

Handgun Safety



Before You Purchase a Firearm

There are a few things you should consider before purchasing a firearm.

The National Rifle Association shares information on what first-time gun buyers should think about before committing to a purchase.

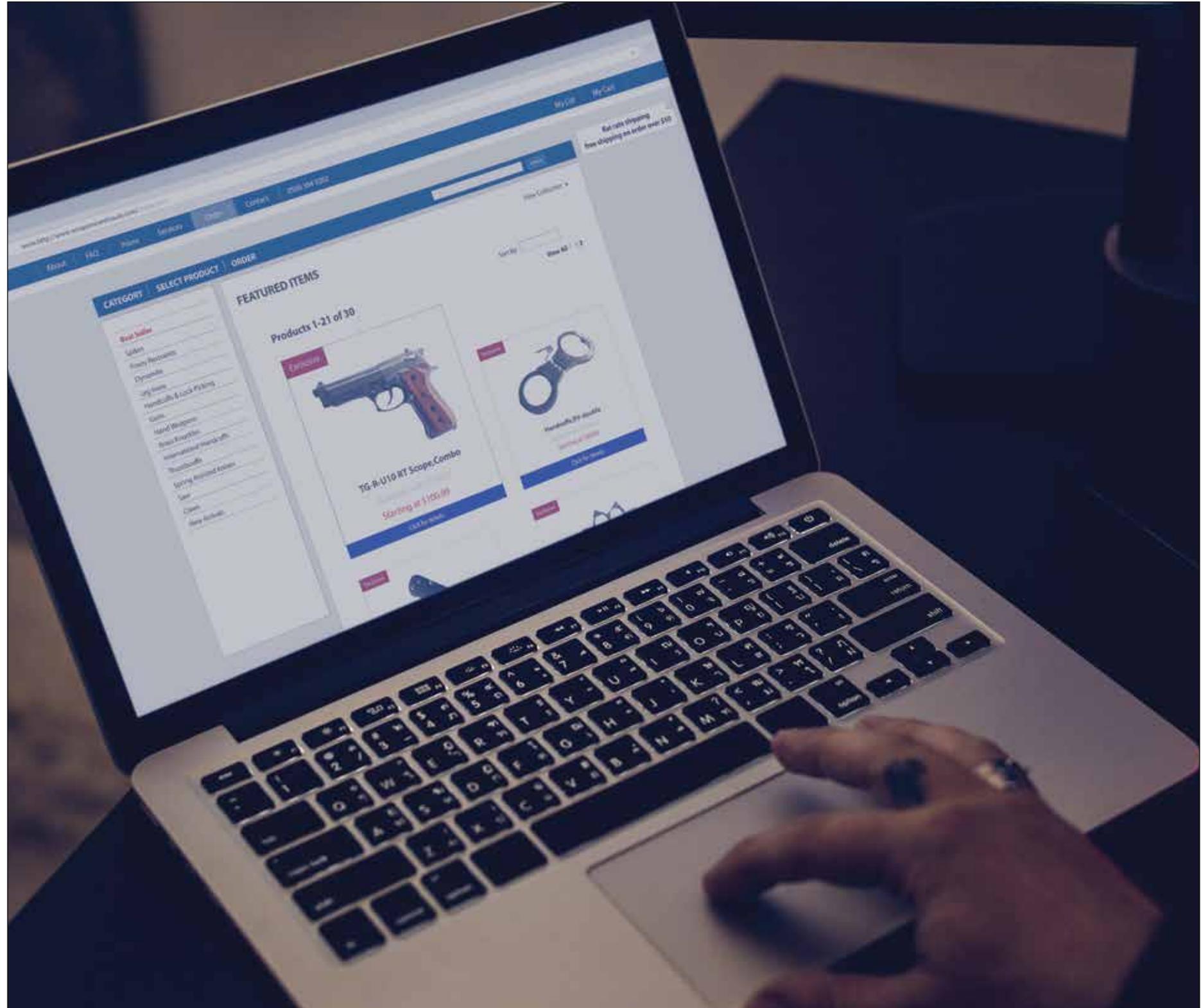
MAKE SURE A FIREARM IS FOR YOU

A firearm is a big purchase, so it is important you make sure you consult each member in your family about having a firearm in your home. A firearm is not a toy and something that should be taken lightly. You should make sure each member knows the responsibility it takes to have a firearm in your home. Each member should know it is not something to be taken lightly and someone can be seriously injured or killed if you do not keep safety front of mind.

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

There are various types of firearms out on the market and not every one could be right for you and your family. It's important to do your homework before purchasing a firearm to see what is best for you in your situation. A gun needs to be safely and securely stored, so purchase a gun you can safely store.

