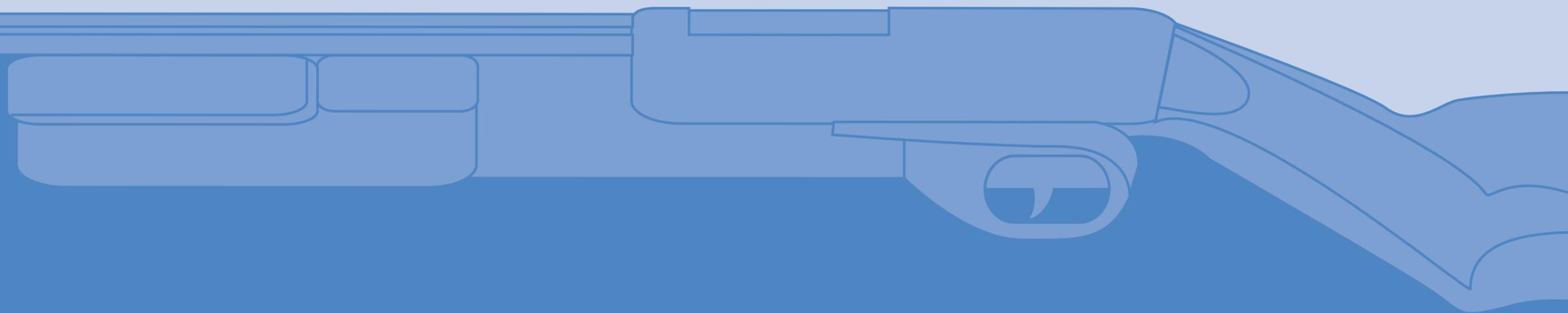


FIREARMS (LONGARMS) USERS GUIDE

RIGHTS, WRONGS AND RESPONSIBILITIES



NSW Police Force
www.police.nsw.gov.au

FIREARMS (LONGARMS) USERS GUIDE

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CHAPTER 1

FIREARMS LICENCE QUALIFICATION COURSE

Why are there firearm laws?

NSW has firearm laws to protect public safety and promote the responsible and safe use of firearms.

The *Firearms Act 1996* (the Firearms Act) and the *Firearms Regulation 2006* (the Firearms Regulation) contain the rules you need to know to lawfully use and own a firearm in NSW. It is recommended that firearms users and owners read the legislation in order to understand their responsibilities.

The current version of the legislation can be found at www.legislation.nsw.gov.au.

What is this course and why do I need to do it?

This is the Firearms Licence Qualification course and it is a requirement that all new firearms licence applicants in NSW complete and pass the course or a course approved by the Commissioner of Police (clause 122, *Firearms Regulation 2006*).

For information about what approved courses you may complete please contact the Firearms Registry Customer Service Line on 1300 362 562 or write to:

Firearms Registry
Locked Bag 1
Murwillumbah NSW 2484

Further information about the Firearms Registry is at:

www.police.nsw.gov.au/about_us/structure/corporate_services/firearms

The Firearms Licence Qualification course is for longarm firearm use or ownership only. Category H (handgun) licence applicants are required to undertake an approved pistol training course, administered by a pistol club.

FIREARMS LICENCE QUALIFICATION COURSE

At the end of this course, you will:

- Have a theoretical and practical understanding of firearms and firearms use;
- Know about firearms laws in NSW; and
- Understand your responsibilities in relation to firearm use and ownership and the requirements you must undertake to own or use a firearm in NSW.

This course can either be conducted by your club or organisation or an approved person. It is your responsibility to ensure that your trainer, club or organisation has been approved to deliver the course. The Firearms Registry can advise you on which clubs or organisations offer approved courses.

This course is an overview only. Please use this information as a starting block from which to learn more about firearms, the legislative environment, and safe and responsible use.

Furthermore, to obtain your firearms licence qualification certificate you must undertake the practical component of the course. Your course trainer will explain what you will need to know about the safe handling and use of firearms. Further information on the practical component can be found in Chapter 10.

CHAPTER 2

THE BASICS

What is a firearm?

The NSW Firearms Act defines a firearm as:

A gun, or other weapon, that is (or at any time was) capable of propelling a projectile by means of an explosive and includes a blank fire firearm, or an air gun, but does not include anything declared by the Regulations not to be a firearm.

What are the main types of firearms?

Firearms are either longarms (fired from the shoulder) or handguns. Most modern longarms are either rifles or shotguns.

A *rifle* derives its name from its rifled barrel (i.e. grooves and lands or ridges on the inside of the barrel). The rifling causes the projectile to spin on its axis, leading to greater accuracy and a longer range.

Shotguns usually have a smoothbore barrel (i.e. a barrel without rifling – lands and grooves) and fires slugs or pellets. These firearms are usually used for moving targets.

Handguns include revolvers and pistols. Handguns are different from longarms as they do not have a shoulder stock and are generally designed to be held in the hand or hands of the shooter.

A *revolver* has a revolving cylinder in which a limited number of cartridges can be held.

A *pistol* has a single fixed firing chamber and holds its cartridges either within the chamber or in a removable magazine. A pistol is reasonably capable of being raised and fired by one hand and must not exceed a prescribed dimension.

The following are the main types of actions for firearms. They are common in longarms but some actions can be found in handguns.

