



Firearms Act 1968

1968 CHAPTER 27

PART I

PROVISIONS AS TO POSSESSION, HANDLING AND DISTRIBUTION OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION; PREVENTION OF CRIME AND MEASURES TO PROTECT PUBLIC SAFETY

Prohibition of certain weapons and control of arms traffic

5 Weapons subject to general prohibition.

- (1) ^{F1}A person commits an offence if, [^{F2}without authority], he has in his possession, or purchases or acquires ...—
- ^{F3}(a) any firearm which is so designed or adapted that two or more missiles can be successively discharged without repeated pressure on the trigger;
 - (ab) any self-loading or pump-action [^{F4}rifled gun] other than one which is chambered for .22 rim-fire cartridges;
 - ^{F5}(aba) [any firearm which either has a barrel less than 30 centimetres in length or is less than 60 centimetres in length overall, other than an air weapon, ^{F6} . . . a muzzle-loading gun or a firearm designed as signalling apparatus;]
 - (ac) any self-loading or pump-action smooth-bore gun which is not [^{F7}an air weapon or] chambered for .22 rim-fire cartridges and either has a barrel less than 24 inches in length or ^{F8} . . . is less than 40 inches in length overall;
 - (ad) any smooth-bore revolver gun other than one which is chambered for 9mm. rim-fire cartridges or [^{F9}a muzzle-loading gun];
 - (ae) any rocket launcher, or any mortar, for projecting a stabilised missile, other than a launcher or mortar designed for line-throwing or pyrotechnic purposes or as signalling apparatus;]
 - ^{F10}(af) any air rifle, air gun or air pistol which uses, or is designed or adapted for use with, a self-contained gas cartridge system;]
 - ^{F11}(ag) any rifle with a chamber from which empty cartridge cases are extracted using—
 - (i) energy from propellant gas, or

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- (ii) energy imparted to a spring or other energy storage device by propellant gas,
other than a rifle which is chambered for .22 rim-fire cartridges;]
- (b) any weapon of whatever description designed or adapted for the discharge of any noxious liquid, gas or other thing;
- [^{F12}(ba) any device (commonly known as a bump stock) which is designed or adapted so that—
 - (i) it is capable of forming part of or being added to a self-loading lethal barrelled weapon (as defined in section 57(1B) and (2A)), and
 - (ii) if it forms part of or is added to such a weapon, it increases the rate of fire of the weapon by using the recoil from the weapon to generate repeated pressure on the trigger; and]
- [^{F13}(c) any cartridge with a bullet designed to explode on or immediately before impact, any ammunition containing or designed or adapted to contain any such noxious thing as is mentioned in paragraph (b) above and, if capable of being used with a firearm of any description, any grenade, bomb (or other like missile), or rocket or shell designed to explode as aforesaid.]
- [^{F14}(1A) ^{F15}Subject to section 5A of this Act, a person commits an offence if, [^{F2}without authority], he has in his possession, or purchases or acquires, ...—
 - (a) any firearm which is disguised as another object;
 - (b) any rocket or ammunition not falling within paragraph (c) of subsection (1) of this section which consists in or incorporates a missile designed to explode on or immediately before impact and is for military use;
 - (c) any launcher or other projecting apparatus not falling within paragraph (ae) of that subsection which is designed to be used with any rocket or ammunition falling within paragraph (b) above or with ammunition which would fall within that paragraph but for its being ammunition falling within paragraph (c) of that subsection;
 - (d) any ammunition for military use which consists in or incorporates a missile designed so that a substance contained in the missile will ignite on or immediately before impact;
 - (e) any ammunition for military use which consists in or incorporates a missile designed, on account of its having a jacket and hard-core, to penetrate armour plating, armour screening or body armour;
 - [^{F16}(f) any ammunition which is designed to be used with a pistol and incorporates a missile designed or adapted to expand on impact;]
 - (g) anything which is designed to be projected as a missile from any weapon and is designed to be, or has been, incorporated in—
 - (i) any ammunition falling within any of the preceding paragraphs; or
 - (ii) any ammunition which would fall within any of those paragraphs but for its being specified in subsection (1) of this section.]
- (2) The weapons and ammunition specified in [^{F17}subsections (1) and (1A) of this section (including, [^{F18}in the case of weapons, any devices falling within subsection (1) (ba) of this section and,] in the case of ammunition, any missiles falling within subsection (1A)(g) of this section)] are referred to in this Act as “prohibited weapons” and “prohibited ammunition” respectively.
- [^{F19}(2A) A person commits an offence if without authority—

