



Firearms Safety

K-12 Instructional Outcomes and Guidance

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Introduction

In 2024, the Tennessee General Assembly passed the following legislation, requiring instruction of firearms safety in schools, outlined in Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1016:

- (a) The departments of education and safety, in consultation with the Tennessee fish and wildlife commission, shall determine the earliest grade in which it is appropriate for students to begin receiving instruction on firearm safety. In determining the earliest appropriate grade for instruction on firearm safety, the departments shall study all relevant data and risk factors, including the earliest age at which incidents of injury involving firearms are reported and the earliest age at which children are susceptible to harm from found firearms.*
- (b) Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, each local education agency (LEA) and public charter school shall annually provide students with age-appropriate and grade-appropriate instruction on firearm safety. The instruction must begin with the earliest appropriate grade, as determined by the departments under subsection (a), and must continue in each subsequent grade through grade twelve (12).*
- (c) The instruction required under subsection (b) must:*
 - 1) Teach students:*
 - a. Safe storage of firearms;*
 - b. School safety relating to firearms;*
 - c. How to avoid injury if the student finds a firearm;*
 - d. To never touch a found firearm; and*
 - e. To immediately notify an adult of the location of a found firearm;*
 - 2) Be viewpoint neutral on political topics, such as gun rights, gun violence, and the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution; and*
 - 3) Not include the use or presence of live ammunition, live fire, or live firearms.*
- (d)*
 - 1) The departments of education and safety, in consultation with the Tennessee fish and wildlife commission, shall develop or approve a curriculum or program of instruction on firearm safety that meets the requirements of this section and that LEAs and public charter schools are required to implement for purposes of providing the instruction required under subsection (b). The departments shall not approve a curriculum or program of instruction if the curriculum, program of instruction, or any of the instructional materials used as part of the curriculum or program of instruction bear a brand or organizational affiliation.*
 - 2) The instruction required under subsection (b) may be provided in a classroom setting, through the viewing of a video, or through the review of online resources or materials, as determined by the department of education.*
 - 3) Each LEA and public charter school shall determine how best to incorporate the instruction required under subsection (b) into the school year.*

Development and Summary of Instructional Outcomes

The Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Department of Safety & Homeland Security, in collaboration with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), collaborated on establishing age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate instructional outcomes to help LEAs and public charter schools meet the minimum requirements of the law requiring instruction of firearms safety in schools.

These outcomes are grouped by grade band and represent what knowledge, skills, and attitudes a student should be able to demonstrate by the end of the instructional unit. The law allows LEAs and public charter schools to decide how to incorporate the instruction and provide materials, ensuring local autonomy.

The instructional outcomes for firearm safety instruction can be met in any way an LEA or public charter school deems appropriate and feasible. They may include methods including, but not limited to, classroom instruction through the viewing of video(s), online resources, or community-supported instruction by School Resource Officers (SROs), local law enforcement, public health educators, TWRA officials, or other local partners.

Firearm Safety Rules for Children

1. **Stop** – The first rule for a child to follow if they find or see a gun is to stop what they are doing. This step is crucial; stopping allows time for the child to remember the rest of the firearm safety rules.
2. **Don't Touch!** – The second rule is for a child not to touch a gun they find or see. A child may think the best thing to do if they find a gun is to pick it up and take it to an adult. A child needs to know they should NEVER touch a gun that is found or seen. A firearm that is not touched or disturbed is unlikely to be fired and otherwise endanger your child or other people.
3. **Leave the Area** – The third rule is to immediately leave the area. This would include never taking a gun away from another child or trying to stop someone from using a gun. Leaving the area removes the temptation to touch the firearm and reduces the danger that another person may negligently cause it to fire.
4. **Tell an Adult** – The last rule is for a child to tell an adult about the gun they have seen. This includes times when other kids are playing with or shooting a gun.

Instructional Outcomes and Outlines

Grades K-2

At the end of instruction, students should be able to:

1. Define the terms *firearm*, *safety*, and *responsible*.
2. Identify the difference between toy guns and real firearms.
3. List, in order, the firearm safety rules for children.
4. Demonstrate a responsible attitude regarding firearms.

I. Introduction

- a. Introduce all instructors and assistants and inform students of the class rules.

II. Firearms Identification and Storage

- a. **Toy guns and real firearms**
- b. **Emphasis** – Any found firearm could be real, regardless of the size, color, shape, etc.
 - i. Firearms should never be brought to the school campus, not even toy guns.
 - ii. Real guns should be stored and locked securely. If you find or see one anywhere, even in your home, a friend's home, or at school, follow the safety rules.

