

This guide can't cover every circumstance, but is designed to provide a straightforward guide to help filling in the form; it is still essential to read the notes on the application forms as they must be complied with.

NB: Please note that although police firearms departments usually send out renewal reminders, it is your responsibility to apply in good time.

At renewal should I return my old certificate for the police?

Ensure that you keep your certificate whilst your renewal forms are being processed. Whilst your existing certificate remains valid, you will need it to buy ammunition and to show that you are in lawful possession of firearms and ammunition. If your firearms licensing department ask for your certificate, photocopy the whole certificate and enclose the copy with your application.

For a variation, should I return my certificate for the police?

Yes, this is a requirement. If you do not send your certificate in with your variation form the police cannot process your request. Stock up on ammunition before sending your form to avoid running out during this process.

If you experience longer delays than usual or your variation is pending due to enquiries, the police should advise that you keep, or agree to send back, your certificate in order to purchase ammunition or new firearms for which you have authority to acquire, but you must return the certificate when asked for the variation to be completed.

What if I experience a delay?

If you have returned your application form in good time and are experiencing delays which may put you in unlawful possession of firearms when your certificate expires, then you should ask for a Temporary Permit under Section 7 of the Firearms Act 1968. This will allow you to keep and use your firearms and shotguns and also, by virtue of Section 5(2)(a) of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, to purchase ammunition. Unfortunately it will not allow you to possess expanding ammunition – if you have any. This should be lodged with a registered firearms dealer until you have your renewed certificate

GENERAL

When you receive your forms, ensure that you fill them in carefully and return them as quickly as possible – give the system a chance to work properly. Make a note of the expiry date of your certificates and make sure that you leave the Licensing Authority (currently the police) reasonable time to issue new certificates before the expiry date. 6-8 weeks should allow plenty of time.

While the vast majority of applications will be dealt with quite correctly and the applicant's dealings with the police met with friendly helpfulness, Members need to be aware that this is not always the case. These notes will help you deal with the situation should difficulties arise.

NB: The Firearms Act 1968 states very clearly that "The application shall be in the form provided". This means that other than the two reference forms (Form 125), the official application form (Firearms Form 101) is the only one you are required to complete. The Firearms Enquiry Officer (FEO) may ask for clarification of your answers to questions on the form but he may not ask you to complete any other forms or ask you to get anyone else to do so.

FILLING IN THE FORM

NB: At the top, don't forget to tick the box to show that you are applying for the grant, the renewal or the variation of a certificate.

PART A - PERSONAL DETAILS

Questions 1-13

These concern your own personal details and are self-explanatory. Remember to write "none" in questions 4 and 5, if this is the case. You are asked for a daytime telephone number so that the FEO can telephone to make an appointment at a mutually convenient time. If he calls without an appointment and it is not convenient then say so. Ask him to telephone to arrange a more suitable time. If he then says that it will delay your renewal which may put you in illegal possession of firearms and liable to prosecution, make a note of it and inform one of the shooting organisations.

Question 14

For purposes of the Firearms Acts there is no such thing as a spent conviction. You must include all convictions, (Including ALL motoring offences, whether still recorded on your driving licence or otherwise) whether in Britain or abroad. Cautions do not need to be mentioned but conditional or absolute discharges do. If this is a renewal, then the form only asks you to declare convictions since your last application. If none, write "None" or "None since last renewal", as appropriate. If you have ANY convictions at ANY time, including parking or speeding, tick the "Yes" box.

Question 15a

Medical conditions. The question refers to any such condition but it seems reasonable to mention only those which might have some bearing on your fitness to possess firearms. If in doubt, put them down.

Question 15b

Self explanatory. Generally speaking one either has or has not epilepsy; however there are related conditions so if in doubt, ask your GP.

Question 15c

Most of the population apparently suffers from some kind of depression at some time or other. It does not preclude you from having a certificate unless the condition presents particular problems, as a general principle, if in any doubt ask your Doctor.

