

4 Basic Rules of Firearms Safety TAB-K ; Series (B)

Have you ever looked at something and thought it was something other than what it actually was? How many times as hunters have each of us mistaken a branch on a tree for an antler on a deer or a bump on a log as a squirrel? It happens and we know how it happens. This is the third in a four-part series on the 4 Basic Rules of Firearms Safety. “B” be certain of your target and what’s beyond it.

Coming to closure is the phenomenon we find ourselves in when we allow our brain to override what our eyes actually see. Think of it this way, remember the game you played in elementary school known as connect the dots? When you drew a line between all of the dots a picture was formed. Most of us could tell what the picture was before we connected all the dots. That’s what happens when hunters are looking for something in particular and see a few of the dots connected such as an ear, leg, or tail flicker. When hunters are in an area known to contain the species they are after, expecting to see them and wanting to see them it doesn’t take much to fill in the dots. What hunters must do is avoid the tendency of accepting their first mental impulse as being accurate. They must verify that what they think they see is actually what it really is. Be certain of your target both for legal and safety reasons. Once you fire the shot it cannot be called back and it’s no excuse when you have to say, “I thought it was a” You must know it was and be right about that.

Knowing what’s beyond your target is equally important. We don’t all hit every target and with some of our firearms the projectiles be the pellets or solid slugs pass through or around the game we are shooting at. Knowing that if we miss or if our shots pass through the game that they will fall or impact in a safe place is important. Looking beyond the animals, planning on where we have safe shots before we take them is critical. If you are on a deer stand you should already know where the safe zones of fire are. During a deer drive with each step you should be making observations of the safe directions you can shoot and where you won’t shoot. Hunters are responsible for their shots both when they hit their targets and when they don’t. Their shots should fall on safe areas and on the property where you have permission to be hunting.

Taking risks on either of these issues is like gambling. You gamble that you are right, but when you are not then the stakes are high. Another tag filled or a bag limit obtained is not worth a citation for destruction of property, a person injured or a person killed. Remember to Be certain of your target AND what’s beyond it. Safe hunting is NO accident.