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- (a) he manufactures any weapon [^{F20}, device] or ammunition specified in subsection (1) of this section,
 - (b) he sells or transfers any prohibited weapon or prohibited ammunition,
 - (c) he has in his possession for sale or transfer any prohibited weapon or prohibited ammunition, or
 - (d) he purchases or acquires for sale or transfer any prohibited weapon or prohibited ammunition.]
- ^{F21}(3) In this section “authority” means an authority given in writing by—
- (a) the Secretary of State (in or as regards England and Wales), or
 - (b) the Scottish Ministers (in or as regards Scotland).]
- (4) [^{F22}An authority shall be subject to conditions specified in it, including such as the Secretary of State or the Scottish Ministers (as appropriate)], having regard to the circumstances of each particular case, think fit to impose for the purpose of securing that the prohibited weapon or ammunition to which the authority relates will not endanger the public safety or the peace.
- (5) It is an offence for a person to whom an authority is given under this section to fail to comply with any condition of the authority.
- (6) [^{F23}The Secretary of State or the Scottish Ministers (as appropriate) may at any time, if they think fit,] revoke an authority given to a person under this section by notice in writing requiring him to deliver up the authority to such person as may be specified in the notice within twenty-one days from the date of the notice; and it is an offence for him to fail to comply with that requirement.
- ^{F24}(7) For the purposes of this section and section 5A of this Act—
- (a) any rocket or ammunition which is designed to be capable of being used with a military weapon shall be taken to be for military use;
 - (b) references to a missile designed so that a substance contained in the missile will ignite on or immediately before impact include references to any missile containing a substance that ignites on exposure to air; and
 - (c) references to a missile’s expanding on impact include references to its deforming in any predictable manner on or immediately after impact.]
- ^{F25}(8) For the purposes of subsection (1)(aba) and (ac) above, any detachable, folding, retractable or other movable butt-stock shall be disregarded in measuring the length of any firearm.
- (9) Any reference in this section to a muzzle-loading gun is a reference to a gun which is designed to be loaded at the muzzle end of the barrel or chamber with a loose charge and a separate ball (or other missile).]

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 5(1) omitted (14.7.2014) by virtue of [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\), ss. 108\(2\)\(a\), 185\(1\)](#) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 6(a)
- F2** Words in s. 5(1)(1A) substituted (14.7.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\), ss. 109\(1\)\(a\), 185\(1\)](#) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 6(b); S.I. 2014/949, art. 6(b)
- F3** S. 5(1)(a)–(ae) substituted for s. 5(1)(a) by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\), s. 1\(2\)](#)

