



# Should handguns be illegal?

## GETTING ORIENTED

The weekly passage covers some issues related to gun ownership. Here is some information that might be helpful to students less familiar with the topic.

### Second Amendment

The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution is part of the Bill of Rights. This amendment protects the right of people to “keep and bear arms.” This means that everyone in the United States has the right to own a gun except under particular circumstances. This amendment became part of the American Constitution in 1791 at the same time as the other amendments in the Bill of Rights. For many years this amendment was interpreted in a variety of ways. Originally people did not have guns unless they were in the military or if they needed them for hunting. Different states made their own laws regarding the use of guns. Since some Americans feel strongly that owning a handgun should be against the law, the Supreme Court reviewed the Second Amendment in 2008. At that time the Supreme Court upheld the notion or idea that individuals have the right to own guns for use according to the law.

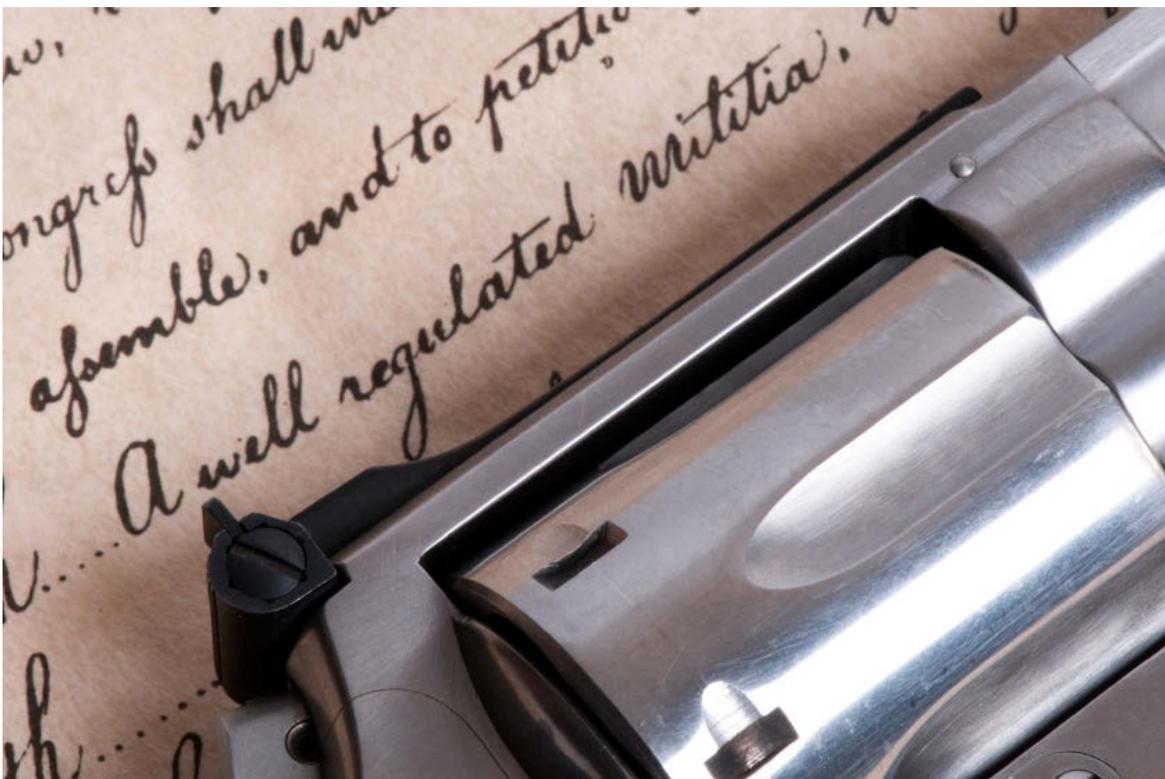
### Gun Laws

There are also gun laws in each state in the United States. These laws regulate or control the sale and possession of both guns and ammunition, such as bullets. It is important

to know these different laws if you are traveling with a gun in your possession. Some states recognize permits from other states, but some do not. State and local police departments are only obligated or made to follow state and local laws; they do not have to enforce the federal gun laws. Some states require individuals to register their handguns, but others do not. Most states require permits to carry a concealed or hidden weapon. There is also a United States law from 1996 that bans the access to firearms by people convicted of crimes of domestic violence.

### The Gun Control Act and The Great Society

The Gun Control Act (GCA) of 1968 is a federal law that was signed by President Lyndon Johnson. It was part of an overall program to promote or help develop a Great Society. The goals of the Great Society reforms were to eliminate or get rid of poverty and racial injustice. The Gun Control Act regulates both firearms owners and people in the industry. It was inspired by the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X, but was not passed before the further assassinations of Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King. It attempts to get handguns out of the hands of people who might use them unwisely.





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## EVIDENCE AND PERSPECTIVES

	<i>Some may have this view:</i>	<i>But others may think:</i>
<b>Handgun owners</b>	Handgun owners are not against owning handguns or they wouldn't own one. There may be some rare situation where a child has been hurt or killed because a gun owner did not take precaution with the gun. People involved in this kind of situation may later change their opinions. They may want guns to be illegal.	People who own handguns do so for their own reasons. They may feel that they need them for self-defense. They know that the law says they are legally allowed to own them, and they don't want that law changed.
<b>Gun manufacturers</b>	It is unlikely that you would find a gun manufacturer who would support making handguns illegal. They may support changes in laws about the use of guns, but making handguns illegal would dramatically affect their business, as consumers would not buy as many guns.	Gun manufacturers would be against making handguns illegal. The more people who buy guns, the more guns the manufacturers make and sell, and the more money they make.
<b>General public</b>	Many people feel that handguns should be illegal because of the number of murders and other crimes committed by handgun owners. They feel that the constitutional amendment should be revised or changed since it was never meant to allow people to use guns the way they are most commonly being used. They know that other countries have laws that make it illegal to own a gun, and they know that statistically there are fewer crimes committed in those countries.	Many people feel that it is up to citizens to use guns responsibly, and if they don't, they should be punished. They do not believe that the government should step in and make decisions for everyone on this kind of issue.
<b>Police</b>	Guns cause many of the violent crimes that police officers have to get involved in. When a police officer is killed while trying to stop a crime, it is usually by gunfire. Some police want to change how easy it is to get a gun so that they will have less risk of being shot while doing their job.	Some police officers might think that if people have guns, that will stop some crimes. If criminals think that a person has a gun, they might not want to rob them. This could mean that police officers see fewer crimes being committed.