THE BASICS

AIR RIFLES OR AIR PISTOLS

In an air rifle or an air pistol, the projectile is propelled by compressed air (this may include any gas or mixture of gases but does not include a mixture of gases generated by an explosive) or by means of a spring. Air rifles are also known as BB guns, pneumatic guns or pellet guns.

MUZZLE LOADING FIREARMS

Muzzle loading firearms require a measured amount of powder to be poured down the barrel of the firearm and a lead ball or bullet follows. A small hole (a flash hole) is located near the trigger and a spark/flash caused by a flint lock or percussion cap lock is used to ignite the powder to create the propulsion for the projectile.

BREAK-OPEN SINGLE OR DOUBLE BARREL FIREARMS

Opening the action of a break open single or double barrel firearm reveals whether it is loaded. When the firearm is open it cannot be fired. Generally, break open firearms do not have a mechanical reloading mechanism, such as a magazine, and must be hand-loaded after each shot.

BOLT ACTION FIREARMS

Bolt action firearms operate by opening and closing a bolt, similar to a door bolt. The bolt can be lifted up and back to see whether the chamber is loaded. Generally, if the chamber is loaded a cartridge is ejected when the bolt is opened.

LEVER ACTION FIREARMS

Lever action firearms have a lever or handle located under, near or as part of the trigger guard. The firearm is opened by operating the lever, which reveals whether the chamber is loaded.

SLIDE OR PUMP ACTION FIREARMS

These firearms have a mechanism which can be slid or pumped to open the action to reveal whether the chamber is loaded.

REPEATING AND SELF-LOADING FIREARMS

Self-loading or repeating firearms are those that automatically recock or have to be manually operated to load the next round from the magazine. These fire one cartridge per pull of the trigger. Self-loaders can also be called semi-automatic firearms.

THE BASICS

What are the major parts of a firearm?

ACTION

The action is the working mechanism of a firearm, for example, bolt action. It contains the moving components of the firearm that enable loading, firing, unloading and ejection of the used cartridge casings.

RECEIVER

The receiver is the frame which contains the operating (or moving) parts of the firearm and includes the breech (which is usually the part of the barrel that includes the chamber into which a cartridge or projectile is loaded) and firing mechanism.

BOLT

The bolt blocks the rear of the chamber and is a mechanical moving part of a firearm.

TRIGGER MECHANISM

The trigger is part of the firing mechanism and is the starting point for firing. The trigger mechanism includes the trigger, which, when pulled, releases what is generally referred to as a hammer. The hammer strikes the firing pin or primer directly (depending on the firing mechanism).

BARREL

The barrel is a hollow tube through which the projectile passes upon firing. The end of the barrel where the projectile exits is the muzzle. The inside of the barrel is the bore.

STOCK

This term is usually used for longarm firearms and refers to the end of the firearm which is positioned into the shoulder for the purpose of supporting the firearm during aiming and firing and transferring some of the recoil. The part of the firearm, which is under the receiver and barrel, is called the fore-end stock.

MAGAZINE (IF APPLICABLE)

A magazine is an internal or external container for cartridges. An external magazine can be detachable.

THE BASICS

What are the basic functions of a firearm?

FEED/LOAD

The process of placing a cartridge into the chamber of a firearm.

COCK

Placing a firearm into a condition where it can be discharged.

LOCK

The firearm breech, bolt and breech face come together providing a securely sealed unit, fully supporting the cartridge.

FIRE

This is the process of discharging a cartridge. Pulling the trigger operates internal components of a firearm which ultimately result in the forward movement of the firing pin. As the firing pin moves forward it strikes the primer of the cartridge. The primer is the means of ignition of a cartridge. The impact of the firing pin on the primer causes the priming compound inside the primer to ignite; this causes the propellant inside the cartridge case to start burning. As the propellant burns a build up of hot gases occurs. This build up of gas then forces the bullet out of the cartridge case and down the barrel of the firearm and out of the muzzle.

UNLOCK

The firearm breech, bolt and breech face separate and the support for the cartridge is removed.

EXTRACT

The act of withdrawing a cartridge or cartridge case from the chamber of a firearm.

EJECT

The act of expelling a cartridge or cartridge case from a firearm.

What is ammunition?

Ammunition is a general term meaning a cartridge with its projectile and propellant and primer.

Projectiles, such as those fired from rifles or handguns, are called bullets. A “round” contains a bullet, primer, cartridge case and propellant. A shotgun does not usually discharge bullets, but generally projects in a single discharge a large number of small pellets (projectiles or shot).

THE BASICS

What are the different types of ammunition?

CENTREFIRE (RIFLE, HANDGUN AND SHOTGUN)

The primer in centrefire ammunition is contained in the middle of the cartridge case head. The primer can be replaced, which means that many centrefire cartridges can be reloaded.

RIMFIRE (RIFLE AND HANDGUN)

The primer in rimfire cartridges is found around the inner edges of the cartridge case. Rimfire cartridges are generally limited to the lower pressure calibres as they often have a thin case. They cannot be reloaded and most modern rimfire cartridges do not exceed .22 calibre.

MUZZLE LOADED

Ammunition for muzzle loading firearms consists of a measured amount of gunpowder followed by an appropriate sized round lead ball, shaped projectile or a shot load along with any patch, card or wad necessary for the specific type of muzzle loading firearm being used.

What are the components of ammunition?

CARTRIDGE

A cartridge is also referred to as a “round”. It comprises the bullet (projectile), propellant (gunpowder) and the primer (ignition), which all fit into the cartridge casing.