Question 16

This may seem an intrusion into your privacy but you must complete it if you want the application to be processed, it only gives police authority to approach your GP for "factual details" of your medical history; They should not ask the Doctor for an opinion as to your fitness to possess shotguns, nor are they allowed access to your medical records. The Home Office suggest that Doctors will need to be contacted only where there are genuine doubts about the applicant's health and that if the Doctor makes a charge for supplying information, the police must pay it. If you have answered "yes" to any of question 15(a), (b) or (c) it might be a good idea to warn your GP that, as a matter of course, he or she may receive a letter from the police relating to your application.

PART B - DETAILS OF FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION

Question 17

List firearms currently in your possession. If this is an application for the initial grant of a certificate, the answer to this question should be "none".

Question 18

If a first application, the answer is "none"; if a renewal make sure that you do not have more ammunition in your possession than you are entitled to.

Question 19

Firearms you wish authority to acquire. It asks for calibre, type, reason and where it is intended to use the firearm.

a) Calibre. it is advisable to list the specific cartridge designation e.g. .17HMR or .17 Remington as the difference in performance between these two examples differ greatly, one is rimfire and the other is centrefire. The police need to deal with the application with regard to the specific ballistics of the cartridge e.g. for land checks and to ensure that what is applied for is appropriate and in some cases conform to secondary legislation i.e. the ballistic requirements contained within the Deer Act.

Question 21

Quantity of ammunition you wish to purchase at any one time. This will be less than the quantity at the previous question so as to allow for purchasing fresh ammunition before you run out. For .22 rim fire the usual quantity is 500 or 1000 rounds; for centre fire calibres, 100 rounds, but see note above if supplies are likely to be difficult.

PART C - STORAGE OF FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION

Question 22

Storage. As you will see from Questions 22a and b, there is no need to say that the guns will be at your home in a British Standard gun cabinet if you have ticked the two boxes. If they are to be stored elsewhere than your home, then you need to put the address of the storage in Q 22. You should also say if the cabinet is bolted firmly down, if it is hidden, and whether anyone else shares the cabinet with you – giving details if necessary.

Question 22a

If firearms are to be stored at your home address, tick the box.

Question 22b

If your cabinet has passed the BSI (British Standards Institute) test or you are aware that it is to this standard, then tick the box. A BSI approved cabinet is not a requirement for the grant/renewal of a certificate.

Security is your responsibility

The police are there to advise you on secure storage, if you think the "advice" is unreasonable then contact one of the shooting organisations for assistance.

Your statutory responsibility for security is set out as Condition 4a on your firearm certificate. This means that you must store your firearms and ammunition "...securely so as to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, access to the firearms or ammunition by an unauthorised person." It does not say that you must have a BSI tested cabinet or, that you must have a cabinet of any kind; however it is accepted that a purpose built gun cabinet, securely fixed to the fabric of the building and in a position where it is not readily observed by casual visitors is the easiest way for most certificate holders to show that they are fulfilling their responsibility. Other methods giving an equivalent level of security are equally acceptable.

Note that in the case of ammunition for firearms held on a Firearm Certificate there is an equal requirement for secure storage. Legislation does not require that ammunition is stored separately from the firearm but this is obviously good practice. This usually takes the form of an extra lockable compartment within the cabinet, or a separate safe or strongbox equally secured to wall or floor.

Be sensible about security. Be aware that good overall household security protects all your property, not just your firearms. The important words in the requirements are "reasonably practicable" and this is your responsibility. A Firearms Enquiry Officer (FEO) is there to advise and help; if you get it wrong and firearms or ammunition are stolen, you are answerable to the Courts. Each situation must be assessed on its merits bearing in mind local crime risk etc.

For most certificate holders a purpose built cabinet is the obvious way to store firearms safely. Get the best you can afford but understand that the cabinet is only as good as its weakest point, which is usually its attachment to the wall. Choose the strongest wall available and use good quality fixings. If you are concerned at the strength of the wall, consider drilling right through it and using spreader plates to distribute the load across a wider area. In this case use heavy coach bolts with the nuts inside the cabinet.

