



Concealed Carry *CRASH COURSE*

You'll Gain **Instant** Understanding
of the Most Critical Issues For
the *Responsibly* Armed Citizen

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April 2008

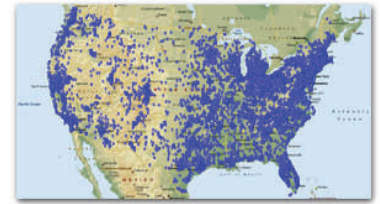
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If you feel the same way I do about family, responsibility, and self-defense, I'd be honored to have you as a new member.

Sincerely,

Tim Schmidt
Founder - USCCA

Introduction...

Ask any professional trainer, and they will tell you that one of the most important qualities in a person who is taking steps to get their Concealed Weapons permit is that they are **always ready and willing to learn**. In fact, I don't know a single trainer who has ever said, *"There. No I know everything there is to know about this. Now I can finally take a break..."*

No way! Becoming an Armed Citizen and warrior is a never ending road toward education and enlightenment. I hope that from this CCW Crash Course, you will gain a vivid understanding of the importance of continued learning on the subject of carrying concealed.

Good reading, friend....

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THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT AND SOCIAL OBLIGATION TO CARRY A GUN

Robert H. Boatman

Carrying A Gun Is An Absolute Right

The framers of the Constitution were under no pressure from the NRA when they wrote "the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

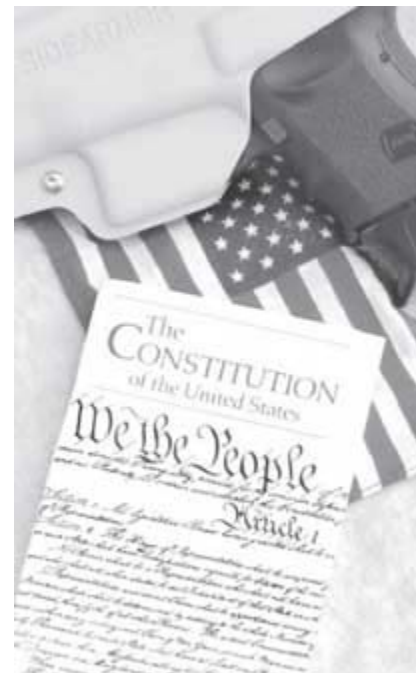
In the same spare sentence, they reaffirmed their historical preference for a "militia" over a standing army, and indicated that this militia should be composed of armed citizens -- citizens of a "free state" whose right to keep and bear arms must never be infringed. Anti-freedom zealots, including academic invalids and the hypocrites of the mis-named American Civil Liberties Union, have stood on their pointy heads in tortured attempts to misinterpret this sentence ever since. Those of us who know how to read the English language have no trouble at all.

The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE to keep and bear arms shall NOT be infringed. The right of the people TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS shall NOT be infringed. The right of the people to keep and bear arms SHALL NOT BE INFRINGED. What part of NOT do the illiterates out to subvert the Constitution NOT understand?

The Constitution of the state of Pennsylvania (adopted September 28, 1776) allocated more words to make the point even more unmistakable: "XIII. That the people have a right to bear arms for the defense of themselves and the state; and as standing armies in the time of peace are dangerous to liberty, they ought not to be kept up; and that the military should be kept under strict subordination to, and governed by, the civil power."

Indeed, the individual right to keep and bear arms for personal defense is based on exactly the same principle as civilian control of the military. One wonders if the ACLU would argue with that.

The Second Amendment, like most other articles in the Bill of Rights, was adopted from the English Bill of Rights of 1689 which, in turn, was based on centuries of English Common Law. English jurist Sir William Blackstone observed that the English Bill of Rights clearly meant that Englishmen



possessed "the right of having and using arms for self-preservation and defense" and that "having arms suitable for their defense" was one of the five auxiliary rights people possessed "to protect and maintain inviolate the three great and primary rights," the first of which is "personal security."

Unfortunately for the English people, they have been persuaded by their own far-left government and insidious anti-gun activists to allow the English Bill of Rights to be, as they might say, shat upon. Today, the English do not have the right to keep and bear arms for self-preservation and defense. As a direct result, they live in a crime-ridden society that grows worse with each passing day.

The recent 2000 International Crime Victims Survey published by the Dutch Ministry of Justice, a highly respected and accurate measurement of the percentage of people by nation who are victims of violent crimes, ranked England far ahead of the United States (which ranked 8th), and second only to Australia (where English-style anti-gun laws are also in effect) as the most violent nation. A recently disarmed England now has twice as much violent crime as the United States.

