

## The DOs And DON'Ts Of Gun Cleaning

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Do you really want to give intruders or others with harmful intent an opportunity to harm you or your family members just because your guns are so dirty they misfire or jam up at the worst possible moment?

I bet you don't.

Make time to clean your weapons and get into the habit of doing so regularly. And take a good look at the article below so you could do it right and safe!

### Never Use Gasoline and Kerosene to Clean Guns

Gasoline and kerosene are two [very flammable and dangerous chemicals](#) to clean your firearms with, because using them can cause a fire hazard and also damage the metal finish.

Gun bluing and other metal finishes can be damaged or removed from all metal parts of the firearm. On rifles, pistols, and shotguns, the use of gasoline or kerosene to clean the stocks can remove the stock finish if it is painted or lacquered.

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In the past, I have personally seen people who have clean their weapons with gasoline or kerosene and forgot they were smoking. These individuals were very lucky because when the firearms flash fired, they weren't burned too badly, but they did singe the hair off their arms and hands.

The only good thing about this incident was that it burned off all the useless oil and soften the cosmoline on the outside of the weapons. Unfortunately the weapons sustained minor burning of the stocks and slight damaged to the gun bluing.

Also the use of very strong solvents or strippers can remove the finishes on all metal parts and all wooden or plastic stock parts. In some cases, the solvents or strippers can damage the plastics of the stock furniture set and make them soft or worse, even dissolve them.

Remember that dumb moment from "Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot" movie when the old lady soaked the pistol in the kitchen sink because it was all greasy and "full of dirt"? Well, never ever do this with you gun!

Hot water and dish washing detergents will cause rusting of the metal parts of the action and the barrels. If you were to soak wooden stocks for a long time to remove grease, dirt, grime, or cosmoline, there is a good chance of warping the wooden stock.

### Cleaning Cosmoline

When buying new guns or surplus rifles, pistols, or shotguns it is very important to remove the cosmoline or other metal and wood protectors that are used to shield the weapon from moisture and rust. When removing these protectors on new weapons, it is much easier because in most cases it is

nothing more than a thin coating of a lubricant to protect all of the surfaces.

In surplus weapons that have been stored for many years, the cosmoline or other protectors may have turned almost into a solid heavy waxy substance. There is no easy way to remove this cosmoline. To clean these weapons, you must do it slowly and take your time to have the job done, and use one of the following ways to remove this substance.

## WD-40

Use WD-40 and spray it heavily on the metal and the wooden parts. WD-40 will easily strip any cosmoline that is on the stock or the metal parts of the weapons. Simply spray on the WD-40 and then just wipe off the cosmoline.

You will need lots of rags or paper towels that can be used to remove the cosmoline as it is dissolved from the wood or metal. A plastic scraper will also help you when cleaning the stock. The plastic scraper will remove large quantities of the WD-40 and cosmoline mixture at one time saving you rags and paper towels.

Remember to clean not only the outside the stock but the inside as well. At this point, a good safety check of the stock, the action, and barrel assemblies would be a good idea. When cleaning the barrels of surplus and modern weapons that have cosmoline on them, you must be sure to get all of the cosmoline out of the barrel.

Failure to get all the cosmoline out of the barrel can cause a barrel obstruction that could lead to the damage of the barrel or physical injury to the shooter.

Another way to clean cosmoline off surplus weapons that are heavily preserved is to use mineral spirits. When using mineral spirits, it is safe for all wood parts of the weapons and also the metal parts. Mineral spirits, like WD-40, will dissolve the cosmoline on all wood and metal parts. The mineral spirits are a little bit expensive but it will work quicker than WD-40.

When you have removed all the cosmoline with mineral spirits you need to oil all metal parts when finished. For the wooden stocks just wipe dry and then air dry to remove any vapors from the mineral spirits. When finished, oil all wooden stock parts with a good stock oil of your choice.

## Using a Heat Gun



The use of a heat gun is another way to remove cosmoline from firearms. For the heat gun to work effectively on removing the cosmoline, the heat gun must be set at approx 125 degrees Fahrenheit.

The best way to use the heat gun is to go back and forth over an area and then wipe off with paper towels or rags. The heat gun method can also be used on metal parts by going back and forth over the cleaning area.

When using a heat gun to remove cosmoline be ready to spend a couple of hours [cleaning the wooden and the metal parts](#) properly.

## Using Plastic Bags

There are some people who use black plastic garbage bags to help soften the cosmoline on surplus weapons. To do this you first wrap all the wooden parts in paper towels. Be sure the paper towels are tight and every nook and cranny of the underside of the stock.

