Children's Defense Fund
Protect Children, Not Guns
The Truth About Guns[i]

1. **A gun in the home increases the risk of homicide, suicide and accidental death**. Contrary to what many people believe, having a gun in your home doesn't make you safer but instead endangers you and your loved ones. A gun in the home makes the likelihood of homicide three times higher, suicide three to five times higher, and accidental death four times higher. For every time a gun in the home injures or kills in self-defense, there are 11 completed and attempted gun suicides, seven criminal assaults and homicides with a gun, and four unintentional shooting deaths or injuries.

2. **Many children live in homes with loaded and unlocked guns**. **Every parent and grandparent needs to be careful where their children play and ask if there is a gun in the home.** One-third of all households with children younger than 18 have a gun and more than 40 percent of gun-owning households with children store their guns unlocked. Twenty-two percent of children with gun-owning parents handled guns in their homes without their parents' knowledge. More than half of youth who committed suicide with a gun obtained the gun from their home, usually a parent's gun.

3. **Guns make violence more deadly**. Contrary to what the gun industry says, guns do kill people. Guns make killing easy, efficient, and somewhat impersonal, thereby increasing the lethality of anger and violence. *An estimated 41 percent of gun-related homicides and 94 percent of gun-related suicides would not occur if no guns were present*. On the same day as the Newtown massacre a man attacked children with a knife at an elementary school in China. Twenty-three children were injured, but none died. In family and intimate assaults, the use of a gun increased the risk of death 12 times.

4. **The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is forbidden from regulating the sale and manufacture of guns**. A 1976 amendment to the Consumer Product Safety Act specifically states that the Commission shall make no ruling or order that restricts the manufacture or sale of guns, guns ammunition, or components of guns ammunition, including black powder or gun powder for guns. As a result, the CPSC can regulate teddy bears and toy guns but not real guns, despite the fact that they are one of the most lethal consumer products.

5. **Virtually anyone can buy a gun without a background check**. Federal law requires that anyone purchasing a firearm from a federally-licensed dealer submit to a background check. But private sales, like many sales at gun shows and increasingly on the internet, do not require it. This is a loophole used by many people who could not pass a background check. In 2009, undercover stings at gun shows in Nevada, Ohio and Tennessee revealed that 63 percent of private sellers sold guns to purchasers who stated that they would be unable to pass a background check. A 2011 study of internet gun sales found that 62 percent of sellers agreed to sell a gun to a buyer who said he probably couldn't pass a background check.

6. **The majority of Americans, including gun owners and NRA members, support common sense gun safety regulations**. Almost three-quarters of those in NRA households (74 percent) and more than four out of five gun owners (79 percent of Republican gun owners and 90 percent of Democratic gun owners) believe that all potential gun buyers should be subject to a criminal background check. Nearly two-thirds of Americans (65 percent) and half of gun owners (50 percent) believe that allowing people to own assault weapons makes the country a more dangerous place. A majority of Americans want a ban on assault style weapons and oppose more teachers and school officials having guns in schools.

7. **Common sense gun safety laws help reduce gun violence while protecting the legal use of guns**. The following gun safety laws have all been found to be effective in reducing gun violence. None of these regulations prevent law-abiding citizens from owning guns.
   - **Requiring background checks for purchases through private sellers as well as licensed dealers**. Since the implementation in 1994 of the Brady Law, which instituted a federal background check requirement for sales through federally-licensed dealers, 2.1 million firearms purchase applications have been denied. A recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine found that states with background checks on private sales had 16 percent lower gun fatality rates.
   - **Firearm prohibitions for high-risk groups**. A study in California found that denial of handgun purchase to people who have committed violent misdemeanors was associated with a decrease in risk of arrest for new gun and/or violent crimes.
   - **Well-designed assault weapons ban**. An Australian law banning semi-automatic and pump-action rifles and shotguns and buying back banned weapons was associated with decreased suicide and homicide rates and with the absence of any mass shootings in the decade following the law (compared to 11 mass shootings in the prior decade).
   - **Child access prevention laws**. Studies of child access prevention laws, which require gun owners to store their guns so that children and teens cannot access them unsupervised, have found these laws reduce accidental shootings of children by as much as 23 percent and suicides of adolescents by 8 percent.
   - **Tighter regulation and oversight of gun sellers**. A study using crime gun trace data from 54 U.S. cities found that diversion of guns for use in crimes is much less common in states:
     - that license retail gun sellers;
     - that require careful record keeping that can be reviewed by law enforcement;
     - that require potential gun buyers to apply for a license directly with a law enforcement agency; and
     - where law enforcement agencies conduct regular compliance inspections.

8. **Common sense gun safety regulations protect lawful ownership and use of guns**. The 1994 Assault Weapons Ban that expired in 2004 protected the rights of gun owners by exempting every shotgun and hunting rifle in use at the time. Senator Dianne Feinstein's proposed 2013 legislation reinstating the ban specifically exempts over 2,000 sporting and hunting weapons. Background checks do not prevent legal gun purchases.

9. **Universal background checks will not lead to a registry of gun owners**. The Brady Law of 1994 explicitly bans the creation of a registry of gun owners. Under the law, instant criminal background checks have been made on over 100 million gun sales in the last decade, without leading to the formation of a gun registry. Likewise, the background check compromise proposed by Senators Manchin and Toomey in early 2013 also explicitly banned the creation of a gun

registry and even imposed new serious criminal penalties (a felony with up to 15 years in prison) on any person who misuses or illegally retains firearms records.

10. **Loopholes in prior gun safety laws prevented them from being as effective as necessary**. The 1993 Brady Law required federal background checks for guns purchased from federally-licensed retailers, but not for private sales. The 1994 assault weapons and high-capacity magazine ban did not apply to weapons and magazines manufactured prior to the ban, allowed importation of rifles that could accept large capacity magazines, and allowed the manufacture and sale of "copy-cat" assault weapons with only small differences from banned models.

11. **Armed school guards and teachers will not necessarily make children safer but may jeopardize the futures of some children**. Armed guards or officers are in about one-third of our nation's public schools. Columbine High School had an armed guard, and Virginia Tech had a full campus police force. There is no evidence that armed guards or police officers in schools make children safer. Educators are strongly opposed to arming teachers. A National Education Association poll of its membership found that 22 percent were in favor of arming teachers, 68 percent were opposed and 61 percent were strongly opposed. While there isn't clear evidence that armed security guards or police officers keep children in schools safer, there is very troubling evidence that their large presence on school grounds leads to the criminalization of some children, especially Black and Latino males, at increasingly younger ages and the feeding of children into the prison pipeline. Alternatives to armed guards include threat assessment teams, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and restorative justice practices, which have all shown to be effective in reducing violence, improving school safety, and maintaining a positive school climate that allows teachers to teach and students to learn.

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[i] See "Protect Children Not Guns 2013" for sources