PROJECTILE

The projectile (bullet) is the item that ejects rapidly from the muzzle.

PROPELLANT POWDER

Propellant powder is material, such as gunpowder, which includes both blackpowder and smokeless powder. It burns quickly and controllably to produce gas, which under pressure forces the projectile to be expelled out of the muzzle.

PRIMER

In cartridges, the primer is held at the base of the cartridge and contains a sensitive chemical that ignites on impact. When the firing pin strikes the primer, it ignites with a spark, which then ignites the propellant powder.

THE BASICS

SHOTGUN PELLETS

A shotgun shell contains a number of pellets (shot), which spread out when fired.

At the end of this chapter you must be able to:

- Identify the main types of firearms
- Identify the major parts of firearms
- Identify the main functions of a firearm
- Identify ammunition components

Sample question: *What is NOT a component of ammunition?*

- (a) primer
- (b) bullet
- (c) bolt
- (d) cartridge case

The correct answer is (c) bolt

CHAPTER 3

USE AND SAFETY

Basic firearms safety

There are four basic rules to ensure firearms safety:

- a) Treat all firearms as if they are loaded;
- b) Always point your firearm in a safe direction (never allow the muzzle of your firearm to point at another human being);
- c) Never load a live round into the chamber of a firearm until you are ready to shoot; and
- d) Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.

When handling a firearm always remember that safety is your top priority.

Always follow these general principles:

- When passing a firearm to someone or when picking a firearm up, check whether the firearm is loaded by opening the action and looking inside the chamber;
- Your firearm is your responsibility;
- Positively identify your target, always ensure that the firing zone is clear and identify what is beyond your target;
- When you have finished shooting remove the magazine (if fitted), unload and check that the chamber is empty;
- Make sure that all firearms are transported securely to prevent misuse or theft;
- Never allow unauthorised access to your firearm or ammunition;
- Do not climb fences or obstacles with loaded firearms;
- Encourage safe and responsible handling of firearms in the field, on the range and within the community;

USE AND SAFETY

- Understand the operation of your firearm, keep it in good repair and always use the correct ammunition;
- Never store firearms and ammunition together. Ensure they are safely locked away when not in use;
- Never mix shooting with alcohol or drugs;
- Be familiar with the legal requirements for safe storage, firearms ownership, possession and use in NSW or in any state or territory you may visit; and
- Dispose of unwanted firearms lawfully. Surrender them to police or sell them to or through a licensed firearms dealer.

What is the National Firearms Safety Code?

The *National Firearms Safety Code* provides instruction on the safe handling procedures and safe shooting practices for firearms. Newcomers must familiarise themselves with the Code and trainers are encouraged to explain the Code to newcomers. The *National Firearms Safety Code* can be obtained from the Firearms Registry by phoning the Customer Service Line on 1300 362 562.

Further information about the safe use of firearms is addressed in the practical component in chapter 10.

At the end of this chapter you must be able to:

- Identify basic firearms safety

Sample question: *Which of the following is good advice for a firearms user?*

- (a) never mix shooting with alcohol
- (b) it's okay to climb over fences with a loaded firearm
- (c) always keep your firearms and ammunition stored together
- (d) it's okay to shoot at abandoned buildings

The correct answer is (a) never mix shooting with alcohol

CHAPTER 4

LICENCES AND PERMITS

Why do I need a firearms licence?

If you want to use or possess a firearm for personal or professional reasons in NSW you must have a licence or permit.

A few people or professions are exempt from the need to hold a licence while acting in the ordinary course of their duties, for example, defence force personnel, custodial officers or police officers.

How do I apply for a firearms licence?

To apply for a firearms licence you must:

DETERMINE WHETHER YOU HAVE A GENUINE REASON FOR OWNING OR USING A FIREARM

Under the Firearms Act, all licence applicants are required to provide a “genuine reason” for use or possession of a firearm. These are:

- Sport/target shooting;
- Recreational hunting/vermin control;
- Primary production;
- Vertebrate pest animal control;
- Business or employment;
- Occupational requirements relating to rural purposes;
- Animal welfare; and
- Firearms collection.

All applicants must provide proof of their genuine reason and must fulfil a range of requirements depending on what genuine reason is supplied.

Applicants are only authorised to use a firearm for the purpose stated on the licence. For example, if the genuine reason of target shooting is provided, the applicants is not authorised to use a firearm for the purposes of hunting.

LICENCES AND PERMITS

An applicant may provide more than one genuine reason on their licence application; however, they are required to fulfil all the requirements for each genuine reason.

DETERMINE WHAT CATEGORY OF LICENCE IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR NEEDS

The Firearms Act has seven licence categories (A, B, C, D, H, firearms dealing and firearms collecting). The different licence categories relate to different categories of firearms or different activities (i.e. dealing and collecting). Additional requirements apply to categories B, C, D and H licences. The firearms licence categories are as follows:

Category A licence

Firearms to which the licence applies:

- air rifles;
- rimfire rifles (other than self-loading);
- shotguns (other than pump action or self-loading); and
- shotgun / rimfire rifle combinations.

For all categories of licence other than Category A, an applicant must provide evidence to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that there is a special need for the person to possess or use a firearm of that category.

Category B licence

Firearms to which the licence applies:

- muzzle-loading firearms (other than pistols);
- centre-fire rifles (other than self-loading); and
- shotgun/centre-fire rifle combinations.