The English Home Office, which cooperated in the survey, has refused to publish these findings in England. It's better not to remind the gullible subjects how empty were the promises of safety and security for which they so eagerly traded away their very real and priceless freedoms and responsibilities. The great Roman philosopher and senator, Cicero, immortalized armed self-defense as an "inalienable right" more than 2,000 years before the U.S. Constitution did so. Cicero said: There exists a law, not written down anywhere but inborn in our hearts; a law which comes to us not by training or custom or reading but by derivation and absorption and adoption from nature itself; a law which has come to us not from theory but from practice, not by instruction but by natural intuition. I refer to the law which lays it down that, if our lives are endangered by plots or violence or armed robbers or enemies, any and every method of protecting ourselves is morally right.

Even people to whom armed self-defense is but a remote abstraction often endorse, without even realizing it, the unquestionable principles underlying the right to carry a gun. Jaron Lanier, writing in *Discover Magazine* (Feb. 2001) said in reference to new copyright-protection technology -- "In a democracy, citizens are supposed to act as partners in enforcing laws. Those forced to follow rules without being trusted even for a moment are, in fact, slaves."

It is perfectly obvious that we have a natural right to arm ourselves and to kill any criminal or other force that threatens us just as surely as an elephant has a right to kill an attacking lion and a mother bear has a right to kill a wolf grinning suspiciously at her cubs. Animal-rights extremists extend the animals' right to the killing of humans under such circumstances.

Even the Dalai Lama, Nobel Peace Prize and all, said in May of 2001 during a speech about "nonviolent resolutions to conflict" to 7,600 Oregon and Washington high-school students -- "But if someone has a gun and is trying to kill you, it would be reasonable to shoot back with your own gun." So said the Dalai Lama. There are criminals among us who are both homicidal and incorrigible. Their parents took a shot at civilizing them and failed. Their school teachers took a shot at them and failed. The odds are overwhelming that government welfare programs and penal institutions took a shot at

them and failed. If it ever becomes your turn to take a shot at them, don't fail. Carrying a Gun Has Always Been Both a Right And a Duty

There have been many societies in which not carrying a weapon was a serious and severely punishable crime. This was true in Greece, Rome, Europe, Britain and, though seldom enforced, is still true in certain places in America today. This is as it should be. A citizen who shirks his duty to contribute to the security of his community is little better than the criminal who threatens it, and is better off living in a society that places lesser demands on his capacity to accept responsibility.

Armed Citizens Of The 21st Century

In 1987, a year after Glocks were introduced to the U.S., Florida enacted a pioneering "shall-issue" right-to-carry law that has served as the model for the rest of the country. The Florida law affirmed the right of a private citizen to carry a concealed gun and eliminated the abuses so typical of "discretionary" right-to-carry laws that resulted in gun permits being awarded arbitrarily to the political cronies of petty officials, limousine liberals, movie actors, athletes and various other celebrity representatives of the rich and famous crowd, but denied to so-called "ordinary" citizens. The Florida law made it crystal clear that any citizen with basic firearms training and a felony-free record would be issued a concealed-carry permit upon request, period.

Florida's landmark right-to-carry law was supported by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Sheriffs Association, Florida Police Chiefs Association and other law enforcement groups. And it was supported by Florida voters.

The media, however, was predictably vociferous in its opposition to the exercise of Constitutionally guaranteed rights, and in its total submission to the party line of radical anti-freedom, anti-self-defense and anti-gun forces. Headlines predicted vigilante justice and wild-west shootouts on every corner. "Florida will become the "Gunshine State." "A pistol-packing citizenry will mean itchier trigger fingers." "Florida's climate of smoldering fear will flash like napalm when every stranger totes a piece." "Every mental snap in traffic could lead to the crack of gunfire."

Such dire and colorful predictions, of course, proved totally false. Nevertheless, that same hysterical fear-mongering and bald-faced lying are used even today every time a new state gets ready to pass an enlightened right-to-carry law. In actual fact, the only notable thing that happened for the first five years after Florida passed its right-to-carry law was that, as homicide rates in the U.S. soared, Florida's homicide rate fell a dramatic 23 percent. A few of the opponents of concealed carry actually had the courage to admit they were wrong.

