

GUN SAFETY

Guns are in more than one third of all U.S. households, so they're a very real danger to children, whether you own one or not. That's why it's important to talk to kids about the potential dangers of guns, and what to do if they find one.

If you do keep a gun in the house, it's vital to keep it out of sight and out of reach of kids. The gun should be kept locked and unloaded, and the ammunition should be stored separately.

Guns and Pretend Play

Allowing kids to play with toy a gun is a personal decision, as is how to respond to a child's pretend shooting action during the course of play. Remember that even if you don't allow your kids to have a toy gun, their friends may have them. So explain to your kids that real guns — unlike toy guns or those shown on TV, in movies, or in video games — can seriously injure or even kill a person.



Talking to Kids About Gun Safety

Teach kids to follow these rules if they come into contact with a gun:

- stop what they're doing
- do not touch the gun
- leave the area where the gun is
- tell an adult right away

It's particularly important for kids to leave the area to avoid being harmed by someone who doesn't know not to touch the gun. A child as young as 3 has the finger strength to pull a trigger. It's also important for kids to tell an adult about a gun that's been found.

If You Have a Gun in Your Home

Many kids are raised with guns in the home, particularly if hunting is a part of family recreation. If you keep a gun in the home, it's important to teach your kids to act in a safe and responsible way around it.

To ensure the safest environment for your family:

- Take the ammunition out of the gun.
- Lock the gun and keep it out of reach of kids. Hiding the gun is not enough.
- Lock the ammunition and store it apart from the gun.
- Store the keys for the gun and the ammunition in a different area from where you store household keys. Keep the keys out of reach of children.
- Lock up gun-cleaning supplies, which are often poisonous.
- When handling or cleaning a gun, adults should never leave the gun unattended.

If you own a gun or have found one in your home and want to dispose of it, call your local police station. Do not dial 911 or an emergency line. Laws differ between states, but generally, the firearm will be checked to ensure it was not part of a criminal investigation and then it will be destroyed.

Community "buy-back" or "amnesty" days are another disposal option. These programs allow people to bring unwanted guns to a designated place where they will be made unusable. To find out if your community hosts such a program, contact your local police department — but don't wait until such a program becomes available to dispose of an unwanted firearm.