

## IT'S ABOUT SAFETY

Before allowing your children to play at a friend's house, consider asking the child's parents if a gun is kept in the house and if so, how it is stored. If guns are not properly stored, consider having the children come to your house instead.



## PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM GUN VIOLENCE



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## Protect Children From Gun Violence

The news stories are frightening: a child accidentally shoots a sibling while handling a gun; a child brings a gun to school to settle an argument with a peer; a young person is shot by a stray bullet while playing outside her home.

Incidents like these happen every day in the United States. On an average day in 2002, eight young people were killed by a gun - that's one every three hours ([Children's Defense Fund](#)).

The good news is that parents can do a lot to protect their children from gun violence. A good start is to follow these three rules:

1. **Lock it up.**
2. **Teach that guns kill.**
3. **Explain how to act around guns.**

### Lock it up.

If you own a gun, keep it locked up, unloaded, and out of reach of children. Store your ammunition separately and keep your ammunition locked up, too. And invest in a trigger lock for your gun.

Not only is it safer to lock up guns and ammunition, but it can be illegal not to. In some states a gun owner can be charged with a crime if he or she doesn't take the appropriate steps to keep the firearm away from minors and a minor uses the gun.

### Teach that guns kill.

Kids may not realize that guns can be deadly. In television shows, movies, and video games, violence often doesn't have consequences.

After being shot, a cartoon character may have a hole in his stomach, but it disappears in the next scene. The leading characters in movies never die, only the bad guys do. In video games, characters have many lives.

But parents can use these media as a way to teach their children about the real-life impacts of guns. If you see an example of violence, ask your children what the consequences would be if it happened outside a Hollywood production. Talk about everyone who is affected by gun violence, such as the victim's children, parents, friends, and community. Discuss the consequences for the shooter and for the shooter's family— such as jail time and guilt

Explain how to act around guns. Even if you don't own a gun, it's likely one

of your neighbors does. Thirty-five percent of adults live in a home with at least one gun, according to John Hopkins University's Center for Gun Policy and Research (PDF, [http://www.jhsph.edu/gunpolicy/US\\_factsheet\\_2004.pdf](http://www.jhsph.edu/gunpolicy/US_factsheet_2004.pdf)).

If children know how you want them to act around guns, they'll be more likely to act in a safe manner. Teach kids the four steps to gun safety:

1. Stop.
2. Don't touch.
3. Get away.
4. Tell an adult.

Talk about specific examples of places your children may see a gun and have your children tell you what they would do. You could talk about the following examples:

- A friend shows your child his dad's gun.
- Your child sees a gun in a classmate's locker or backpack.
- Your child overhears a classmate talking about bringing a gun to school.
- Your child sees a person walk into a store holding a gun.
- Your child finds a gun while playing outdoors.

You can also go online with your children and read how McGruff's nephew Scruff reacts when he's confronted with guns in various situations. Visit [www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org) for more information.