



Safe Insight

Online Classroom



**Washington
CPL Basics**

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Introduction

If you are reading this then you have probably either decided to apply for your Washington CPL or you already have one. No doubt, you have realized that Washington is one of only eight states that *does not* require any sort of training to carry a concealed firearm. While that makes applying for a CPL easy, it can make finding answers to your questions difficult.

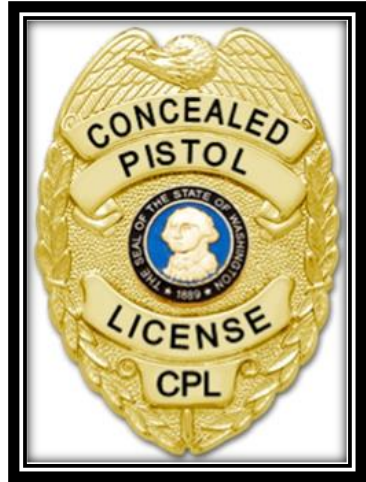
When you go to a police department and ask questions related to carrying a concealed firearm, you typically receive a response that is something like this, “You have to look that up.” Others will simply suggest that you go find firearms training to help answer your questions.

When you go to take most firearms training courses, the focus is on shooting. There is of course the safety portion of the training, but most completely ignore the legal aspect of firearms. Those that do talk about legalities, rarely discuss laws related to *carrying* a firearm. Where can you turn to find answers?

This book was designed to help you learn about the laws associated with concealed carry in Washington State.

What Is A CPL?

A CPL stands for a Concealed Pistol License. It is the equivalent of a CCW (Carrying Concealed Weapon), CHL (Concealed Handgun License), or CWP (Concealed Weapon Permit) issued by other states. They have different names, but they all give you the same basic legal right; to carry a concealed firearm for self-defense.



Safety First

Since you either are a CPL holder, or are thinking of becoming one, it is important that you have a firm understanding of safety involving firearms. This is because the only person that is responsible for what happens with your handgun is YOU!

One of the first steps to preventing tragic accidents with firearms is to remember that you should never handle a firearm while you are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. This is not only referring to shooting your firearm. This means that you should not clean your firearm while under the influence. You should not bring out your firearm for others to see while you are under the influence. You should not **handle** it in any way, shape, or form if you are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.



Remember that you do not have to be intoxicated to be under the influence. Even one beer can impair your judgement. Equally important to remember is

that drugs can mean prescription drugs. If your doctor has prescribed you something that has a warning label regarding drowsiness, or operating heavy machinery, you should not handle your firearm.

Firearms Safety Rules

There are four rules that must be abided by when handling firearms. These are referred to as the Universal Firearms Safety Rules. They are called universal because they apply to all firearms, in all situations.

Whenever you go to a shooting range, you will see these four rules posted. They are usually posted in multiple different locations because of how important they are. These four rules have the same basic intent, but they are worded a little differently everywhere you go. There is a simple acronym that you can use to help you remember these safety rules.

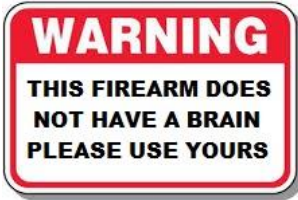
S – Suppose

A – Aim

F – Finger

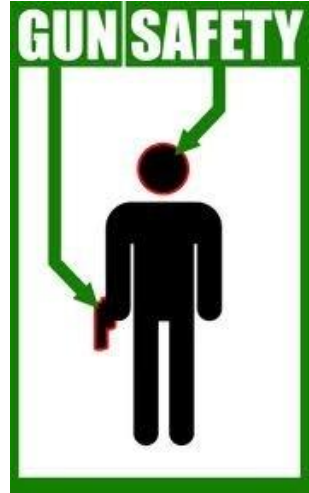
E – Everything

Suppose all firearms are loaded



From now on, every time you handle a firearm for any purpose, think of it as loaded. Too many times, we hear about tragic accidents with firearms. Usually it involves something like a couple of friends playing with a handgun, or somebody showing off their gun to a friend, when suddenly, the trigger gets activated.....BANG! Inevitably, the first thing they says is, "I thought the gun was unloaded."

