

THE WRITER'S GUIDE TO FIREARMS & AMMUNITION

NATIONAL SHOOTING
SPORTS FOUNDATION®



WWW.NSSF.ORG



11 FACTS ABOUT FIREARMS AND THE FIREARMS INDUSTRY

- \$4.1 billion a year: Size of the U.S. firearms and ammunition industry.
- \$27.8 billion: Total economic impact of hunting and shooting on the U.S. economy.
- 60/40: Approximately the annual production ratio of long guns (rifles & shotguns) compared to handguns (pistol & revolvers).
- 1: Percent of fatal firearm accidents involving children, the lowest cause listed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- 300 million: Estimate of how many firearms are in the United States
- 85 million: Estimate of the number of firearms owners in the United States.
- 49: Number of states that allow concealed carry of a handgun.
- Regulation: The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives regulates the manufacturing, transfers and retail sales of firearms.
- SHOT Show: Industry's annual trade event and largest trade show of its kind in the world, with more than 58,000 industry professionals, 1,600 exhibiting companies and 2,000 media members attending.
- National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF): trade association for the firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting sports industry. With a mission to promote, protect and preserve hunting and the shooting sports, NSSF has more than 6,000 manufacturer, distributor, retailer, range and media members.
- Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI): An association of manufacturers that creates and publishes industry standards for firearms and ammunition, coordinates technical data and promotes safe and responsible firearms use.

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NSSF ONLINE NEWSROOM AND PROGRAMS

Visit the NSSF online newsroom at www.nssf.org/newsroom to subscribe to press releases, legislative alerts and the electronic newsletters *Bullet Points* and *Pull The Trigger*. The newsroom also contains links to background papers on key firearms issues, the NSSF photo library, NSSF Blog and research and survey information.

INTRODUCTION

Writers and their readers prize accuracy and fairness. To help ensure these qualities are part of your firearms-related stories, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the trade association for the firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting sports industry, has developed the “Writer’s Guide to Firearms and Ammunition.”

In our experience working with members of the media, we believe the majority make a good effort to report accurately on our issues. Despite having good reporting skills, however, many writers lack knowledge of and experience with firearms and the shooting sports, and that sometimes is reflected in their stories. This booklet can help. The “Writer’s Guide to Firearms and Ammunition” provides plain-language reference material about firearms and ammunition, firearms laws, common inaccuracies, a glossary of terms, programs of NSSF and helpful websites.

The booklet can be viewed online at www.nssf.org/newsroom or downloaded. It is available as an e-book as well.

America has an estimated 85 million firearms owners. They are passionate about their Second Amendment rights and about their target shooting and hunting activities. When they read stories that contain inaccurate references to firearms, they are quick to point out errors in comment fields, websites and blogs. Having the Writer’s Guide to Firearms and Ammunition by your writing terminal or on your smartphone is a handy way to check a term or a fact and can eliminate inaccuracies.

In addition to providing the “Writer’s Guide to Firearms and Ammunition,” NSSF is available to assist any communicator with his or her story. You can reach a member of NSSF’s communications staff at 203-426-1320 or email info@nssf.org. Have a suggestion to make the Writer’s Guide better? Email it to us; we welcome the input.

SECTION 1:

GLOSSARY

For additional pictorial and video information on hunting and shooting, visit www.youtube.com/thenssf and www.nssf.org/newsroom.

ACTION

The combined parts of a firearm that enable a round to be chambered, fired and ejected.

ACTION, AUTOMATIC

A firearm that chambers, fires and ejects cartridges continually as long as the trigger is depressed and there are cartridges available in the feeding system (i.e., magazine or other such mechanism). Automatic action firearms are machine guns. Note: Since 1934 it has been unlawful to sell or possess an automatic firearm without special permission and licensing from the federal government, in addition to other requirements.

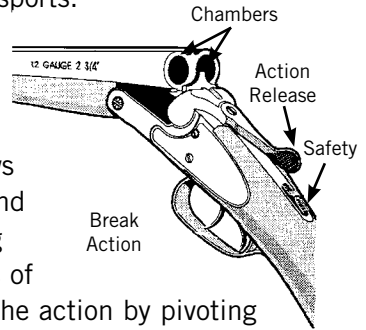
ACTION, BOLT

A firearm, typically a rifle, that is manually loaded, cocked and unloaded by pulling a bolt mechanism up and back to eject a spent cartridge and load

another. Bolt-action firearms are popular for hunting, target shooting and biathlon events. A bolt-action rifle allows the shooter maximum accuracy, but may be too slow for some shooting sports.

ACTION, BREAK

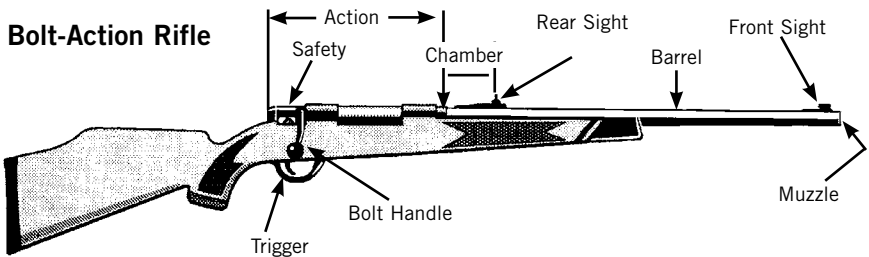
A firearm that allows loading and unloading by means of opening the action by pivoting the barrel(s) down and away from the breech while activating a release lever. Most commonly used in single-shot and double-barreled shotguns and rifles.



ACTION, LEVER

A firearm, typically a rifle, that is loaded, cocked and unloaded by an external lever usually located below the receiver.

Bolt-Action Rifle



Lever-Action Rifle



Note: The type of rifle used in most Western movies is a lever-action.

ACTION, PUMP

A firearm that features a movable forearm that is manually actuated to chamber a round, eject the casing and chamber a subsequent round.

ACTION, SEMI-AUTOMATIC

A firearm in which each pull of the trigger results in a complete firing cycle, from discharge through reloading of the chamber. It is necessary that the trigger be released and pulled for each cycle. These firearms are also called “auto-loaders” or “self-loaders.” The discharge and chambering of a round is either blowback operated, recoil operated or gas operated. Note: An automatic-action firearm loads, discharges and reloads as long as ammunition is available and the trigger is depressed. A semi-automatic firearm only discharges one cartridge with each squeeze of the trigger.

AMMUNITION

A loaded cartridge, consisting of a primed case, propellant and a projectile. Among the many types of ammunition are centerfire, rimfire and shotshells.

AMMUNITION, ALTERNATIVE

Ammunition whose projectile

(bullet, slug or shot) is made of a metal other than lead, in contrast to “traditional ammunition” containing lead core components.

AMMUNITION, SMALL ARMS

A military term used to describe ammunition for firearms with bores (the interior of the barrel) not larger than one inch in diameter.

AMMUNITION, TRADITIONAL

Ammunition containing lead core components, in contrast to “alternative” ammunition that contains other metals such as steel, copper or bismuth.

