

## 4 Basic Rules of Firearms Safety TAB-K ; Series

Every graduate of hunter education has been taught and tested on the 4 basic rules of firearms safety since it began in the summer of 1967 in Wisconsin. In the very early days we actually trained our students on the 10 commandments of firearms safety but statistics and research has shown that every firearms related incident is a violation of one or more of the 4 basic rules of firearms safety, which are included in the 10 commandments. This is the first in a series of articles explaining each of those 4 basic rules, why they are important and how to put them into practice.

The first rule is to treat every firearm as if is loaded. Put simply never assume a firearm is unloaded and even if you know it is do not treat it with any different respect than if it was loaded. Too many times a firearm has been handled and the person said, “ah, it’s not loaded” and then it discharged when the trigger was pulled. That is what is known as an unwanted discharge. It’s not an accidental discharge because it was not an accident that caused the firearm to go off; the trigger was pulled intentionally. Unwanted discharges shock everyone nearby. In the worst cases a person is injured or even killed.

Every time you handle a firearm do two things. First check to see if it is loaded by opening the action. If a person is handing you the firearm it’s even better if you have them open the action before you agree to accept it. The second thing is to check the safety and make sure that it is always on safe. This is a practice that should be conducted numerous times when handling a firearm. Safe hunters and shooters do this all the time and frequently when they are handling firearms. You cannot check the safety too many times to verify if it is on safe or not. I don’t mean play with it. I mean routinely check the safety once you first touch the firearm, then frequently while handling it and when you are just about to put it away or hand it off to someone else.

Respect is what this rule is all about. Respect for the firearm and what it can do. Respect for other people around you. Every one likes to know that you acknowledge their presence and are aware that safety is foremost on your mind. Respect for property. Firearms can and will do damage to property when discharged. The person handling the firearm is responsible for any and all damage done by the discharge. Proper handling and respect of firearms is necessary to be safe. Treat every firearm as if it is loaded. That means every firearm, every time, all the time.