



Take this fun quiz to see if you pass the “safety test” with flying colors, or if you require remedial training.

Some gun owners believe possessing a gun assures personal safety. In reality, guns are just tools that, when used skillfully, can contribute to our safety. Personal safety actually results from recognizing risks and hazards, making informed choices and resolving dangers promptly—no matter what tool is used.

Take the following fun quiz to determine your safety index. We've included some improvement hints.

Attitude

Personal safety begins with how we feel about ourselves. Some women choose risky behavior due to low self-esteem or feeling they are invincible. Women traditionally are caregivers, often at significant sacrifice to themselves, but providing for everyone else before addressing your own needs is unwise if it puts you at risk. How ironic if an attack left you unable to care for the very ones for whom you sacrificed!

Sometimes we go into denial or freeze if a safety problem seems overwhelming. Do you ever say, “I can't carry a gun because it doesn't work with my clothes,” or “I don't have the time or money for guns or training”? Excuses sometimes expose priorities put ahead of committing time or resources to personal safety.

1. Write a “1” in the “At Risk” column if you use the excuse that you can't find time to participate in self-defense training or believe you can't afford a better self-defense gun. Related symptoms include refusing to spend money for safer transportation or putting off replacing inadequate locks or vulnerable doors and windows at home.

On the other hand, give yourself a point under “Prepared” if you forfeit pleasures (brown bagging lunch, bypassing the latté stand) to save up for self-defense equipment and training, or to resolve transportation or housing risks.



2. Write a “1” under “At Risk” if, after reading about an assault by an intruder who crawled in an open window or a woman abducted from the same bus stop you use, you avoid thinking about the attack. Worry is part of your early warning system. Ignore it at your own risk!

If, after hearing such a report, you checked the windows in your home, began using a safer bus stop or altered your routine to avoid similar hazards, add a point to the “Prepared” column. Reading the police blotter in the newspaper or checking the online sex offender registry increases awareness of neighborhood risks.

3. Add a point to the “Prepared” column if you insist on taking safety precautions, even when friends or family ridicule you or call you “paranoid.” If you’ve let a friend talk you into doing something you knew was risky, write a “1” under “At Risk.” Standing up to social or family pressure is one of the hardest tests of our commitment to individual safety! In fact, this is so important that it probably deserves double points!



Shore up the Home Front

Your home is an excellent place to increase your level of personal security. Beyond installing sturdy locks on doors and windows, your behavior at home can invite or deter trouble. Add a point to the “At Risk” column if you answer “no,” or in the “Prepared” column if you answer “yes” to any of these points:

4. When returning to an empty home, are you alert as you enter the dwelling, checking for signs that may reveal an intrusion?

5. Are doors and windows in your home routinely locked or blocked? For ventilation, block windows open at about four inches—less than a motivated intruder could exploit. A full-length stick or dowel in window frames can also prevent popping the lock on older, wooden-framed windows, if the intruder needs to avoid breaking glass.

When returning home, are you alert as you enter, or are you distracted by other activities?

6. Is your front door reinforced with a steel frame or a metal strip around the lock and latch? For older sliding glass doors, use a dowel in the track to block it and install anti-lift pins to thwart lifting it out of its track. If renting, work out security concerns with the landlord before signing the lease.

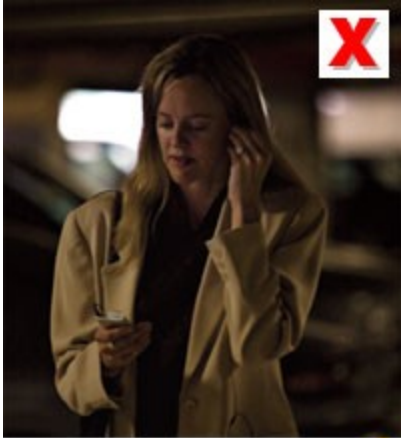
7. Do you take steps to protect your identity? Rent an off-site mailbox service to keep correspondence and deliveries from leading opportunists to your door? Use the off-site address on business cards, business brochures, checks and documents. Remove address labels from boxes and shred other papers.

8. Do you limit strangers’ access to your home? When meeting new people, get together in a public spot like a coffee shop. Carry a concealed handgun on-body when repair or installation workers are in your home, in case the worker seizes an opportunity to harm you.

9. Are guns in the home kept unloaded and secured when not in use? Lock up guns that are not within your immediate control or carried on-body. (For more on this topic, contact the NRA Program Materials Center, (800) 336-7402, for a copy of NRA’s Home Firearm Safety book; Inventory No. ES 14120. The cost is \$7 plus shipping.)

Workplace Concerns

When job hunting, make sure you consider the security of your work environment along with your compensation package. If you’ve worked at the same job for a while, have you let small risks escalate into larger problems? Add a point to the “At Risk” column if you answer “no” or put one under “Prepared” if you answer “yes” to any of these points:



At the workplace, do you park in well-lit areas or walk with co-workers when leaving?

10. At work, do you choose parking areas that are heavily used, well lit, and provide the safest route into your work area, even if you have to arrive earlier or walk farther? Sometimes using a busy street-level parking lot is safer than walking through a deserted parking garage.

11. Have you implemented strategies for coping with stairwells, elevators and parking garages, including walking with several co-workers, or obtaining an escort from security if arriving or leaving work when the facility is mostly empty?

12. If it's legal to carry a concealed handgun, do you carry it to and from work? If you do not carry your gun on your body, make a safe location at work in which to lock it. If workplace regulations require that you leave your gun in your car, secure it in a sturdy lockbox bolted to the floorboards.