All prohibited firearms are excluded from this licence category.

Category C licence

Firearms to which the licence applies:

- self-loading rimfire rifles with a magazine capacity of no more than 10 rounds;
- self-loading shotguns with a magazine capacity of no more than 5 rounds; and
- pump action shotguns with a magazine capacity of no more than 5 rounds.

A category C licence is prohibited except for limited purposes and is restricted to persons who cite the genuine reason of primary production (and in some special circumstances, clay target shooting).

LICENCES AND PERMITS

Category D licence

Firearms to which the licence applies:

- self-loading centre-fire rifles;
- self-loading rimfire rifles with a magazine capacity of more than 10 rounds;
- self-loading shotguns with a magazine capacity of more than 5 rounds;
- pump action shotguns with a magazine capacity of more than 5 rounds; and
- any firearm to which a category C licence applies.

These firearms are prohibited except for official purposes and can only be used for the purposes of vertebrate pest animal control.

Category H licence (pistols)

Firearms to which the licence applies:

- pistols (including blank fire pistols and air pistols).

(Note: under the Firearms Act, the term “pistols” includes “revolvers”)

Handguns can only be possessed or used for certain strictly limited purposes, including business or employment or target shooting.

Firearms Dealers Licence

Firearms to which the licence applies:

- the kinds of firearms specified in the licence.

Collector's Licence

Firearms to which the licence applies:

- the kinds of firearms specified in the licence.

In general, post-1946 pistols and any prohibited firearm (other than those firearms to which a category C licence or category D licence applies) are excluded from this licence category.

Applicants must note that a range of restrictions and responsibilities apply to all licence categories.

The following pistols are prohibited from ownership unless authorised by a special permit:

- a pistol with a calibre of more than .38 inch;
- a self-loading pistol with a barrel length of less than 120 mm;
- a revolver with a barrel length of less than 100 mm, but does not include any such kind of pistol that is a black powder pistol.

LICENCES AND PERMITS

COMPLETE THE FIREARMS LICENCE QUALIFICATION COURSE OR A COURSE APPROVED BY THE COMMISSIONER

Your licence application cannot be approved without providing proof of completion of an approved firearms licence qualification course.

CONTACT THE FIREARMS REGISTRY TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY FORMS

You can only obtain the necessary forms from the Firearms Registry. These forms are specifically designed for electronic scanning and cannot be photocopied and must be fully completed.

Complete the application forms and forward with supporting documentation as required to support the genuine reason you have applied for.

AWAIT APPROVAL FROM THE FIREARMS REGISTRY

If your licence application is approved by the Firearms Registry, you will be sent a notice to collect your firearms licence from the Roads and Traffic Authority. Only the successful applicant is permitted to collect the firearm licence in person.

Who can apply for a licence?

A licence applicant must be:

- At least 18 years of age;
- Except in the case of a Firearms Dealer or where the applicants genuine reason is Business/Employment a 'natural' or living person (i.e. not a business name); and
- A NSW resident or about to become a resident of NSW.

If you are under 18 years of age, you may apply for a minor's firearms permit. Further information on minor's permits can be found in the section on permits in this chapter.

Is there anything that may prevent me from getting a licence?

You will be prevented from getting a licence if, in the past ten years, you have committed a:

- Firearms offence (or you are subject to a firearms prohibition order);
- A prohibited drugs or a prescribed restricted substances offence;
- An offence involving violence;
- Offences of a sexual nature;
- Terrorist offences;
- You are the subject of an Apprehended Violence Order; or
- You are the subject of a Good Behaviour Bond.

Additionally, you will be refused a licence if it is considered that you are not a fit and proper person and cannot be trusted to have possession of a firearm without harm to public safety or peace. Discretionary grounds for refusal are also contained with in the Act.

LICENCES AND PERMITS

What do I need to provide?

To obtain a licence you must:

- Prove your identity (the “100 points test”);
- Proof of the genuine reason (such as club membership)
- Provide proof of completing this course or an approved Firearms Qualification Course; and
- Pay the relevant fee.

Furthermore, the Commissioner must be satisfied that the storage and safety requirements are understood and capable of being met by the applicant (see chapter 5 for further information on safe storage).

How do I change my firearms licence?

To change any detail on your firearms licence you must contact the Firearms Registry and obtain the necessary forms.

What happens if I lose my licence?

If you lose your licence you must notify the Firearms Registry in writing within fourteen (14) days.

What happens if my reasons for having a licence change?

If the reasons for your having a licence change (for example, if the genuine reason for possessing and using your firearm can no longer be established), you must inform the Firearms Registry in writing within fourteen (14) days.

For example, if you have a firearm for the purpose of farming (primary production) and you sell your farm, you no longer have a genuine reason for owning a firearm.

What happens if I breach a condition of my licence?

Depending on the severity of the breach, you may lose your licence, incur a fine or face imprisonment.

When must I renew my licence?

The term of a licence is generally up to 5 years. It is your responsibility to ensure that you renew your licence on time. If you do not receive a renewal notification from the Firearms Registry prior to the expiration of your licence, please contact the Firearms Registry.

If you choose not to renew your licence, you must dispose of your firearms legally before your licence expires (see chapter 5 for further information about the safe disposal of firearms).

LICENCES AND PERMITS

When would my licence be revoked or suspended?

