

“Always and Never”

-A Review of Shotgun Safety



Always keep the action of your gun except when standing on the shooting station, ready to shoot. The only exception to this rule is for over and unders, when they are placed in the gun rack. However, you should close it only as you place it in the rack and open it immediately as you retrieve it from the gun rack.

Never load your gun except when standing on the shooting station ready to shoot. Always unload your gun completely of both live and fired shells before turning around and walking off the shooting station. A gun is deemed to be loaded when it contains one or more shells in part of the mechanism including the breech, the magazine, or anywhere else.

Always keep your gun pointed in a safe direction. This includes even when it is unloaded and/or the action is open. A safe direction is one where even if it were to go off, it would not cause injury or damage.

Never load or fire a gun if there is any doubt about its ability to operate safely and/or reliably. A gun, like any other machine, requires regular cleaning and maintenance. Always ensure that it receives maintenance or repair immediately if there is any question concerning its ability to function correctly.

Never attempt to load or fire any gun unless you are familiar with its operation. With any new or strange gun you should acquaint yourself with how it works and how to load and unload it safely before proceeding to use it on the shooting range with live ammunition. Read the owners' manual!

Always use shot that is sized appropriately for the game you are shooting. For Skeet, that means 9's. For 5-Stand #7-1/2 is the largest we can use. Larger shot travels farther and can easily leave the range area.

Never rely on a safety catch. Safety catches are designed for hunting and defense weapons—they have no practical use on a target gun. If the gun is loaded and closed it must be considered ready to use and inherently dangerous if misused. Some target guns have the safety removed or locked off to prevent misuse. Keep the action open when not firing!

Never mix your ammunition. Both 20 and 28 gauge shells will lodge into a chamber that is one size bigger in such a way as to obstruct it and yet allow the correct size shell to be loaded after it.

Never use alcohol or drugs before or while shooting. This applies equally to medical drugs that might impair your reflexes or judgment. If in doubt seek medical advice. If you have consumed alcohol or drugs, as with driving your car, do not handle your gun until the effects of these substances have diminished to an acceptable level.

Always check your bore for obstructions. This mainly applies after you fire a shell with an abnormal report or after you trip or fall while carrying your gun. It is also a good idea to get into the habit of doing it every time you load your gun, if you haven't just fired it. This includes after you have just taken it from the gun rack as well as after you have assembled it or taken it from the case.

Always keep your muzzle pointed towards the center stake if you have a misfire or malfunction. This allows the referee to examine and adjudicate safety. You can then rectify the problem while the gun is still pointed in a safe direction. Never turn around until the gun has been opened and unloaded.

Always unload your gun and open the action immediately if there is any hold-up while shooting. If the interruption is going to be a long one, it is best to unload your gun, open the action, and step off the station until the referee indicates that shooting can be resumed. Even if the hold-up appears to be a short one, and you do not intend to step off the station, always unload your gun until either common sense or the referee indicates that it is safe to continue.

Never load more than two shells in your gun at any one time. You may load only one shell when shooting high house on Station 8.

Never walk in front of the low house window. If the machine is cocked and loaded, and someone was to push, bump, or drop the button, a severe injury could result. Even if the button is visibly safe, someone in the house could manually trip the machine in the process of loading the trap.

Always wear eye and ear protection while on the shooting range. This applies equally to shooters and trap personnel. Ear plugs are necessary to prevent long term hearing loss and safety glasses are required, even when you are near a field, to prevent serious eye damage from target pieces or ricocheting shot pellets.

REMEMBER—FIREARM SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT! Most accidental shootings occur with “unloaded” guns.