Following the first Universal Firearm Safety Rule will help you to avoid such a terrible situation. Even if somebody tells you that a firearm is unloaded, your mindset should be thinking that a bullet is ready to come out. Keeping this mindset will make it easier to remember and follow the remaining safety rules.



Aim firearms in a safe direction at all times



Your firearm should NEVER point at anything you are not willing to shoot or destroy. This is not only true when you are shooting the gun. It applies ANY time you are handling the firearm.

What is a safe direction? People often think of pointing down at the ground as a safe direction. In general, this is true. What if you were on the third floor of an apartment building? Down is no longer a safe direction, is it? Perhaps here you need to point at a fireplace, or something else significant enough to stop a bullet.

Wherever you are, you must evaluate what is a safe direction. Remember that the average handgun round has no problem penetrating sheetrock walls. In fact, they can often travel through *multiple* walls. So, aim in a safe direction at all times!



Finger off the trigger until you are ready for a bullet to come out

Your finger should **ONLY** be on the trigger when you are lined up on your target and ready to discharge a round. If you are checking your target, drawing from the holster, or doing any other action, your finger should be **OFF** the trigger.

Keeping your finger off the trigger means that you are “indexing” it along the frame of the firearm. Resting your finger on outside of the trigger guard is a bad idea because the natural human phenomenon of “sympathetic reflex” (whatever action one hand takes, the other one does with 25% of the strength) can cause a disaster. This is especially important if you are in a stressful self-defense situation.



Remember: It takes conscious effort to keep your finger off the trigger. The gun is designed to fit ergonomically with your finger on it. Keeping your finger off takes thoughtful practice.

*Everything in the path of the bullet
must be accounted for*

Remember that bullets are designed to travel through things, not into them. This means that you not only have to be aware of your target, but you also have to know what your backstop is (the item that will actually stop the round), and even what is beyond that. This is important because you have to know what the bullet is going to hit if the backstop fails, or you miss it.

How far can the average handgun round travel? About a mile, on average. Once you press the trigger, there is a lot of property between you and a mile. That is a lot of distance that you must be responsible for. And everything that your bullet touches is going to have an attorney attached to it, waiting to get paid.



Firearms Storage

What is the best way to store firearms. There really is no right answer to this question. There are, however, a lot of wrong ones. Simply storing a gun on a high closet shelf is not a way to secure a firearm. Many people think that this is a good way to keep firearms away from children, but too many tragic stories in the news show otherwise.

Some of the more common forms of secure firearms storage include the following:



Cable Lock – These are often available for free at your local police station or gun store.



Trigger Lock – This is another inexpensive solution that is sometimes provided by the manufacturer. You can also purchase these at a gun store.



Safe – A good type of safe to consider for home defense is one that allows you to access it in the dark, and open it in less than 5 seconds. There a variety of these available.

Ultimately, the best firearms storage is a personal choice. This is because it should help you to accomplish the four goals of firearms storage. These goals will be different, depending on your personal circumstances.

Goals of Firearms Storage

- 1) Prevent Children From Access
- 2) Prevent Untrained Adults From Access
- 3) Make Theft Of The Firearm Difficult
- 4) Keep The Firearm Accessible For Your Needs

You have to evaluate a secure storage plan in light of these four goals. If you only want to use your firearm to go to the shooting range, then



you could unload it, field strip it, put a trigger lock on, and throw it in a safe. That would certainly keep it out of the hands of children. But if you are thinking that you may want the firearm for home defense, this would not be keeping the gun accessible for *your* needs.

Lead Exposure

One of the biggest safety factors that often gets overlooked in firearms training is lead exposure. Lead is a natural substance. But high concentrations of it can lead to damage to the following functions: Nervous System, Digestive System, and Reproductive System.