A licence must be revoked or suspended if:

- You are the subject of a firearms prohibition order or an Apprehended Violence Order;
- You are no longer a person to whom a licence can be granted, for example, if you are convicted of a drug or violence offence; or
- If you are an armed security guard and you fail to undertake your firearms safety training course.

A licence may be revoked or suspended if:

- You supply false or misleading information;
- You breach the Firearms Act or Regulation;
- You breach a condition on your licence;
- Your firearm is stolen due to negligence or fraudulent activity; or
- If it is no longer in the public interest that you hold a firearms licence.

When may my firearms be confiscated by police?

Your firearms may be confiscated by police if your licence is suspended or revoked or if your registration has been cancelled. If this occurs, you must immediately surrender your firearms and licence to a police officer.

What else do I need to know?

As a licence holder you have a range of activities that you must undertake so that you can prove that your reason for holding a firearms licence is genuine. For example, if your genuine reason is target shooting, then each year you must participate in four club organised competitive shooting matches. If you are a member of a hunting club, you are required to participate in no less than two club organised events.

Be aware of **your responsibilities** so that you fulfil the necessary requirements of your licence category and genuine reason!

What is a permit and how is it different from a licence?

The permit system was created to ensure that people who demonstrated a legitimate reason for firearm use or possession could be authorised to own or use a firearm.

The Firearms Act requires that to use or possess a firearm you must be authorised by a licence or permit. You may apply for a licence if you can provide a genuine reason for using or possessing a firearm (see above). However, some people may have valid or legitimate reasons for using or possessing a firearm

LICENCES AND PERMITS

but these reasons do not fall within the genuine reason categories. For example, a theatrical armourer (someone who supplies firearms for film, television or theatre) has a valid reason for possessing a firearm and should not be prevented from pursuing his or her vocation.

For example, permits may be provided for the purposes of:

- Possessing a firearm as an heirloom;
- Ammunition collection;
- Using a high calibre firearm in special target shooting competitions;
- Theatrical armoury or film, theatre and television production;
- Displays at RSLs and museums; and
- Paintball.

Permits can also be obtained for under 18s. An applicant must be over 12 years old, must have completed this course or an approved course prior to applying and must have the written consent of a parent or guardian. A minor can only get a permit for the purposes of firearms training or target shooting.

What is a permit to acquire?

If after obtaining your licence or permit, you would like to acquire a firearm you must first obtain a Permit To Acquire (PTA). A separate PTA is required for each firearm.

A PTA will only be approved if the Firearms Registry is satisfied that you have a good reason for acquiring that firearm. A PTA can only be approved 28 days after the application has been lodged.

At the end of this chapter you must be able to:

- Identify one genuine reason for firearms ownership
- Identify the different categories of firearms
- Provide one reason for which your firearms licence may be revoked
- Explain when you need to get a permit to acquire

Sample question: Which of the following is NOT a Category A or B firearm?

- (a) muzzle loaded longarm
- (b) self-loading rifle
- (c) air rifle
- (d) rimfire rifle

The correct answer is (b) self-loading rifle

CHAPTER 5

BUYING, REGISTERING AND SAFELY STORING YOUR FIREARM

How do I acquire a firearm?

Prior to acquiring a firearm you must have:

- A valid licence or permit;
- A permit to acquire; and
- Suitable safe storage.

Where can I buy or sell a firearm?

You may only buy or sell a firearm from or through a licensed firearms dealer. If a licensed firearms dealer is unavailable (i.e. both the seller and the buyer live more than 100 kilometres from a licensed dealer), the sale must be witnessed by a police officer.

Can I borrow a firearm?

Yes. You may borrow a registered firearm from an authorised licence holder if you are authorised to use that category of firearm.

Ammunition – how do I get it?

You may buy ammunition from a firearms dealer or a licence or permit holder who is authorised to hold the relevant licence or permit for a firearm which takes that ammunition. To purchase ammunition you must hold a relevant licence or permit for a firearm which takes that ammunition.

What if I don't want my firearm or ammunition anymore?

If you no longer want your firearm or ammunition you must dispose of them in a responsible manner.

BUYING, REGISTERING AND SAFELY STORING YOUR FIREARM

You must either:

- Sell the firearm and ammunition to or through a dealer; or
- Surrender the firearm and ammunition to the police.

If you happen to come across a firearm that you are not authorised to have, you must immediately surrender it to the police.

Do I need to register my firearm?

All firearms, unless they are exempt, must be registered. Only very limited types of pre-1900 firearms are exempt from registration. The Firearms Registry maintains a central registry of firearms that includes information on the particulars of the firearm to enable its identification, such as the serial number of the firearm. It is an offence to be in possession of an unregistered firearm.

Safe storage (Firearms and Ammunition)

The Firearms Act sets out your responsibilities as a firearms owner in relation to safe storage. The Firearms Registry can provide you with a set of guidelines to assist in complying with safe storage laws. If you want to make sure that you comply with safe storage requirements, contact the Customer Service line at the Firearms Registry on 1300 362 562.

Safe storage of firearms and ammunition is essential to ensure that your firearm does not fall into the wrong hands such as children, relatives or criminals. Remember, it is illegal to lend your firearm to an unauthorised person.

Different categories of licence require different standards of safe storage. However, across all licences and permit categories, the legislation provides that any firearms owner must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that the firearm:

- Is kept safe;
- Is not lost or stolen; and
- Does not come into the possession of a person who is not authorised to possess the firearm.

If you do not comply with these measures, you may lose your licence, incur a fine or go to prison.