ARMS, SMALL

Any firearm capable of being carried by a person and fired without additional mechanical support.

ARMOR PIERCING

See BULLET, ARMOR PIERCING

AR RIFLE

Carbine based on the AR platform that was designed by the ArmaLite company in the 1950's. It is the civilian, semiautomatic version of the military's M16. The prefix does not stand for “automatic rifle” or “assault rifle.” See Modern Sporting Rifle.

ASSAULT RIFLE

Intermediate-caliber rifle, chambered for cartridges such

as 7.62x39mm, with a selector switch that determines full or semi-automatic fire, such as the M16, and that is the standard infantry weapon of modern armies. The term is purposely and wrongly applied by anti-gun forces to AR-style rifles, which function as semi-automatics only.

ASSAULT WEAPON

Political term purposely and wrongly used to describe AR-style rifles. The federal assault weapons ban defined a semi-automatic rifle as an assault weapon if it could accept a detachable magazine and had two or more of the following: pistol grip, folding or telescoping stock, flash suppressor or barrel threaded to accept one, bayonet mount or grenade launcher. The ban expired in 2004. See Assault Rifle.

BALLISTICS

The science of studying projectiles. Ballistics can be “interior” (inside the gun), “exterior” (in the air), or “terminal” (at the point of impact). Ballistic comparison is the attempt to microscopically match a bullet or fired cartridge case to a particular firearm.

BARREL

That part of a firearm through which a projectile travels. The barrel may be rifled (i.e., with

spiral grooves on the interior) or smooth bore (i.e., a smooth interior barrel with no grooves, usually a shotgun).

BB

Spherical shot having a diameter of .180” used in shotshell loads. The term is also used to designate air rifle shot of .175” diameter.

BENCHREST

A table specifically designed to eliminate as much human error as possible by supporting a rifle for competitive shooting or sighting-in purposes.

BIG BORE

In America, any firearm using a centerfire cartridge with a bullet .30” in diameter or larger.

BIRDSHOT

Small pellets, usually lead or steel, used in shotshells ranging in size from #12 (less than the diameter of a pencil point) to #4 (about .10” in diameter) used for bird and small-game hunting.

BORE

The interior of the barrel forward of the chamber.

BORE DIAMETER

On rifled barrels, the interior diameter of the barrel from the tops of the lands (the highest point). On a smooth-bore barrel, the interior dimension of the

barrel forward of the chamber (not including the choke on shotgun barrels).

BUCKSHOT

Large lead pellets ranging in size from .20" to .36" diameter, normally loaded in shotshells used for deer hunting.

BULLET

A non-spherical projectile for use in a rifled barrel.

BULLET, ARMOR PIERCING

A projectile or projectile core which may be used in a handgun which is constructed of certain hard materials, such as steel and brass, listed in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(17)(B) or whose jacket weighs more than 25% of the total projectile. Note: The Gun Control Act of 1968 (18 U.S.C. § 922 (a) (7)) prohibits the manufacture or sale of armor-piercing ammunition, except for use by law enforcement and the military.

BULLET, DUMDUM

A British military bullet developed in India's Dum-Dum Arsenal in 1897-98. It was a jacketed .303 caliber rifle bullet with the jacket nose left open to expose the lead core in hopes of greater effectiveness. Further development of the bullet was not pursued because the Hague Convention of 1899 outlawed

such bullets for warfare.

BULLET IMPRINTING

The grooves embossed into a bullet by barrel rifling. Note: When a bullet travels down the barrel, the spiral grooves (or rifling) leave an imprint on the bullet. The matching of the marks on a bullet to the rifling of a particular firearm can be an important tool for law enforcement in determining whether a bullet was fired from a particular firearm.

BULLET, FULL METAL JACKET

A projectile in which the bullet jacket (a metallic cover over the core of the bullet) encloses most of the core, with the exception of the base. They are used mostly for target shooting and by the military.

BULLET, HOLLOW POINT

A bullet with a cavity in the nose, exposing the lead core, to facilitate expansion upon impact. Hollow point cartridges are used for hunting, self-defense, police use and other situations to avoid over-penetration.

BULLET, WADCUTTER

A generally cylindrical bullet design having a sharp-shouldered nose intended to cut paper targets cleanly to facilitate easy and accurate scoring.

BUTT

On handguns, it is the bottom part of the grip. On long guns, it is the rear or shoulder end of the stock.

CALIBER

A term used to designate the specific cartridges for which a firearm is chambered. It is the approximate diameter of the circle formed by the tops of the lands of a rifled barrel. It is the numerical term included in the cartridge name to indicate a rough approximation of the bullet diameter. It is expressed in either fractions of an inch (.30 cal.) or millimeters (7mm).

CARBINE

A rifle of short length and light weight originally designed for horse-mounted troops. Usually having a barrel of 20" or less.

CARTRIDGE

A single round of ammunition consisting of the case, primer, powder and one or more projectiles.

CARTRIDGE, CENTERFIRE

Any cartridge intended for use in rifles, pistols, and revolvers that has its primer central to the axis at the head of the case. Note: Most cartridges, including shotshells,



Centerfire
Rifle
Cartridge

are centerfire. Exceptions include 17 and 22 caliber rimfire ammunition. The rear end of a centerfire cartridge has a primer in its center, hence "centerfire."

CARTRIDGE, MAGNUM

Any cartridge or shotshell that is larger, contains more shot or produces a higher velocity than standard cartridges or shotshells of a given caliber or gauge.



Rimfire
Cartridge

CARTRIDGE, RIMFIRE

A cartridge containing the priming mixture in the rim of the base.

CARTRIDGE, SMALL BORE

A general term that refers to rimfire cartridges. Normally .22 caliber ammunition used for target shooting, plinking, and small-game hunting.

CHAMBER

In a rifle, pistol or shotgun, it is the part of the barrel that accepts the ammunition. In a revolver, it refers to the holes in the cylinder where the cartridges are loaded.

CHOKE

The constriction at the end of a shotgun barrel that controls shot dispersion. Chokes typically are cylinder, improved cylinder, modified, improved modified and full. Note: A cylinder choke produces a very wide shot

dispersion, whereas a full choke will provide a much tighter shot pattern. Different chokes are used for skeet, trap and sporting clays. In hunting, the type of game and conditions will determine choke type.

CHOKE TUBES

Interchangeable threaded cylinders having different choke diameters (e.g. modified, full) that screw into the muzzle of a shotgun to allow for different shot patterns. (See choke, above)

CLIP

A separate cartridge container to hold cartridges or shells in proper sequence for feeding into a specific firearm. It is a magazine charger, and unlike a magazine does not contain a feeding spring. Sometimes improperly called a Magazine.

COCK

To place the hammer, or striker, in position for firing.

CYLINDER

The round, rotatable part of a revolver that contains the

cartridge chambers.

DERRINGER

A generic term referring to many variations of pocket-sized pistols. The name comes from the pistol's original designer, Henry Derringer. Note: According to the American Derringer Company, Henry Derringer's name is spelled with one 'R.' The proper spelling of Derringer firearms is with two 'R's.

DISCHARGE

To cause a firearm to fire.

