



Introduction to Firearm Suppressors

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American Inventor - Hiram Percy Maxim

- Hiram Percy Maxim is credited with inventing and selling the first commercially successful firearm silencer, and also with developing mufflers for internal combustion engines.
- He was the son of Sir Hiram Maxim, inventor of the Maxim Machine gun and nephew of Hudson Maxim, an inventor of explosives and ballistic propellants. He was a mechanical engineering graduate, class of 1886, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Hiram Percy Maxim



Hiram Percy Maxim, c.1914

Silencer Origins & History

- The first suppressor was invented in 1902 by Hiram Percy Maxim. In 1909, it was patented as the Maxim Silencer. That is where the term “silencer” was introduced.
- The term “silencer” was never accurate; Maxim’s device didn’t eliminate sound. But it was a clever marketing device. The Maxim Silencer was advertised first in sporting goods catalogs for sportsmen. It was made for automatic rifles, single-shot rifles, carbines, single-shot target pistols, and even large-caliber Winchester and Remington rifles.
- The National Firearms Act of 1934 restricted and regulated suppressors on firearms and halted their development for the next 40 years, a move that bit into organized crime violence. But the US military and other countries began experimenting with suppressors of their own.
- **Silencers and suppressors** are different words for the same thing. But terminology has evolved in the firearms industry, and because the term “silencer” suggests the complete silence of shots fired, it makes sense that we’ve shifted to referring to them as “suppressors” instead. It’s a more accurate description. Federal law can and does refer to them as “silencers.”

Aren't "Silencers" supposed to be illegal?

- Contrary to what many people believe, suppressors are legal to purchase and own in 39 states (the exceptions are California, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont). They are regulated items under the **National Firearms Act** but can be purchased through any Federal Firearms License-holding dealer that can deal in **Title II NFA-restricted items**. Buyers must meet all the other legal requirements to own a firearm..
- Suppressor sales are controlled by the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. To receive the suppressor from the dealer, buyers are required to pay \$200 for a BAFTE tax stamp and fill out some paperwork. The suppressor is registered directly to you and cannot be possessed by anyone else (though there are ways to instead register the suppressor to a **trust or corporation** to work around this). The devices themselves can be expensive—potentially costing as much or more than the firearm itself—but not prohibitively so for most people interested in buying firearms in the first place.
- However, these items are illegal to purchase or possess without first possessing the proper paperwork and a tax stamp. The requirement to register a silencer or suppressor and pay the \$200 tax stamp exists under 26 U.S.C. § 5861. And, at the time of this writing, the process (or wait time between sending in the required documents and receiving the tax stamp) can take several months—almost a year. And remember, until you have successfully registered the item and have received your tax stamp, you cannot lawfully possess the suppressor.

Firearms - Guides - Importation & Verification of Firearms - Gun Control Act Definition - Silencer

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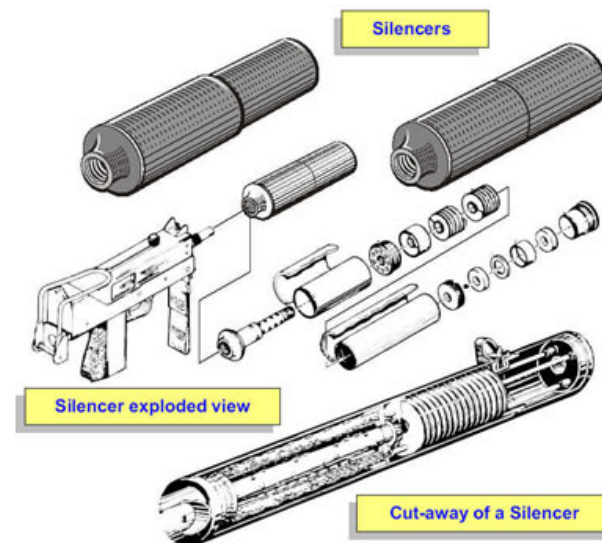
Firearms Verification

Gun Control Act Definitions

Silencer

18 U.S.C., § 921(A)(24)

The term “**Firearm Silencer**” or “**Firearm Muffler**” means any device for silencing, muffling, or diminishing the report of a portable firearm, including any combination of parts, designed or redesigned, and intended for the use in assembling or fabricating a firearm silencer or firearm muffler, any part intended only for use in such assembly or fabrication.



Note: Any device that meets the definition as stipulated above in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(24) is also subject to controls of the National Firearms Act 26 U.S.C., Chapter 53.

<https://www.atf.gov/firearms/firearms-guides-importation-verification-firearms-gun-control-act-definition-silencer>

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How does a silencer work?

How a suppressor works is by dramatically reducing a gunshot noise by slowing the decompression of hot, high-pressure gasses. A firearm suppressor creates a controlled environment in which these gases expand and cool before they make contact with ambient air. Imagine untying a balloon instead of popping it, or slowly removing the champagne cork just enough for gas to vent in a slow and steady fashion: you would hear a hiss instead of a pop.

Silencers are an effective way to provide hearing protection, with most models providing as much or more sound reduction in decibels (dB) as the most effective over- or in-ear sound protection. Instead of blocking out the sound at your ear, you're blocking the sound at the muzzle. Silencers give the gas of the gunshot ample space to expand, while using various means to slow down, trap, and redirect the gasses inside so they've dropped as much pressure and temperature as possible when the gases exit the muzzle. Attaching a silencer to your firearm is a substantial improvement when you're hunting, target shooting, or otherwise engaging with your firearm. By attaching a suppressor to your firearm, you'll have the hearing safety benefits of over-ear hearing protection, without sensory deprivation or the added bulk/weight on your head.

