

107+ HANDGUN ACCURACY SECRETS

You'll Shoot to the Absolute LIMIT of Your Handgun's Ability When You Easily Master These Principles of Extreme Handgun Accuracy.

This report is dedicated to the Armed Citizen. Just as any given currency is only as valuable as the precious metal or similar commodity backing it, any given freedom or right is only as good as the armed men and women who back those freedoms or rights.

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All ‘Random Thoughts’ and ‘Case Studies’ written by Delta Media. All end-of-chapter checklists are compiled by Delta Media by content found within each article.

INTRODUCTION

As Armed Citizens, we are all products of extremely diverse backgrounds. We may differ in ethnicities and religions. I may swear by a 1911, while you may swear by a j-frame revolver. We may not see eye-to-eye on the '9mm Vs. .40 caliber' debate...

Yet as Armed Citizens, we all share one common belief, and that is an unyielding perception of the value of human life. We carry deadly weapons to protect our own lives, and the lives of loved ones. We all understand evil, and we recognize the reality that there will always be violence. We know that bad things do indeed happen to good people. In that sense, any difference in opinion or background is irrelevant— we are all united as brothers and sisters in arms— and such a bond can never be broken.

From the 'Armed Citizen Bond' hierarchy, where the 'preservation of innocent life' is at the top, many more similarities can be assumed. One such similarity is that we all agree that if you are going to carry a weapon with the intent of using it to preserve life, it is always better to have a higher level of proficiency with that weapon than a lower level of proficiency.

Of all the ways to be proficient with your pistol, none are as important as being able to accurately hit what you're aiming at.

It is this objective which this report will attempt to achieve in you, the reader.

You're about to dive into hundreds of years of combined knowledge put to paper by some of the finest pistol handlers in the world.

Ready... Set... LEARN!

—*The Delta Media Team*

TRIGGER CONTROL

By Massad Ayoob

To hit what you're shooting at with a handgun, trigger control is "the heart of the beast." It seems to be far more important than, say, sight picture. At close combat distances, a poor sight picture may pull the shot out of the heart and dump it elsewhere in the chest, but a convulsive jerking of the trigger can cause the shot to miss the whole human-size target.

The late, great Ray Chapman was the first world champion of the combat pistol. He used to say that shooting a handgun well was simple, it just wasn't easy. That's true in spades for the trigger control element.

Once the decision to fire has been made, and the gun is on target, the shooter must bring the trigger straight back in a manner that doesn't pull the gun off the mark. The rearward pressure should be smooth, it should be uninterrupted, and it should be evenly distributed.

With any physical skill, we must crawl before we walk and walk before we run. Trigger control development should start with dry fire, progressing to live ammunition only after the shooter has been conditioned to hold the gun steadily on target as the "hammer drops." (Dry fire should always be practiced with a safe backstop, as if it were live, as a hedge against the day human error finds us with a round in the thought-to-be-unloaded firearm.)

Random Thoughts #3:

Some handguns allow for the weight of the trigger pull to be lightened or stiffened, depending on the weapon's make and model. If you cannot get used to the trigger pull of your handgun, this may be an option for you. Note that doing so MAY open you up to legal scrutiny should you ever need to use your weapon in self defense.

When it's time for live ammo, the pace should begin with careful slow fire, progressing into faster and faster cadenced shot sequences, until true rapid fire is achieved. With any complex psychomotor skill – a chain of physical events, which firing a gun most certainly is – the quickest route to learning to do it fast is to start by doing it slowly.

Finger Placement and Handgun Grasp

Historically, we have been taught to manipulate the trigger with the tip of our index finger, or with its "pad," which means that the whorl of the fingerprint is centered on the trigger. However, this history comes largely from bullseye shooting with cocked revolvers and light-trigger, single action semiautomatics. Target guns tend to be heavy, usually somewhere between 34 and 60 plus ounces. A light touch from the sensitive fingertip will serve us well if our pistol is a gently-held 48-ounce High Standard .22 with the recoil of a mouse burp, and we're shooting at NRA's specified Rapid Fire rate of five shots in ten seconds.



