



# The Writer's Guide to Firearms and Ammunition

Including a complete, illustrated glossary

Produced as a service to professional journalists by the  
National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc.



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# INTRODUCTION

Accuracy and fairness are key qualities in any story. To that end and in that spirit, we present to you the “Writer’s Guide to Firearms and Ammunition.”

Most journalists don’t have the time or the inclination to become experts on firearms and ammunition. This guide has been written to help you understand them better. We’ve attempted to eliminate the technical jargon and put together a plain English glossary of firearms terms and at-a-glance fact sheets you can use when you need to do a firearms-related story.

Most members of the media strive to be accurate and fair in their reporting. Sometimes, however, an inaccurate word or phrase is used that can significantly alter the audience’s impression. This usually occurs because the writer is unfamiliar with firearms themselves, firearms terminology or the firearms industry. One purpose of this resource is to provide plain-language, easy-to-access reference material about firearms. Another, and important, purpose of the booklet is to show that the occasional, seemingly insignificant inaccuracy can, and does, have an undesired impact on meaning.

In one section, we will take a close look at some writing examples. Our intention is not to criticize the writer, but to show that certain terms, such as “high-powered” and “cop killer,” are hard to define, often misleading and frequently inflammatory. Additional sections are devoted to laws that deal with owning and using a firearm, statistics involving the use of firearms, a glossary of terms and generic illustrations.

This guide is more than simply an attempt to clarify misconceptions about firearms and ammunition. It is a resource filled with facts and practical hints to help you write accurately about firearms. **PLEASE CONTACT US AT ANY TIME IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT FIREARMS, AMMUNITION OR RELATED SUBJECTS: (203) 426-1320.**

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**SECTION 1:  
JUST THE FACTS**

## **“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 United States Code §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 77 percent, from a high of 3,200 in 1930, to 730 in 2005. (Source: National Safety Council, Injury Facts Report, 2007 edition)

Hunting is one of the safest forms of recreation in America. In a recent 10-year period, the number of fatal accidents declined by more than half (53 percent), from 91 in 1995 to 42 reported in 2005. In the same time period non-fatal accidents declined by 60 percent from 957 incidents to 392 incidents. (Source: International Hunter Education Association - Hunting Incident Summary)

- ◆ The firearms and ammunition industries and associated groups have distributed tens of millions of safety brochures over the past 15 years. Source: Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturer's Institute (SAAMI).
- ◆ Hunter education programs now involve more than 54,000 instructors and over 600,000 students annually, in all 50 states. Over 24 million have graduated since hunter education became a mandatory requirement to get a hunting license. Source: International Hunter Education Association.
- ◆ Individually, there were more accidental fatalities due to motor vehicles, falls, drownings, fires and burns, ingestion of food and/or objects, and poisoning than by firearms in 2005. Source: National Safety Council, Injury Facts Report, 2007 edition.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE SHOOTING SPORTS

- ◆ The nation's hunters and recreational shooters spend \$24.7 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 employ more people than all Sears stores. Source: SAAMI, Market Size and Economic Impact of the Sporting Firearms and Ammunition Industry in America, p.2.
- ◆ More than 31.7 million Americans participated in at least one of the shooting sports in 2006. That's over 6.2 times the number of people who played racquetball during the same period, five times as many as water ski and nearly 7 million more than those who played golf. Source: 2006 American Sports Data, Superstudy of Sports Participation.
- ◆ There are an estimated 230 million firearms in America today. Source: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.
- ◆ The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) estimates that one of every two homes contains at least one firearm.
- ◆ The firearms and ammunition industry supports an 11% excise tax on all rifles, shotguns and ammunition, and a 10% excise tax on handguns, which raises more than \$163 million annually for wildlife management, habitat acquisition and safety training. Since 1937, \$4 billion has been raised. Source: SAAMI Excise Tax Study, and ATF-Firearms and Ammunition Excise Tax Collection.

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**SECTION II:  
FIREARMS INDUSTRY  
REGULATIONS**



The sporting firearms and ammunition industry in America is rich in history but is not "big business." Sales at the manufacturer level are approximately \$2.3 billion annually. There are single companies in our nation that are 100 times larger than the entire firearms industry. Companies ranging from Toys R Us to Stanley Tools are many times larger than the entire gun industry.

