



 **NRA**
Mentor Initiative

A GUIDE FOR **NEW SHOOTERS**

- GETTING STARTED
- GOING TO THE RANGE
- RULES FOR GUN SAFETY
- ESSENTIAL GEAR
- USING YOUR SIGHTS
- GUN CLEANING AND MORE...

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LET'S GET **STARTED**

If you're like millions of Americans, you've either recently purchased your first gun, or you're seriously thinking about it. Whether you have decided that you'd like to go to a range to try out a few different types of firearms to see what works best for you, or you want to make sure that you properly develop your skills, you will find that the guidance of a qualified mentor is a key to success. While instruction from an NRA Certified Instructor should be the foundation of firearm training, a mentor can help you build on that training. Receiving assistance from someone you trust will help you take charge of your personal safety in a safe, supportive environment. Your NRA is here to help you get started in what often proves to be a lifelong pursuit.



NRA CERTIFIED INSTRUCTORS

NRA Certified Instructors offer premium firearm training for everyone, regardless of your age or level of expertise. For additional information, go to [NRainstructors.org](https://www.nrainstructors.org).

WHAT TO EXPECT

Going to the range is fun and easy once you know a few simple rules.

The main thing that all gun ranges have in common is that safety comes first. (Turn to the next page for the NRA Basic Rules of Gun Safety.) Aside from that, every range is different. Some allow you to rent firearms; others don't. Some have strict rules about what kind of targets you may use. Some are busy, while at others, you and your mentor may be the only shooters present.

RANGE SAFETY OFFICERS

Most ranges have Range Safety Officers (RSOs), whose job is to supervise shooters, enforce the rules and handle any problems that may occur. The Range Safety Officer has absolute authority on the range. Your mentor may want to introduce you to the RSO so they can explain what's expected of you.

RANGE COMMANDS

Two of the most common range commands are **"cease firing"** and **"commence firing."** **"Commence firing"** is the command given to tell everyone it's safe to shoot. **"Cease firing"** is used whenever all shooting must stop. During a ceasefire, there is no handling of firearms. The key things to remember are:

1. **Chamber is empty and ammunition source (magazine) is removed.**
2. **Action is open.**
3. **Hands off!**
4. **Step away from the firing line.**



Other Things to Remember

- Do not fire at posts, supports or target frames.
- Shoot only range-approved targets.
- If you set out frames to support your targets before starting, return them to the storage area once you are done. However, never go past the firing line (i.e., downrange) until the RSO says it's safe to do so.
- If your club or range allows pets, keep them on leashes or under control at all times. Pets not comfortable with gunfire might panic on a range.
- It's good etiquette to leave the range better than you found it.

FIND RANGES NEAR YOU



Go to findnra.nra.org and check the box for "Places to Shoot" and type in your ZIP Code.



FIVE THINGS YOU NEED AT THE RANGE

Don't be intimidated: Going shooting is much less gear-intensive than you may think.

A GUN CASE

Unless the "range" is your backyard, you'll want something to transport your firearm in. Gun cases are available in just about every conceivable size at prices that won't hurt your wallet.

EAR PROTECTION

Even a .22-caliber rifle can produce a sound of 140 decibels (dB), which is enough to cause hearing damage. You can protect your ears without breaking the bank. Foam inserts, especially doubled up with earmuffs, work wonders.

EYE PROTECTION

Eye protection is also crucial. Protect your eyes with a pair of shooting glasses. Look for glasses that are impact-resistant and specifically labeled for use in the shooting sports.

AMMUNITION DESIGNED FOR YOUR FIREARM

Check your owner's manual to make sure you only buy ammunition recommended by the gun's manufacturer. Your mentor can help you select the best option for your gun.

TARGETS

Of course you'll want something to shoot at, and not all ranges sell targets. Some beginners like to start with reactive targets, which may do things like show a color change where your bullet strikes. Be aware that many ranges stipulate paper targets only.

GUN SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S **RESPONSIBILITY**

THREE BASIC RULES

- 1 ALWAYS** keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.
- 2 ALWAYS** keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
- 3 ALWAYS** keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.

Following these rules at all times will help keep you safe; but there's plenty more to know.

Know your target and what is beyond it.

You must be sure that there is something that will serve as a backstop to capture bullets that miss or go through the target.

Know how to use the gun safely.

Before handling a gun, learn how it operates. Read the owner's manual, and work with your mentor until you know how to safely open and close the action and how to unload the gun.

Use only the correct ammunition for your gun.

Each gun is intended for use with a specific caliber or cartridge. Only cartridges designed for that particular gun can be fired safely. The owner's manual will list the cartridges appropriate for your gun.

Be sure your gun is safe to operate.

Just like other tools, guns need regular maintenance. Regular cleaning and proper storage are a part of the



gun's general upkeep.

Wear eye and ear protection.

The sound of a gunshot can damage unprotected ears. Also, gun discharges can emit debris and hot gas that can cause injury to your eyes. Wear safety

glasses and earplugs whenever you shoot.

Never use alcohol or drugs before or while shooting.