When at home and your firearm is not actually being used or carried, holders of category A and B licences must:

- Store the firearm in a locked receptacle that is constructed of hard wood or steel and not easily penetrable; and
- Store ammunition for the firearm in a locked container separate from the firearm.

BUYING, REGISTERING AND SAFELY STORING YOUR FIREARM

If the receptacle weighs less than 150 kilograms when empty, it must be fixed in order to prevent its easy removal and the locks must be of solid metal and be of an approved type.

When at home and your firearm is not actually being used or carried, holders of category C and D licences must:

- Store the firearm in a locked steel safe (bolted to the structure of the premises) that cannot be easily penetrated; and
- Store ammunition for the firearm in a locked container separate from the firearm.

While transporting your firearm you must ensure that it is conveyed in a safe and responsible manner, taking all reasonable steps to ensure the firearm is not stolen or unlawfully used. For example, when transporting a firearm, ensure the firearm is not loaded and render the firearm temporarily inoperable (i.e. cannot fire) by: removing the bolt from the firearm or fitting a trigger lock (or other commercial device); and locking the firearm out of visual sight, such as in the boot of the car. If you cannot fit the firearm in the boot, then ensure the firearm is covered from view and the vehicle is locked. Any ammunition must be locked in a separate container inside the vehicle, for example in the locked glove box.

In addition to these requirements, the Firearms Registry will inform you what extra precautions you must take to ensure that your firearm does not get lost or stolen.

At the end of this chapter you must know:

- Where or how you may lawfully buy or acquire a firearm
- How to dispose of your firearm or ammunition
- General principles relating to safe storage of firearms and ammunition

Sample question: *Is it legal to store your Category A/B firearm:*

- (a) in a zipped gun bag under my bed
- (b) in a garage
- (c) in a locked receptacle that is not easy to break into
- (d) with your ammunition

The correct answer is (c) in a locked receptacle that is not easy to break into

CHAPTER 6

MODIFYING A FIREARM OR AMMUNITION

What components of my firearm can I change?

Unless you are authorised by a permit you must not:

- Shorten any firearm (other than a pistol) to less than the dimensions prescribed in the Regulation;
- Possess any such firearm that has been shortened;
- Sell or give possession of any such firearm that has been shortened to another person; or
- Alter the construction or action of a pistol or firearm so as to convert it into a prohibited pistol or firearm.

What if my firearm breaks or needs repairs?

Every shooter has a duty of care to regularly maintain their firearm. If you are unsure of how to clean or maintain your firearm either refer to manufacturer's manual or ask a licensed firearms dealer or club armourer to assist you.

You can always take your firearm to a licensed dealer or a manufacturer to have it repaired.

Can I alter the appearance of my firearm?

You must not:

- Alter the construction or action of a pistol or firearm so as to convert it into a prohibited pistol or firearm;
- Alter the construction of a prohibited firearm so as to convert it into a firearm; or
- Add a silencer to your firearm, unless authorised by a prohibited weapons permit.

Can I increase the magazine capacity of my firearm?

You may be able to increase the magazine capacity of your firearm if your firearm still falls within the category of licence for which you are authorised.

MODIFYING A FIREARM OR AMMUNITION

Prior to altering your firearm, please check with the Firearms Registry or a firearms dealer to ensure that you comply with the legislation.

If the magazine is one of the following, **you must** obtain a prohibited weapons permit:

- a rimfire magazine with a capacity of more than 15 rounds;
- a centre-fire self-loading rifle magazine with a capacity of more than 5 rounds;
- a shotgun magazine with a capacity of more than 5 rounds;
- a shotgun tubular magazine extension that is capable of extending the capacity of a shotgun magazine to more than 5 rounds; and
- a pistol magazine with a capacity of more than 10 rounds.

Is reloading the only alternative to factory loaded ammunition?

Yes. However, you may go to a licensed dealer if you require your ammunition to be modified. You may buy factory loaded ammunition or load your own (except for rimfire).

Are all other modifications to ammunition dangerous?

Before reloading your own ammunition, you should speak to experienced shooters at your local club or refer to reloading manuals, which are available through your local gun shop. If you do not do this, you may put yourself or others at risk.

What should I do if my firearm malfunctions or if I discover a fault with my firearm?

If you are not adept at firearms repair, it is advised that you take your firearm to someone who can assist you – a club armourer, a licensed dealer or the manufacturer of the firearm.

What is the role of a club armourer in the safe maintenance of firearms?

A club armourer is authorised to possess, manufacture, convert, purchase, sell, transfer, repair, maintain or test in his or her capacity as a club armourer at the club specified in his or her licence.

At the end of this chapter you must be able to:

- Identify what components of my firearm am I allowed to change
- Understand the principles of safe reloading of ammunition

Sample question: *If you are a Category A licence holder you are authorised to:*

- (a) shorten your rifle to the length of a pistol
- (b) increase the rifle's magazine capacity to over 15 rounds
- (c) add a silencer to your rifle
- (d) none of the above

The correct answer is (d) none of the above

CHAPTER 7

SHOOTING RANGES

What is a shooting range?

A shooting range is a facility designed to allow competitive shooting activities to be conducted under a controlled and safe environment.

Shooting clubs may have a shooting range, which may be indoors or outdoors.

Shooting ranges also refer to moveable shooting ranges (e.g. air gun shooting ranges that you may find at carnivals or fairs).