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. Sales are attributable roughly 60% to hunting, 20% to target shooting, 15% to home or self-protection and 5% to collecting.

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 575,000 jobs. Source: Economic Importance of Hunting in America.

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 National Shooting Sports Foundation does not maintain that hunting or recreational shooting are desirable activities within our society just because they make a significant contribution to our national and local economies. We suggest these activities are a responsible and desirable part of our nation's heritage and should be continued, because experience and common sense tell us so. The economic impact of these activities must be considered when some individuals suggest that America would be a better place without hunting and recreational shooting simply because those individuals possess a personal antipathy or apathy toward these activities.

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* regulated. 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, silencers, 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."

"Consensus is established when, in the judgment of the ANSI Board of Standards Review, substantial agreement has been reached by directly and materially affected interests. Substantial agreement means much more than a simple majority, but not necessarily unanimity. Consensus requires that all views and objections be considered and that a concerted effort be made toward their resolution."

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."

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**SECTION III:**  
**STATISTICAL DATA REGARDING**  
**GUN HOMICIDES, SUICIDES,**  
**AND ACCIDENTS**

Depending on the source, firearms are portrayed as tools of destruction that are responsible for over 35,000 deaths per year, or they are legitimate products primarily used safely by millions of responsible citizens. Let's look beyond the rhetoric. Who's right? Are guns inherently unsafe? How can various groups look at objective data and make vastly different claims about the safety of firearms?

One popular argument claims that a firearm in the home is an accident waiting to happen – but what is the reality? According to the National Safety Council's Injury Facts, accidental firearm fatalities in the home numbered 500 for 2005. This accounts for 1% of all accidental fatalities in the home. (Source: National Safety Council, Injury Facts Report, 2007 Edition)

Compared with the leading causes of unintentional home fatalities, you can see in Figure 1 that firearms rank near the bottom.

**FIGURE 1**

**PRINCIPAL TYPES OF HOME UNINTENTIONAL-INJURY DEATHS, UNITED STATES 1950-2005**

Year	Total Home	Falls	Fires/Burns	Suffocation Inj. Obj.	Suffocation Mech.	Drowning	Poisoning	Natural Heat/Cold	Firearms	Other
1950	29,00	14,800	5,000	(b)	1,600	(b)	2,550	(b)	950	4,100
1955	28,500	14,100	5,400	(b)	1,250	(b)	2,050	(b)	1,100	4,600
1960	28,000	12,300	6,350	1,850	1,500	(b)	2,250	(b)	1,200	2,550
1965	28,500	11,700	6,100	1,300c	1,200	(b)	2,800	(b)	1,300	4,100c
1970	27,000	9,700	5,600	1,800c	1,100c	(b)	4,100	(b)	1,400c	3,300
1975	25,000	8,000	5,000	1,800	800	(b)	4,100	(b)	1,300	3,400
1976	24,000	7,700	5,200	1,800	700	(b)	4,700	(b)	1,200	3,100
1977	23,200	7,400	5,000	1,800	800	(b)	4,300	(b)	1,100	3,400
1978	22,800	7,400	5,100	1,800	800	(b)	3,700	(b)	1,000	3,200
1979	22,500	7,100	4,900	2,000	500	(b)	3,500	(b)	1,100	3,500
1980	22,800	7,100	4,800	2,000	500	(b)	3,400	(b)	1,100	4,100c
1981	21,700	6,800	4,700	2,000	500	(b)	3,200	(b)	1,000	3,300
1982	21,200	6,500	4,300	2,100	600	(b)	3,400	(b)	1,000	3,200
1983	21,200	6,500	4,100	2,200	600	(b)	3,500	(b)	900	3,400
1984	21,200	6,400	4,100	2,300	600	(b)	3,500	(b)	900	3,200
1985	21,600	6,500	4,000	2,400	600	(b)	3,900	(b)	900	3,300
1986	21,700	6,100	4,000	2,500	600	(b)	4,300	(b)	800	3,400
1987	21,400	6,300	3,900	2,500	600	(b)	4,100	(b)	800	3,200
1988	22,700	6,600	4,100	2,600	600	(b)	4,800	(b)	800	3,200
1989	22,500	6,600	3,900	2,500	600	(b)	5,000	(b)	800	3,100
1990	21,500	6,700	3,400	2,300	600	(b)	4,500	(b)	800	3,200
1991	22,100	6,900	3,400	2,200	700	(b)	5,000	(b)	800	3,100
1992	24,000	7,700	3,700	1,500	700	900	5,200	(b)	1,000	3,300
1993	26,100	7,900	3,700	1,700	700	900	6,500	(b)	1,100	3,600
1994	26,300	8,100	3,700	1,600	800	900	6,800	(b)	900	3,500
1995	27,200	8,400	3,500	1,500	800	900	7,000	(b)	900	4,200
1996	27,500	9,000	3,500	1,500	800	900	7,300	(b)	800	3,700
1997	27,700	9,100	3,200	1,500	800	900	7,800	(b)	700	3,500
1998	29,000	9,500	2,900	1,800	800	1,000	8,400	(b)	600	4,000
1999c	30,500	7,600	3,000	1,900	1,100	900	9,300	700	600	5,400
2000	29,200	7,100	2,700	2,100	1,000	1,000	9,800	400	500	4,600
2001	33,200	8,600	3,000	2,000	1,100	900	11,300	400	600	5,300
2002	36,200	9,700	2,800	1,900	1,100	900	13,900	400	500	5,000
2003d	38,600	10,300	2,900	2,100	1,000	800	15,900	400	500	4,700
2004d	40,000	10,500	3,100	2,100	1,100	1,000	16,000	500	500	5,200
2005e	37,000	10,400	2,600	1,700	900	900	16,200	400	500	3,400