Thanks to the intensive lobbying efforts of the NRA, along with the tireless grassroots work of politically aware gun owners, 33 states now have Florida-style laws which require the prompt issuance to their citizens of legal permits to carry concealed weapons. Well over half of the U.S. population, more than 60 percent of all handgun owners, live in these free states, yet no more than one to five percent ever apply for such licenses.

Notwithstanding the fact that most people do not carry guns, the mere possibility that an intended victim could be armed with a handgun eliminates millions of crimes every year.

According to the FBI, states with "shall-issue" right-to-carry laws have a 26 percent lower total violent crime rate, a 20 percent lower homicide rate, a 39 percent lower robbery rate and a 22 percent lower aggravated assault rate than those states that do not allow their citizens to legally carry guns.

Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University, Gary Kleck, in *Point Blank: Guns and Violence in America* (Aldine de Gruyter Publishers, 1991) found that "robbery and assault victims who used a gun to resist were less likely to be attacked or to suffer an injury than those who used any other methods of self-protection or those who did not resist at all."

Convicted felons reveal in surveys that they are more afraid of armed citizens than they are of the police. And well they should be. Armed citizens kill 2,000 to 3,000 criminals each year, three times the number killed by the police. And only two percent of civilian shootings involve an innocent person mistakenly identified as a criminal, whereas the error rate for the police is more than five times that high.

Kleck's research shows that private citizens use firearms to protect themselves and thwart crime about 2.5 million times a year. Citizens use firearms to prevent mass killings, bank robberies, gang attacks, carjackings, rapes, kidnappings and hostage-takings. They use them to help capture prison escapees and murderers, to come to the aid of outnumbered or ambushed law enforcement officers. Yet only a handful of these 2.5 million life-saving uses of firearms are ever reported in the mainstream press.

If a lot more people carried guns, what kind of a society would we have? Certainly not the kind predicted by anti-gun fanatics. Those hysterical doomsayers have been proven absolutely wrong one hundred percent of the time. Would we have a crime-free society? Certainly not. Criminals are as natural and immune to total eradication as fruit flies. But a better-armed society would severely limit the violent damage criminals wreak before they are stopped. Criminals are naturally self-destructive. The reasons they are so doesn't matter. To assist them in their self-destructiveness is the polite and civilized thing to do. Thus another ageless axiom: An Armed Society Is A Polite Society.

In 1998, John R. Lott, Jr., senior research scholar in the School of Law at Yale University, authored the most comprehensive and exhaustive study of crime and gun control laws ever conceived, based on the largest data set on crime ever assembled. His landmark book, *More Guns, Less Crime* (The University of Chicago Press, 1998, 2000), now available in an updated second edition, includes thorough analyses of more than 54,000 observations and hundreds of variable factors across more than 3,000 counties in all 50 states for 18 years.

***“The Right of the People
to Keep and Bear Arms
Shall Not Be Infringed”***

The assiduously researched conclusions reached by Lott immediately set off a wave of panic among anti-gun fanatics and drew organized, systematic personal attacks of the most vicious and dishonest nature, including death threats leveled at Lott and his wife and children.

Yet not a single serious academic challenge of Lott's research, his methodology or his incontrovertible conclusions has ever been successfully mounted. In fact, Lott's conclusions have reluctantly been called "bulletproof" even by the liberal mainstream press.

Bottom line, in keeping with the title of his work, the more guns there are in society and the more these guns are carried by private citizens, the less crime there is.

These are some of the reasons why police, who fight crime for a living and are well aware of the realities of street criminals, support right-to-carry laws for private citizens by an overwhelming three-to-one margin. This is an even higher margin of support for right-to-carry than the strong support voiced by the civilian population.

Policemen are nobody's personal bodyguards. Their jobs are to find and arrest people who have committed crimes, not to prevent such potential crimes from happening in the first place. Clearly, the responsibility for victim-prevention lies with the victim-to-be.

The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals (*Bowers v. DeVito*, 1982) did not mince words when it ruled, "There is no Constitutional right to be protected by the state against being murdered by criminals or madmen."

What It Means To Carry A Gun

That loaded pistol in your holster is a powerful expression of your Constitutionally guaranteed liberty as an American citizen, your recognition of the solemn duty you have to your fellow man, and your willingness to accept the full weight of a life-and-death responsibility.

When you are prepared to defend yourself, you are equally prepared to defend all of society and all of its guiding principles. Your responsibilities are therefore many -- moral, legal and tactical. That is why most people, including lifelong gun owners, experienced hunters and competitive shooters, even in states that freely issue concealed carry permits, do not choose to carry a gun.