DUMDUM

See Bullet; Dumdum.

EJECTION

The removal of a cartridge (fired or unfired) from the breech of a firearm by means of a mechanical ejector.

EXTRACTION

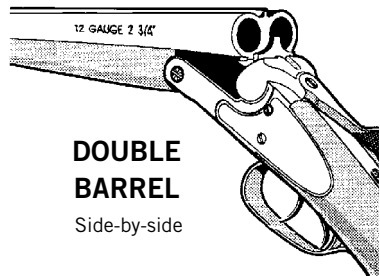
The withdrawal of a cartridge (fired or unfired) from the chamber of a firearm by means of a mechanical extractor.

FIREARM

An assembly of a barrel and action from which a projectile is propelled

DOUBLE BARREL

Two barrels on a firearm mounted to one frame. The barrels can be vertically (over-under) or horizontally (side-by-side) aligned.

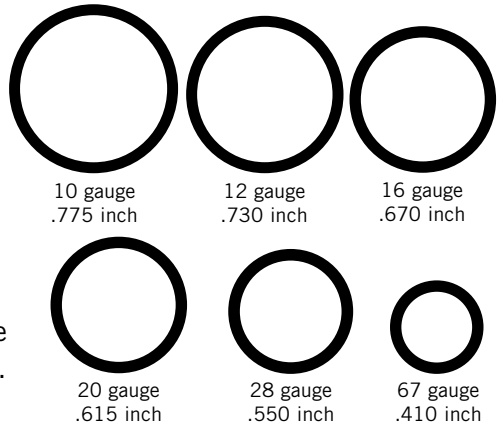


DOUBLE BARREL

Side-by-side

GAUGE

A term used to identify most shotgun bores, with the exception of the .410 shotgun. It relates to the number of bore diameter lead balls weighing one pound. Note: The .410 shotgun is a caliber. The .410 refers to the interior diameter of the barrel. Shown at actual size.



as a result of combustion.

FIRING PIN

The part of a firearm that strikes the primer of a cartridge to start the ignition.

FLASH SUPPRESSOR

An attachment to the muzzle designed to reduce muzzle flash. Note: A flash suppressor is not a silencer.

FULL COCK

On an exposed-hammer firearm, the position of the hammer when the firearm is ready to fire.

GROUP

A series of shots fired at the target used to adjust the sights or determine the accuracy of a firearm.

HALF COCK

On an exposed-hammer firearm, the position of the hammer about half retracted and intended to prevent release of the hammer by

a normal pull of the trigger.

HAMMER

The part of the firing mechanism that strikes the firing pin, which, in turn, strikes the primer.

HAMMERLESS

A firearm having an internal hammer or striker.

JACKET

The metal envelope enclosing the lead core of a bullet.

JAM

A malfunction that prevents the action from operating. Jams may be caused by faulty or altered parts, defective ammunition, poor maintenance or improper use of the firearm.

KICK

The upward and rearward movement of a firearm when it is fired. It is commonly called recoil.

LANDS

The highest surface of the bore of a rifled barrel.

LOAD

The combination of components used to assemble a cartridge or shotshell. The term also refers to the act of putting ammunition into a firearm.

MACHINE GUN

See ACTION, AUTOMATIC.

MAGAZINE

A receptacle on a firearm that holds cartridges or shells for feeding into the chamber. Magazines take many forms, such as box, drum, rotary or tubular, and may be fixed or removable.

MAGNUM

See CARTRIDGE, MAGNUM.

MISFEED

Any malfunction during the

feeding cycle of a repeating firearm that results in the failure of a cartridge to enter the chamber completely.

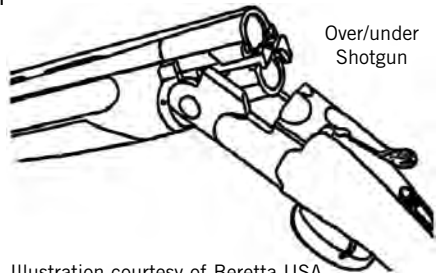
MISFIRE

A failure of the cartridge to fire after the primer has been struck by the firing pin, or the failure of the initiated primer to ignite the powder.

MUZZLE

The front end of a firearm barrel from which the bullet or shot emerges.

MUZZLE FLASH



MODERN SPORTING RIFLE

Semi-automatic rifle based on the AR platform widely owned for target shooting, hunting and home defense. See AR Rifle.



The illumination resulting from the expanding gases of the burning propellant particles emerging from the barrel behind the projectile.

MUZZLE LOADER

Any firearm loaded through the muzzle. Also called “black powder” firearms. They may be antique, replica or of modern (in-line) design.

NOSE

The point or tip of a bullet.

OVER AND UNDER (O/U)

A firearm with two barrels, one above the other, usually a

shotgun.

PATTERN

The distribution of shot fired from a shotgun. Generally measured as a percentage of pellets striking in a 30-inch circle at 40 yards.

PISTOL

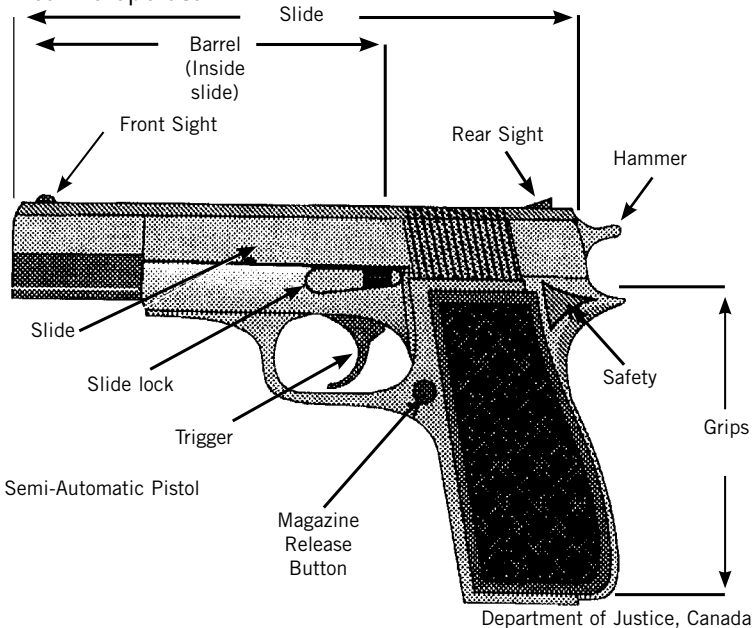
A term for a hand-held firearm with a single chamber. (A revolver has at least five chambers.)

PISTOL, DOUBLE ACTION

A pistol mechanism in which a single pull of the trigger cocks and releases the hammer.

PISTOL, SEMI-AUTOMATIC

The common but improperly used term to describe semi-automatic pistols. See ACTION, SEMI-AUTOMATIC for a description of how these firearms operate.



PISTOL, SINGLE ACTION

A pistol mechanism that requires the manual cocking of the hammer before the trigger releases the firing mechanism for the first round only.

PLINKING

The informal shooting at inanimate objects at indefinite points. Note: Plinking typically refers to casual shooting for fun and practice.