<b>Additional Information for Teachers</b>	
<p>Investigate the story of Dred Scott  <a href="http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2933.html">http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2933.html</a>  <a href="http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2932.html">www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2932.html</a></p> <p>Shootings at Virginia Tech University Spark Gun Debate  <a href="http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/04/17/earlyshow/main2693587.shtml">http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/04/17/earlyshow/main2693587.shtml</a></p>	<p>Learn about the prevalence of gun violence in America  <a href="http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/gun-violence">www.nij.gov/topics/crime/gun-violence</a></p> <p>Look into the details of gun laws  <a href="http://www.justfacts.com/guncontrol.asp">http://www.justfacts.com/guncontrol.asp</a></p>



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### ANNOTATIONS FOR TEACHERS

#### Features of Academic Text: *Varying Word Choice*

*Academic writing requires that students learn to vary their choice of words and phrases that need to be repeated. When explaining different perspectives - a common writing task in school - effective writers will use some of the highlighted words and phrases for "they think."*

- **The people argue that....**
- **The also note that...**
- **They argue that...**
- **They remind us that...**

*Ask students to think of other ways that a writer could introduce a perspective.*

- **They believe...**
- **They contend that...**
- **It's their argument that...**

In March 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, a 23-year-old college student at Virginia Tech, walked into a gun shop and bought a handgun. To purchase the gun, all he had to do was prove that he lived in Virginia and that he did not have a criminal record. This quick and easy process enabled him **subsequently** to carry out a terrible **scheme**. On April 16, 2007, Cho used the gun to kill 32 people on the Virginia Tech campus.

Some people believe we should have laws in our country that make it harder to obtain handguns. **These people argue that** a handgun's only purpose is hurting people. **They think** there might be fewer murders, armed robberies, and suicides if handguns were illegal.

They also note that people who keep guns in their houses sometimes shoot someone accidentally. Sometimes children find the handguns and think they are toys. Sometimes people use the guns to shoot each other when they are angry. Later, those people wish it had not been so easy to hurt or kill the other person.

The Supreme Court, however, has decided that Americans have the right to own handguns and to keep them in their homes. **Some people**

**think** this was a good decision. **They argue** that people need handguns to defend themselves against criminals. This is one of the widespread and **dominant** arguments for handgun ownership. In addition, **some people think** that if guns were illegal, only criminals would have them. **They remind us** that even if handguns were made illegal in the US, criminals could **import** them from countries where handguns are allowed.

**Some people argue that** if it had been harder for Cho to get a handgun, perhaps the **commission** of all those murders could have been prevented. **Others say that** if Cho's professors and fellow students had been carrying their own handguns, they would have been able to protect themselves.

Should handguns be illegal? Or should Americans have the right to own them?



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## GENERATING WORDS

### Roots

#### Can you figure out the meaning of the root **seque**?

- Have you seen any of the “Harry Potter” or Twilight **sequels**?
- Have you ever had to follow a **sequence** of steps in order to do something, like a dance routine?
- Have you ever had a **consequence** for doing something that you weren’t supposed to do?

 What do all of these words have in common? Turn and talk to a partner and try to figure out the meaning of the root **seque**.

If you report out to the class, try one of these sentence frames!

We think **seque** means \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_ .

Based on what we know about all of these words, we determined that the root **seque** must mean \_\_\_\_\_ .

#### How about the root **miss**?

- What are some weapons that fire **missiles** at their targets?
- How do you know when you are **dismissed** from class?
- Have you ever watched a spy movie where the spy was sent on a **mission**?

 Turn to another partner and try to figure out what the root **miss** means.

If you get the chance to share with the whole class, try one of these sentence frames!

We determine that **miss** may mean \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_ .

Though we are not sure, it appears that **miss** might mean \_\_\_\_\_ . We think this because \_\_\_\_\_ .



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## DEVELOPING DISCUSSIONS

### Connecting Cause and Effect

When you work with cause and effect statements, it helps to think of the cause as the **WHY** and the effect as the **WHAT**.

For example:

- **CAUSE:** Since the U.S. Constitution says people have the right to own a gun,
- **EFFECT:** lots of people in the U.S. own guns compared to other countries.

Now use this chart to write more cause and effect statements. For some, you are asked to write the effect. For others you are asked to write the cause. Try to use academic language that is logical. Avoid simply writing your personal opinion.

Cause	Effect
Since people want to protect themselves,	_____ .
Since the gun industry in the United States is large and gives many people jobs,	_____ .
Because gun are dangerous,	_____ .
Since people are allowed to carry in gun some places in the United States,	_____ .
Since guns are sometimes left unlocked in homes with children,	_____ .
<i>Try to create two more:</i>	
_____ ,	_____ .
_____ ,	_____ .

Cause and effect statements work equally well when you put the effect first.

For example:

- Lots of people in the U.S. own guns because the the U.S. Constitution says people have the right to own a gun.

With a partner rephrase the cause and effect statements in the chart so the effect comes first in each sentence. Practice saying both versions orally.