Fig 3-19 Suggested trigger finger placement on a gun with a heavy trigger pull, a double action S&W .357 Magnum N-frame in this case. Distal joint of index finger centered on trigger maximizes shooter's leverage. Photos by Gail Pepin.

However, in defensive shooting with a concealment handgun, the dynamics change. Now we have a 20-ounce baby Glock that must be stabilized against a five- to eight-pound trigger pull, or a twelve-ounce Smith & Wesson AirLite snubby with up to a twelve-pound trigger pull. Now we have recoil that can truly live up to its colloquial name, “kick.” Now, rapid fire means five shots in one second before our homicidal attacker can reach us with his clubbed tire iron.

Different jobs require different skills and different tools.

For a heavier than “target” trigger pull, you’ll find that getting your finger deeper onto the trigger will give you more leverage. The sweet spot is what the old double action revolver masters called “the power crease,” and what medical folks would call the distal joint of the finger on the palmar side. With longer, heavier pulls, this index finger placement simply gives the shooter more biomechanical advantage for a smooth, straight-back pull that won’t deviate the gun muzzle off target.



Fig 3-20 On a pistol with a short, light trigger pull - such as this Guncrafters Custom 1911 - placing index finger at tip or pad may work well...but with a longer and/or heavier pull, the shooter may need “more finger” for maximum control. Photos by Gail Pepin.

CASE STUDY by Delta Media

When Mark Cunningham purchased a little Taurus .22LR pistol from a friend for \$120, he thought he’d found a neat little back-up gun at a great price. It appeared to be fairly fool-proof in design, proved reliable in test firing, and it was small enough to conceal almost anywhere.

He *thought* he had found the perfect complement to his GLOCK 19... Until he shot it, that is. He knew the basics of inaccuracy diagnostics— things like ‘if you’re hitting low, you’re anticipating the recoil’, but there was ZERO consistency to where he was hitting.

He would have shots barely to the right of the bullseye, some shots a foot below the bullseye, some above, and some twenty inches to the left.

Mark didn’t understand it. With his GLOCK, he could maintain 5-inch groups as far back as 25 yards. All he could figure is that the pistol’s extremely short barrel length was to blame for the weapon’s inaccuracy.

A couple months down the road, he thought to ask his friend Jake about the gun’s problem. After seeing the pistol, Jake asked Mark how far he was shooting from.

“About seven yards,” he told him. Jake later said that he had to try pretty hard to hide his grin. He immediately knew what Mark’s problem was, but also knew that Mark had to see to believe...

Moments later, the pair had taken the pistol and about twenty rounds of .22LR behind Mark’s garage, and set up a target. Mark’s jaw dropped when Jake fired an entire magazine into the target at seven yards, grouping all of the shots inside the four-inch black circle.

Jake explained: Mark had gotten so used to the trigger pull on his GLOCK, that the trigger’s large travel length of the double-action Taurus would take a LOT of practice to get used to.

He also explained that lesser quality guns, as the little Taurus was, sometimes had inconsistencies in their

trigger pull, and because the gun was so light, he was really going to have to develop a rock solid grip in order to prevent the gun from moving while he pressed the trigger.

Above all, he said that what Mark really needed was just practice. “.22 ammo is cheap enough, just go get a brick or two, and spend a day just shooting magazine after magazine until you know the gun by heart.”

Moral of the story? All guns have a slightly different trigger pull, and they each will take time to get used to. If you're having dramatic accuracy problems, the first place that we recommend looking is your trigger pull.

Similarly, the light grasp so long favored by target shooters is poorly suited to stabilizing the handgun against a heavy trigger pull, or to keep it from shifting in the shooter's hand when jackhammer recoil must be dealt with. Half a century of handgunning has taught this writer that a very firm grasp – a crush grip, if you will – better serves both needs.