Symptoms of Lead Exposure

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| • Irritability | • Digestive Difficulty |
| • Depression | • Joint Pain |
| • Insomnia | • Bleeding Gums |
| • Headaches | • Weight Loss |

Bullets are made of lead. Tiny portions of lead scrape off as the bullet travels down the barrel. The result is that microscopic lead portions are present all around us while shooting. This might not seem like much, but consider how lead enters your body:

Ingestion – Lead directly enters the mouth or nose

Inhalation – Lead is breathed in through the air

Absorption – Lead absorbs through our skin

Lead is present in all three forms while you are shooting. The good news is that you can take simple steps to prevent over exposure to lead.

Minimizing Exposure – While Shooting

Do Not Eat Drink or Smoke – Helps to prevent ingestion of lead.

Wear A Hat – Prevents lead from sitting on top of your scalp and eventually absorbing into it.

Wear Long Sleeves and Long Pants - This will prevent your arms and legs from absorbing lead.

Minimizing Exposure – After Shooting

Wash Face and Hands – Use COLD water and soap to help close the pores and remove the lead from skin.

Blow Your Nose – Any lead that was captured by your nose will eventually be inhaled. Get rid of it.

Minimizing Exposure – At Home

Remove Shoes & Wash Clothing - This will prevent you from spreading lead around your home. This is especially important if you have children.

Wash Hair Before Bed – Prevent lead from getting on your pillowcase which would lead to further exposure.

Handgun Laws

If you make the decision to carry a concealed firearm, then it is up to you to know the laws associated with concealed carry. Laws change, so it is up to you to be familiar with the current laws. Sometimes it can be difficult to locate particular laws within the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). Below is a guide to help you find some of the more commonly searched for questions. Click on the links to see the RCW.

What happens when I apply for a CPL?

[RCW 9.41.070](#)

Do I need to apply for a CPL?

[RCW 9.41.050](#)

What are the penalties for discharging a firearm?

[RCW 9.41.230](#)

What is “deadly force” per the law?

[RCW 9A.16.010](#)

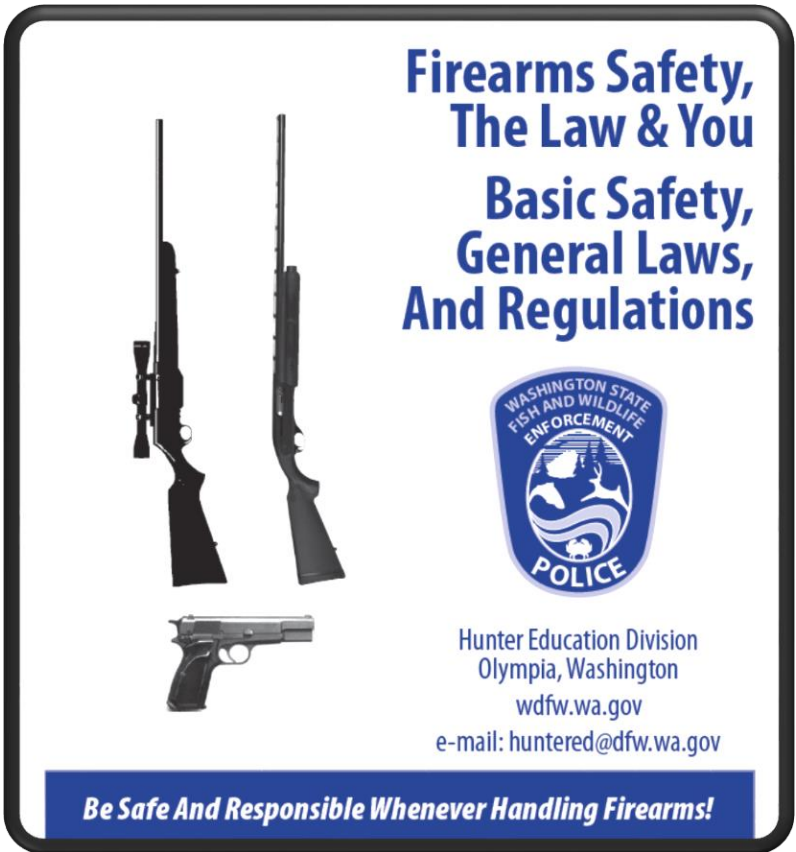
When is it lawful to use force?