POWDER

Commonly used term for the propellant in a cartridge or shotshell. See also PROPELLANT.

POWDER, BLACK

The earliest type of propellant, allegedly first made by the Chinese or Hindus. First used for firearms in the 13th century, it is a mechanical mixture of potassium or sodium nitrate, charcoal and sulfur. It makes a large cloud of smoke when fired.

POWDER, SMOKELESS

A modern propellant containing mainly nitrocellulose or both

nitrocellulose and nitroglycerin. Relatively little smoke is created when fired.

PRESSURE

The force developed by the expanding gases generated by the combustion of the propellant.

PROPELLANT

The chemical composition that, when ignited by a primer, generates gas. The gas propels the projectile. See also powder.

RECEIVER

The basic unit of a firearm which houses the firing mechanism and to which the barrel and stock are assembled. In revolvers, pistols and break-open firearms, it is called the frame.

RECOIL

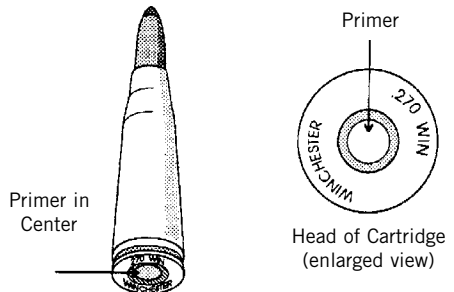
The rearward movement of a firearm resulting from firing a cartridge or shotshell.

RECOIL PAD

A butt pad, usually made of rubber, which reduces the recoil or “kick” of shoulder firearms.

PRIMER

An ignition component consisting of a brass or gilding metal cup, priming mixture, anvil and foiling disc. It creates a spark when hit by a firing pin, igniting the propellant powder.



RELOAD

A round of ammunition that has been assembled using fired cases. Note: Reloading is very popular among recreational target shooters, competitive shooters and hunters. In addition to being cost-effective, reloading enables shooters to develop ammunition specifically designed for particular shooting disciplines or games.

REVOLVER

A firearm with a cylinder having multiple chambers so arranged as to rotate around an axis and be discharged successively by the same firing mechanism. (A semi-automatic pistol is not a

revolver because it does not have a revolving cylinder.)

RIFLE

A firearm having spiral grooves in the bore and designed to be fired from the shoulder. By law, rifle barrels must be at least 16 inches long. Handguns usually have rifled barrels as well. See also, rifling.

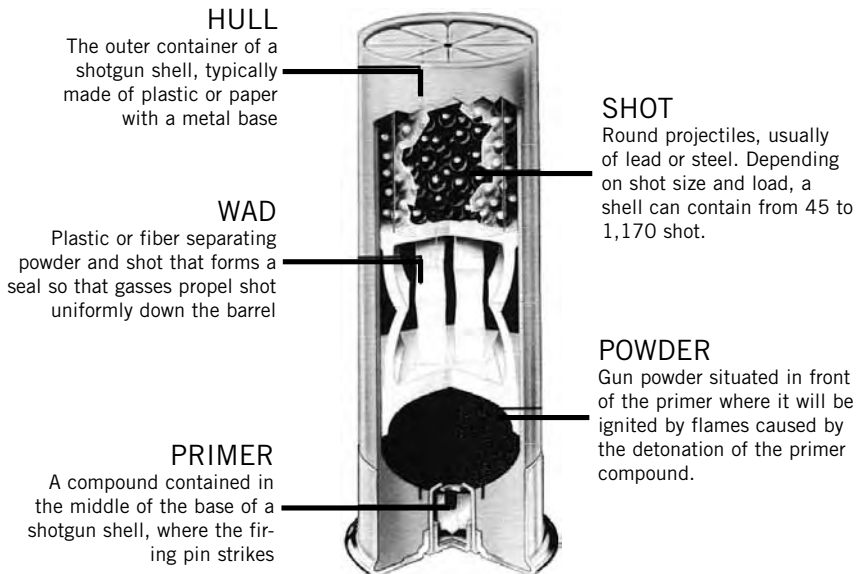
RIFLING

Spiral grooves formed in the bore of a firearm barrel to impart rotary motion to a projectile, to enhance accuracy.



SHOTSHELL

A round of ammunition containing multiple pellets for use in a shotgun.



Black's Wing & Clay, 1998

ROUND

One complete cartridge.

SAFETY

A device on a firearm designed to provide protection against accidental or unintentional discharge when properly engaged.

SEMI-AUTOMATIC

A firearm that fires, extracts, ejects and reloads once for each pull and release of the trigger.

SHOTGUN

A smooth-bore shoulder firearm designed to fire shells containing numerous pellets or a single slug.

SILENCER

A device attached to the muzzle of a firearm to reduce the noise of discharge.

SKEET

A clay target shooting sport with a shotgun. One shooter at a time fires at crossing clay targets.

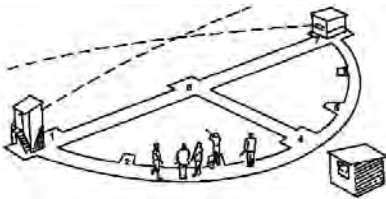


Illustration courtesy of Tennessee Tech University

SKEET GUN

A shotgun with an open choke specifically designed for clay target skeet shooting or close-range hunting.

SPORTING CLAYS

A sport in which shooters, using shotguns, fire at clay targets from different stations on a course laid out over varying terrain, intended to simulate bird and rabbit hunting.

STOCK

The wood, fiberglass, wood laminate or plastic component to which the barrel and receiver of a rifle or shotgun are attached.

TARGET, CLAY

A circular, domed frangible disc used as an aerial target for shotgun shooting games. Originally formed out of clay, modern targets are a combination of pitch and limestone. Dimensions and weights are regulated by trap and skeet shooting associations. They are often called “clay pigeons.”

TRADITIONAL AMMUNITION

See Ammunition, Traditional.

TRAJECTORY

The path of a bullet through the air.

TRAP

A clay target-throwing device, either power or hand operated.

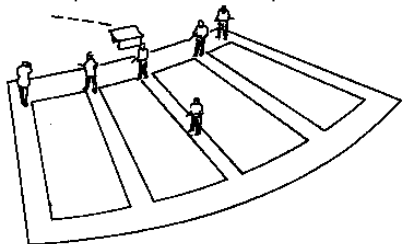


Illustration courtesy of Tennessee Tech University

TRAP SHOOTING

A clay target-shooting sport with a shotgun. Shooters fire at clay targets flying away from them. Shooters stand behind the trap at a distance from 16 to 27 yards.

TRIGGER, HAIR

A slang term for a trigger requiring very low force to actuate. Note: "Target" triggers are frequently used on competitive target rifles and pistols for increased accuracy. The reduced force needed to pull the trigger allows the shooter's firearm to remain steady.

TRIGGER LOCK

An accessory for blocking a firearm from unauthorized use.

TRIGGER PULL

The average force which must be applied to the trigger to cause the firearm to fire. Note: Typically, non-target model-firearms have a minimum trigger pull of three pounds. Double-action revolvers often have a long, heavy trigger pull of around 10 pounds.