After the paper towel layers are about three to five layers thick use masking tape to hold the paper towels in place. Next place the wooden stock parts that are wrapped in paper towels and place them in the black plastic bag.

You can put this black plastic bag in the bright sunlight where the sun will heat the black plastic bag. As the temperature in the bag rises, the cosmoline will soften.

After a few hours, take the wrapped wooden stock parts out of the bag and remove the paper towels. Wipe the excess cosmoline off all the wooden parts. The amount of cosmoline on the wooden parts will determine how many times you must wrap up the wooden stock parts and place them in the

black plastic bag.

## Using the Oven

In the past, I have also used an old oven to bake off the cosmoline. I would not recommend doing this with your primary cooking stove because cosmoline can be very sticky, and when melted, the odor will be hard to remove without a good stove cleaning.

Set the heat at 150 to 175 degrees and put the rifle stock on the middle rack of the oven. To keep the oven clean, I recommend putting aluminum foil to catch any drip of the cosmoline. When the wooden stock begins to sweat and the cosmoline is loose, use rags or paper towels to remove the cosmoline from the wooden stock or other wooden parts.

While using this method it is very important to stay with the stove and keep an eye on it to make sure that no wood or the cosmoline catches fire in the stove.

I have seen people who were cleaning surplus weapons with heavy cosmoline just do a light cleaning. They didn't realize that the cosmoline was still in the lands and grooves on the rifling of the rifle barrel.

After they cleaned the action and stripped the wood, they took the weapon to the firing range to shoot it. Because the weapon was not cleaned properly, when they loaded the weapon for test firing, they forgot to check the barrel before firing the rifle.

For safety sake a string was tied to the trigger to fire the weapon, which was tied down to a rifle rest. When the rifle was fired, there suddenly appeared a large bulge in the rifle barrel, and the rifle was blown into many pieces because of a grease obstruction in the barrel.

Most people do not realize how high the pressure is in a center fire rifle when it is fired. If the owner of the rifle had been sitting behind the rifle when it was fired, the odds are that he would have been killed!

Because nobody was sitting behind the rifle on the test fire bench, nobody was hurt or injured. The only thing that was damaged beyond repair was the surplus rifle. It was not a very expensive lesson, for the surplus rifle was only worth about \$75 at the time.

## Why It Is Important to Clean All the Parts of Your Firearm

Every major firearms manufacturer provides detailed information on the proper methods used to disassemble, clean, and reassemble the guns they produce, and this information is usually packaged with the firearm.

If this information is not present with the firearm at the point of purchase, it is advisable to ask the manufacturer for this info or where it may be obtained. For safety reasons, the manufacturer's directions for cleaning, maintenance, and care should always be followed.

Be sure that you [clean all the recommended parts of the weapon](#), because this is not the time to be lazy or to take any shortcuts. But don't jump to the other extreme, and go below disassembling the firearm beyond what the manufacturer recommends.

In some firearms, going beyond what is recommended can void your warranty because the weapon cannot be reassembled without special tools, and can possibly pose a danger to the shooter if the weapon is not correctly reassembled.

It is very possible that the weapon looks like it was reassembled correctly, but was not. Aside from maiming or injuring the shooter, there is a possibility of breaking parts or destroying the weapon.

Sometimes when people get lazy or do not clean a semiautomatic action correctly, some problems may occur. The ordinary action of a firearm releases fine particles of gunpowder, metals, and other contaminants into the receiver and barrel of a firearm, which may cause malfunctions. In rarer cases, extreme buildup may cause the firearm to explode upon being fired.

Slamfiring is a malfunction caused by a heavy buildup of dirt, grime, and other contaminants in such a way that a semiautomatic may temporarily and involuntarily become fully automatic – ie it will fire repeatedly without another pull of the trigger until the firearm is out of ammunition.

