

Firearm Safety Rules, Terms, and Commands

I tend to follow the four rules of firearm safety as espoused by COL Jeff Cooper, commonly considered the father of modern firearms training:

- 1) All guns are always loaded (or at least treated that way)!
- 2) Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy!
- 3) Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target!
- 4) Always be sure of your target! (and what lies beyond it)

The NRA prefers:

- 1) Always keep your gun pointed in a safe direction
- 2) Always keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.
- 3) Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.

For training I conduct, all firearms will be kept unloaded, with the actions open, unless actually on the firing line while the range is called “hot”, with the exception of those people I so designate as authorized to carry loaded firearms during training, or unless I have stated that training has advanced to where I trust all students present to carry loaded firearms during training.

I will have chamber safety plugs/flags for both rifles and pistols available to borrow or purchase, they are \$1 each.

If you have a firearm malfunction on the firing line, keep the firearm pointed down range and raise your hand to request assistance from a range officer or instructor.

Safety is everybody's job – if you see an unsafe condition or action, say something. Any person on the range can call a cease fire if there is a safety concern. If someone is unwilling or unable to behave safely, they will be instructed to leave the range.

If there is any form of injury, call for a cease fire and summon a range officer, we have designated who will respond for first aid, and if necessary, to direct medical personnel to the site.

Terminology:

Hot range – either a range where shooters may carry loaded firearms or one where shooting is in progress and shooters may load and fire their firearms on the firing line.

Cold range – all firearms must be unloaded, with the actions open, and not handled while the range is cold (with the exception of those specifically allowed to have loaded, holstered, or slung firearms)

Firing line – the line, parallel to the backstop of the range, where shooters line up to shoot. Nobody may advance forward of the firing line while the range is hot, except as instructed during advanced training.

Square range – a firing range where there is a firing line parallel with the back stop and all firing is done at a 90 degree angle to the firing line and backstop, with no movement allowed.

Dynamic range – a range where shooters may move from position to position to engage targets, and where targets may be at angles to the shooter.

Cocked and locked – the practice of carrying a single-action semiautomatic pistol with a round in the chamber, the hammer cocked, and the safety engaged. This is the normal mode of carry of 1911 pattern pistols.

Single-action – A pistol or revolver that must be cocked before a shot can be fired. With a semiautomatic pistol, it is usually cocked by the action of chambering a round.

Double-action – a pistol or revolver in which the act of pulling the trigger both cocks the hammer or striker and releases it during the trigger pull.

Semi-automatic – a pistol or rifle that, upon firing one round, automatically ejects the fired casing and loads a fresh round from the magazine, being ready to fire again.

Full automatic – a pistol, rifle, submachinegun, or machinegun that will continuously fire, eject, and load fresh rounds until the firer releases the trigger or runs out of ammunition.

Commands:

Cease fire – at this command, all shooters stop firing, unload their firearms, lock the actions open, insert a chamber plug or flag, and step back from the firing line. No firearms may be handled during a cease fire.

Ready on the left/right/center – a question asking whether everybody in the designated section of the range has their eye and ear protection on and is ready for firing to commence.

All ready on the firing line – an acknowledgment that all sections of the firing line have indicated they are ready for firing to begin.

The range is now hot, commence firing – shooters may pick up, load, and fire their firearms.

Going cold – called after a cease fire, an indication that the firing line is going cold for target retrieval or for other reasons. When this is called, unload your firearm, set it on the table, step back, and raise your hand so the range officers can tell you're ready for the range to be safe.

Is the left/right/center clear? - asking whether each section of the firing line is clear of anybody downrange, preparatory to calling the line hot.