Inside a suppressor, there are a series of baffles, and chambers that trap and slow the high-pressure gas that is created when the firearm is discharged. These baffles, which are flat or cone-shaped, are spaced apart to create expansion chambers inside of the suppressor body. The suppressor's baffles can be machined in any of three main ways: 1) out of a single piece of metal (monocore), 2) machined individually then welded together, or 3) machined individually and stacked on top of each other inside of a tube. Some silencers are additively manufactured (3 printed) via a direct metal laser sintering process (DMLS). The materials used inside a suppressor, especially the first baffle (also known as the "blast" baffle), must be capable of handling high heat and pressure, as well as some high-speed debris that blasts out of the barrel.



How does a silencer work?

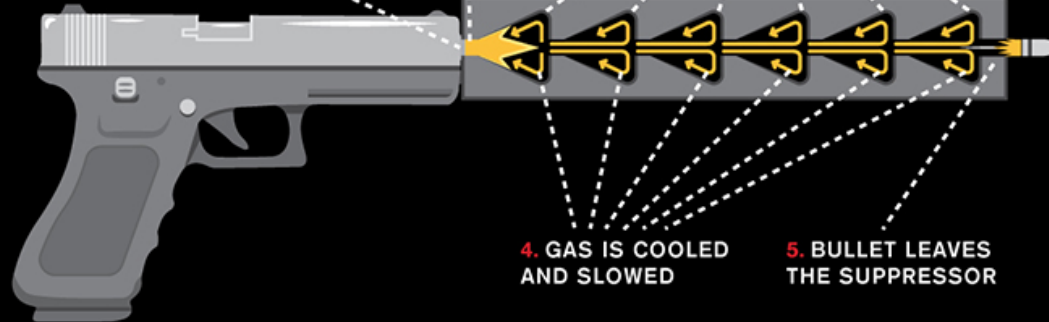
HOW A SUPPRESSOR WORKS

SILENCER  SHOP

1. THE SUPPRESSOR ATTACHES TO THE GUN BARREL

2. BULLET LEAVES THE CHAMBER

3. BAFFLES INSIDE THE SUPPRESSOR



4. GAS IS COOLED AND SLOWED

5. BULLET LEAVES THE SUPPRESSOR

1. The suppressor attaches to the gun barrel. The direct thread method is the most common way to attach a suppressor to a barrel and the suppressor simply screws on.

2. Bullet leaves the chamber and travels through the gun barrel and into the suppressor. High pressure gas is released; this is one of the causes of the loud noise when discharging a firearm.

3. Baffles are spaced apart throughout the inside of the suppressor. These baffles are chambers that trap gas.

4. Gas is cooled and slowed while trapped in the chambers, this decreases the pressure and temperature.

5. Bullet leaves the suppressor at a much lower volume, decreasing sound by up to 40 decibels.

How To Buy a Suppressor: General Guide

- **Choose your suppressor.** You'll buy the suppressor prior to being able to take possession of it. Many suppressor owners refer to this as the stage where the suppressor is "jailed" until the paperwork is approved.
- **Get a tax stamp.** At the time of this writing, the ATF tax stamp is \$200. It's a price set by the federal government, meaning you will not find deals on this. The cost of this suppressor tax stamp is paid along with the suppressor itself.
- **Decide whether you're registering as an individual or an NFA trust.**
 - Individual means no legal costs, less paperwork, and less chance of mistakes being made
 - NFA trust has the benefit of allowing multiple person ownership – new owners can be adding to the trust at any time – and there's property protection after death.

How To Buy a Suppressor: General Guide continued

- **Submit a Form 4** or an **eForm 4** to the ATF through the dealer, whether in person or online. This process includes:
 - Personal information such as name, address, and social security number.
 - Make, model, and serial number of the suppressor.
 - Fingerprint cards.
 - Passport style photograph.
- **Wait to be approved.** The wait time typically varies from 90 days to as many as 9 months. Sometimes, it's significantly faster than 90 days. It depends on the backlog at the ATF.

ATF eForms Website

<https://www.atf.gov/firearms/applications-eforms>

ATF eForm4 Tutorial

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMI9Hx3pLAM&ab_channel=ATFHQ



Questions?

BONUS SLIDE – Silence Purchase Overview

Silencers are legal but are regulated by federal law and on a state-by-state basis by the Nation Firearm Act (NFA) branch of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (BATFE). Private citizens can legally purchase and possess silencers in 42 states* without a permit.

How to purchase a silencer, step-by-step:

1. Fill out a BATFE Form 4 in person or eForm 4 online with your dealer at time of purchase
2. Obtain two passport photos and submit them with your Form 4
3. Have your fingerprints taken for your FBI Form FB-258
4. Inform your local CLEO (Chief Law Enforcement Officer) of your intent to own a suppressor
5. Pay a \$200 tax stamp to the BATFE and submit it with your Form 4
6. Wait for the ATF to approve your Form 4 before the suppressor is transferred into your possession
7. Your dealer will notify you when your silencer is ready for pickup

To purchase a silencer, you must meet the following qualifications:

- Reside in one of the 42 states that currently allow civilian ownership
- Be a resident of the United States
- Be legally eligible to purchase a firearm
- Pass a BATFE background check
- Be at least 21 years of age to purchase from a dealer
- Be at least 18 years of age to purchase from another citizen