



Ball bearing (BB) guns and imitation firearms - a guide for parents



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A message from Thames Valley Police:

"The number of times firearms officers have been called to incidents involving BB and imitation guns has increased dramatically in recent months.

"We have serious concerns that a youngster is going to end up being shot by a police officer because it is extremely difficult to tell the difference between a genuine firearm and an imitation.

"If you are thinking about buying your child anything which has the appearance of a genuine firearm then please think again. You could be putting their lives at risk and at the very least they could end up with a criminal record if they take that imitation firearm into a public place.

"A great deal of firearms officers' time is being wasted attending incidents involving replica guns which look like the real thing. While they are dealing with those incidents they are not available to help those at genuine risk from a real firearm.



"Please help us to keep your communities safe by keeping BB and replica guns off the streets."

**Supt Paul Sullivan,
Head of Tactical Support.**

What the law says:

- Carrying an air weapon (and this includes some BB guns) or an imitation firearm (which also includes some BB guns) in a public place is an offence unless you have "reasonable excuse." An example of a reasonable excuse could be that you have just bought the BB gun and you are taking it home, although you would need to be able to prove this
- An imitation firearm is described as anything that has the appearance of a firearm including some toy guns
- You must be 17 to purchase an air weapon, including some of the more powerful BB guns, unless supervised by someone who is at least 21, or as part of an approved target shooting club or shooting gallery
- No offence is committed if a young person aged 14 to 16 is on private premises and has the consent of the occupier to have an air weapon and provided any missile fired does not go beyond the boundary of those premises
- It is an offence to make a gift of an air weapon, or ammunition for it, to a person under 17.

The Government is also looking at tightening up the law even further in 2006 with new powers to ban the manufacture and sale of imitation firearms, tougher sentences for carrying imitation firearms and an increase in the age at which you can buy or fire an air weapon without supervision from 17 to 18.

Visit our website at
www.thamesvalley.police.uk/saferstreets

