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PLAYING WITH GUNS

Guns. You can be a *big gun*, *go great guns*, *jump the gun*, and be *under the gun*. Some people spend their time looking for a *smoking gun*. Of course, we're talking about gun guns. *Real* guns, that is, not the plastic variety that shoots sticky darts. The kind of guns you buy at a gun shop, the kind with which you can kill large animals and yourself if you're not careful.

Guns and gun violence are everywhere from the movies to television to video games. And they're all very realistic—with one exception. Nothing is real. When you get killed in *Modern Warfare*, you come back to life 5 seconds later. That doesn't happen in real life. You're just dead.

Guns are appealing. The sound of pumping a shotgun, the feel of a pistol grip in the palm of your hand, the push of the rifle stock against your shoulder as you pull the trigger, and the loud report as the gun fires. Some people find it exhilarating.

Guns are dangerous. You already know the statistics about the children, teenagers, and adults killed by gunfire each year. There's one worth mentioning: the Children's Defense Fund says that more children and teens die each year from gunfire than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS combined.

Guns are everywhere. Chances are good that you have a gun in your house. Chances are even better that someone you know does. That's reason enough to know the basics, like how to hold a gun, pointing it away from people and in a safe direction. The best place to learn gun safety basics is by taking a gun safety course. The knowledge will serve you well.

Playing with Guns Dos and Don'ts

- If you play with toy guns, treat them like they're real. It's good practice.
- If you play with BB, pellet, or paint ball guns, wear eye protection and clothing that protects your body. These guns can injure you and others around you. Be careful.
- If you handle real guns, do it in a way you would want others to imitate. Be a good role model.
- Assume every gun is always loaded.
- Never point a gun at anything you're not willing to kill or destroy.
- Keep the gun's safety on and your finger away from the trigger.