Cabinets are best installed in a corner, in an alcove or recess, or within an under stairs cupboard or similar where there will be insufficient room for a thief to get leverage to use a jemmy or other tools. It may also be possible to disguise them with a false front of some kind. It may sometimes be more convenient to install a cabinet flat on its back and bolted to wall and floor; perhaps then disguised as a bench seat or similar. What a criminal cannot find, he cannot break into.

The Home Office have issued a document dealing with firearm security available only via the Internet at:

<http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/operational-policing/firearms-handbook.pdf>

This is well worth downloading and reading.

DON'T MAKE THE CABINET SO INACCESSIBLE THAT YOU MAY BE TEMPTED TO LEAVE A FIREARM OUT RATHER THAN GO TO THE TROUBLE OF LOCKING IT AWAY.

Questions 23 to 26

These ask for details of certificates which you now hold or which you held at any time in the past. Read each question carefully before answering; it is easy to make a mistake.

PART E – REFEREES

In the past an applicant had to find a counter signatory who had a certain standing in the community. This is still so for shotgun certificate applications but for a firearm certificate two referees are required instead. Read the notes on the back of the application form.

Some parts of these are helpful but are not always in clear English and in one area is actually misleading. If they seem confusing, telephone one of the shooting organisations for help.

You may ask anyone you wish to act as a referee, other than a member of your family, a police officer, a civilian police employee, a person of "ill repute" or a registered firearms dealer. The referee must have known you for at least two years. If you are renewing your certificate and you hold, or wish to hold any firearms purely for target shooting, see the notes on the application form for details of when dealers may act as referees and when an official of a Home Office approved target shooting club must be one of your referees.

Your referees must each sign the application form in the space provided which confirms that they believe your answers to Questions 1-16 are correct and that the photographs are a true likeness of you. Note that anyone who makes a charge for this service is barred from being a referee. Your referees should complete their forms and send them to the police firearms department INDEPENDENTLY from your application. They should do this as soon as possible in order to prevent a delay in issuing your certificate.

PART F – DECLARATION

Sign and date this part but read the notes carefully so that you know exactly what you are signing. It is a criminal offence to make a false statement in order to obtain a firearm or shotgun certificate.

Return the form, photos and payment as quickly as possible and ask your two referees to do the same. It is no good complaining that the police have failed to renew the certificate in time if you sat on the application form for two months before returning it.

The section in the notes detailing requirements for photographs to accompany applications for co-terminous firearm and shotgun certificates is confusing. For such an

application you will need five photographs signed; 2 signed by the two referees (1 each) for the firearm certificate application, 1 signed by the counter signatory for the shotgun certificate application and 2 signed and dated by yourself. The legislation requires four photographs for each certificate application (EIGHT in total.)

NOTES

These are at the end of the application form, below Part E, and are intended to help you complete the form correctly.

Also note that the section relating to the requirement for photographs is incorrect where it states that a "firearm application requires that each of the referees should endorse a separate photograph and that two photographs must be signed by you." You only need to sign one for each certificate.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Each application must be accompanied by four passport size photographs, of which each referee must sign and date one photograph each and endorsed with the words, "I certify that this is a current true likeness of [your name] on the back of the photograph. A third photograph must be signed by the applicant (you) on the back. The fourth photograph should be left blank.

Examples of how photographs are to be completed when accompanying an application for, or renewal of a firearm certificate

<p>I certify that this is a current true likeness of</p> <p>(Your Name)</p> <p>Signed (Referee 1)</p> <p>Date</p>	<p>I certify that this is a current true likeness of</p> <p>(Your Name)</p> <p>Signed (Referee 2)</p> <p>Date</p>	<p>Your Signature and Date</p>	<p>Leave this one Blank</p>
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