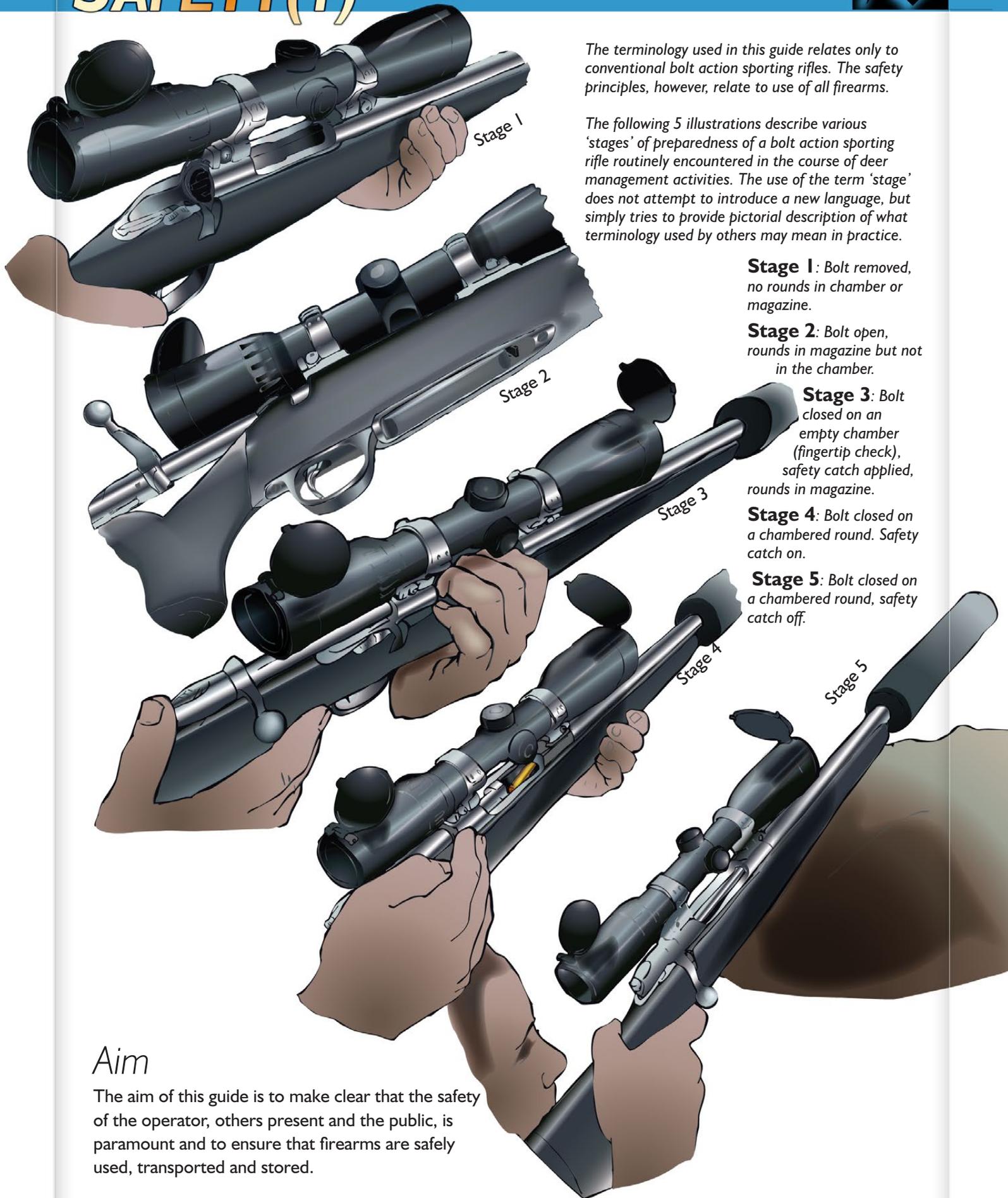




# SAFETY (1)



The terminology used in this guide relates only to conventional bolt action sporting rifles. The safety principles, however, relate to use of all firearms.

The following 5 illustrations describe various 'stages' of preparedness of a bolt action sporting rifle routinely encountered in the course of deer management activities. The use of the term 'stage' does not attempt to introduce a new language, but simply tries to provide pictorial description of what terminology used by others may mean in practice.

**Stage 1:** Bolt removed, no rounds in chamber or magazine.

**Stage 2:** Bolt open, rounds in magazine but not in the chamber.

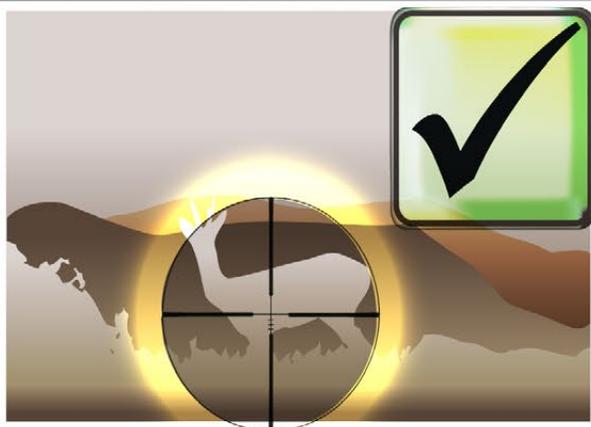
**Stage 3:** Bolt closed on an empty chamber (fingertip check), safety catch applied, rounds in magazine.

**Stage 4:** Bolt closed on a chambered round. Safety catch on.

**Stage 5:** Bolt closed on a chambered round, safety catch off.

## Aim

The aim of this guide is to make clear that the safety of the operator, others present and the public, is paramount and to ensure that firearms are safely used, transported and stored.



safe backstop, no obstructions in front



skyline shots are never safe because there is no safe backstop



the round, or fragments of the round, may ricochet off the water behind



trees must never be used as a backstop, as they may cause ricochet or obscure something you do not mean to shoot at

## Risk assessment and Health & Safety

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 covers the use of firearms by employees and those who 'conduct an undertaking' involving the use of firearms.<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Ensure that an appropriate risk assessment for any activities involving the use of firearms has been carried out and recorded where appropriate.\*

## Common understanding of terminology

There are a range of scenarios in which deer managers may have learned rifle safety (e.g. open-hill stalking, woodland stalking, military, hunting abroad). This means that the terms 'loaded' and 'unloaded' may mean different things to different people. Inherent to safe use of firearms is the need to be able to describe accurately to others, the location of rounds in relation to the chamber.

- 2 Ensure that you clarify and agree in advance, the words used to describe the location of rounds in relation to the chamber of a rifle at any given time (see illustrations Stages 1 to 5 overleaf).

## When handling firearms

- 2 Never allow your firearm to be pointed at anyone.
- 2 Keep the rifle in Stages 1, 2 or 3 for as long as possible during the stalk.
- 2 If actively stalking with a rifle in Stage 4, ensure it is kept pointing at the ground or into the sky at all times.
- 2 When crawling forward prior to taking the shot with a rifle in Stage 4, ensure the person in front has control of the rifle to avoid the possibility of accidental discharge and injury when crawling.
- 2 Never rely on a firearms's safety catch mechanism – it could be faulty or may be accidentally knocked 'off'. Periodically check safety catch position if the rifle is in Stage 4.
- 2 Avoid handling firearms while under the influence of alcohol or any drugs.
- 2 Check that the chamber is empty either visually or with finger tip.

continued in Safety(2)

<sup>1</sup> Publications are available online at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) or can be obtained from HSE Books (for address and contact details see BP Contacts)

\* See BPG Risk Assessment