Each type of gun has an intended purpose, so consider what you will use the weapon for before deciding



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on a model.

NRA.org shares a couple of trusted online resources such as Shooting Illustrated and American Rifleman that you can use for your research.

LEARN TO SHOOT BEFORE PURCHASING

A gun isn't like a bike where you should purchase one even before knowing to use it properly. You shouldn't purchase a

firearm if you have never held or used one safely. Mishandling of the gun and its parts can lead to serious injury or death.

If you are serious about purchasing a firearm, go to a

firing range and shoot a couple of guns there or take a lesson before committing to the purchase. You may find in that time that a firearm isn't for you.

Buying a Firearm

Purchasing a firearm in the United States can be a lengthy process if you don't have the proper paperwork.

Here is a list of requirements you will need to purchase a firearm.

BACKGROUND CHECK

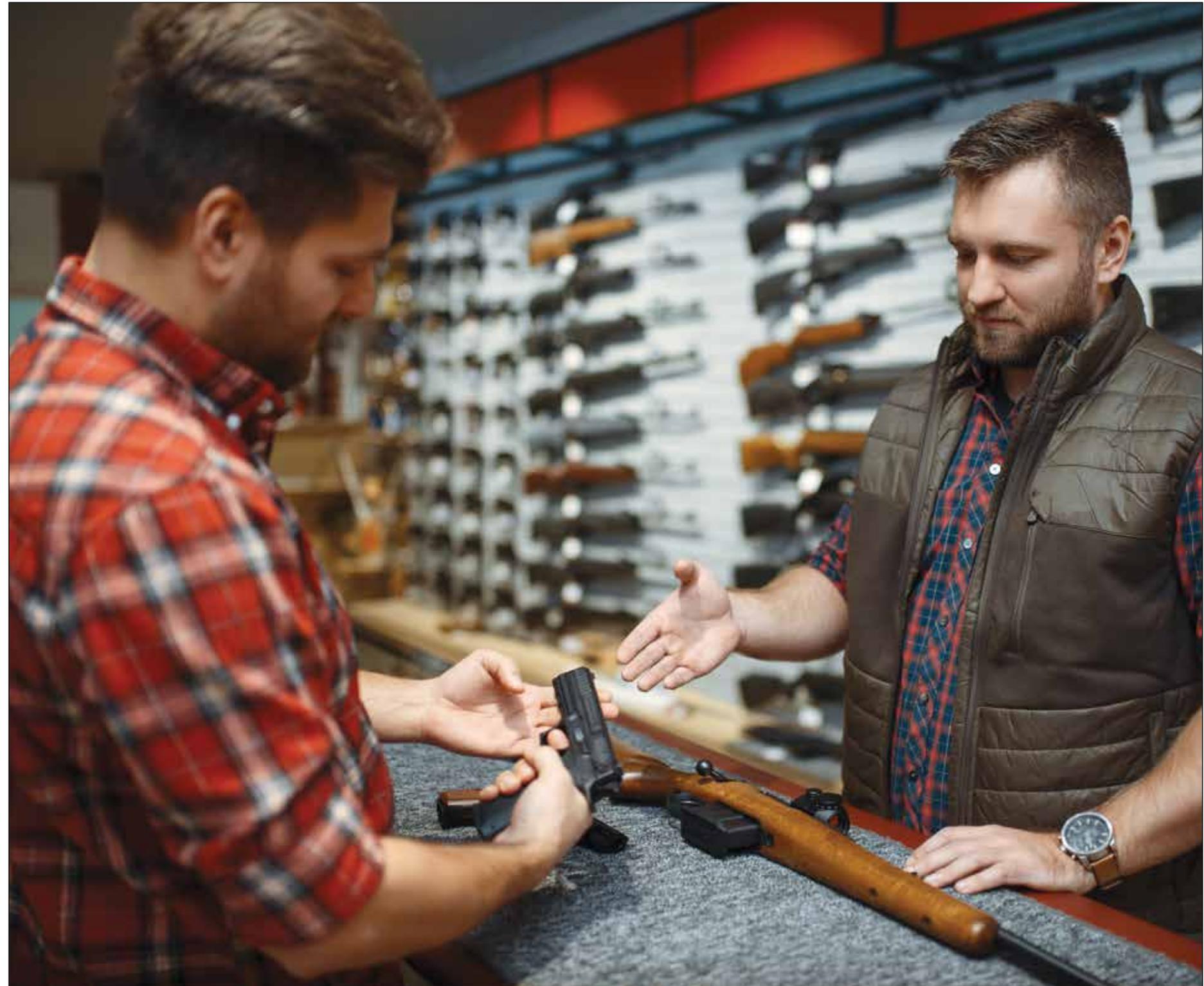
According to the 1968 Gun Control Act, potential firearm purchasers are required to fill out a federal form known as a ATF 443. The federal form checks your history for convictions, warrants or any other red flags.