UNLOAD

To remove all unfired ammunition from a firearm.

VELOCITY

The speed of a projectile at any point along its trajectory, usually designated in "feet per second."

WAD

A spacing device in a shotshell, usually a plastic cup or paper discs, that separates the propellant powder from the shot.

WEAPON

An instrument used in combat. The term should never be used in referring to sporting firearms.

SECTION 2: JUST THE FACTS

**The most up-to-date facts about
firearms laws, safety and economic
impact of hunting and target
shooting can be found at [www.nssf.
org/newsroom](http://www.nssf.org/newsroom).**

“THERE OUGHT TO BE A LAW ...” (AND THERE IS)

- ◆ You must be **18 years old** to purchase long guns (rifles and shotguns) and **21 years old** to purchase handguns.
- ◆ You must be 18 to purchase rifle or shotgun ammunition and 21 to purchase handgun ammunition.
- ◆ It is illegal for certain categories of people to ship, transport, receive or possess firearms. These categories include any person:
 - under indictment for, or convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year
 - who is a fugitive
 - who is an unlawful user or addicted to any controlled substance
 - who is an illegal alien
 - who has been dishonorably discharged from the military
 - who is subject to a restraining order from harassing, stalking or threatening an intimate partner or child
 - who has been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence
 - who has been adjudicated mentally defective, or had been committed to any mental institution
 - who was a citizen of the United States but has renounced citizenship
- ◆ Mail order sales or other transfers of firearms between individuals in different states are illegal.
- ◆ It is illegal to have, ship or receive a firearm that has its permanent serial number missing or changed.
- ◆ It is illegal to purchase a firearm with the intent to sell it to an unqualified third party. These are called “strawman” purchases.
- ◆ A federal firearms licensee must make an official record of every sale or transfer of all firearms and notify the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) if multiple firearms sales are made to any person in a single transaction.
- ◆ It is illegal to manufacture or sell ammunition specifically designed to defeat body armor.
- ◆ Theft of a firearm from a federally licensed dealer is punishable by imprisonment for up to 10 years and a fine of \$250,000 (18 U.S.C. §922(u)).

SAFETY FACTS

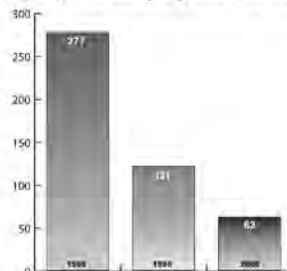
Accidental firearm-related fatalities are at their lowest point since record-keeping began in 1903. Today, the annual number of firearm-related accidents is down 79 percent, from a high of 3,200 in 1930, to 680 in 2008. (Source: National Safety Council, Injury Facts Report, 2010 edition)

Hunting is one of the safest activities in America with a 0.05 percent injury rate per 100 participants. Additionally, unintentional firearm-related fatalities have declined by 60 percent from 1,489 unintentional fatalities in 1989 to 600* in 2009. Source: CDC and National Safety Council Injury Facts 2011 edition (*preliminary data).

- ◆ The firearms and ammunition industry and associated groups have distributed tens of millions of safety brochures over the past 15 years. Source: SAAMI.
- ◆ Hunter education programs now involve more than 54,000 instructors and over 600,000 students annually, in all 50 states. Over 25 million have graduated since hunter education became a mandatory requirement to obtain a hunting license. Source: International Hunter Education Association.
- ◆ Annually, firearms are involved in fewer than 1 percent of all accidental fatalities. There are annually more accidental fatalities due to motor vehicles, falls, drownings, fires and burns, ingestion of food and/or objects, and poisoning than by firearms. Source: National Safety Council, Injury Facts Reports, 2010 edition.
- ◆ Firearms account for the lowest cause of injury among youth. Firearms are involved in less than 1.5 percent of all accidental fatalities among children.

Firearm-related Fatalities among Youth Down 78 Percent

Over the last two decades the number of unintentional firearm-related fatalities among youth 14 years of age and under decreased by 78 percent, and by 49 percent in the last 10 years.



Source: CDC WISQARS Injury Mortality Reports (2008 data)

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE SHOOTING SPORTS

The sporting firearms and ammunition industry in America is rich in history but is not “big business.” Sales at the manufacturer level are approximately **\$4.1 billion annually**. There are single companies in our nation that are many times larger than the entire firearms industry.

From excise tax sales projecting, sales break down roughly to $\frac{1}{3}$ **from handguns**, $\frac{1}{3}$ **from rifles and shotguns together** and $\frac{1}{3}$ **from ammunition**. Those percentages vary, sometimes significantly, from year to year, but, overall, that’s an accurate breakdown.

Beyond actual firearm and ammunition sales, however, the hunting and shooting sports have a fairly significant economic impact, particularly in rural areas. According to surveys by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others, the hunting and shooting sports generate some **\$67.6 billion in economic impact annually**, supporting more than 592,944 jobs. Source: NSSF 2011 Industry Intelligence Report.

According to Fortune magazine, “The dollars spent by hunters pack special oomph, because they hit small towns far off the interstate. There, merchants look to hunting season the way Macy’s looks to Christmas: it can make or break the year.”

The nation’s hunters and recreational shooters spend **\$27.8 billion annually** on equipment, including firearms, ammunition, clothing, reloading equipment, optics and accessories. Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Hunting- and shooting-related industries account for 183,000 jobs. Source: Firearms and Ammunition Industry Economic Impact report 2010.

More than **34.5 million** Americans participated in at least one of the shooting sports in 2009. That’s more than double the number of people that play baseball or soccer during the same period and nearly 10 million more than those who play golf. Source: (NSGA) National Sporting Goods Association.

The firearms and ammunition industry supports an **11% excise tax** on all rifles, shotguns and ammunition, and a **10% excise tax** on handguns, which raised more than \$402 million in 2010 for wildlife management, habitat acquisition, safety training and shooting range development. **Since 1937, \$6.8 billion has been raised**. Source: Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau.

**SECTION 3:
FIREARMS INDUSTRY
REGULATIONS**

One common refrain echoed by anti-gun advocates is that the firearms industry is unregulated. To most people, this sounds alarming. How can the gun industry have no oversight or government regulation? The truth is the gun industry ***is one of the most heavily regulated industries***. It is not, however, regulated by the Consumer Product Safety Act (CPSA) or the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

In 1976, the Consumer Product Safety Act was amended. In part, the amendment reads, “The Consumer Product Safety Commission shall make no ruling or order that restricts the manufacture or sale of firearms, firearms ammunition, or components of firearms ammunition including black powder or gunpowder for firearms.”

This exemption for firearms and ammunition was necessary because anti-gun advocates, namely Handgun Control, Inc., (now the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence) petitioned the Consumer Product Safety Commission in June 1974, to adopt “a rule banning the sale of bullets for handguns.”

Since it was not the intent of the Consumer Product Safety Act to empower the Consumer Product Safety Commission with the authority to ban ammunition, the petition was denied. The commission, in response to the petition, said, “The commission does not believe that Congress, in establishing the commission and in transferring to it the authority to administer the Federal Hazardous Substances Act, intended to confer upon the commission the authority to ban handgun bullets.”