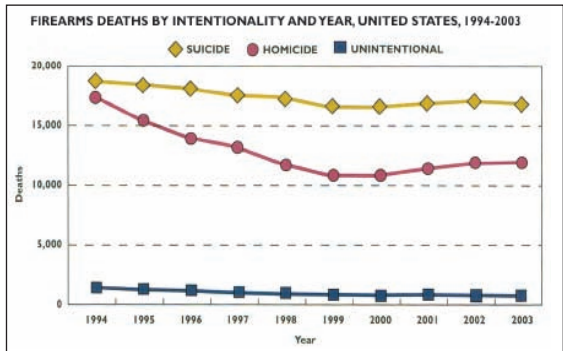
Source: National Safety Council estimates (1994-1995 revised, 1996 preliminary) based on data from National Center for Health Statistics and state vital statistics departments. The Council adopted the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Census of Fatal Occupational injuries count for work-related unintentional injuries retroactive to 1992 data. Because of the lower Work class total resulting from this change, several thousand unintentional-injury deaths that had been classified by the Council as work-related had to be reassigned to the Home and Public classes. For this reason, long-term historical comparisons for these three classes should be made with caution. See the Technical Appendix for an explanation of the methodological changes.

a=Includes deaths from conflagration, regardless of injury; b=included in "other"; c=1999 revision in data; d=revised; e=preliminary

So, what is the truth? Where are the 35,000 victims of firearms? According to the National Safety Council, "firearm-related deaths from intentional and undetermined causes totaled 30,136 in 2003, a decrease of less than 0.5% from 2002. Suicides accounted for 56.1% of firearms deaths, 39.6% were homicides, and about 2.4% were unintentional deaths."

In other words, 95.7% of all fatalities involving firearms are either homicides or suicides. Intentional misuse of a product should not be used as a yardstick for that product's safety or utility. However, anti-gun activists regularly include homicide and suicide statistics in order to inflate the numbers and make firearm deaths an "epidemic" or "public health issue." Deliberate or criminal misuse is quite different from an accident. See the chart below for trends in homicides, suicides and unintentional fatalities.

While firearm ownership has more than doubled over the last 30 years, the number of accidental firearms fatalities has been reduced by more than 70 percent. If there were truth to the allegation that guns in the home are unsafe, we



would expect to see a correlative rise between the number of guns in private hands and the number of accidental firearm fatalities. Thanks in large part to industry-sponsored education efforts and the responsibility of gun owners, that correlation does not exist.

Curious youngsters and teenagers are most likely to have an accident with firearms. That is why the firearms industry encourages gun owners to lock up their guns securely. Numerous products, ranging from trigger locks to gun safes, can help prevent an accident. Circumstances may dictate how one stores firearms, but whatever steps are taken, they must be effective.

The firearms industry shares with all Americans a deep concern about the scourge of violence in our nation. However, we do not believe that imposing responsibility for illegal acts on those who lawfully and responsibly manufacture firearms will deter criminals from engaging in criminal acts.



