



AMMUNITION STORAGE TIPS



FIREARMS
LEGAL PROTECTION



If you own a firearm, you already know that keeping ammunition in stock is a must. When you buy ammunition, you also need to purchase the items to store it properly. Short-term storage of ammunition is often pretty easy, but longer-term or unknown-term ammunition storage can be very tricky, so what's the best way to store it? Can ammunition go bad? Do you have to purchase storage containers for your ammo? These are all valid questions that we hope to answer for you while you learn the “do’s and don’ts” for storing your ammunition.

These days, ammunition seems especially precious. It is often low in stock and can be expensive... hopefully this trend won't last forever! You must take storing your ammo seriously and treat it like a survival investment. The shelf life of your ammunition all depends on how you store it. While your ammunition doesn't technically expire like milk, storing it improperly can make it lose its potency or make it unsafe to load in a firearm. When ammo is appropriately stored it can last several decades, and even function as it would the day it was produced. It takes more than ensuring the temperature your ammo is kept in to make sure your ammo doesn't decline in performance and remain safe to shoot.

The more you handle your ammo, the more likely it could become damaged over time. Oils and salts on your skin can react with metallic cases. Bright, polished brass with no fingerprints looks nice, but what starts as a fingerprint or just a bit of tarnish can ultimately turn into deeper corrosion. So when in doubt, keep your rounds in their original purchase

box and handle the brass as little as possible. You can purchase an ammo can, or any standard airtight container, to store your cardboard or paper boxes of ammo.

Some may even preload their magazines and store their magazines in the container, this is all personal preference. One of many widely debated topics on the internet is whether storing magazines in loaded condition wears out the spring in the magazine.

The issue has not been totally resolved, but the general conclusions are:

- **Using magazines wears out the spring more than storing them**
- **Under-loading the magazine by a round or two is still convenient, but eliminates some of the spring tension, lessening the potential for damage**
- **Most importantly...magazines are designed to load a gun and for short term to medium storage - not to store ammo for decades.**
- **Use your magazine as intended and you probably wont have any issues**

PURCHASING AMMO CANS

You can purchase ammo cans at stores near you or even online. Quality ammo cans should be made with a rubber o-ring and a good latch to make sure it is a tight seal. The can itself can be made of metal or a hard plastic. Some popular trusty brands that you could consider when purchasing your ammo can are **Plano** and **MTM ammo cans**. Even military surplus cans work great for storing ammunition; just make sure the rubber gasket is in good condition. The gasket can dry rot or degrade over time, especially if it has been sitting out in the sun at some national guard armory. Similar military-styled ammo cans (like the Sportster by Blackhawk) can be purchased at Walmart and even Harbor Freight. Usually these cans come with a desiccant pack (or “Oxygen absorber”, you know, that thing that says “Do not eat”) that is intended to be left in the can to absorb any moisture. Ammo cans ensure that the environment is water

and airtight for your ammunition. This is especially important in warm humid environments. A simple tip to prevent more moisture coming in the ammo cans is to add an inventory sticker on your ammo cans, so you don't have to open them up to see what type of ammo is inside every time you need to access them.

Organization is another step to consider, should you store your ammo loosely, or keep it packed tight? **Birchwood Casey sells Gun & Reel cloths** that are made for protecting and preparing metals to help combat the environment it's exposed to. All you must do is wipe down the can with these cloths, and it will layer the can with silicone to prepare the environment for the ammo. You can also use these cloths for your firearms, but that's a whole other topic to discuss. If you are a member of Firearms Legal Protection, you receive 30% off Birchwood Casey products. Check out your member portal for the "Smarts Discounts" tab to access this discount



code and a whole array of other codes! If you are not a member, then hop on board and sign up with our blog discount below to access these amazing discounts and many other perks. Now, to help combat moisture buildup, use oxygen absorbers like silica gel packets or bucket moisture absorbers. Side note: do not use both because they will conflict with each other. Oxygen absorbers require moisture to activate and work, whereas silica gel will soak up all the moisture. Oxygen absorbers would be useless at this point due to the lack of oxygen in their environment for them to activate.

