

**CRIMINAL POSSESSION OF A WEAPON  
IN THE SECOND DEGREE  
(Possession of Loaded Firearm Not in Home or Business)  
Penal Law § 265.03 (3)  
(Committed on or after Nov. 1, 2006)<sup>1</sup>**

(Revised Feb. 2016, July 2016, Aug 2018, Dec 2022 & 2023)<sup>2</sup>

The (specify) count is Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree.

Under our law, a person is guilty of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree when that person knowingly<sup>3</sup> possesses any loaded firearm and such possession did not take place in such person's home or place of business.

*NOTE: Penal Law § 30.00(2) specifies that a "juvenile offender" (14 or 15 years of age) "is criminally responsible for acts constituting. . . section 265.03 of [the Penal Law], where such machine gun or such firearm is possessed on school grounds, as that phrase is defined in [Penal Law § 200.00(14)]." <sup>4</sup> In turn, CPL 190.71*

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<sup>1</sup> This offense was formerly Penal Law § 265.02 (4), a class D felony, which was repealed by L 2006, ch 742, § 1, eff. Nov. 1, 2006, and reenacted in the same legislation as Penal Law § 265.03, a Class C felony.

<sup>2</sup> The February 2016 revision was for the purpose of adding a definition of "home" for cases in which it is in issue. See footnote 10. The July 2016 and December 2022 revisions were for the purpose of revising the definition of "knowingly" to better state the applicable law. The August 2018 revision was for the purpose of adding the Court of Appeals definition of "business." The December 2023 revision was for the purpose of adding the Note that follows the definition of the crime.

<sup>3</sup> The word "knowingly" has been added to this definition to comport with statutory law (see Penal Law § § 15.00(2) and 15.05 [2]) and with case law. *People v Persce*, 204 NY 397, 402 (1912) ("the possession [of a slungshot] which is meant is a knowing and voluntary one"); *People v Saunders*, 85 NY2d 339, 341-42 (1995) ("Possession,' as part of the forbidden act, includes the Penal Law definitional component of '[v]oluntary act,' which incorporates the attribute of awareness of the possession or control . . . . Thus, the corpus delicti of weapons possession . . . is the voluntary, aware act of the possession of a weapon"); *People v Ford*, 66 NY2d 428, 440 (1985) (the offense of possession of a loaded firearm requires that the possession be knowing).

<sup>4</sup> "School grounds" means (a) in or on or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground or land contained within the real property

*authorizes a Grand Jury to indict the “juvenile offender” for a violation of Penal Law § 265.03 for the possession of a machine gun or firearm on school grounds. In accord therefore with those statutes, as held in People v Raul A., 215 AD3d 500 (1st Dept 2023), when a “juvenile offender” is indicted for possession of a machine gun or firearm in violation of Penal Law § 265.03: [1] the words “and the possession took place on school grounds” must be included in the indictment; [2] those words must be added to the definition of the crime set forth in this instruction; [3] the applicable part of the definition of “school grounds” (set forth in footnote) must be added in the definition section of this instruction; and [4] the element of possession on school grounds must be added to the list of elements the People must prove beyond a reasonable doubt.*

The following terms used in that definition have a special meaning:

A FIREARM means any pistol or revolver.<sup>5</sup>

A LOADED FIREARM means any firearm loaded with ammunition which may be used to discharge such firearm [or, any firearm which is possessed by one who, at the same time, possesses a quantity of ammunition which may be used to discharge such firearm].<sup>6</sup>

POSSESS means to have physical possession or otherwise to exercise dominion or control over tangible property.<sup>7</sup>

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boundary line of a public or private elementary, parochial, intermediate, junior high, vocational, or high school, or (b) any area accessible to the public located within one thousand feet of the real property boundary line comprising any such school or any parked automobile or other parked vehicle located within one thousand feet of the real property boundary line comprising any such school. For the purposes of this section an "area accessible to the public" shall mean sidewalks, streets, parking lots, parks, playgrounds, stores and restaurants. Penal Law § 220.00(14).

<sup>5</sup> Penal Law § 265.00 (3). The statutory definition of a “firearm” includes other weapons. If, therefore, a firearm, other than a pistol or revolver, is in issue, see “DEFINITION OF FIREARM AS OTHER THAN A PISTOL OR REVOLVER” in “Additional Charges” at the end of the Table of Contents for Penal Law article 265 crimes.

<sup>6</sup> Penal Law § 265.00 (15).