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**SECTION IV:**  
**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 (Sec. 922(g)(1)-(3)).

It was a federal felony for Bob to exhibit false identification when purchasing the guns (Sec. 922(a)(6), Sec. 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 (Sec. 922 (a)(3)).

It was a federal felony for Bob to sell firearms to persons who were not New York residents (Sec. 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 (Sec. 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 (Sec. 922 (a)(1)(A)).

It was a federal felony for Bob to transport a firearm with an obliterated serial number (Sec. 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 (Sec. 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 (Sec. 924(B), (h)).

— Since Bob had more than three felony convictions, he is subject to a mandatory 75-year sentence (Sec. 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 (Sec. 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 (Sec. 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.

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**SECTION V:  
EXAMPLES OF INACCURATE OR  
MISLEADING COVERAGE**

Let's take a look at some examples of accurate and inaccurate, clear and misleading, honest and, perhaps, less than honest writing about firearms and ammunition.

OFF-TARGET	ON-TARGET
<p>“[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</p>	<p>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.</p>

### 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	ON-TARGET
<p>“Haven’t you been aware of the rising incidences of accidental or incidental deaths associated with guns?” —Dan Thompson, Editor</p>	<p>To the contrary, accidental firearm fatalities are at <u>the lowest levels</u> since record-keeping began in 1903.</p>

### EXPLANATION

Over the last 75 years (1930-2005), the annual number of accidental firearms-related fatalities declined by 77 percent. In the last decade (1995-2005), the number of fatalities involving firearms has continued to drop by 40 percent.

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 2007 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	ON-TARGET
<p>"Firearm deaths involving children have increased 70 percent during the past decade."                      – Kate Taylor, "The Oregonian"</p>	<p>To the contrary, the number of unintentional firearm-related fatalities involving children (14 years of age and younger) has <b>DECREASED by 79%</b> in the past decade (1993-2003).</p>

**EXPLANATION**

According to the National Safety Council's "Accident Facts, 1993 Edition," there were 273 unintentional firearm-related fatalities involving children 0-14 in 1993. However, according to the National Safety Council's "Injury Facts, 2007 Edition," the number of unintentional firearm-related fatalities involving children 0-14 in 2003 declined to 56. This is a decline of nearly 80 percent!

OFF-TARGET	ON-TARGET
<p>"Nationally, guns are becoming more lethal than autos."                      –Violence Policy Center</p>	<p>Accidental firearms fatalities are 31 times lower than automobile fatalities.</p>

**EXPLANATION**

According to the National Safety Council, in 1997 there were 214 million registered vehicles in the U.S.; the most recent gun numbers suggest nearly 230 million guns in private hands. While accidental firearms fatalities number 730 for 2005, automobile accidents claimed 45,800 lives. Guns rank well behind automobiles, drownings, fires, suffocation, and falls as a source of accidental death. Homicides, suicides, accidents and other firearm-related fatalities

totalled 30,136 in 2003. Of these, 28,827 were homicides or suicides. It is misleading to compare intentional deaths (i.e., homicides and suicides) to accidental fatalities.

OFF-TARGET	ON-TARGET
<p>“[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”</p>	<p>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.</p>

### 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	ON-TARGET
<p>“The NRA opposed the ban on bullets that pierce police safety vests.” —Associated Press</p>	<p>The NRA opposed loosely written legislation that, if passed, would have outlawed 80% of all big-game ammunition.</p>

### 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	ON-TARGET
<p>“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”</p>	<p>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 detectible by metal detectors.</p>

**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	ON-TARGET
<p>“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]</p>	<p>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.</p>



## 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 hollow-point, or dum dum, bullet expands on contact with human flesh, so it kills or incapacitates more often than a conventional bullet."

—David Firestone, "N.Y. Times"

### ON-TARGET

A hollow-point bullet has a cavity in the nose to facilitate expansion upon impact.

## EXPLANATION

Hollow-point bullets are not synonymous with dum dum bullets. A hollow-point bullet has a hollow cavity in the nose. A dum dum bullet was a British military bullet developed in India's Dum-Dum Arsenal in 1897-98. It was a jacketed .303 caliber bullet with the jacket nose (tip of the bullet) 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. Virtually all cities arm their police officers with expanding ammunition in order to minimize over-penetration, ricochets and other dangers to bystanders.