[RCW 9A.16.020](#)

When is deadly force justifiable?


[RCW 9A.16.050](#)

The Department of Fish & Wildlife has produced a comprehensive firearms pamphlet that covers laws in more detail. This was produced with State funds and is available for your information. You can download a copy of this by clicking on the image below.



**Firearms Safety,
The Law & You**

**Basic Safety,
General Laws,
And Regulations**



Hunter Education Division
Olympia, Washington
wdfw.wa.gov
e-mail: huntered@dfw.wa.gov

Be Safe And Responsible Whenever Handling Firearms!

CLICK IMAGE TO DOWNLOAD

Common Questions

I thought Washington was an “open-carry” state, why do I need a Concealed Pistol License?

Washington is technically an “open-carry” state. However, legal complications can arise when others around you feel intimidated by the fact you are carrying in this manner. You subject yourself to many legal headaches that could otherwise be avoided by simply carrying concealed. Additionally, if you ever choose to carry concealed, you are required to have a CPL to do so.

How do I transport a firearm to the range?

If you do not have a CPL, you must ensure that the firearm is unloaded. The firearm must be locked in an opaque (non-see through) carrying case and stored in a location that is inaccessible to you while driving.

If you have your CPL, you may carry your firearm loaded or unloaded. It may be on your person or in a carrying case of your choice.

Note: Most ranges require that firearms enter the range in either a holster or a carrying case. See individual range rules for specific details.

If I am contacted by law enforcement, am I required to let them know I have a concealed firearm?

In some states, you are required to notify law enforcement that you have a concealed firearm. Failure to do so is a crime that you can be arrested for. In Washington State, there is no such requirement. It is completely at the discretion of the CPL holder.

But the real question is, why wouldn't you let an officer of the law know that you had a concealed firearm if you were contacted? Some people feel like it is private, and there is no need for the officer to know. But how private is it?

If you are stopped for a traffic violation, the officer will no doubt make a lawful demand to see your driver's license and other legal documents. When they return to their patrol vehicle to run your driver's license, they will get a return on your driving record. They will also get a confirmation that you have..... a CPL.

So really there is no reason to hide the fact that you have a CPL and a concealed firearm. In fact, it is really a benefit to both you and the officer if you let them know that you have a CPL. It lets the officer know that you have already been cleared of criminal activity, and the fact that you are letting them know you have a firearm helps to alleviate their concerns should they notice that you have one in your vehicle.

Is it legal to carry a concealed firearm into a business that has a “No Guns” sign posted?

This all depends on one important factor; does the sign quote one of the RCWs, or is it just a plain sign that could be ordered by anybody? In Washington State, signs by themselves do not have the force of law. Any business can ask you not to bring firearms into their location by posting a sign. They also have the right to refuse you service and ask you to leave. But it is not a crime to bring a firearm into these locations.

The exception to this is a type of business specifically mentioned in the RCW. For example, you cannot bring a firearm into a location that has a “No Guns” sign that specifically quotes an existing RCW.

You cannot carry into a bar or liquor establishment

[RCW 9.41.300](#)

You cannot carry firearms (or any other “dangerous weapons”) onto school property.

[RCW 9.41.280](#)

What should I do if my firearm is lost or stolen?

Immediately call 9-1-1 and make a police report. Be sure that you have all of the necessary information. Fill out a Personal Property Firearms Log ahead of time.

[PERSONAL PROPERTY FIREARMS LOG](#)



Safe Insight

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