



THE ANNIE'S GUIDE TO SHOTGUN SAFETY AND RANGE ETIQUETTE

Safe shooting and shotgun handling is a matter of common sense. A primary objective of the Annie Oakley Shooters is to provide you with the appropriate information to ensure a positive shooting experience and to have you feel safe and confident. Annie shooters are expected to be hyper vigilant about safety concerns. As a female sporting clays shooter, you will be under a microscope, yes people will be watching us. Facts. Below is a breakdown of what it means to be a safe shooter and possess excellent range etiquette. Don't be afraid to point out unsafe gun handling behaviors of others and never hesitate to ask questions if you are unsure of the correct safety procedures yourself. Safety must always be an Annie's first concern.

M.A.T.E.S.

A simple way to remember the primary tenets of safe gun handling is with the acronym MATES. It refers to Muzzle, Action, Trigger, Eye and Ear Protection and Shells.

MUZZLE

The muzzle of a shotgun refers to the very front end where the projectile exits. It's the business end of a shotgun where the pellets fly out. **The muzzle always needs to be pointed in a safe direction.** Always. This typically means downrange. If your shotgun is unloaded and in a gun rack it can be pointed up (still safe). If you take an over/under shotgun from a gun rack, break open the action, check that it is unloaded and put it securely on your shoulder facing forward and down, you can safely get to where you are going. (See pic below). For a semi-automatic, first double check that it is unloaded, and carry it muzzle up (also called military style) and you can safely get to where you are going. Never point your shotgun at something you don't intend to shoot. This is the commonsense part.

ACTION

As the name implies, this is where all the action takes place. This is the part of the shotgun that loads, fires and unloads shells. **The action needs to be unloaded at all times until you are ready to shoot.** This is the commonsense part again. In sporting clays, you can only load a maximum of 2 shells and ONLY when you are in the stand, gun is pointed down range and you are ready to shoot.

TRIGGER

Keep your finger off the trigger until you call pull. There is no need to have your finger on it or near it for any reason.



EYE AND EAR PROTECTION

You will be required to wear eye and ear protection every time you shoot sporting clays. Sunglasses or reading glasses work fine if you are not ready to invest in shooting glasses. They will protect your eyes from flying debris, shells, and broken clays. Foam disposable earplugs should be available at most shooting ranges. Keep a spare set or two in your shooting bag. Over time you may want to invest in molded earplugs.

SHELLS

Make sure the **shells you are loading into your shotgun match the gauge and chamber length of your gun.** These will be indicated and stamped on the barrel or receiver of your gun. They will also be indicated on the outside of the box of the shells you are shooting. Otherwise, they won't fit – or worse, they will fit but not fire properly resulting in a dangerous malfunction. Never mix shells of different gauges or lengths. If shooting in a squad, keep your own shells in your pocket and never leave any at the stand.

TO RECAP AND OTHER IMPORTANT RANGE ETIQUETTE

- Remember M.A.T.E.S – Keep your **Muzzle** pointed in a safe direction. Keep the **Action** open and clear until ready to shoot. Keep your finger off the **Trigger** until you are ready to call pull, wear **Eye** and **Ear** protection and load **Shells** designed for your shotgun.
- Etiquette is a bit more nuanced than safety. But being safe is the most critical component of range etiquette.
- Shooting sporting clays is a bit like playing a round of golf. Keep voices low and give space and courtesy to the shooter who is in the stand (like, don't talk while a golfer is in their backswing). If driving a cart, slow down or stop when passing a stand with someone actively shooting. Play ready golf! Be ready when it's your turn, use your down time wisely planning your shot.
- Pick up your shells when you leave a stand
- Don't be that person that offers unsolicited advice to other shooters. You likely won't because as a female sporting clays shooter you will be inundated with coaching from people who are not coaches, so you will know better!

Example of safe gun handling. Shooter on left has an over under shotgun with action open and muzzle pointing down. Shooter on the right has a semi auto with action open, muzzle pointed up and neither has their finger on the trigger.