### 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.

### 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 ¼ 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.

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## 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 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.

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# SECTION VI: GLOSSARY

For additional pictorial and video instructional information on hunting and shooting, visit the NSSF Web site ([www.nssf.org](http://www.nssf.org)) media resources section and [www.huntandshoot.org](http://www.huntandshoot.org).

## **ACTION**

The combined parts of a firearm that enable it to be loaded, discharged and unloaded.

## **ACTION, AUTOMATIC**

A firearm that loads, 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.

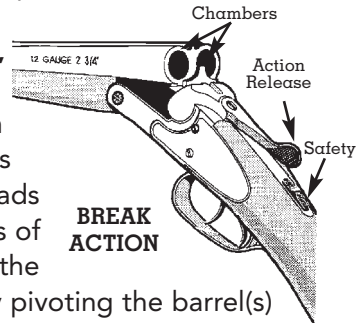
## **ACTION, BOLT**

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**

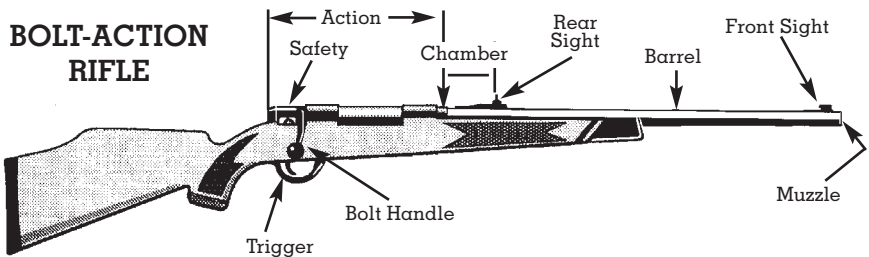
A firearm that loads and unloads by means of opening the action by pivoting the barrel(s) down and away from the breech while activating a release lever. Most commonly used in single-shot and double-barreled shotguns and rifles.



## **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 center-fire, rimfire and shotshells.

### **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.

### **ARMS, SMALL**

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

### **ARMOR PIERCING**

See BULLET, ARMOR PIERCING

### **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 that is intended to pierce steel armor. Note: The Gun Control Act of 1968 (18 U.S.C. Sec. 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

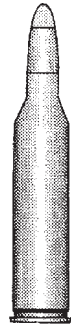
weight originally designed for horse-mounted troops. Usually having a barrel of 20" or less.

### **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, are centerfire, with the exception of 17 and 22 caliber rimfire ammunition. The rear end of a centerfire cartridge has a primer in its center, hence "centerfire."



Centerfire  
Rifle  
Cartridge

### **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.

### **CARTRIDGE, RIMFIRE**

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



Rimfire  
Cartridge

### **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**

See **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.

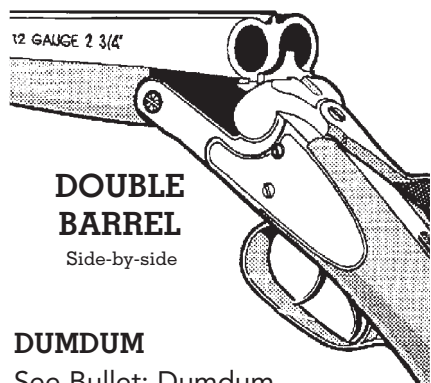
Note: According to the American Derringer Company, Henry Deringer's name is spelled with one 'R.' The proper spelling of Derringer firearms is with two 'R's.

### **DISCHARGE**

To cause a firearm to fire.

### **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

### **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 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.

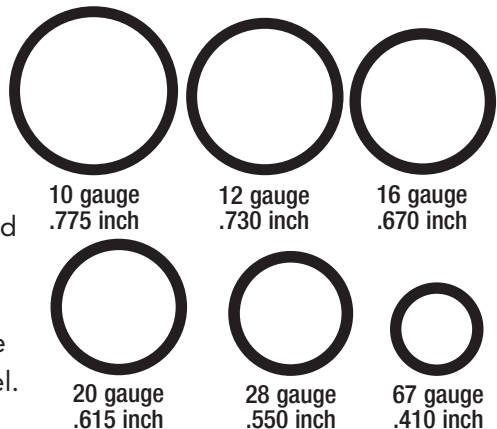
### **JACKET**

The metal envelope enclosing the lead core of a bullet.

