

# Kentucky



Total prohibition

(+0, highest per capita gun ownership – need we say more!)

Total freedom

0 ----- 10 ----- 20 ----- 30 ----- 40 ----- 50 ----- 60 ----- 70 ----- 80 ----- 90 ----- 100

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- \*Standard firearms & ammo: no permit required for possession or sale – see p.2
- \*Semi-auto guns & high capacity magazines: no permit required for possession or sale
- \*Machine guns & suppressors: ownership lawful per federal law compliance
- \*Firearm law uniformity: preemption law, gun laws uniform; localities may be sued for violations
- \*Right of Self-Defense: NRA-model castle doctrine, *stand your ground* in public areas
- \*Open carry: lawful in most public areas and generally accepted
- \*Licensed concealed carry: licenses issued by state police to residents only
- \*Constitutional or “no permit required” concealed carry: yes – see below
- \*Out-of-state permit recognition: automatic recognition for all non-residents with carry permits
- \*Weapons allowed for *licensed* carry: include any lawful deadly weapon
- \*Vehicle carry by non-permittees: loaded firearms may be carried anywhere in a vehicle
- \*Vehicle gun possession at colleges: lawful for any gun owner
- \*Vehicle gun possession at K-12 schools: Kentucky permittee w/loaded handgun lawful  
(permittee must be a non-student)
- \*Duty to notify LEO of permit/carry status: upon demand of police officer
- \*RV carry while “boondocking”: parking lot owners may *not* prohibit guns in vehicles – see p.9
- \*State Parks: concealed handgun carry by licensees and those 21 and older allowed
- \*Restaurants serving alcohol: persons 21 & older may carry while eating in dining areas – see p.3
- \*Hotels: subject to hotel policy enforcement – see p.7
- \*Airports: carry allowed in non-sterile terminal areas and parking lots – see p.9
- \*Highway Rest Areas: carry allowed in buildings and on grounds – see p. 7

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One of America’s greatest statesmen was Kentucky’s own Henry Clay. Famous for arranging deals that delayed the inevitable conflict between North and South, he was known as the nation’s “great compromiser.” While still revered in the Bluegrass, his penchant for compromise would be in stark contrast to those tasked with crafting the state’s gun laws. When it comes to guns rights in Kentucky, there is no compromise.

**Recognized permittees:** Kentucky’s State Police issue licenses to carry concealed firearms, or other deadly weapons, through the sheriff of an applicant’s home county for five-year terms. Kentucky does not grant permits to nonresidents but will recognize any permit issued by another state as long as the permittee is not a resident of Kentucky. A recognized permittee may carry concealed in most public areas. Prohibited places include childcare centers, K-12 schools, bars, legislative meetings, law enforcement offices, and courthouses. Colleges, hospitals, local governments, and private businesses may also ban carry in their buildings by posting signs. But prohibitions in these areas are not criminal offenses.

**Persons without recognized permits:** Kentucky no longer requires a license to carry a firearm concealed. In 2019, the legislature enacted constitutional or “permitless” carry. Loaded firearms may now be carried anywhere in a vehicle. Hidden from view in a console box, glove compartment or under the seat or visibly displayed in a belt holster are all lawful carry modes for those without permits.

On foot, permitless concealed carry is allowed in most places where licensed carry is permitted. Permitless carriers must still abide by the same place restrictions noted above for licensees. And carry in your vehicle on K-12 school grounds would require a Kentucky-issued license to avoid running afoul of federal school zone restrictions (see p. 4).

Open carry of a firearm while on foot is also allowed in most public areas. Such carry is best limited to visible belt holsters secured on one’s hip. Kentucky’s strong preemption law now provides stiff penalties for any locality that attempts to regulate this activity.

**All Persons:** A property owner may not prohibit employees and customers from carrying firearms in their vehicles while the vehicles are parked on that owner’s property. Civil penalties exist for property owners who violate this mandate. Also, game wardens may not harass any sportsmen who carry firearms for self-defense while hunting or fishing.