Other industries are also exempt from the CPSA. For example, tobacco, motor vehicles, pesticides, aircraft, aircraft engines and boats are all exempt from the CPSA. Are these industries unregulated? Clearly not. A host of laws and regulations govern the manufacturing of these products. In a similar manner, numerous laws and regulations govern the firearms industry.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is the most prominent regulator of firearms. For example, in order to sell firearms, an individual must be licensed with ATF as a Federal Firearms Licensed (FFL) dealer. An FFL holder is required to keep meticulous records of all firearms acquired and sold. These records

include the firearm's serial and model number, the manufacturer, the caliber and type of firearm, the date of the transfer and the person to whom the firearm is sold. These records must be kept in a bound volume and ready for inspection by ATF agents.

Additionally, federal laws govern how and under what conditions a firearm may be sold to an individual. For example, every gun purchaser must complete an ATF form 4473. On this form, they must provide verification of identity and answer questions regarding any criminal history, mental competency and drug use, among other things.

Many firearms and firearm-related products are banned under federal law. For example, it is illegal to manufacture and sell to the public: sawed-off shotguns, machine guns and armor-piercing ammunition.

Federal law also requires manufacturers to include an indelible serial number on all firearms. The manufacturer must keep records of the serial number, date of manufacture, type of firearm and to whom it was sent. The ATF routinely traces firearms used in crime by contacting the manufacturer and recreating the chain of distribution.

Other agencies and regulatory bodies also regulate the firearms and ammunition industry. For example, the Federal Aviation Administration has regulations regarding transporting firearms on aircraft. Shipping regulations and package-labeling requirements promulgated by the Department of Transportation regulate how ammunition must be shipped. With a few specific exceptions, firearms can only be shipped across state lines between federally licensed FFL holders. Individuals cannot buy firearms through the mail.

In total, an estimated 20,000 federal, state and local gun laws are on the books. Some of these laws cover individual buyers; some govern what can be made and sold. Others regulate how and under what terms and conditions firearms and ammunition can be distributed throughout the country. Firearms and ammunition, while exempt from the CPSA, are subject to the same product-liability laws as other products. As such, the firearms and ammunition industry is dedicated to the manufacturing of quality, safe products for use by responsible, law-abiding citizens.

The Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI)

was founded in 1926 at the request of the U.S. government to create safety and reliability standards for the design, manufacture, transportation, storage and use of firearms, ammunition and components.

SAAMI is also an accredited standards developer for the ANSI. As such, SAAMI's standards for industry test methods, definitive proof loads and ammunition performance specifications are subject to ANSI review and various ANSI criteria.

According to ANSI, "approval of an American National Standard requires verification by ANSI that the requirements for due process, consensus and other criteria for approval have been met by the standards developer."

Standards are developed when the governing body, SAAMI, proposes a new standard and circulates the draft to canvasees. Canvasees for each standard include government agencies (such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Customs Service), non-SAAMI member companies and interested parties (such as the National Institute of Standards and Technology). Once the draft standard has been reviewed and returned to SAAMI with comments or corrections, the canvass group votes on whether or not to accept the standard. If there is disagreement and a canvasee opposes the standard, but the standard is accepted by the other members of the canvass group, an ANSI appeals process decides the matter.

It is ANSI and SAAMI policy that every five years the standards be revised or reaffirmed. Even if the standards remain the same, they must go through the approval process outlined above. Simply stated, the standards accepted by ANSI and promulgated by SAAMI are reviewed and accepted by outside experts, and every five years the validity of the standards are reaffirmed.

SAAMI has been audited by ANSI and received high marks for technical expertise, professionalism and competency. The audit concluded that "SAAMI staff is competent and knowledgeable concerning the SAAMI standards process and ANSI requirements. The standards are processed in a professional manner."

NSSF's "**Lock, Stock and Barrel**" video provides an introduction to and overview of the firearms industry. View it at nssf.org/video or on NSSF's YouTube Channel at youtube.com/thenssf.

SECTION 4:
PENALTIES FOR VIOLATING
FIREARM LAWS – A CASE STUDY

Many people call for more firearms laws without knowing or acknowledging the laws on the books. Let's look at a case study to see what laws are already in effect and what should happen to a career criminal who breaks the gun laws.

Scenario: Bob is a multi-convicted felon, a drug dealer and a fugitive. He lives in New York City. Five of Bob's "customers", all of whom are drug addicts previously convicted of felony drug trafficking, ask Bob to get them guns. Two of his customers live in New Jersey. Bob obtains a fake New Hampshire driver's license and other identification. He drives to New Hampshire, goes to five sporting goods stores, fills out the ATF forms, undergoes the National Instant Criminal Background Check (NICS) and purchases the guns. (His counterfeit identification enables him to get through the background check.) He immediately files the serial numbers off the guns, returns to New York and delivers them to his customers, knowing they will be used in a crimes of violence involving the drug trade.

Using the above scenario and looking at the Gun Control Act (United States Code, Title 18, Chapter 44), Bob should face considerable prison time. Keep in mind that numerous state and local laws were broken as well. In the interest of space, we will only look at the federal violations.

It was a federal felony for Bob — as a convicted felon, as a fugitive or as an unlawful drug dealer — to buy or receive or transport any firearm (§ 922(g)(1)-(3)).

It was a federal felony for Bob to exhibit false identification when purchasing the guns (§ 922(a)(6), § 924 (a)(1)).

It was a federal felony for Bob, a resident of New York, to buy firearms in another state and transport them back to New York (§ 922 (a)(3)).

It was a federal felony for Bob to sell firearms to persons who were not New York residents (§ 922 (a)(5)).

It was a federal felony for Bob to sell firearms to convicted felons or unlawful drug users regardless of where they lived (§ 922 (d)(1),(3)).

It was a federal felony for Bob to engage in the business of dealing in firearms without a Federal Firearms License (§ 922 (a)(1)(A)).

It was a federal felony for Bob to transport a firearm with an obliterated serial number (§ 922 (k)).

Penalties

The basic felony penalties for each of Bob's willful violations are fines, imprisonment or both. Bob could face up to a maximum of 5 or even 10 years in prison, depending on the violation. Each gun would constitute a separate count for each offense.

There is an alternative sentence of 10 years for knowingly violating six of the provisions (§ 924 (a)(2)), which would increase the total federal felony sentence to 470 years.

The penalty provisions of the Gun Control Act define additional offenses and enhanced penalties that would increase Bob's sentence further:

— Bob's knowledge that crimes would be committed with the guns he transported and sold would add 50 years of sentencing time (§ 924(B), (h)).

— Since Bob had more than three felony convictions, he is subject to a mandatory 75-year sentence (§ 924(e)(1)).

— Bob's trip to New Hampshire to acquire firearms to be used in illegal dealing in firearms is a felony carrying a sentence up to 10 years (§ 924(n)).

— Bob's conspiracy with his customers to purchase in another state and provide firearms to be used in a crime of violence is punishable by a sentence up to 20 years (§ 924(O)).