The harder you hold the handgun, the less it will shift in your hand during recoil. It will feel as if it's “kicking” less. That's not happening; grip force doesn't alter the laws of physics. What's happening is that your body is more efficiently managing the recoil. The gun is not moving as much and is coming back on target sooner. A strong stance that puts body weight into the gun helps considerably here, too. The less the recoil moves your body, the less likely you are to develop anticipation that makes you jerk the trigger and bring the shot low.

The firm grasp also helps trigger control. Our fingers are subject to a sympathetic reaction called interlimb response. When one finger moves rapidly, the others want to open and close with it. This creates a phenomenon the old masters called “milking.” When the fingers close as if upon a cow's udder in sympathy to the index finger's

movement on the trigger, they pull the gun down and toward the weak hand side. If you're a right-handed shooter and have been hitting low left, that may well be the diagnosis.

If “milking” is the disease, a hard grasp is one proven cure. If the rest of the fingers are already closed as tightly on the grip—frame as they can be, they can't close any more in sympathy with the index finger's rapid activation of the trigger.



Fig 3-21 Laser sights such as this Crimson Trace LaserGrip on S&W Model 442 are useful for dry-fire trigger control practice. The laser beam, emitting from the grip... [Continued on Fig 3-22] Photos by Gail Pepin

Fit Factors

No shooter will shoot their best without a gun that fits their hand. A key dimension of that fit is “trigger reach.” The gun should sit in the firing grasp with the barrel in line with the long bones of the forearm, the web of the hand high on the backstrap of the frame, and the finger naturally in its “sweet spot” on the trigger. If the gun affords too short a trigger reach, a longer trigger on a 1911 pistol or larger grips that cushion the backstrap and push the web of the hand further back can solve the problem. The new generation of polymer frame auto pistols with replaceable backstraps in various sizes, pioneered by Walther, help here, too.

Shortcuts

There are shortcuts to achieving good trigger control. Not many, but a few. One is what I call an Exemplar Drill. The new shooter takes his or her firing stance and grasp, and is responsible for sight alignment. The veteran shooter places his or her gun hand over the shooter's, with the experienced trigger finger in front of the novice digit. The old-timer presses the newcomer's finger slowly back against the trigger the first few times to show them what a good trigger press should feel like. Then, the new shooter and the veteran pull the trigger together at the same pace. Finally, the trainee is pulling the trigger with the trainer's index finger just lightly touching theirs, to monitor the movement and make sure they're not backsliding into poor technique. I learned it from Ray Chapman... Chapman learned it in the Marine Corps...and the USMC Marksmanship Manual circa 1930 had it in print. Sometimes, old secrets get lost and have to be rediscovered.

For the shooter working alone, a laser sight is a great tool for developing trigger control. Put the red dot on the target, and hold it there through the trigger stroke. Do it dry fire to start. It conditions the shooter to the feel of smoothly stroking the trigger back without deviating from point of aim. Progression to live fire is smooth and natural. Then switch to the conventional sights: the smooth trigger pull should remain constant.

Random Thoughts #4:

It is possible to get what's known as a ".22 Conversion Kit" for many common handguns, such as GLOCKs and 1911s.

These kits are easy to install and remove, and allow you to master the trigger pull and grip of your own weapon while saving BIG TIME on ammo costs.

Plus— even at \$250, they pay for themselves with just a couple bricks of .22LR!