Why would I need to use one?

Depending on your category of licence, you may be authorised to frequent a shooting range to use, sight in or practice with your firearm.

What are my obligations or responsibilities when I use a shooting range?

General safe practices are required when using a shooting range. If you are unsure of your responsibilities check with the range or safety officer.

What are my range responsibilities?

The following are general rules that you must follow when at a range. Prior to shooting at a range, you must check the specific rules of the range.

- You must obey the range officer at all times;
- You are prohibited from loading your firearm except when on the firing line;
- If you are carrying a firearm you must point the muzzle in a safe direction and keep the action open;
- Every person at a range is responsible for safety; and
- You are obliged to report any potentially dangerous situation to the range officer immediately.

SHOOTING RANGES

What are my responsibilities if I am shooting in a field environment?

If you are shooting in a field environment you must ensure that:

- You are aware of where the muzzle of your firearm is pointed at all times;
- You keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target and you have decided to fire; and
- You are sure of your target - know what it is, what is in the path between you and your target and what is behind it. Never fire at anything you have not positively identified.

If you want to know more about shooting in a field environment, ask your range officer or hunting club.

What does a range officer do?

A range officer holds a supervisory role at the shooting range. You must obey the commands or directions of the range officer to ensure safety is upheld. Your shooting range will have a set of directions with which you must comply. You must familiarise yourself with these rules.

What is the maximum range (distance) that my firearm can shoot and what is beyond the target?

The maximum distance your firearm can shoot will depend on your firearm and the ammunition your firearm uses. In addition, environmental factors, (e.g. wind) may significantly change the velocity and trajectory of the projectile.

Firearms users should be aware of the maximum range of their firearm, particularly if involved in outdoor shooting activities such as target shooting or hunting.

Often an immobile target backs onto materials that stop the projectile in its tracks, such as a soft earthy mound. Of course, moveable objects, such as clay targets or animals, may not have anything behind them to stop the trajectory of the bullet. A shooter must at all times be aware of what is beyond the target and must know where the projectile will go should they hit or miss the intended target.

At the end of this chapter you must be able to:

- Explain what is a shooting range
- Identify and explain some of the correct or safe firing procedures
- Explain the role of a range officer

Sample question: *At a shooting range it is bad practice to:*

- (a) keep your finger on the trigger when walking around the range
- (b) be aware of your muzzle direction at all times
- (c) respond to orders from the range officer
- (d) immediately report a safety issue to the range officer

The correct answer is (a) keep your finger on the trigger when walking around the range

The *Firearms Act 1996* and the *Firearms Regulation 2006*

The *Firearms Act 1996* (the Firearms Act) and the *Firearms Regulation 2006* (the Firearms Regulation) provide for the regulation, control and registration of firearms in NSW.

The Firearms Act was developed in 1996 to comply with the National Firearms Agreement, which introduced uniform national firearms laws. Other national agreements, such as the Handgun Agreement have also led to changes in NSW firearms laws.

The Firearms Act provides that people who satisfy licensing and other requirements can pursue lawful shooting activities. This is recognised in the genuine reasons for gun ownership, which are provided for in the Firearms Act. Examples include sport or target shooting, recreational hunting or vermin control, business or employment, and primary production. Licences can be issued for firearm collection and firearm dealing.

What are the principles and objects of the Firearms Act?

The Firearms Act seeks to balance the concerns of the broader community with regards to public safety against the legitimate needs of firearms users. The underlying principles of the Firearms Act are:

- a) To confirm firearm possession and use as being a privilege that is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety, and
- b) To improve public safety:
 - (i) By imposing strict controls on the possession and use of firearms, and
 - (ii) By promoting the safe and responsible storage and use of firearms, and
- c) To facilitate a national approach to the control of firearms.

LEGISLATION

The objects (aims) of the Firearms Act are as follows:

- a) To prohibit the possession and use of all automatic and self-loading rifles and shotguns except in special circumstances,
- b) To establish an integrated licensing and registration scheme for all firearms,
- c) To require each person who possesses or uses a firearm under the authority of a licence to provide a genuine reason for possessing or using the firearm,
- d) To provide strict requirements that must be satisfied in relation to licensing of firearms and the acquisition and sales of firearms,
- e) To ensure that firearms are stored and conveyed in a safe and secure manner, and
- f) To provide for compensation in respect of, and an amnesty period to enable the surrender of, certain prohibited firearms.

The Firearms Regulation contains much of the administrative detail required to implement the Firearms Act.

What is the role of NSW Police Force (Commissioner and Firearms Registry)?

The Commissioner of Police or his delegate administers the Firearms Act and is authorised by the legislation to administer the regulatory scheme for firearms.

The Manager of the Firearms Registry is the Commissioner's delegate. The Firearms Registry is authorised to:

- Issue firearm licences and permits to individuals, clubs, businesses and firearms dealers;
- Register firearms to all of the above;
- Issue permits to acquire firearms;
- Assist with customs clearances for imported firearms;
- Provide advice about licences, firearms and permits; and
- Provide updates on firearm related matters.

Complying with the law (including offences under the Act)

There are a range of offences relating to firearms that are addressed in the Firearms Act and in the *Crimes Act 1900*.

