Jeff Cooper's Four Rules of Gun Safety

You can prevent nearly all gun accidents by following these four rules. Jeff Cooper’s words are in **bold**. All the rest is additional explanation.

1. **All guns are always loaded (until you establish whether they are or not).** If you think it is unloaded, check it again. Remember to check the chamber as well as the magazine. A semi-automatic gun will load a cartridge into the chamber when the slide is pulled back, then released. Remove the magazine, then pull back the slide to eject the cartridge in the chamber.

2. **Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.** Keep your gun pointed in a safe direction at all times: on the range, at home, loading, or unloading. Don’t point guns at people or animals except when necessary for self-defense or hunting.

3. **Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target (and you are ready to shoot).** You may pull the trigger by reflex if you stumble while your finger is on the trigger.

4. **Be sure of your target. Know what it is, what is in line with it and what is behind it.** Never shoot at anything that you haven't positively identified. Remember that a handgun bullet can travel one mile and a rifle bullet can travel several miles. Bullets fired into the air will come back down.

Add one more rule to Jeff Cooper's four rules: **Don’t do anything really stupid.** Don’t handle guns when you are drunk, drugged, or demented. Don’t leave guns lying around where children can get them. Instead, lock guns in a child-proof, burglar-proof safe whenever it is practical to do so. Don’t treat guns as toys. If you wouldn’t juggle chain-saws then don’t play with guns.

*Note that most US gun deaths are either suicides or drug-related. There are fewer than 1,000 accidental gun deaths per year in the US, but these accidents can be especially tragic.*