A recent WUPAARC survey of over 1,200 parents addressed *Parental Opinions and Practices Concerning Firearm Safety in the Home*. Most parents indicated the following information about firearm safety would be helpful:

| When should I discuss firearms with my child? | It is important to get children thinking about gun safety as early as pre-school. Most children are strong enough to pull a trigger **around 3 years old** and are mature enough to understand the conversation.  

**Repetition is key.** Every month or two is not too often when the child is younger. Reinforce your conversation regularly, adding detail and context as your children get older.  

**The gun is the responsibility of the owner at all times.** Children are inherently curious and you cannot rely on them to always follow your wishes. With that in mind, keep firearms out of reach of children. |
| --- | --- |

| How do I discuss firearms with my child? | For **young children**, the safety messages are:  

- When you see a gun, STOP.  
- Don’t touch it.  
- Even if a gun looks like a toy, leave it alone.  
- Leave the area – go tell an adult.  

**Additional Aspects:** Children need to know what to do if they come across a gun with no adult present. Make sure you and your partner are on the same page about gun safety before you have the discussion with your child. Minimize distractions by turning off cell phones and the TV to emphasize that this is a serious discussion. |
| --- | --- |

| How do I discuss firearms with my child? | For **teenagers**, the safety messages are:  

- Don’t touch, pick up or use a gun without an adult’s permission and supervision.  
- Never, ever point a gun at anyone.  
- Always assume a gun is loaded and can fire.  

**If you own a gun, set an example of safe handling and storage.**  

**Additional Aspects:** Every teenager needs to be advised on gun safety; however it should be more of a conversation than a lecture. *Explain the reasons why* each aspect of gun safety is important. Talk about how to handle potential situations involving guns to help your teen know what to do when you are not around. For example, “A friend wants to shoot cans with their father’s handgun without asking permission. What do you say to them?” |
| --- | --- |

| How do I discuss firearms with my child’s friend’s parents? | Work **“Is there an unlocked gun in your house?”** into normal conversations:  

- **First Playdate:**  
  - Does your child have any allergies or dietary restrictions?  
  - Do you have an extra car seat or do I need to leave mine?  
  - Is there an unlocked gun in your house?  
    
    - “(Child’s name) is very curious. I just want to be sure he can’t get into too much trouble.”  

- **Other Interactions:**  
  - “I just read an article about gun safety and I thought it might be a good idea to ask...”  

**Additional Aspects:** Emphasize safe storage not ownership. Discuss your own home. You are simply trying to make sure your child is in a safe environment. |

---

*Answer adapted from an excellent video found at: [www.projectchildsafet.org](http://www.projectchildsafet.org)*