In the United States, fugitives, people with prior or current felonies and people involuntarily committed to mental institutions are prohibited from purchasing a firearm.

If you are interested in purchasing a firearm, you will need to fill out a background check before even being considered to look at firearms. The check usually takes around 10 minutes by phone or online.

SAFETY COURSES

Depending on where you live in the country there may be some regulations and obstacles before you are permitted to legally carry your handgun. Just like obtaining a hunting license, some states make gun owners take and



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pass a safety course before they are legally permitted to carry a handgun on their person. Although it may not be required, you should still consider taking a safety course or two. These courses can show

you a lot about your firearm that you may not even know you would need to learn.

Some courses include the basic rules and what to follow as well as some training you on how to properly treat and

use the firearm.

OTHER

Be prepared to take some measures before you purchase a firearm such as having your fingerprints taken or register-

ing with local authorities. Depending on which state you live in, there also may be fees you will have to pay for the license or any service local governments perform for you to acquire your firearm.

Gun Safety Rules

Gun safety is important to always remember whether you are a first-time gun owner or a someone who has had a gun all your life.

The National Shooting Sports Foundation shares gun safety tips for all gun owners whether they are novices or experienced.

KEEP YOUR MUZZLE DOWN

The simplest and most basic gun safety rule is to keep the muzzle of your firearm pointed in a safe direction.

This rule is as simple as it gets and all up to you as a gun owner. The NSSF says to never point your gun in the direction of anything you do not intend to shoot. This is especially important if when loading and reloading the firearm. It doesn't always happen but in the case of an accidental discharge, no one will get hurt if you point the gun to a safe direction.

A safe direction means the muzzle is pointed away from people or anything the bullet can ricochet from. Most gun owners follow the "up or down" rule. You either point the gun at the sky or down to the ground depending on the environment and circumstance.

KEEP FIREARMS UNLOADED

Another simple rule to

remember is to keep your gun unloaded at all times until you are ready to use it. The NSSF says firearms should only be loaded when you are in the field or on the target range or shooting area.

It is important to store firearms unloaded with the ammunition in a safe, secure place away from small children and teens when you are not

using it.

As soon as you are finished at the range or in the backyard, you should immediately make sure your gun is unloaded before you bring it in the house or in your car. The NSSF says to leave the action open when handing your firearm to someone else.

NEVER assume the gun is unloaded. Always check for

yourself before handing the weapon to someone else.

KEEP YOUR FINGER OFF THE TRIGGER

Every firearm is built with a "safety" that prevents the trigger from being squeezed all the way down to fire the weapon. Although a safety is there to protect you and those around you from a misfire, you do not

want to put your life on it. NSSF says the safety is a mechanical device which, like any device, can become inoperable at the worst possible time.

The best advice is to always treat the gun as if it is loaded and ready to be fired. This means keeping your finger off the trigger until you are ready to fire the weapon.



Reasons to Carry

Depending on where you live in the United States, firearms are an everyday way of life.

People carry firearms on them today like they carry their phone or wallet. A firearm can be a great tool to protect you and your loved ones, but it can also be a tool used for harm. Consider whether a firearm is the best fit for you and your family.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Family is one of the most important things for many people, and the need to protect family can be a good reason to acquire a firearm. Having a firearm in the home will provide you good protection in case your family or you are ever in danger or during an emergency.

It is important to understand and recognize these kinds of situations. Taking firearms courses can be a good way you can learn to recognize true emergency situations.

FOR SPORT

There are many people who carry firearms for sport. If you are or want to become an avid hunter, that can be a great reason to purchase a firearm.

Hunting isn't only about the need to shoot or hunt an animal but it is also about providing food for your family and tapping into our ancient roots as humans.

Different kinds of hunting



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require different types of firearms. Depending on the animal, you'll need different calibers of ammunition.

Hunting a whitetail deer in the plains of Montana requires different ammunition than

hunting ducks. Recognize the different situations and types of animals you're hunting. Take a course or find a friend that can help you understand how to hunt wild game.

Some firearm sports don't

even require an animal to hunt. There are marksmen who shoot clay targets for sport. This sport can be even more dangerous than hunting because the amount of ammunition and number of

times you're shooting the gun.