Your moral responsibilities are to fire your gun into another human being only when the line of necessity has clearly been reached, and then to fire without hesitation and to full effect. Remember the words of Cicero.

Your legal responsibilities are to justify your actions to those who would call you a criminal at the drop of a hat, and quite possibly to a jury of your peers, most of whom have neither the competence

nor the courage to carry a gun in their own defense. Read the findings of the Citizens' Self-Defense Act of 2001.

Your tactical responsibilities are to carry your gun with confidence, to be well trained in your ability to operate it effectively, and to have instilled in yourself an iron will to use deadly force to prevent or end violence committed against yourself or others. Most of this book is dedicated to your tactical responsibilities, because that's what will save your life.

Violence happens either at random, or directed toward the obviously vulnerable, or toward someone in particular for a reason. You can rest assured it will not happen at the shooting range when you are all suited up in your speed rig with a plan of action worked out for the coming run-and-gun stage. It will happen when you are home sleeping in your bed, shopping at the grocery store, walking out to get the mail, mowing the grass, at dinner, at church, at the theater.

The most dangerous places in the world are those called "gun-free safety zones" by their ignorant political creators and known by criminals and psychopaths as "safe-to-kill zones." Even an adolescent school kid can figure out that an advertised killing field where no one is allowed to shoot back is the safest location in the world to carry out a mass shooting. Don't even consider going to a place like that unarmed, whether it's your kid's school or a national park. If you can't handle breaking the law, don't go.

The assistant principal of a high school in Pearl, Mississippi, broke the law. He kept a .45 in his car parked on the school grounds. When a deranged student opened fire, Joel Myrick ran for his gun. Two students were killed because Myrick had to retrieve his gun from his car instead of his holster. But the .45 eventually prevailed, and Myrick stopped the massacre long before police arrived on the scene. God only knows how many lives he saved. But assistant principal Joel Myrick wasn't awarded any medals. Of the several hundred newspaper and television stories about the incident, only a few even mentioned his name. Almost none revealed the fact that he used a gun to stop the killings.

When you bodyguard someone for a while, or when you just live a normal life with your eyes wide open, you realize how vulnerable we all are to becoming another tidbit-of-opportunity in the relentless food chain that sustains the life of this unpredictable world. It's a realization not of paranoia but of reality. That's the way it is, always has been, always will be. You can ignore it out of faint-heartedness, deny it out of lunacy, submit to it out of a fatalistic contempt for your own life and the lives of others, or you can face it with courage and intelligence and prepare yourself to deal with capricious reality's predisposition toward danger.

Most of those dangers can be met with nothing more than a strong I'm-not-a-victim mindset and body language. Many others may shrivel with the demonstration of superior verbal skills. Still others may require a fundamental knowledge of martial arts, a container of pepper spray, a makeshift club, the presence of a well-wielded knife or the sight of a firearm. A few, perhaps one in a lifetime, will not be affected by any kind of less-than-lethal response and will not end until you churn your attacker's dreams and determination into a chunky red stew and spew it all over the street with a couple of big-bore hollow points. The trouble is, you never know when or where that last one is coming.

If you ever find yourself under attack by an armed criminal, you will be on the defensive and he will be on the offensive. In other words, he will have a strong advantage going in. And, though he will not have trained himself to shoot nearly as well as you have trained, he will be far more experienced in the art of killing. The odds are, any criminal who is intent on killing you has probably killed men before, knows how to do it, knows how it feels and likes it. You're not going to talk him out of it, scare him out of it, or wound him out of it. You're going to have to kill him.

Studies show that simply brandishing a weapon saves many lives, but I am personally against the idea of waving a gun around while your adversary thinks. The way to overcome his offensive advantage is to strike without warning. Once you make the decision to free your Glock from its holster the entire situation should be over and done with in a second or two. The most important component in practicing your draw is firing the instant you have a sight picture on your target, and continuing to fire until your assailant no longer exists.

More than a century of military and police research tells us that most people, including up to 85 percent of trained soldiers and cops, are psychologically unable to use deadly force in a life-or-death situation no matter how compelling the circumstances may be. If you can't kill, there is no reason for you to carry a lethal weapon.

Carrying a loaded gun with the ability and will to use it is not a casual fling meant to bring some excitement into your boring life. It is an all-embracing lifestyle and must take precedence over your respect for law, your fear of social criticism, your love of humanity, your wardrobe and your drinking habits. You can never be unaware of the weight you carry on your hip or under your arm. You can never forget your responsibilities. You must wear your Glock with the same allegiance as your wedding ring. If you're not married, your Glock is your wedding ring. Wear it for life. Don't even think about leaving home without it. Be prepared to use it at a moment's notice. Carry it all the time. And shoot to kill.