III. Firearm Nomenclature

- a. **Trigger** – Never touch the trigger of a firearm
- b. **Barrel** – Metal tube the bullet travels down
- c. **Muzzle** – End of the barrel where the bullet comes out. The muzzle should be pointed away from you or anyone else.

IV. Firearm Safety Rules for Children

- a. **Stop**

The first rule for a child to follow if they find or see a gun is to stop what they are doing. This step is crucial; stopping allows time for the child to remember the rest of the firearm safety rules.
- b. **Don't Touch!**

The second rule is for a child not to touch a gun they find or see. A child may think the best thing to do if they find a gun is to pick it up and take it to an adult. A child needs to know they should NEVER touch a gun that is found or seen. A firearm that is not touched or disturbed is unlikely to be fired and otherwise endanger your child or other people.
- c. **Leave the Area**

The third rule is to leave the area immediately. This rule would include never taking a gun away from another child or trying to stop someone from using a gun. Leaving the area removes the temptation to touch the firearm and reduces the danger that another person may negligently cause it to fire.
- d. **Tell an Adult**

The last rule is for a child to tell an adult about the gun they have seen. This includes times when other kids are playing with or shooting a gun.

Grades 3-5

At the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Define the terms *firearm*, *safety*, and *responsible*.
2. Describe the differences and similarities between toy guns, air guns, BB guns, and modern firearms.
3. List, in order, the firearm safety rules for children.
4. Demonstrate a mature attitude regarding firearms.

I. Introduction

- a. Introduce all instructors and assistants and inform students of the class rules.

II. Firearms Identification and Storage

- a. **Firearms, air gun, BB gun, toy gun**
- b. **Emphasis** – Any found firearm could be real, regardless of the size, color, shape, etc.
 - i. Any firearm could seriously injure someone or worse.
 - ii. Firearms should never be brought to the school campus, not even toy guns.
 - iii. Real guns should be stored and locked securely. If you find or see one anywhere, even in your home, a friend's home, or at school, follow the safety rules.

III. Firearm Nomenclature

- a. **Trigger** – Never touch the trigger of a firearm
- b. **Barrel** – Metal tube the bullet travels down
- c. **Muzzle** – End of the barrel where the bullet exits. Keep the muzzle pointed away from you or anyone else.

IV. Firearm Safety Rules for Children

a. **Stop**

The first rule for a child to follow if they find or see a gun is to stop what they are doing. This step is crucial; stopping allows time for the child to remember the rest of the firearm safety rules.

b. **Don't Touch!**

The second rule is for a child not to touch a gun they find or see. A child may think the best thing to do if they find a gun is to pick it up and take it to an adult. A child needs to know they should NEVER touch a gun that is found or seen. A firearm that is not touched or disturbed is unlikely to be fired and otherwise endanger your child or other people.

c. **Leave the Area**

The third rule is to leave the area immediately. This would include never taking a gun away from another child or trying to stop someone from using a gun. Leaving the area removes the temptation to touch the firearm and reduces the danger that another person may negligently cause it to fire.

d. **Tell an Adult**

The last rule is for a child to tell an adult about the gun they have seen. This includes times when other kids are playing with or shooting a gun.

Grades 6-12

At the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Define the terms *firearm*, *safety*, and *responsible*.
2. Demonstrate a mature attitude regarding firearms.
3. Know the proper storage of firearms and ammunition in the home.

I. Introduction

- a. Introduce all instructors and assistants and inform students of the class rules.
- b. Review the firearm safety rules for children for those unfamiliar with firearms.

II. Firearms Identification

- a. **Modern Firearm, primitive firearm, air gun, BB gun, toy gun**
- b. **Emphasis** – Any found firearm could be real and dangerous, regardless of the size, color, shape, age, condition, etc.
 - i. Any firearm could seriously injure someone, or worse.
 - ii. Firearms should never be brought to the school campus.
 - iii. Real guns should be stored and locked securely. If you find or see one anywhere, even in your home, a friend's home, or at school, follow the safety rules.