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### **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.



**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.

**MUZZLE**

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

**MUZZLE FLASH**

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.

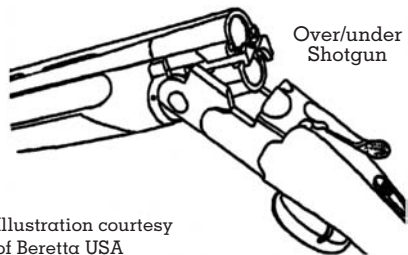


Illustration courtesy of Beretta USA

**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, SINGLE ACTION**

**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.

A pistol mechanism that requires the manual cocking of the hammer before the trigger releases the firing mechanism.

**PLINKING**

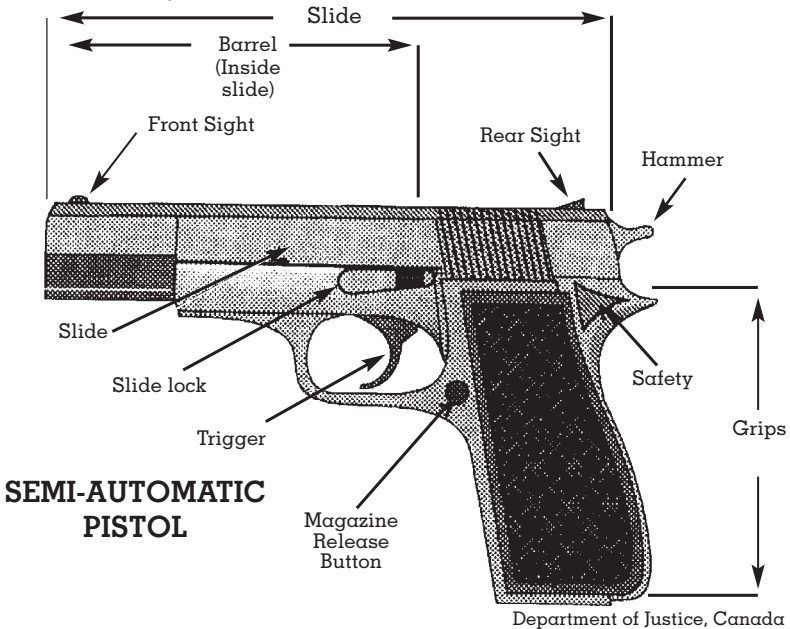
The informal shooting at inanimate objects at indefinite points. Note: Plinking typically refers to casual shooting for fun and practice.

**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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **RELOAD**

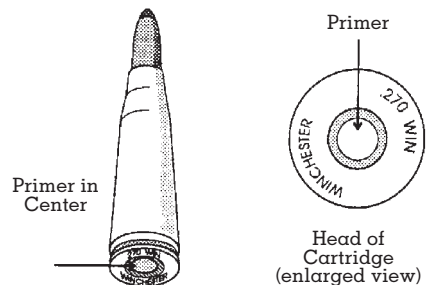
A round of ammunition that has been assembled using fired cases. Note: Reloading is very popular among recreational target shooters, competitive shooters and hunters. In addition to being cost-effective, reloading enables shooters to develop ammunition specifically designed for particular shooting disciplines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



**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.

**SHOTSHELL**

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

**SILENCER**

A device attached to the muzzle of a firearm to reduce the noise of discharge. Silencers are prohibited for civilian ownership and use.

**SKEET**

A clay target shooting sport with a shotgun. Shooters fire at clay targets crossing in front of them.

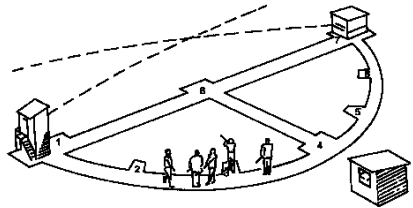


Illustration courtesy of Tennessee Tech University

**HULL**

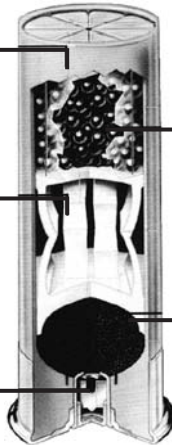
The outer container of a shotgun shell, typically made of plastic or paper with a metal base

**WAD**

Plastic or fiber separating powder and shot that forms a seal so that gasses propel shot uniformly down the barrel

**PRIMER**

A compound contained in the middle of the base of a shotgun shell, where the firing pin strikes



**SHOT**

Round projectiles, usually of lead or steel. Depending on shot size and load, a shell can contain from 45 to 1,170 shot.