<sup>7</sup> Penal Law § 10.00 (8). Where constructive possession is alleged, or where the People rely on a statutory presumption of possession, insert the

A person KNOWINGLY possesses a firearm when that person is aware that he or she is in possession of an object that is firearm.<sup>8</sup> That person need not know (that is, be aware of) the object's name or that it meets the definition of a firearm.<sup>9</sup>

Under our law, a firearm must be operable, that is, the firearm must be capable of discharging ammunition.<sup>10</sup> A person in possession of a firearm is not required to know that the firearm

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appropriate instruction from the "Additional Charges" section at the end of the charges for this article.

<sup>8</sup> See Penal Law § 15.05 (2). For an expanded charge on the definition of "knowingly," see Instructions of General Applicability, Culpable Mental States, Knowingly.

<sup>9</sup> See *People v Parrilla*, 27 N.Y.3d 400, 405 (2016) (when possession of a gravity knife was a crime, defendants were required to know that "they possessed a knife" but the People were not required "to prove that defendants knew that the knife in their possession met the statutory definition of a gravity knife"); *People v Hernandez*, 180 AD3d 1234, 1237 (3d Dept 2020) ("Contrary to defendant's contention, the court was not required to instruct the jury that the People were required to show that defendant was aware of the legal definition of a blackjack. The characteristics of the blackjack at issue—a lead core, surrounded by leather, which is flexible and used as a weapon—make 'the inherently dangerous nature of the prohibited object be readily apparent, so as to put [defendant] on clear notice that the object is potentially subject to government regulation or prohibition' . . . . Accordingly, the People did not have to prove that defendant was aware of the statutory definition of a blackjack"); *People v Steinmetz*, 177 AD3d 1292, 1293 (4th Dept 2019) ("The People were not required to establish that defendant knew the rifles met the statutory criteria of an assault weapon but, rather, only that he knowingly possessed the rifles"); *People v Abdullah*, 206 AD3d 1340, 1344 (3d Dept 2022) (knowing possession of a slungshot is required but a defendant need not know the dictionary definition of slungshot).

<sup>10</sup> Case law has added "operability" of a firearm as an element of the crime (see *People v Longshore*, 86 NY2d 851, 852 [1995]), but has further held that there is no requirement that the possessor know the firearm was operable (see *People v Parrilla*, 27 NY3d 400 [2016] ["Defendants need only knowingly possess a firearm, they need not know that the firearm was loaded or operable"]; *People v Saunders*, 85 NY2d 339, 341-342 [1995]; *People v Ansare*, 96 AD2d 96, 97 [4th Dept 1983]). In December 2022, the last sentence was substituted for: "The defendant is not required to know that it is loaded or operable."

is operable or loaded.<sup>11</sup>

[*If in issue*: “HOME” has its ordinary meaning as a structure within which a person lives. “Home” also includes those areas around the home in which a person would reasonably be entitled to the privacy normally associated with a person’s home. “Home” does not include any area around the home that is subject to unlimited public access, no matter how closely related a person may feel to that particular area as part of what that person calls “home,” or the extent to which a person uses the area as one would a part of his or her home.<sup>12</sup>]

[*If in issue*: A place of business is a PERSON’S PLACE OF BUSINESS when that person has a greater interest in protection of the premises, principal control over the premises, and a strong tie to the continued safety and security of the establishment and the goods or services offered there. For example, when a person is a merchant, storekeeper, or principal operator of a business that place is that person’s place of business.<sup>13</sup>]

In order for you to find the defendant guilty of this crime, the People are required to prove, from all of the evidence in the case, beyond a reasonable doubt, each of the following (specify number) elements:

1. That on or about (date), in the County of (County), the defendant, (defendant's name) possessed a firearm;

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<sup>10</sup> See footnote 10.

<sup>12</sup> See *People v Powell*, 54 NY2d 524, 530 (1981) (“[T]he common though unarticulated thread of all of the decisions above referred to is, as the Appellate Division suggests, whether the possessor of the weapon was entitled to ‘privacy, as one would have in his home’ in the area where he was apprehended with the weapon. The very antithesis of privacy is unlimited public access, no matter how closely related the possessor, as a subjective matter, may feel to the particular area as part of what he calls ‘home,’ or the extent to which he uses the area as one would a part of his home.”)

<sup>13</sup> *People v Wallace*, 31 N.Y.3d 503 (2018).

2. That the defendant did so knowingly;
3. That the firearm was loaded and operable, [and]
4. That such possession did not take place in the defendant's home or place of business; [and]
- [5.. That such possession did take place on school grounds.<sup>14</sup>]

If you find the People have proven beyond a reasonable doubt each of those elements, you must find the defendant guilty of this crime.

If you find the People have not proven beyond a reasonable doubt any one or more of those elements, you must find the defendant not guilty of this crime.

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<sup>14</sup> See the Note at the beginning of the definition of this section.