It's important to have the right kind of training before taking part in these kinds of sports. Make sure you know the basics of firearms and how to handle them correctly.

Basics and Gear

If you've never seen or fired a gun in person but are interested in purchasing your first firearm for protection or sport, there are a few things you need to be aware of before purchasing.

BASICS AND GEAR

Before you purchase a firearm, consider your family and friends around you first. Also think about how much you know about firearms and handling them. There are a few items you should consider purchasing before you have the gun.

Get together with a friend or a family member who already owns a firearm to get a feel for the gun. Go to a shooting range with them and have them teach you how to handle and fire the gun.

Protect yourself by purchasing and keeping eye protection and ear protection with you. A gun is a lot louder than they appear in movies. You'll be surprised how loud a 9 millimeter or shotgun can be. A whole firing session can even leave your ear ringing at the end if you aren't careful and don't wear protection.

A gun cleaning kit is essential to have around. Gun pros and sportsman can all agree that a clean and well kept gun is a safer gun.



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PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY

If you have children, purchasing a gun safe or lock is crucial.

A gun is a responsibility and you wouldn't want it get-

ting into the wrong hands. There are plenty of horror stories out there of young kids and teens getting a gun in their hands and causing harm.

Remember to keep the gun

put away in a safe place, away from little hands, don't tell anyone your passcode to the safe and hide it in a good place.

If you want to be extra careful, purchase two separate

safes — one for your unloaded firearms and the other for ammunition. Use two different locks or codes for each safe to make it harder for people that may know the password to one.

First Guns

Now that you're ready for your first gun, here are some tips to help you during the purchasing process.

NEED TO KNOW

There are different categories of guns with different sizes and calibers. Most people's first firearms are a 9 millimeter pistol or an AR-15 rifle. These guns are common firsts for new gun buyers because they are widely accessible, come in a variety of prices and are reliable guns with which to train.

The average first gun costs about \$400 to \$800, depending on the make and model and how adventurous you want to be with your purchase.

If you are struggling to decide which kind of firearm you to purchase, consider what you will do with the firearm after you take it home and what the purpose of the firearm is.

Is the firearm for self protection or are you going to try to shoot competitively? Where are you going to store the firearm after you purchase it?

Pistols are easier to conceal within your home or on your person. Most people begin their gun ownership with a pistol and then move on to the bigger AR-15 once they feel more comfortable handling firearms.

GUN TIPS

Most shotguns are heavier, pack more of a punch and can



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be harder to handle than a pistol or rifle.

Shotguns can also be harder to load if you're a novice gun owner. Most civilian shotguns are single-loading guns, meaning you have to load each shot-

gun cell individually instead of placing bullets into magazines for weapons such as a pistol or AR-15.

As you're starting out owning firearms, stick with basic ammunition such as 9 millime-

ter, .223 for AR-15, and 12-gauge for shotguns. As you explore firearms and familiarize yourself with them, you can become a little more adventurous.

Research the gun laws in

your city and state. What may be legal in one city or state may not be legal in the next. This will help ensure that the weapon you purchase will not cause you legal problems down the line.

Shooting Range Etiquette

Shooting firearms and getting comfortable loading and reloading a weapon becomes easy the more you practice.

It's like any other hobby or sport, the more you practice the better you get. That being said, if you don't have a vast amount of land or space to safely practice firing, the next best thing would be to find a friend who does or go to a shooting range. You are responsible for yourself at a firing range. There is some etiquette you need to follow to protect yourself and others around you.

PRACTICE LOADING AND RELOADING

You never know when a situation will come when you will need to react quickly without thinking. When your firearm is not in use, it should not be loaded. You need to know how to load and reload your firearm quickly. Practice loading and cocking your firearm for a good while before you begin shooting at the range. Do it until it is basically muscle memory for you to load and reload the firearm.

This will in turn help you remember and unload the weapon when you are not using it and keep others around you at the range safe.



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TERMS TO KNOW

There are a few terms you may hear at the range that you need to keep in mind and remember.

“Firing line” refers to where shooters may stand. You must be positioned at the line

before loading or shooting your gun. A painted strip or the words “firing line” may represent the firing line at your shooting range.

“Downrange” refers to the area past the firing line, this is important to know as your

instructor or friend may yell this out notifying everyone at the range someone is past the firing line.

“Hot or cold” is a term that refers to whether the shooters near you are active or not. “Hot” means the shooters are

active and “cold” means they are not.

It is important to be vigilant and aware of your surroundings when at the firing range. Be sure to listen closely to your instructor and others around you.