III. Basic Home Firearms Safety

- a. **All family members should be taught safe gun handling.**
 - i. More than half of all firearm accidents occur in the home.
 - ii. Children are never too young to be taught firearm safety.
 - iii. Guns are not toys.
- b. **Storage of Firearms and Ammunition**
 - i. Firearms and magazines should be unloaded before bringing them into the home, camp, or vehicle.
 - ii. Guns should be stored unloaded in a locked cabinet or gun safe.
 - iii. Storage cabinets and safes should be out of sight of casual visitors.
 - iv. Glass-fronted display cases offer little security.
 - v. Gun safes are the best protection for firearms from theft and inexperienced persons.
 - vi. If proper storage facilities are not available, trigger locks should be used.
 - vii. Place firearms out of sight and out of reach of children and other inexperienced persons.
 - viii. Ammunition should be stored in a location separate from firearms.

Implementation Support

Community Partner Suggestions for Implementation Support

The following is a list of example organizations that LEAs and public charter schools may consider bringing in to support firearms safety instruction facilitation. Not all organizations are present or available statewide, nor may every organization have an individual who is knowledgeable and skilled to be able to facilitate the related content. It is recommended that LEAs and public charter schools determine at the administrative level if and which community partner(s) would be appropriate to bring into schools to support firearms safety instruction either in part or whole.

- Department of Health – Public Health Educators
- Department of Safety regional offices
- Local law enforcement municipalities
- School Resource Officers
- Tennessee Highway Patrol Officers
- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

Tips on Communicating with Families

Parents and guardians are going to have questions about firearms safety instruction. The following are considerations, not requirements, when preparing for instruction as it relates to communication with families:

1. Be clear in communication of the purpose and reasoning behind the incorporation of the instruction (i.e., Tennessee law).
2. Be transparent in what will be taught, how it will be taught, who is teaching it, and when. Emphasize that this instruction is strictly for safety purposes.
3. Encourage parents to ask school and/or district staff/leadership questions about the instruction.
4. Have information readily available at open house events or other similar events.
5. Hold a brief parent meeting to discuss the incorporation of the instruction or use media platforms to provide information via recording.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is there an option for LEAs/public charter schools to not provide this instruction?

A: No. Per subsection (b), LEAs and public charter schools shall annually provide students with age-appropriate and grade-appropriate instruction on firearm safety.

Q: How often do LEAs/public charter schools need to teach firearm safety?

A: Every year. Per subsection (b), LEAs and public charter schools shall annually provide students with age-appropriate and grade-appropriate instruction on firearm safety.

Q: How should instruction be delivered?

A: Per subdivision (d)(2), the instruction required may be provided in a classroom setting, through the viewing of a video, or through the review of online resources or materials.

Q: When should instruction be delivered?

A: Per subdivision (d)(3), each LEA and public charter school shall determine how best to incorporate the instruction required under subsection (b) into the school year.

Q: How does this instruction relate to the required safety training?

A: Per Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-805(7), Instruction on firearm safety required under § 49-6-1016 must be credited toward the annual school safety training required by the state-level safety team's template for district-wide school safety plans and building-level school safety plans for all students, teachers, and other school personnel who receive or provide the instruction.

Q: How are the outcomes grouped in the instructional unit?

A: The outcomes are grouped by grade band.

Q: What do the outcomes represent?

A: They represent the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students should demonstrate by the end of the instructional unit.

Q: Does the instructional guidance include scripts and materials?

A: No, the instructional guidance does not include scripts, materials, or detailed instructional content.

Q: Why does the Department of Education not provide detailed instructional content?

A: In Tennessee, the state sets academic standards and expectations while local education agencies determine the specific curricular materials to use to help their students achieve mastery of the content

Q: Who decides how to incorporate the instruction and provide materials?

A: LEAs and public charter schools decide how to incorporate the instruction and provide materials.

Q: What does the law ensure regarding instructional facilitation?

A: The law ensures local autonomy in instructional facilitation.

Q: Who should determine the appropriate community partners for firearms safety instruction?

A: LEAs and public charter schools should determine at the administrative level which community partners would be appropriate to bring into schools to support firearms safety instruction.

Q: Can you name some example organizations that might support firearms safety instruction?

A: Some example organizations include:

- *Department of Health – Public Health Educators*
- *Department of Safety regional offices*
- *Local law enforcement municipalities*
- *School Resource Officers*
- *Tennessee Highway Patrol Officers*
- *Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency*

Q: What firearms safety instruction information should be communicated to parents and guardians?

A: It is important to communicate the purpose and reasoning behind the instruction and be transparent about what will be taught, how it will be taught, who is teaching it, and when it will occur.

Q: How can schools encourage parents to engage in firearms safety instruction?

A: Schools can encourage parents to ask questions, have information available at open house events, hold brief parent meetings, or use media platforms to provide information via recordings.