You can get the metal case silica packets (make sure to tape the sides shut, so you don't get the silica pebbles all over the ammo can) or purchase the single silica packets. Once you wipe down the ammo can, you will place the silica on the side, bottom, or top, depending on how you load the ammo.



Labeled Ammo Cans

ORGANIZE YOUR AMMO

In addition to protecting your ammo, organization is also important. Think about how you intend to use your ammo and store it accordingly. Are you just tucking away a box until your next trip to the range? Are you stashing away massive amounts of ammunition indefinitely, “just in case”? Are you going to have different types of ammunition that you need to keep organized? The method you choose to load your ammo will depend on what you need most.

If you only have a small amount of ammo you can definitely store it together, but if you have a larger amount of ammunition, it is generally recommended to store it in separate containers, arranged logically—typically by caliber, type, or use. As previously mentioned, labeling your containers is important to keep boxes sealed, but also for noting these logical divisions in type, caliber, or quantity.

You should always make sure that you are using the correct ammunition in a particular firearm but storing ammunition by caliber can also help here. There are many cartridges that look very similar, and in fact CAN chamber in guns designed for other cartridges. For example, a 380 ACP round looks very similar to a 9mm [same diameter, just shorter]. You don't want to

show up at the range with a can full of 380 that won't work in your Glock 19. Organize and label your ammo containers to avoid this. There are even more dangerous combinations... a 300 Blackout round accidentally loaded into a .223 Remington could blow up this gun. Both use the same parent case and the same magazines. A 20 gauge shotgun shell will load into a 12 gauge barrel. It won't fire and cause immediate damage, but the smaller diameter round can drop down in the barrel, making it hard to remove, and potentially be disastrous if another 12 gauge round is loaded behind it. This is why all 20ga shells are bright yellow, to catch your attention if you are using only "non-yellow" shells. Shotgun shells can present other issues. The ink-stamped label on the hull can wear off, especially if rounds are just loosely dumped in a bin, rattling around and rubbing against each other. If you know what is in the container and it is all the same type of shell this is not that bad. If you have a bucket of mystery rounds of various types, you can imagine the troubling questions, "Is this birdshot or 00-buck? Is this a steel duck load, or a lead load that I can't legally use for waterfowl? Prevent these disasters and store your ammo by type and use. Proactively labeling your ammo can save you a lot of trouble.

STORAGE LOCATION

Once you put your ammo in an airtight container, the next step is to make sure you put it in a location that is climate controlled, somewhere that it does not get really hot or really cold. Keeping your ammo in a cool and dry environment can help ensure they last longer and to their full potential. Ammo is stored in warehouses, and shipped in cargo trucks and container ships so a bit of temperature swing won't immediately hurt it, but long term exposure to extreme temperatures lead to inconsistent performance on powers and primers.

The primer is likely the most vulnerable part of ammunition, and if the primer fails, then the cartridge will fail, so this is another reason to keep your ammo in climate controlled and dry environment. Gunpowder and the primer compound are chemical compounds that degrade over time if accelerated by heat, which is why it's better off leaving your ammo in a room temperature environment. Effective cleaning chemicals are often harsh

solvents that break down gunpower and other compounds (this is why they work well to clean residue and carbon out of your gun). Do not store solvents (Ballistol, WD-40, other cleaning chemicals) in the same container as your ammunition. While you may be trying to be organized and store “gun stuff” together, you may be reducing the shelf life of your ammunition.

As long as you keep up with these practices, your ammunition should be good to go for many years. Most of these rules are sufficient to preserve all types of ammo. Overall, keep your powder dry*, avoid high heat and extreme temperature fluctuations, and store in an airtight container. Let us know below what your go-to step is to store your ammunition safely!



“Keep your powder dry”

A time when soldiers had to keep dry in order to be ready to fight when required. This advice was originated from Oliver Cromwell during his campaign in Ireland.

In Ballads of Ireland, 1856, Edward Hayes wrote:

“There is a well-authenticated anecdote of Cromwell. On a certain occasion, when his troops were about crossing a river to attack the enemy, he concluded an address, couched in the usual fanatic terms in use among them, with these words- ‘put your trust in God; but mind to keep your powder dry’.”



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