**POWDER**

Gun powder situated in front of the primer where it will be ignited by flames caused by the detonation of the primer compound.

**SHOTSHELL**

## **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."

## **TRAJECTORY**

The path of a bullet through the air.

## **TRAP**

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

## **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.

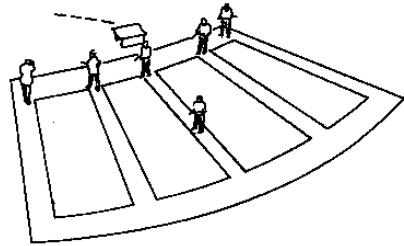


Illustration courtesy of Tennessee Tech University

## **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.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

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Amateur Trapshooting  
Association of  
America  
601 W. National Road  
Vandalia, OH 45377  
Telephone: 937-898-4638

Black's Wing and Clay  
43 West Front  
Red Bank, NJ 07701  
Telephone: 732-224-8700

International  
Hunter Education  
Association  
2727 W. 92nd Avenue, Suite 103  
Federal Heights, CO 80260

National Rifle Association  
11250 Waples Mill Rd.  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
Telephone: 703-267-1000

National Safety Council  
1121 Spring Lake Drive  
Itasca, IL 60143  
Telephone: 630-775-2326

National Shooting  
Sports Foundation, Inc.  
11 Mile Hill Road  
Newtown, CT 06470-2359  
Telephone: 203-426-1320

National Skeet  
Shooting Association  
5931 Rofth Road  
San Antonio, TX 78253-9261  
Telephone: 210-688-3371

National Sporting Clays  
Association  
5931 Rofth Road  
San Antonio, TX 78253  
Telephone: 210-688-3371

Sporting Arms and  
Ammunition Manufacturers'  
Institute (SAAMI)  
11 Mile Hill Road  
Newtown, CT 06470-2359  
Telephone: 203-426-4358

USA Shooting  
U.S. Olympic Training Center  
One Olympic Plaza  
Colorado Springs, CO 80909  
Telephone: 719-578-4617

## NSSF PROGRAMS AND WEB SITES

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Don't Lie for the Other Guy	<a href="http://www.dontlie.org">www.dontlie.org</a>
Families Afield	<a href="http://www.familiesafield.org">www.familiesafield.org</a>
First Shots	<a href="http://www.firstshots.org">www.firstshots.org</a>
Hunt and Shoot	<a href="http://www.huntandshoot.org">www.huntandshoot.org</a>
Hunting Heritage Partnership	<a href="http://www.nssf.org/hunting">www.nssf.org/hunting</a>
Junior USA Shooting Team Patch Programs	<a href="http://www.nssf.org/shooting">www.nssf.org/shooting</a>
National Association of Firearms Retailers (NAFR)	<a href="http://www.nafr.org">www.nafr.org</a>
National Association of Shooting Ranges (NASR)	<a href="http://www.rangeinfo.org">www.rangeinfo.org</a>
National Hunting and Fishing Day	<a href="http://www.nhfd.org">www.nhfd.org</a>
Project ChildSafe	<a href="http://www.projectchildsafe.org">www.projectchildsafe.org</a>
Scholastic Clay Target Program	<a href="http://www.nssf.org/sctp">www.nssf.org/sctp</a>
STEP OUTSIDE	<a href="http://www.stepoutside.org">www.stepoutside.org</a>
Where to Hunt	<a href="http://www.huntinfo.org">www.huntinfo.org</a>
Where to Shoot	<a href="http://www.wheretoshoot.org">www.wheretoshoot.org</a>
Wingshooting USA	<a href="http://www.wingshootingusa.org">www.wingshootingusa.org</a>

## CONCLUSION

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We hope this guide is a helpful resource you can use when writing about firearms and ammunition. For more information on issues related to the firearms industry, visit the "Media Resources" section of the NSSF web site: [www.nssf.org](http://www.nssf.org). If you have suggestions for topics you would like to see covered in future editions, please contact:

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