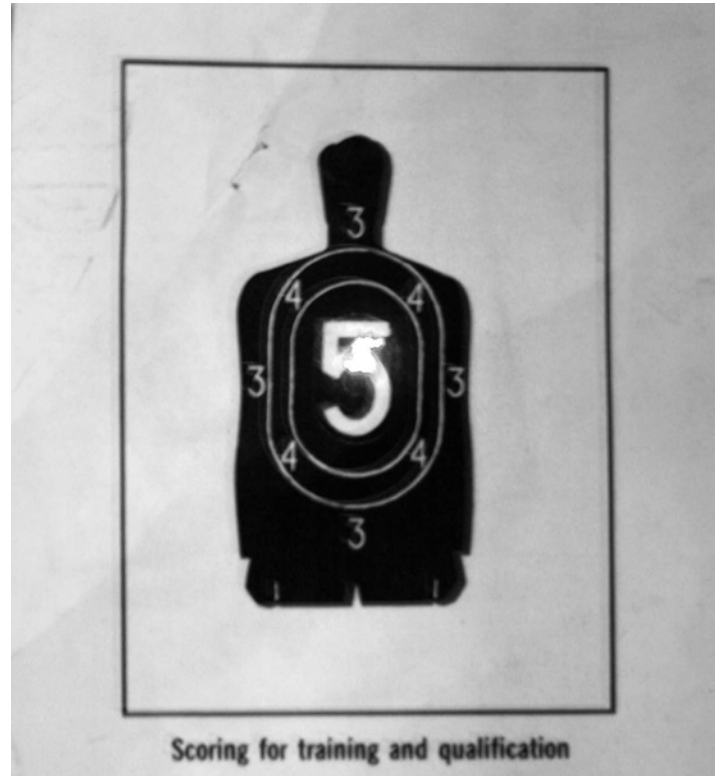


Fig 3-22 ...is held on target as shown here as shooter practices rolling trigger to hammer-fall. Photos by Gail Pepin

As Chapman said, it's simple, but it's not easy. It takes time and dedication. Sometimes, you'll need to open your mind to new techniques, or work with a gun that you're not familiar with but which might be a more suitable fit to your hand. Once you've "got it," you'll feel the light bulb come on, and now it will be up to you to maintain a training regimen to "keep the feel of it" and make a smooth trigger pull happen faster and faster. Stay with it, and you'll be a better shot before you know it.

About the Author...

LE firearms instructor since early '70s. Director, Lethal Force Institute, 1981 to present. Chair of firearms committee, American Society of Law Enforcement Trainers, 1987—2006. Won Outstanding American Handgunner of the Year Award, 1998. Became first IDPA Five—Gun Master, 2005. Has won numerous state and regional championships, with both auto pistol and revolver.

POST CHAPTER CHECK-LIST

There's a lot of information, tips, and tricks packed into each one of these chapters... Here's a little checklist to help you keep it all straight!

- To hit what you're shooting at with a handgun, trigger control is "the heart of the beast."
- A convulsive jerking of the trigger can cause the shot to miss the whole human—size target.
- The shooter must bring the trigger straight back in a manner that doesn't pull the gun off the mark.
- Trigger control development should start with dry fire, progressing to live ammunition only after the shooter has been conditioned to hold the gun steadily on target as the "hammer drops."
- The pace should begin with careful slow fire, progressing into faster and faster cadenced shot sequences, until true rapid fire is achieved—the quickest route to learning to do it fast is to start by doing it slowly.
- Rapid fire means five shots in one second before our homicidal attacker can reach us with his clubbed tire iron.
- For a heavier than "target" trigger pull, you'll find that getting your finger deeper onto the trigger will give you more leverage— The sweet spot is what medical folks would call the distal joint of the finger on the palmar side.
- The harder you hold the handgun, the less it will shift in your hand during recoil. A strong stance that puts body weight into the gun also helps considerably.
- If the rest of the fingers are already closed as tightly on the grip-frame as they can be, they can't close any more in sympathy with the index finger's rapid activation of the trigger.
- No shooter will shoot their best without a gun that fits their hand. A key dimension of that fit is "trigger reach."
- A laser sight is a great tool for developing trigger control— It conditions the shooter to the feel of smoothly stroking the trigger back without deviating from point of aim.
- Maintain a training regimen to keep the feel of the trigger pull and make a smooth trigger pull happen faster and faster.