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- F4** Word in s. 5(1)(ab) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(3); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I** (with art. 5)
- F5** S. 5(1)(aba) inserted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(2); S.I. 1997/1536, **art. 2**
- F6** Words in s. 5(1)(aba) repealed (1.2.1998) by 1997 c. 64, ss. 1, 2(7), **Sch.**; S.I. 1997/3114, art. 4, **Sch. Pt. II** (with art. 5)
- F7** Words in s. 5(1)(ac) inserted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(4); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- F8** Words in s. 5(1)(ac) repealed (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 52(2), **Sch. 3**; S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- F9** Words in s. 5(1)(ad) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(5); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- F10** S. 5(1)(af) inserted (20.1.2004 for certain purposes and 30.4.2004 in so far as not already in force) by Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (c. 38), ss. 39(3)-(5), 93; S.I. 2003/3300, **arts 2(c)(iii), 5**
- F11** S. 5(1)(ag) inserted (16.5.2019 for specified purposes, 14.7.2021 in so far as not already in force) by Offensive Weapons Act 2019 (c. 17), ss. 54(2), 70(1)(5)(d); S.I. 2021/819, reg. 2(f)
- F12** S. 5(1)(ba) substituted for word (16.5.2019 for specified purposes, 14.7.2021 in so far as not already in force) by Offensive Weapons Act 2019 (c. 17), ss. 54(3), 70(1)(5)(e); S.I. 2021/819, reg. 2(f)
- F13** S. 5(1)(c) substituted by Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (c. 45, SIF 51:1), s. 1(3)
- F14** S. 5(1A) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 3(1)**
- F15** Words in s. 5(1A) omitted (14.7.2014) by virtue of Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (c. 12), ss. 108(2)(b), 185(1) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 6(a)
- F16** S. 5(1A)(f) substituted (31.1.2017 for specified purposes, 2.5.2017 in so far as not already in force) by Policing and Crime Act 2017 (c. 3), ss. 129(2), 183(1)(5)(e); S.I. 2017/399, reg. 4(e)
- F17** Words in s. 5(2) substituted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 3(2)**
- F18** Words in s. 5(2) inserted (16.5.2019 for specified purposes, 14.7.2021 in so far as not already in force) by Offensive Weapons Act 2019 (c. 17), ss. 54(4), 70(1)(5)(f); S.I. 2021/819, reg. 2(f)
- F19** S. 5(2A) inserted (14.7.2014) by Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (c. 12), ss. 108(3), 185(1) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 6(a)
- F20** Word in s. 5(2A)(a) inserted (16.5.2019) by Offensive Weapons Act 2019 (c. 17), ss. 54(5), 70(5)(g)
- F21** S. 5(3) substituted (14.7.2014) by Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (c. 12), ss. 108(4), 185(1) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 6(a)
- F22** Words in s. 5(4) substituted (14.7.2014) by Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (c. 12), ss. 109(1)(b), 185(1) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 6(b)
- F23** Words in s. 5(6) substituted (14.7.2014) by Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (c. 12), ss. 109(1)(c), 185(1) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 6(b)
- F24** S. 5(7) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 3(3)**
- F25** S. 5(8)(9) inserted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(6); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 5: transfer of certain functions (1.11.1968) by S.I.1968/1200, **art. 2**
- C2** S. 5 amended (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(7); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- C3** S. 5: transfer of certain functions (S.) (1.7.1999) by S.I. 1999/1750, art. 2, **Sch. 1**; S.I. 1998/3178, **art. 3** (as amended (14.7.2014) by Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (c. 12), ss. 109(4)(a), 185(1) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 6(b))
- C4** S. 5 excluded (31.1.2017 for specified purposes, 22.3.2021 in so far as not already in force) by Policing and Crime Act 2017 (c. 3), ss. 126(5), 183(1)(5)(e) (with s. 126(4)(8)); S.I. 2021/282, reg. 2 (with regs. 3, 4)
- C5** S. 5 excluded in part (22.3.2021) by The Policing and Crime Act 2017 (Commencement No. 11 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 2021/282), regs. 1(1), 3, 4
- C6** Power to amend s. 5(1) conferred by Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (c. 45, SIF 51:1), s. 1(4)
- C7** S. 5(1)(aba) amended (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, ss. 1(8), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7(1)(3); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- S. 5(1)(aba)(b)(c) amended (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, ss. 1(8), 8; S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**

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C8 S. 5(2A) amended by 1997 c. 5 s. 1(7A)(7B) (as inserted) (14.7.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\), ss. 108\(9\), 185\(1\)](#) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 6(a)

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

- Act amended by [1997 c. 5 s. 12\(2\)](#) (This amendment not applied to [legislation.gov.uk](#). S. 12 was repealed (17.12.1997) by 1997 c. 64, s. 2(7), Sch.; S.I. 1997/3114, art. 3, Sch. Pt. I)
- Blanket amendment words substituted by [S.I. 2011/1043 art. 34](#)

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 3A inserted by [2023 c. 49 s. 2](#)
- s. 11(3A)-(4A) substituted for s. 11(4) by [2023 c. 49 s. 1\(2\)](#)
- s. 51(2A) added by [1997 c. 48 s. 62\(1\)Sch. 1 para. 3](#)