each cartridge. Do not fire the gun if there is any question about the compatibility of the gun and ammunition

**4. Carry only one gauge/caliber of ammunition when shooting.** Smaller ammunition can be accidentally placed in a gun chamber designed for larger ammunition, creating an obstruction and a very hazardous situation. Remove unfired ammunition from clothing when

you are shooting to avoid accidentally mixing different ammunition next time you go shooting.

**5. Be sure of your target – and what's beyond.** Be absolutely sure you have identified your target without any doubt. Equally important, be aware of the area beyond your target. This means observing your perspective area of fire before you shoot. Never fire in a direction where there are people or any other potential for mishap. It's simple: *think first, shoot second*.

**6. Don't mix alcohol or drugs with shooting.** Alcohol, as well as any other substance likely to impair mental or physical functions of the body, should not be used before or while handling firearms.

## OWNING & HANDLING A GUN

**7. Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.** There's a natural tendency to place your finger on the trigger when holding a gun. Avoid it! Your trigger finger should be extended, pointing forward, pressed against the side of the firearm, above the trigger area.

**8. Keep the action open and the gun unloaded until ready to use.** Whenever you pick up any gun, immediately check the action and check to see that the chamber is unloaded. If the gun has a magazine, make sure it is empty. Even if the magazine is empty or removed, a cartridge may still remain in the firing chamber. If you do

not know how to open the gun's action, leave it alone or get help from someone who is knowledgeable.

**9. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.** Whether you are shooting or simply handling your gun, never point the muzzle at yourself or at others. Common sense should dictate which direction is safest depending on your location and various other conditions. Generally speaking, it is safest to have the gun pointed upward or towards the ground.

**10. Store your guns safely and securely when not in use.** Hiding guns where you think children or others will not find them is not enough. Always store your guns unloaded and locked in a case or gun safe when not in use, with ammunition locked and stored in a separate location.

**11. Consider temporary off-site storage if a family member may be suicidal.** When there is an emotional crisis (like a break-up, job loss, legal trouble) or a major change in someone's behavior (like depression or anger, more drinking) that causes concern, storing guns outside the home until situation improves may save a life. Friends and some police departments (if an officer is called to your home to assist) may provide temporary storage. Any firearms retailer can recommend and sell you a secure gun safe or gun lock. Putting time and distance between a firearm and a suicidal person saves lives.