For example, it is an offence to:

- Own or possess a firearm unless authorised to do so by a licence or permit;
- Buy or sell a firearm unless through a licensed dealer (except in very remote areas where the sale can be witnessed by a police officer);
- Lend a firearm to someone if they do not have the relevant licence;

LEGISLATION

- Sell, buy or possess an unregistered firearm;
- Not inform the Firearms Registry if your firearm or licence is lost or stolen; and
- Use a firearm under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

You must not:

- Cause any danger with a firearm;
- Fire at a house or building; or
- Trespass with a firearm.

Am I allowed to use my firearm if intoxicated?

No! You must never use your firearm under the influence of drugs or alcohol or sell or give possession of a firearm to a person if it is reasonable to believe they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Also, if you are taking any pharmaceutical medication that warns against driving or using heavy machinery, it is advised that you do not use your firearm.

At the end of this chapter you must be able to:

- Understand the principles and objects of the Firearms Act
- Identify offences under the Firearms Act

Sample question: *Is it an offence to:*

- (a) comply with your licence conditions
- (b) shoot at buildings
- (c) lend a firearm to someone who has a relevant licence
- (d) tell the Firearms Registry if your licence gets stolen

The correct answer is (b) shoot at buildings

CHAPTER 9

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ETHICS

What are my legal responsibilities?

As a firearms owner in NSW you are required to familiarise yourself with the Firearms Act and Regulation and comply with all the requirements.

It is essential that you:

- Ensure public safety is paramount;
- Comply with your licence or permit conditions; and
- Store your firearm safely to minimise the likelihood of it being lost or stolen.

You must be aware that firearms ownership is a privilege and is conditional on the overriding need for public safety.

What are my social responsibilities?

As a firearms owner in NSW you are bound to act in a safe and responsible manner whilst using a firearm and ensure that those around you do the same.

You must:

- Never mix shooting with alcohol or drugs;
- Never act in a foolhardy way around firearms.

What should I do if I become aware of an illegal activity?

If you become aware of illegal activity involving firearms, for example, if you know of an unlicensed person who owns a firearm you must contact Crime Stoppers on **1800 333 000**.

What could happen if a firearm is misused?

If you misuse your firearm you may lose your licence and may have committed a serious offence (in which case you may be fined or face imprisonment).

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ETHICS

Your misuse of a firearm may have an impact on the whole of the firearms community.

How can I ensure my own safety and those around me?

Be vigilant in ensuring you abide by the legislative requirements, safety rules and the rules of your shooting range or club.

What is a duty of care?

A duty of care is a legal obligation requiring that an individual avoids doing harm to another person. A person must exercise a reasonable standard of care while undertaking an act where it is reasonably foreseeable that the act may harm another person.

As a licence holder you must ensure that your use of firearms does not result in the unintentional harm of another person.

Furthermore, if you are in a position of authority, such as a range officer, then you must be aware of your legal obligations in relation to duty of care.

What do I need to do if there is a firearm accident or injury?

If there is a serious firearms accident or injury and the individual requires urgent medical attention, call an ambulance.

Am I obliged to render assistance?

If you are in a position of authority then you must be aware of your legal obligations in relation to rendering assistance.

What is ethical behaviour and what are my responsibilities in relation to the environment and animals?

If you are a recreational hunter, vermin controller or vertebrate animal pest controller you are bound by the requirements of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*. This means that in the course of hunting, shooting, snaring, trapping, catching or capturing an animal you are not allowed to inflict any unnecessary pain on that animal.

You should also be aware of your responsibilities under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*. This Act provides for the effective management of introduced species of game animal and promotes responsible and orderly hunting of those game animals on public and private land and of certain pest animals on public land. For certain hunting activities, an additional licence must be obtained from the Game Council.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ETHICS

At the end of this chapter you must:

- Identify your legal and social responsibilities
- Explain what to do if there is a firearm accident or injury

Sample question: *As a firearms owner in NSW it is essential that you:*

- (a) ensure public safety is paramount
- (b) comply with your licence or permit conditions
- (c) store your firearm safely to minimise the likelihood of it being lost or stolen
- (d) all of the above

The correct answer is (d) all of the above

CHAPTER 10

PRACTICAL COMPONENT

The practical component of this course is to be undertaken by all course participants. Your course trainer will explain each task below and demonstrate each one.

After completing the requisite training, approved course trainers must ensure that all course participants complete this component and are competent across all areas.

Handling a Firearm

The course participant must demonstrate how to:

- Inspect or pick up a firearm safely including how to:
- Open the action
- Check to see if the chamber is empty

It is essential that the course participant completes every task ensuring that the muzzle is pointing in a safe direction.

- Handle a firearm safely in a range of situations including:
- Passing a firearm from one person to another;
- Carrying a firearm (at the range, in the field);
- Negotiating fences and other obstacles;
- Placing a firearm in and removing it from a vehicle; and
- Correctly securing a firearm (at home, in a vehicle).

Using a Firearm

The course participant must demonstrate:

- How to load and unload a firearm safely and correctly;
- How to load and unload magazine/single shot;

PRACTICAL COMPONENT

- How to hold a firearm safely and correctly in a variety of positions;
- Correct aiming procedure and correct trigger control;
- What to do if a firearm malfunctions – in the field, at the range;
- Correct/safe firing procedures in field or range environments; and
- The procedure to follow if a live round is stuck in a firearm.

Maintenance

The course participant must demonstrate:

- How to check a firearm is safe and remove ammunition before commencing inspection;
- That a firearm is unloaded and safe before cleaning; and
- How to inspect a firearm to see if it is safe to use.