Even if you don't drink or

do drugs, be aware that some legal drugs, like prescription medicine or over-the-counter remedies, can impair your ability to shoot safely.



Visit [NRAFamily.org](https://www.nrafamily.org) for the Mentor Initiative video series. Just search for keyword "Mentor Initiative."



GET THE **PICTURE**

HERE'S HOW TO GET A SIGHT PICTURE THAT WILL LEAD YOU TO SHOOTING SUCCESS.

Sight alignment for rifles and pistols simply means that the eye is lined up with the gun's front and rear sights so that an imaginary line connects all three in the proper manner. Sight alignment for shotguns means connecting the eye with the front bead/barrel muzzle in a line that intersects the path of the clay target.

The most common rifle/pistol "open" sights consist of a square rear notch and a front blade. The properly aligned front sight should be centered in the rear sight notch, side to side. The top of the blade should appear even with a line extending across the top of the notch.

Many rifle (and sometimes pistol) shooters opt to use optical sights, commonly a scope that magnifies the target image. In use, the shooter

simply aligns the reticle or dot with his or her desired point of aim.

Once the rifle/pistol sights are properly aligned, imagine extending that line until it touches the target at the desired point of impact. If adjustment is necessary, move the gun, the shooter and the aligned sights as a unit.

Always focus on the front sight. Because your eye can only focus on one element of a sight picture at a time, focusing on the front sight allows you to keep all three elements (target, front and rear sight) aligned. When shooting a shotgun at moving clay targets, always focus on the clay to account for movement. If shooting slugs, then the rifle rules apply.

HANDGUN SIGHT ALIGNMENT



OPEN SIGHTS

RIFLE SIGHT ALIGNMENT



APERTURE REAR SIGHT, POST FRONT SIGHT



RIFLE SCOPE RETICLE

SHOTGUN SIGHT ALIGNMENT



BEAD SIGHT

KEEPING IT CLEAN

IT MAY SOUND INTIMIDATING, BUT CARING FOR YOUR GUN IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK.



Cleaning and maintaining your guns preserves their functionality and value, and keeps them safe and accurate. The effort and attention you put into maintaining your firearms will pay off in peace of mind that your guns will do what you need them to do.

1 Choose a work area that is well-ventilated and well-lit.

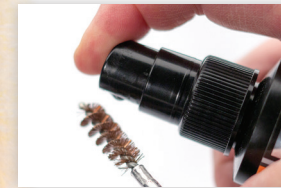


2 Remove all ammunition from the area.

3 Set out your supplies.

4 Find the owner's manual from the manufacturer. It should explain how to take the gun apart and clean it.

5 Once you have the gun disassembled, start with cleaning the bore. Clean from breech to muzzle whenever possible.



6 Use a cleaning rod of the correct diameter. They often come sized for .22-cal., .30-cal. or shotgun/muzzle-loader diameters.

7 Start with solvent-wetted patches to loosen the fouling. After you've run three patches through the bore, it should be ready for the bore brush.

8 Thread the brush to the cleaning rod and wet the bore brush with solvent. Ten passes with the brush should be enough. Run three more wet patches through the bore to pick up the fouling loosened by the bore brush. Repeat this process until your patches appear clean.

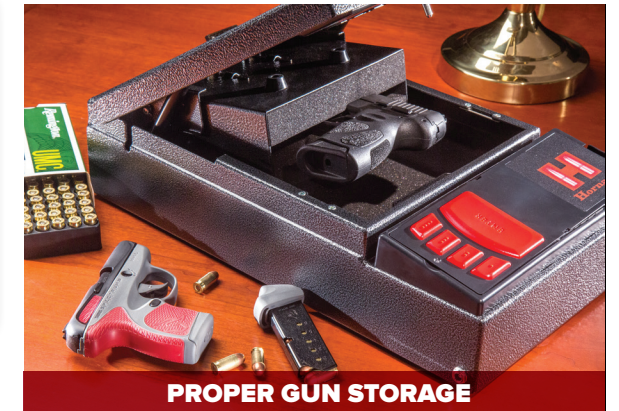


9 Wipe down the cleaning rod before finishing up with dry patches.

10 Run a patch lightly soaked with oil down the bore. Beware: Oil in the bore can create excessive pressure, a dangerous condition. Run a dry patch down the bore before you shoot your gun again.

11 Once cleaning is complete, reassemble the gun right away.

12 After you have reassembled the gun, check the safety and the trigger for proper function.



PROPER GUN STORAGE

Store guns so they are not accessible to unauthorized persons. Many factors must be considered when deciding where and how to store guns. A person's particular situation will be a major part of the consideration. Dozens of gun storage devices, as well as locking devices that attach directly to the gun, are available. However, mechanical locking devices, like the mechanical safeties built into guns, can fail and should not be used as a substitute for safe gun handling and the observance of all gun safety rules.

For transport, shooters use hard or soft cases depending on circumstances and preference. Airlines require hard-shell locking cases, but for driving to the range or hunting areas, most owners rely on lightweight soft cases.

GUN STORAGE OPTIONS

- Gun safes
- Gun cases
- Locking drawers
- Locks that attach to the gun
- Pistol lock boxes
- Quick-access devices





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