Conclusion

Eliminating illegal gun transfers requires that we enforce the laws on the books with a zero-tolerance policy and long prison terms for law-breakers and criminals like Bob.

SECTION 5:
EXAMPLES OF INACCURATE OR
MISLEADING COVERAGE

REPORTING ON FIREARMS AND FIREARMS ISSUES

Inaccuracies and factual errors about firearms and ammunition in news stories can damage the credibility of the news outlet and the writer, particularly in the view of America's 85 million firearm owners. The Off-target/On-target examples presented here, along with this booklet's glossary of terms, can help media professionals communicate accurately about firearms and ammunition.

OFF-TARGET

"[Personalized] weapons would be manufactured with technology, such as fingerprint recognition, that only allows the authorized user to fire it. Most legitimate gunmakers already utilize such technology."

—Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Associated Press

ON-TARGET

No gun makers manufacture firearms with owner-recognition technology. So-called "smart gun" technology is only in the development stages and is not being incorporated into mainstream gun manufacturing due to safety and reliability concerns.

EXPLANATION

"Personalized" or "smart gun" technology, while in development stages, is neither reliable nor available. A U.S. Dept. of Justice-funded project, researched by Sandia National Laboratories, concluded, "There is not currently a perfect smart gun technology." Owner-recognition technology, such as fingerprint recognition or a radio transmitter, requires a power source to work. Any technology that relies on a power source will fail, possibly at the worst time imaginable.

OFF-TARGET

"Haven't you been aware of the rising incidences of accidental or incidental deaths associated with guns?"

—Dan Thompson, Editor

ON-TARGET

To the contrary, accidental firearm fatalities are at the lowest levels since record-keeping began in 1903.

EXPLANATION

Over the last two decades, the annual number of accidental firearms-related fatalities declined by 42 percent, and for children under 14 by 77 percent in that same period.

The decline is attributed to a number of factors, including free firearm locking devices shipped with new firearms, safety and education programs sponsored by the firearms and ammunition industry, the International Hunter Education Association and the National Rifle Association, as well as technological advances in firearm design and manufacturing processes.

According to the National Safety Council's "Injury Facts 2009 Edition," accidental firearm fatalities are at historical lows and are continuing to decline. These statistics hold true even as the number of firearm owners has more than doubled during the same time period.

OFF-TARGET

"[Semi-automatic] high-powered weapons are of no value for hunting and their use for target practice seems dispensable."

—Dr. Jerome P. Kassirer, "New England Journal of Medicine"

ON-TARGET

Semi-automatic firearms, which have been around since 1885, fire only once each time the trigger is pulled. They are widely used for hunting, various types of recreational shooting and competition events including the Olympics.

EXPLANATION

Semi-automatic firearms are no more powerful than other types of firearms. They use the same ammunition as other types of firearms. Semi-automatic firearms are popular for hunting, trap, skeet, informal target shooting and formal marksmanship competitions. One reason semi-automatic firearms are popular for recreational shooting is that they tend to have less recoil. Because some of the energy generated by firing a round is used to cycle a fresh round, there is less impact pushed against the shooter's shoulder. Semi-automatic firearms are also useful in hunting situations when multiple, quick shots are needed.

OFF-TARGET

"The NRA opposed the ban on bullets that pierce police safety vests."

—Associated Press

ON-TARGET

The NRA opposed loosely written legislation that, if passed, would have outlawed 80% of all big-game ammunition.

EXPLANATION

Though the National Rifle Association did oppose efforts to ban so-called “cop-killer” bullets, this quote misrepresents the NRA’s position. From 1982 to 1986, the NRA opposed several loosely written legislative proposals that would have banned the manufacture and sale of some 80% of all sporting ammunition. Although some of the ammunition that would have been banned (such as large-caliber rifle ammunition used for hunting and long-range target shooting), can, by sheer velocity and energy, penetrate certain grades of protective body armor, technical experts of the ATF, FBI, Secret Service and Police Forensic Labs thought the definition of “cop-killer” bullets offered in the legislation impractical and unenforceable. NRA critics took the opportunity to claim that the NRA opposed banning “cop-killer” bullets.

OFF-TARGET

“U.S. Regulators have also been watching with concern all the gunmakers’ efforts to devise lightweight handguns made almost entirely out of plastic. Such weapons cannot be discovered by metal detectors similar to those used in the U.S. Capitol building.”
—”The Express” on “Sunday Investor News”

ON-TARGET

Polymer-framed handguns are not ‘almost entirely’ made of plastic, nor can they evade detection by security devices. Polymer-framed handguns have metal barrels, slides and internal parts that make them easily detectable by metal detectors.

EXPLANATION

The firearms industry has no interest in manufacturing a firearm that can evade x-ray or metal detectors. Polymer-framed handguns are currently in favor with law enforcement and civilians due to their corrosion resistance and lighter weight. Polymer-framed firearms have a proven track record of reliability and durability, even with high-performance law enforcement ammunition. Additionally, all firearms must be able to pass a federal detection standard.

OFF-TARGET

“The Ruger Old Army takes an expert 60 seconds to load, but an empty magazine can be easily removed and replaced with one which is already full.”

—Nick Parker, “The Sun” [London]

ON-TARGET

The Ruger Old Army is a muzzleloading black powder ‘cap and ball’ revolver that is slow to load and reload. Moreover, the Old Army is an antique replica revolver; it doesn’t have a detachable magazine.

EXPLANATION

A muzzleloading revolver is slow to load because each chamber requires the shooter to go through several steps, including pouring in loose black powder, putting in a ball and ramming it with a ram rod. There is no such thing as a magazine for a revolver of any type—black powder or smokeless powder. A magazine is a receptacle that holds several cartridges or shells for feeding into the firearm chamber. Revolvers, by contrast, are loaded by inserting cartridges into the cylinder. With each pull of the trigger, one round is fired and the cylinder rotates to the next position. Antique replica-type firearms are very popular and rarely used in crimes.

OFF-TARGET

“A trigger lock works to immobilize the gun’s trigger, making it impossible to fire the weapon until unlocked.”

—Ken Dixon, “Connecticut Post”

ON-TARGET

A trigger lock is a supplementary safety device designed to be affixed over a firearm’s trigger. Tests have shown that firearms equipped with a trigger lock can still discharge a round. As most trigger lock manufacturers warn, their products should never be used on a loaded firearm.

EXPLANATION

Trigger locks can be an effective safety measure on certain firearms, but locking devices are not a substitute for safe storage and handling. Although many locking and storage devices are widely available, no device will completely childproof a firearm. Trigger locks should never be used on a loaded firearm. NSSF’s Project ChildSafe program

distributes cable-style locks because most firearms must be unloaded before such a lock can be installed, thereby providing an extra level of safety.

OFF-TARGET

“Laser sights alleviate the need for manual aiming—just follow the red dot. If the dot is on the target, the target will be hit...laser sights, with their point-and-hit capability, may well increase the urban death toll.”

—Violence Policy Center, “The Boom In Guns”

ON-TARGET

Laser sights, firearm optics that project a beam of light at a target, are popular sighting devices that, by their mere presence on a firearm, make it no more or less accurate.

