

Safety Checking a 1911

To Properly safety check a 1911 pistol, you must check the thumb safety, the grip safety, the disconnecter and, on series 80 style pistols, the firing pin lock out feature.

Before beginning the safety checks- **BE ABSOLUTELY SURE THAT YOUR PISTOL IS UNLOADED!**

The thumb safety should be checked first. To check the thumb safety, cock the hammer and engage the thumb safety - then firmly pull and release the trigger. The hammer must not drop. Disengage the thumb safety - the hammer should not drop. Do not touch the trigger again.

The next check is to determine if the thumb safety is holding the sear from partially disengaging from the hammer. (I call this the click test - and remember - DO NOT TOUCH THE TRIGGER after disengaging the thumb safety.) After disengaging the thumb safety, place the hammer area of the pistol close to your so that you can hear the slightest click when you run this test. With the hammer area of the pistol held close to your ear, pull the hammer to the rear very slightly. Do not touch the hammer at all until you have placed the pistol near your ear. If you hear a very slight click when you touch the hammer this is the sound of the sear jumping back into full engagement with the hammer full cock hooks. Remember, you must engage the thumb safety, pull and release the trigger, disengage the thumb safety, holt the pistol near your ear, and then just touch the hammer slightly to the rear. If you hear a click the safety is allowing the sear to move slightly out of engagement with the hammer. The hammer hooks that the sear engages with are only .022" thick as made at the factory and if the pistol has had a trigger job done the hooks could have been shortened to .019". Any movement of the sear could leave the sear engaging the hammer with only a few thousandths. NOT SAFE! *If you hear a click you must have the safety replaced or welded up and re-cut to stop any sear movement with the thumb safety engaged.*

Next you will check the grip safety. to test the grip safety, first cock the pistol. Then with the pistol cocked, thumb safety off, and the grip safety not depressed, pull the trigger firmly and release. The hammer should not fall. If the hammer falls when the trigger is firmly pulled without the grip safety depressed the grip safety is defective. The grip safety must be repaired before you load or fire the pistol.

The next step is checking the grip safety is to determine that the grip safety is not allowing any sear movement jus as you did in the thumb safety test. This is a repeat of the click test. To test for this you run the grip safety test as just described and then place the pistol next to your ear. Touch the hammer slightly to the rear and listen for a click. If you hear a click the grip safety is not blocking the movement of the trigger enough to prevent slight movement of the sear away from the hammer. Again this test is just a repeat of the click test that you did to check the hammer. Remember, do not depress the grip safety during the test and do not touch the hammer until you have placed the hammer next to your ear to hear the click.

Next you will check the disconnecter. The disconnecter is the part that makes your pistol a semi-auto and allows the hammer to re-cock after each shot while the trigger is still fully depressed. To test the disconnecter, first cock the pistol. Hold the pistol as you would if you were going to fire the pistol with one hand. Do not place your finger on the trigger yet. Place the palm of the other hand squarely on the muzzle and press the barrel and slide straight to the rear as far as they will go. The slide and barrel will move to the rear approximately 1/4" before stopping. While you hold the slide and barrel in this position you then place your finger on the trigger and pull the trigger. Hold the trigger fully pulled to the rear. The hammer should not fall against the slide when you pull the forward. The hammer should still not fall. Now release the trigger, the hammer still should not fall. You should hear a firm click when you release the trigger. The click that you hear is the disconnecter reconnecting with the sear to allow that pistol to be fired again. Now that you have released the trigger and the disconnecter has reconnected, pull the trigger again. The hammer should fall.

The last safety check to be performed is for Colt series 80 Pistols and all Para Ordnance pistols. This safety check will cover the firing pin lock out feature. This feature prevents the firing pin from moving far enough forward to fire the cartridge unless the trigger is pulled. This feature makes the pistol one of the safest pistols manufactured.

The firing pin lock out feature consists of a spring loaded plunger located in the slide that prevents the firing pin from moving far enough forward to fire the cartridge unless the trigger is pulled far enough to depress the plunger. The trigger movement is transferred to the plunger by the movement of two levers.

First, you should know the correct names for the parts involved. The plunger that prevents the firing pin from moving is called the firing pin block plunger. The spring that returns the firing pin to the locked position is called the firing pin block plunger spring. There are two levers that transfer that transfer the trigger motion to unlock the firing pin. The lever that the trigger pushes on is the trigger lever and the lever that the trigger lever moves that contacts the firing pin block plunger is called the block plunger lever. Please look at the diagram in the manual that came with your gun to see the arrangement of the levers and their action.

There are two reasons to check the firing pin lock out system. The first reason to check the system is to be sure that the firing pin is locked when the trigger is not pulled and the second is to be sure that the firing pin unlocks quickly enough to let the pistol fire.

To check the firing pin to see if it is locked is very simple. First, cock the pistol. Then take a punch that is slightly smaller than the rear of the firing pin that protrudes through the firing pin stop and push firmly on the firing pin being sure that the punch is only touching the firing pin and not the edge of the hole. Press on the punch as hard as you can with hand pressure. The firing pin will move slightly forward, about 1/8" but will not move far enough forward to allow you to remove the firing pin stop. This slight

movement of the firing pin will not let the front of the firing pin protrude through the breech face.

Now you need to check to see that the firing pin is being unlocked when the trigger is pulled. To do this, hold the hammer fully to the rear, depress the grip safety, and pull and hold the trigger fully rearward. Continue to hold the hammer fully to the rear. The grip safety can now be released as you are holding the hammer back and the trigger fully to the rear. You can now take your punch and see if the firing pin is unlocked. Press on the firing pin with your punch. The firing pin should move completely forward with no binding. If you feel the firing pin click off of a hard spot as you push it forward or it fails to move fully forward, you need to have the pistol examined by a gunsmith that fully understands the series 80 firing pin lock out system. The firing pin should move far enough forward that the end of the firing pin that you are pressing on will move below the firing pin stop. Now release the firing pin, release the trigger and drop the hammer. Cock the hammer once more and check that the firing pin has returned to the rearward position and press on it once more to check that it is locked again.

If you have installed a trigger with an overtravel stop or adjust the overtravel stop on an existing trigger you may limit the rearward trigger travel to a point that the firing pin will not unlock to fire the pistol. You can also create a potential problem if the firing pin block is unlocking just far enough to allow the firing pin to strike the firing pin block plunger every time you fire the pistol. This is indicated by the firing pin clicking off of a hard spot when you are pushing the firing pin forward to check that the firing pin is being unlocked when you pull the trigger. If you do have a trigger overtravel stop and the firing pin will not unlock or you feel the click when you press the firing pin forward during the unlock check you must back off the overtravel stop until you correct the problem. If the firing pin continues to strike the firing pin block plunger each time you fire the pistol, the firing pin or the firing pin block plunger will be damaged and will eventually cause the firing pin to stick forward or to not unlock. Should the firing pin stick forward, the pistol can go full or auto or jam the round that is being fed. There is a special plunger lever that is available for use in pistols that have a trigger overtravel stop.

Should your pistol fail any of these tests, do not load or fire your pistol until you have had the problem corrected. If you find that your pistol has a safety problem and you do not have a local pistolsmith that can fix your pistol. Cylinder & Slide, Inc. will be happy to repair your pistol. Please call and set up an appointment to have your pistol repaired.