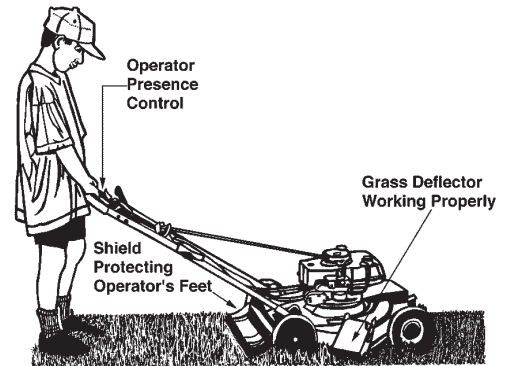


# Lawn Mower Safety

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Lawn mowers enable homeowners and groundskeepers to keep neat, appealing grass simply by mowing. Many youngsters earn extra money by mowing lawns. However, a lawn mower can be extremely dangerous if it is not handled properly. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that each year lawn mowers injure over 110,000 people seriously enough to require treatment in hospital emergency rooms.



What can be done to prevent lawn mower accidents? **The following practices will prevent most accidents:**

- **Read the operator's manual.** Read the instructions and then follow these instructions carefully. The manual explains safe procedures that should be followed.
- **Train operator.** Be sure anyone operating the mower understands how the mower operates. Then demonstrate how it should be used. Observe the operator until satisfied that he/she can handle the mower safely.
- **Check your lawn before mowing.** Objects picked up and hurled by the blade cause many injuries, even deaths. Clear the lawn of sticks, stones, toys, bones and other objects.

## Four Types of Power Lawn Mower Accidents Cause the Majority of Injuries

- **Contact with rotating blade.** Injury often occurs when the victim cleans the discharge chute of grass clippings or performs other maintenance while the engine is running.
- **Propelled objects.** Rocks, glass and wire are hurled at initial speeds above 170 miles per hour. Objects may be thrown 50 feet or more, causing death and injuries ranging from blindness to severe bruising.
- **Overturning.** This occurs primarily when riding mowers are used on steep slopes or embankments. Victims may be pinned under the mower or come into contact with the blade.
- **Riding mowers running over the victim.** Accidents occur if the operator fails to look when backing a riding mower. Playing children are seriously injured. Or, an operator pulls a power mower backward over his or her foot.

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- **Check guards and shields.** Be sure all protective devices are in place before starting the mower. Shields and guards are for your protection and will prevent numerous injuries if used.
- **Dress properly to do the job safely.** No bare feet! No sandals! No sneakers! Always wear sturdy shoes; steel-toed safety shoes are preferred.
- **Handle gasoline with care.** Do not fill the gasoline tank while the engine is running. Let it cool first. Fuel up outdoors, then wipe up all spills.
- **Keep all persons and pets away from mowing area.** Remember, a mower blade can pick up and throw objects with force sufficient to seriously injure or kill.
- **No riders on riding mowers.** Always say “no” to small children asking to ride the mower with you. Extra riders can be thrown from the mower and run over. Extra riders also distract an operator, contributing to careless mistakes.
- **No horseplay around lawn mower.** Playing with a mower is asking for serious trouble. This has caused many serious injuries. Use a mower only for the purpose it was designed – to mow lawns.
- **Do not use riding mowers on steep slopes.** Mower overturns cause serious injury. Drive up and down slopes when operating a riding mower. Mow across the slope when using a walk-behind mower.
- **Take care of your mower.** The operator-presence switch should stop the mower immediately when you release the control. Clean and safety-check your mower during the mowing season. If you have any doubt about how to adjust or repair your mower or sharpen your mower blade, see an expert. An annual inspection by an experienced service person is a good idea anyway.
- **Store fuel safely.** Store gasoline outside the house and away from any heat source. Frequently remind yourself and everyone in the family that gasoline is a volatile flammable liquid.
- **Use earplugs to preserve your hearing.** Inability to hear high-pitched sounds is the first indication of damage. Hearing loss from loud noise is permanent.

Since 1982, manufacturers have made operator-presence safety stops that stop the blades within 3 seconds after controls are released. Brakes may have to be adjusted, but this safety feature should never be bypassed. The trailing toe shield and the discharge chute protection should be operational.

## Mower Safety Guidelines

### Before Starting Mower

- Put on close fitting clothes and sturdy, nonslip shoes.
- If the lawn is wet – wait!
- Go over the lawn carefully to pick up stones, wire, toys, dog bones – anything the mower blade might pick up and throw.
- If your electric mower isn’t labeled “double insulated,” never plug it into anything but a grounded (3-prong) outlet.
- Adjust cutting height before starting mower.

### While You Mow

- Never run mower over gravel, stones or hard, immovable objects like pipes, rocks or sidewalk edges.
- Mow advancing forward whenever possible so you can see where you’re going.
- Keep electric mower cord out of the cutting path.
- Stay clear of the blade housing and the discharge chute.
- Never point discharge chute at others.
- Turn off the mower before you leave it – even for a moment.

### Be Sure To

- Disconnect spark plug or power cord before working on your mower.
- Treat gasoline like the volatile fuel it really is.
- Keep the power cord of an electric mower in near-new condition.

**Safety practices are just common sense – but we often need reminders. Take a few minutes to review these safety suggestions at the beginning of each mowing season.**

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