

# Always Follow the NRA Training Policies when Conducting a Class: Managing the Student Complainers

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NRA Trainers are the “Gold Standard” when it comes to firearms instructors. We follow the creed that the NRA stands for one thing – the Constitution of the United States with a focus on the Second Amendment. An NRA Firearms Training course is not the place to advance a political agenda. It is also not the place to denigrate a political party, candidate, or a position on any controversial topic.

NRA Trainers are to provide a welcoming and safe venue for those who want to learn about firearms and learn about their Second Amendment Rights. NRA Trainers are to serve the

students, and no one else. Trainers are required to conduct their classes impartially and objectively. Biases and prejudices have no place in the classroom or on the range. These include racial, religious, political, or ethnic issues or beliefs.

Adhering to these policies is very important to protect yourself and your firearms training business. These policies are also required to be followed if you are conducting an NRA Training Course. We live in a very litigious society. We need to do all we can to not open ourselves up to a lawsuit being filed against you. Lawsuits can be very time-consuming and expensive, so it is best to avoid them altogether by acting professionally and responsibly.

### **Never Can Make Them Happy Complainer**

There are three types of complainers to be concerned about. The first type of complainer is the “never can make them happy person.” These individuals are the ones that go out of their way to look for something to complain about. These people are basically unhappy and no matter what you do, they will find something to complain about. You can do everything right, watch your words, and even script out your lesson so you do not deviate so as not to offend someone. But no matter how well-prepared you are, this type of person will find something to complain about. Face it, there are individuals who are looking to complain and who are looking for something to be offended by. All you can do is not give them anything substantial to complain about that can get you sued or have your NRA Training Credentialing revoked.

### **Mad About Being Here Complainer**

The second type of complainer is the “mad about being here complainer.” This one is hard to understand because they are paying you to be in your class. No one is forcing them to be there, so why are they so mad? These types of complainers can be summed up in two reasons why they are mad. First, it is the individual who thinks of themselves as a firearms “expert” and he or she is “too good” to be in a basic firearms class but needs the class to achieve another goal. Some of these goals include the need for your class before they can move onto an additional level of certification, or perhaps to become a concealed carry or license to carry instructor in the state in which they reside. Your class may also be a prerequisite they need before they can join a particular shooting club, it may be a requirement for their job, or any other reason.

The other type of “mad about being here complainer” is the person that believes society has forced them to be in your class. These are the people that thought they would never own a firearm, but due to rising crime, the need for knowledge and training has “forced” them to get a gun for protection of themselves and their families. These individuals are usually afraid of the firearm and will probably never keep a gun “in battery,” or “ready to use.” With this type of individual, focus on what you teach in a basic class - safety and the fundamentals. They are not ready for tactical reloads or any other type of advanced lessons or training.

### **Legitimate Complainer**

The third type of complainer is the “legitimate complainer.” These individuals have a legitimate complaint because you did or said something wrong. There are several issues that firearm instructors must be aware of. Violations of the NRA Ethics Guide can lead to you losing your credentials.

The first issue you need to be aware of is sexual harassment. This is not just an issue for men. Women need to be aware of sexual harassment also. Do not say anything that could be mistaken for sexual harassment. If you must counsel a student, do so in plain view of other students. You should not speak loud enough to embarrass the student whom you are counseling, but be in the same area where there are witnesses. Sexual harassment includes making slurs or implying things of a sexual nature.

There is no room for prejudices and biases. These include racial, ethnic, and religious biases and discrimination. It goes without saying, if you have any racial, ethnic, religious, or any other biases, they are to be left out of the classroom. If you are not able to do this, you should not be an NRA Firearms Instructor. Period.

You should be aware of any unintended racial, ethnic, or religious symbolism that might be considered offensive. The only items in your classroom should be related to firearms and firearms training. Outside of our National Flag and perhaps your state flag, keep any other flags out of your classroom. I have heard complaints of other instructors having a Confederate flag in their classroom. Without getting into the debate of the meaning of this symbol, it has nothing to

do with firearms and firearms training. This includes Black Lives Matter flags, Antifa Flags, or Gay Pride flags. Just do not open yourself up to any grievances, real or perceived.

One of the hardest things for firearms instructors to do is to keep their personal opinions to themselves. You should never voice your opinions on your favorite guns, political candidates, or controversial topics. This also includes avoiding the use of abusive or foul language. Being in front of a class is not a platform to hear all about “you” and share your achievements or successes. The students are there to learn firearm safety and the shooting fundamentals, not hearing you opine. You have no idea what experiences or situations your students bring with them to class. These experiences may be shared or kept private.

For example, I once had a student that was opposed to a particular type of firearm because her father intentionally shot himself with one. Remember, the NRA policy is that no instructor will engage in “making statements that would bring dishonor to all NRA Instructors, the firearm community, discredit the mission of the NRA, or encouraging anti-gun legislation.”

Other issues that the NRA specifically spells out that could jeopardize your credentials are the negligent handling of firearms in class or on the range, and teaching while impaired. Your students will follow your lead and act as safely as you do. That is why it is imperative that you model the correct behavior you want your students to exhibit. If you must be told to safely handle firearm in class and to not be impaired by alcohol or drugs, maybe firearms instructing is not for you.

Remember, students seek certified instructors who have been properly trained and who possess the knowledge, skills, and attitude necessary to organize and conduct NRA Firearm Training Courses. Students have come to NRA Trainers trusting that they will get the GOLD STANDARD in firearms training!