

Jeff Cooper “Weapon Conditions” As Applied to AR-15s and Modern Semi-Automatic Pistols

The late Marine Corps Lt. Col. Jeff Cooper founded a highly regarded firearm training center today known as the Gunsite Academy. His “Weapon Conditions” are used in the Marine Corps, the Army (with different verbiage), and in the civilian world today to indicate the readiness with a firearm can be carried, with modifications as necessary to accommodate differences in how various firearms operate.

Work with an instructor certified by the [NRA](#), [Rangemaster](#), the military, a law enforcement agency, or another recognized authority to understand and be able to apply the tasks described below. At all times, keep the gun pointed in a safe direction, with your finger off the trigger.

Condition Show Clear

Condition Show Clear, in which a gun is unloaded, precedes Cooper’s conditions for the carrying of firearms.

Definition: Magazine out; action open; chamber, bolt or breech face, and magazine well verified visually and by touch to be free of ammunition. Additionally, an AR-15s selector should be set to “SAFE” and, if a pistol has a slide-mounted safety or decocker-safety that can be engaged when the action is open, the device should be engaged.

Sequence of Operations:

1. Attempt to place an AR-15’s selector on “SAFE.” If it cannot be placed on “SAFE,” it is because the hammer is not cocked. For now, move to step number 2. If a pistol has a slide-mounted safety, decocker, or decocker-safety that, when engaged, allows the action to be opened, engage the device. If a pistol has a slide-mounted safety that cannot be engaged with the action open, move to step number 2.
2. If there is a magazine in the gun, remove it.
3. Lock the action open. Now place an AR-15’s selector on “SAFE,” if it could not be placed on “SAFE” previously.
4. Visually and by touch inspect the chamber, bolt or breech face, and magazine well. If any ammunition is present, remove it.

Condition Four

1. Close the action. (Close the ejection port of an AR-15.)
2. Verify that an AR-15s selector or the slide-mounted safety or decocker-safety of a pistol is still engaged. Depress the decocker of a pistol that has such a device. If a hammer-fired pistol

(such as a Model 1911 or Browning Hi-Power) has a manually operable safety that could not be engaged while the action was open, engage the device at this time.

Condition Three

1. Insert a magazine. Push it in until it locks in place with a “click.” Pull on it once, to make sure it is locked in place.
2. Verify that an AR-15’s selector is still on “SAFE.” If a pistol has a slide-mounted safety, decocker, or decocker-safety, verify that the device is still engaged.

Condition Two

Condition 2, which means that a round has been chambered, the hammer is down, and the safety is engaged, applies to only some semi-automatic pistols, such as an F-Series Beretta 92 or M9, which has a decocker-safety. To such place a pistol in Condition 2 from Condition 3:

1. Verify that the decocker-safety is engaged.
2. Cycle the action to chamber a round.
3. Verify that the decocker-safety is still engaged.

Condition One

Condition 1, which means that a round has been chambered, the hammer or striker is cocked, and the safety is engaged, applies to the AR-15, and some semi-automatic pistols. To go from Condition 3 to Condition 1:

1. With an AR-15, verify that its selector is still on “SAFE.” With a pistol that has a slide-mounted safety that can be engaged while the action is open, verify that it is still engaged. With a pistol that has a slide-mounted safety that cannot be engaged while the action is open, disengage the safety.
2. Cycle the action to chamber a round.
3. With an AR-15, verify that its selector is still on “SAFE.” With a pistol that has a slide-mounted safety that can be engaged while the action is open, verify that it is still engaged. With a pistol that has a slide-mounted safety that could not be engaged while the action was open, engage the safety at this time.

Note: Some pistols, such as a Glock, do not have a slide-mounted safety, but instead have an internal safety. If we interpret Condition 1 according to the text of Cooper’s definition—hammer or striker cocked, safety on—a Glock can be placed in Condition 1, because with its striker partially cocked, the safety device within the trigger is engaged. However, if we interpret Condition 1 according to the effect that Cooper intended—that pulling the trigger would not fire

the pistol—the Glock cannot be placed in Condition 1. Instead, from Condition 3, racking the action to chamber a round would place the pistol in Condition Zero, discussed next. Setting aside the debate over how to interpret Condition 1 relative to Glocks and similar pistols, understand that with such pistols, if you are in Condition 3, and you rack the action and chamber a round, the gun is ready to fire. Pulling the trigger in the normal way—placing your finger on the trigger and pulling it—would fire the gun.

Condition Zero

Condition Zero applies to the AR-15 and all pistols.

1. With a pistol that has a slide-mounted decocker, from Condition 3 rack the action to chamber a round and immediately engage the decocker to lower the hammer safely. Never pull the trigger to lower the hammer manually.
2. With an AR-15, move the selector to “SEMI,” to allow the rifle to be fired. With a pistol that has a slide-mounted safety or decocker-safety, disengage the device to allow the pistol to be fired.
3. Once the decision to not fire has been made, reset an AR-15’s selector to “SAFE” and reengage a pistol’s slide-mounted safety, decocker, or decocker-safety. If the pistol doesn’t have such a slide-mounted device, the only way to render the pistol unable to fire is to unload it, returning it to Condition Show Clear.