## 10 Tips for a Safe Gun Cleaning

- Always treat a firearm as if it is loaded. It seems like every few weeks there is an article in the paper, or a story on the news about an accidental death from a firearm. Many times this occurs when the weapon is being cleaned, when the person did not realize it was loaded, and it went off. To avoid this happening to you while [cleaning your gun](#), always treat the gun as if it is loaded.
- Never point at anything you wouldn't shoot at to begin with. Even if you have removed the magazine and emptied the chamber, only point your gun at things you are okay with shooting at.
- Disassemble your gun in a safe place. Interior walls don't stop bullets, so know what lies behind them. Safely cleaning a gun means making sure that if an accidental firing were to happen, nothing you value would be damaged.
- Slow down. Cleaning your gun is not something you rush. When you rush, mistakes can happen. Clean your gun when you can give it your full focus and attention. Be methodical. It is best to clean your gun when you can be alone, without interruption or distraction from others.
- If you don't want to kill, injure, or maim, don't let the muzzle of the gun point at a living thing even if in your mind you only think you are in the process of cleaning your gun. The gun is like any other machine, it will do exactly what you make it do within the limits of its mechanical tolerances and condition: if you pull the trigger and there is a bullet, then the gun will fire at whatever the muzzle is pointing at. This seems like common sense, yet many gun owners point the gun in irresponsible direction while cleaning; and then spend the rest of their lives wishing they could take that bullet back.
- Keep the muzzle pointed at the ground during any kind of transport, and pay attention to what would be hit if the gun were to fire.
- When cleaning your gun, keep your hand away from the trigger. Once you are ready to clean that area, deliberately pick a target (even though the gun is empty), and keep your gun aimed there while cleaning. In other words, if the firearm was to fire, where would an acceptable place be for a bullet to go? Aim it there before you ever allow your finger near a trigger.
- Reassemble with care. Keep ammunition away from the gun while reassembling, and reassemble with the same care and precision used to disassemble. Again, only point the gun at something you are okay with destroying.
- Return to safe or case immediately. Do not leave a gun out after it has been cleaned. The sooner it is returned to a locked case or safe after cleaning, the lower the risk of accident and

injury.

- Sometimes when people are cleaning 22 caliber rifles or pistols with a multi-section cleaning rod they push the cleaning rod too far out the front of the muzzle of the rifle or pistol. This could cause the crown at the end of the barrel to be slowly chipped and damaged over time in such a way that it can cause loss of accuracy. The spot that actually does the damage to the crown is where the jag on the cleaning rod is screwed in. Push the cleaning rod to the end of the barrel crown, and then make sure that only the jag (but not the area where the jag is screwed in) exits the rifle barrel.



## What Are the Golden Rules of Gun Cleaning?

Definitely, the first golden rules of gun cleaning is safety.

- Always handle any firearm as if it were loaded.
- Always make sure your firearms are not loaded before cleaning, storing or traveling.
- Always be sure that the gun is unloaded with the action open and a magazine out. Remove all live ammunition from the cleaning area. This includes any ammunition that might be in the magazines.
- Be sure you know how to disassemble the firearm you are working on. If you do not, review the manufacturer's manual for the weapon you are working on before you start to disassemble the weapon.
- Before loading any firearms be sure that the barrel bore, chamber, and action are clean and clear of obstructions.
- Always wear safety glasses when cleaning firearms.
- Always keep and [store your firearms](#) and ammunition in locked receptacles out of reach and sight of children and untrained people.
- Just like other tools, guns need regular maintenance to remain operable. Regular cleaning and proper storage are a part of the gun's general upkeep. If there is any question concerning a



gun's ability to function, a knowledgeable gunsmith should look at it. Taking proper care of it will also maintain its value and extend its life. Your gun should be cleaned every time that it is used or by the number of rounds that the manufacturer suggests.

- A gun brought out of prolonged storage should also be cleaned before shooting. Accumulated moisture and dirt, or solidified grease and oil, can prevent the gun from operating properly.
- Remember to only lubricate those parts of your firearms that require it.

## What Are the Killing DON'Ts in Gun Cleaning?

- Never use alcohol or over-the-counter, prescription or other drugs before or while cleaning your firearms. Alcohol, as well as any other substance that is likely to impair normal mental or physical function must not be used before or while handling or cleaning firearms.
- Never indulge in "horseplay" while holding your firearms.
- Never take anyone's word that a gun is unloaded.
- Always make sure that your firearms are not loaded before laying it down, or handing it to another person.
- Never abuse your firearms by using it for any purpose other than shooting.
- Never leave a firearm cocked and ready to fire unattended in the cleaning area.
- When reassembling a firearm after cleaning be sure not to force parts back together. If they do not fit, disassemble the parts that you tried to assemble and look for the proper fit.
- After cleaning your firearms do not forget to use the proper lubricant on the slide rails, the barrel, or any other internal parts that need to be lubricated.
- If your pistol has a bushing, be sure that the bushing is properly seated in the slide of the gun.
- If you don't clean your pistol or revolver after every range shooting session, then you should at least lubricate them. If you do not, you may cause over heating or freezing up of the pistol or revolver.
- Not keeping your firearms lubricated can cause excess wear of the metal on metal contact points of the pistols and other firearms.

It is crucial that when you are cleaning your firearms, do not make the common mistakes that sometimes occur when people are distracted or don't know how to disassemble the firearm they are working on. Gun cleaning –same as shooting - is a serious task.



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