EXPLANATION

Misconceptions about laser sights abound. Some people believe that a laser sight actually steers the bullet to an intended target—like a guided missile from a jet fighter. Others think that a laser sight somehow enhances the lethality of a firearm. Laser sights do not have any relationship to ballistic or firearm capability.

In truth, laser sights project a 1/4 inch dot of red light on the target. With a laser sight, a shooter has little advantage over a conventional telescopic sight. The firearm and scope still need to be “sighted in” so that the point of impact of the bullet is the same as the point of sight. A firearm with a laser sight that is not “sighted in” is no more or less accurate than the same firearm with conventional sights.

OFF-TARGET

“We noted 43 suicides, criminal homicides, or accidental gunshot deaths involving a gun kept in the home for every case of homicide for self-protection.”

—Dr. Arthur Kellerman, “New England Journal of Medicine”

“For every case in which an individual used a firearm kept in the home for self-defense homicide, there were 1.3 unintentional deaths, 4.6 criminal homicides, and 37 suicides involving firearms.”

—Dr. Arthur Kellerman

ON-TARGET

The mere presence of a gun in the home does not increase the likelihood that an accident will occur.

EXPLANATION

This widely quoted “43 times” statistic is misleading. Several authoritative studies performed in recent years estimate there are between 760,000 and 3 plus million defensive firearms uses every year. The study from which the “43 times” figure was taken only considers a defensive firearms use as an instance in which the criminal was shot and killed. This is like measuring the effectiveness of the police solely on the basis of the number of criminals they kill. In the words of the author of the “43 times” study, “Our study does not include instances in which intruders are wounded or frightened away by the use or display of a firearm. A complete determination of firearm risks versus benefits would require these figures be known.”

OFF-TARGET

“The ATF must be given enhanced authority to regulate the manufacturers, importers, distributors and dealers in firearms. Stricter regulation of dealers in automatic weapons should also be imposed.”

—Violence Policy Center, *A More Comprehensive Strategy*

ON-TARGET

In addition to federal gun laws imposed by the National Firearms Act (1934), the Gun Control Act (1968), the Firearms Owner’s Protection Act (1986) and other laws, most states and some local jurisdictions have imposed their own firearms laws. All told, there are more than 20,000 firearms laws at the federal, state and local levels. Federal background checks are required for the purchase of any firearm from a dealer.

EXPLANATION

Calling for more firearms laws is a an over-simplified “solution.” Enforcing the laws already on the books to the fullest extent possible would help continue the reduction in the criminal acquisition and misuse of firearms. Additionally, the very few federally licensed dealers in automatic weapons (known as Class III dealers) undergo extensive criminal background checks and pay thousands of dollars

to obtain a permit. It would be difficult to imagine how “stricter regulation” of these dealers could be accomplished, or what further effect it could have.

OFF-TARGET

The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia last week persuasively ruled that the Constitution allows the District to ban possession of assault weapons . . . –N.Y. Times editorial

ON TARGET

The terms assault weapon and assault rifle should not be used to describe semi-automatic firearms, most notably AR-style rifles. “Assault weapon” is political term created in order to ban some semi-automatic rifles.

EXPLANATION

The federal assault weapons ban, enacted in 1994, restricted ownership of some semiautomatic firearms based on cosmetic reasons, not function. Studies have shown that the ban, as with other gun-control measures, could not be proven to reduce crime. The term is wrongly used to describe an AR-style rifle, which is the civilian, semi-automatic version of the military’s M16. These modern sporting rifles are among the most popular firearms in America today and are widely owned for target shooting, hunting and home defense.

OFF TARGET

Toxic lead ammunition is danger to wildlife; outlaw it in favor of greener options.” Cleveland Plain-Dealer blog headline

ON TARGET

No scientific evidence exists to warrant the extraordinary step of banning traditional ammunition, which is ammunition that contains lead core components.

EXPLANATION

Some raptors including bald eagles may ingest ammunition fragments left in the entrails of field-dressed game, causing sickness or mortality. Industry is concerned about this, but raptor populations have not been adversely affected (rather, they are increasing). Industry considers efforts to ban traditional ammunition an overreaction to this issue. Additionally, a study by the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention shows that eating game taken with traditional ammunition does not pose a human health risk. NSSF supports gun owners being free to choose the ammunition they think is best suited to their purpose, whether it's traditional ammunition or alternatives that use steel, copper or other metals.

OFF TARGET

Guns are flowing across the U.S.-Mexico border mainly because of illegal straw purchases at firearms retailers in the United States.

ON TARGET

Most of the firearms recovered in Mexico do not come from the United States.

EXPLANATION

A 2011 report by the STRATFOR research group called “The 90 Percent Myth,” which refers to the number of illegal guns in Mexico coming from the United States, “more political rhetoric than empirical fact.” According to the report, which is based on U.S. government statistics, less than 12 percent of the guns Mexico seized in 2008 have been verified as coming from the United States. See the NSSF Blog post:
www.nssfblog.com/report-shatters-myth-of-mexicos-gun-supply/

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Amateur Trapshooting
Association of America
Shootusa.org

National Sporting Clays
Association
NSSA-NSCA.org

International Defensive Pistol
Association
IDPA.com

Outdoor Writers Association of
America
OWAA.org

International Hunter Education
Association
IHEA.com

Professional Outdoor Media
Association
Professionaloutdoormedia.org

National Rifle Association
NRA.org

Single Action Shooting Society
sassnet.com

National Safety Council
NSC.org

Sporting Arms & Ammunition
Manufacturers' Institute
SAAMI.org

National Shooting Sports
Foundation
NSSF.org

United States Practical Shooting
Association
USPSA.org

National Skeet Shooting
Association
NSSA-NSCA.org

USA Shooting
USAShooting.org

NSSF PROGRAMS AND WEBSITES

Bullet Points newsletter	nssf.org/bulletpoints
Don't Lie for the Other Guy	dontlie.org
Educational literature/videos	nssf.org/education
Families Afield	familiesafield.org
First Shots	firstshots.org
Hunt and Shoot	huntandshoot.org
Hunting	nssf.org/hunting
Hunting Heritage Partnership	nssf.org/hunting/grants
National Hunting & Fishing Day	nhfday.org
Pull The Trigger newsletter	nssf.org/pullthetrigger
Project ChildSafe	projectchildsafesafe.org
Ranges/Range Report Magazine	nssf.org/ranges
Research	nssf.org/research
Retailers	nssf.org/retailers
Safety	nssf.org/safety
Shooting ranges	nssf.org/ranges
SHOT Business Magazine	shotbusiness.com
Where To Shoot	wheretoshoot.org
Wingshooting USA	wingshootingusa.org

NSSF IS A RESOURCE FOR MEDIA

We hope this guide proves to be a helpful resource that you can use when writing about firearms and ammunition. For more information about the firearms industry, gun-related issues and research related to hunting, shooting and firearm safety, visit www.nssf.org/newsroom or call 203-426-1320. Email suggestions for future editions of this booklet to info@nssf.org.



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