13. Have you mastered intermediate defense skills, and do you keep defense products like a mini-baton or pepper spray in a pocket or waistband?

14. Do you establish and enforce boundaries with clients and co-workers? If a co-worker is too "touchy," crowds into your space, makes inappropriate comments or makes you feel threatened, report it to your supervisor and insist on your right to a safe workplace. If you fear revenge from the co-worker, do not confront this person yourself.

15. Are you alert to situations with co-workers under stress? Keep an eye on explosive situations that may lead to violence in which you could be harmed, sometimes as a side effect.

Though law enforcement, private security and corrections professionals head the list of workers who are attacked at work, taxi drivers, bartenders, gas station, convenience mart and liquor store workers are also considered high risk. If employed in one of these professions, do you practice a high level of caution and professionalism to avoid the risks inherent in doing the job?

If working an unsafe job is not your first choice, update your résumé and look for safer work. Don't give up until you find something safer.

Out in Public

Personal safety doesn't mean being a hermit! Safety results from awareness, plus preparations and precautions regularly practiced. Write a "1" under "At Risk" if you answer "no" to any of these questions, or add a point to the "Prepared" column if you answer "yes."

16. When in public, do you keep your head up, scanning, avoiding distractions like cellular phone calls, listening to your iPod or timidly avoiding eye contact with strangers? Alertness is the No. 1 most effective method for preventing crime against you!

17. Are you conscious of people around you? Would you notice if someone followed you off a bus or through a department store, or if a car followed yours for several blocks? Recognizing the early stages of contact allows escape by crossing the street, getting in a cab or another maneuver.

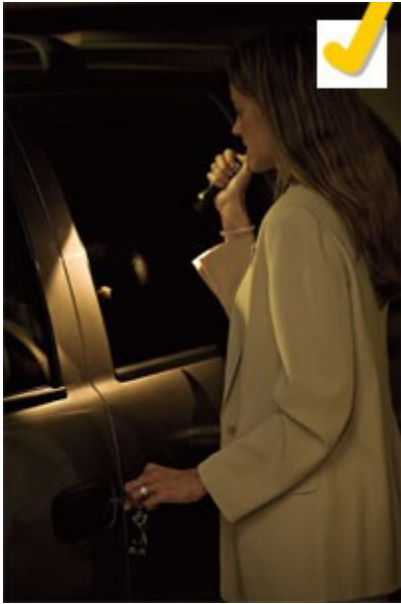
18. Do you respond firmly to strangers attempting to get inside your personal space? Be alert to ploys like trying to start a conversation, asking the time or directions or even feigning a handicap to draw you in.

19. Do you maintain a reasonable buffer zone between yourself and strangers? A friend describes her large umbrella as a "space maker," positioning it subtly to keep strangers at safer distances when on the commuter train.

20. Is your mass transit what another friend calls "the work address of drug dealers?" Look for safer transportation options like carpooling or solutions like the growing car-sharing initiatives found in some larger cities.

21. Do you park your car in busy, well-lit areas? When returning, approach your car from an angle

that lets you see anyone hiding under or around it and look between the seats before getting inside. Carry a high-intensity SureFire, Streamlight or similar flashlight to help.



When returning to your car, approach it from an angle and check behind seats with a high-intensity flashlight like a SureFire or Streamlight.

searches and now the Yellow Pages list places for women seeking an outside perspective on what is going on at home.

22. In the car, do you keep the windows up and doors locked, especially when traffic is creeping along or stopped? We favor models that provide better security than open-topped cars, in which you are vulnerable.

23. Is your car kept in good repair to limit the risk of being stranded? Since even the best cars can break down, carry a cellular phone for emergencies, or have towing insurance so you don't have to walk in the dark to find help.

24. If it is legal to carry a concealed handgun in your state, do you carry it regularly? If you're carrying in a holster handbag, carry the bag very close to your torso, making it less accessible to a purse-snatcher.

Hard Personal Questions

Sadly, women are assaulted, battered and murdered by intimate partners more often than by strangers. Other times, roommates, relations and partners introduce risk into our lives. If living with someone who is involved in drugs or other crime, be aware that the dangers one person willingly accepts can victimize innocent women and their children. Valuing your own life may mean walking away from someone who does not.

There are many resources to help women identify risky relationships, become aware of warning signs and escape abusive partners. Community health providers, Internet

A Personal Commitment

Personal safety is much more than having a gun. It is a lifestyle in which skills with firearms may play a valuable role, but are not the entire solution. Accepting personal responsibility for your own safety and acknowledging that risks exist is the beginning point. Remaining alert to hazards usually allows evasion. Coping strategies—planned out in advance—include escape, verbal intervention, pepper spray, mini-batons or physical defense skills. If these tactics fail or are impractical, knowing how to use a gun can provide a final level of insurance against a deadly attack.

We hope this has been a fun way for you to identify your at-risk areas and set about curing them. For more information on developing your personal safety plan, please contact Defensive Shooting Instructors, (786) 299-6057, or e-mail us at info@DefensiveShootingInstructors.com

How Did You Score?

At Risk Score	Your Results
0	Are you sure? This is too perfect to be true! We'll be dropping by later for the lie detector test!
4-8	You're doing well! Keep up the good work and share your methods with family members, co-workers and other women.
9-15	You've got the idea, but try to work harder on some of the points that ran up your "At Risk" score.
10-24	Your scores are heavily weighted in the "At Risk" column. If you're still OK, you have amazing luck and should buy a lottery ticket! Seriously, take a hard look at why you live with such hazards and get to work on changing things.