"Liberty or death," the meaning of which is clear and absolute, is but a trivial phrase if you do not carry a gun. For freedom-loving Americans, the five most important words in the English language are, and always have been -- from my cold dead hands.

This article was reprinted with permission and condensed from a chapter in Robert Boatman's Book *Living with GLOCKS*. Mr. Boatman can be reached at: interboat@aol.com.

This book is available from www.boatmanbooks.com.

View more of Robert Boatman's 2nd Amendment writing at: www.ironwordranch.com.

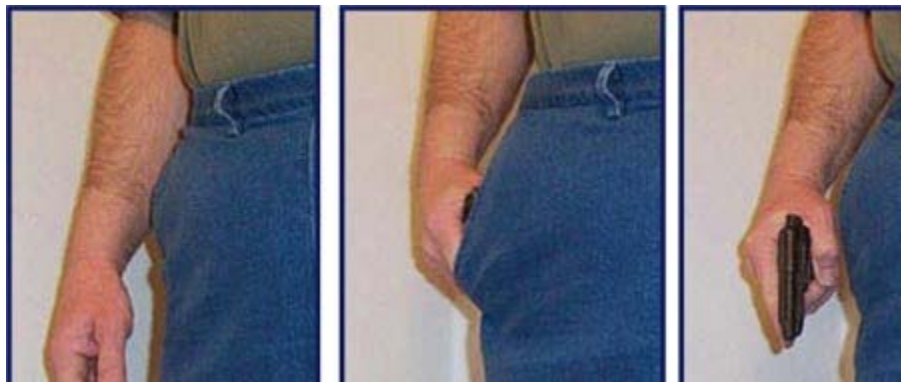
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COMMON SENSE POINTERS FOR CARRYING CONCEALED

Paul Benjamin

Because our lives are so busy, we may overlook some important details:

- How many of us carry concealed firearms for personal protection, but can't remember the last time that we practiced with them?
- How many of us carry our firearms under business suits all week, but practice at the range in jeans and T-shirts?
- How many of us carry our firearms loaded with expensive, self defense ammunition, but only practice with cheaper, target loads?



We have to practice regularly with the firearms that we carry. We are counting on these firearms to protect our lives. How often do we have to practice? This varies with our individual, personal performance and budget. When practicing correctly and regularly, a minimum of thirty to fifty rounds a few times a month is good. Remember, we are not practicing because we can't wait to shoot the bad guys.

By practicing, our minds and bodies maintain familiarity with our firearms. We thereby increase our probability of neutralizing the bad guys and reduce the risks of hitting innocent bystanders.

If you carry your firearm under a suit jacket, you must practice drawing from concealment while wearing a suit jacket. If your firearm has an external safety that must be taken off before firing, practice taking the safety off before shooting each string of fire. Practice so that clearing the clothing, gripping the firearm, drawing the firearm, taking the safety off, pointing the firearm downrange, and placing your finger on the trigger all become one natural, fluid motion. For example, if you carry in your front pocket,

can you draw without the firearm or holster getting snagged on the pocket lining? This type of practice will expose defects in your carry or draw, and thereby allow you to correct the problem before you need to defend yourself.

Remember, if you have to draw your firearm to defend yourself, you are reacting to someone's aggressive moves. They are already in motion, while you are catching up. Your drawing and firing have to be as natural as breathing. You will not have time to think about each step.

Inexpensive target ammunition can be used while developing and maintaining sight alignment, trigger and grip control, and most of the other basics. However, different ammunition will vary in its performance and feel. Periodically, shoot about six rounds of the exact type of ammunition that you carry. This will maintain your familiarity with the differences and will prevent some unwanted surprises, such as increased recoil.

I plan to write a second article that addresses some more common sense tips in detail. For now, here are a few more quick-tip gems:

- If necessary, women should consider modifying their wardrobes to enable themselves to carry their firearms on their persons, rather than in their purses. The first thing a lot of bad guys go after is purses. If they get your purse and your gun is in it, they have everything.
- Wherever you carry your gun concealed, practice getting to it, drawing it, taking the safety off, etc. Do this with an unloaded firearm. It is much safer to discover a flaw in your draw when bullets can't come out. Remove all of the ammunition from the area. Check and double-check the firearm to be sure that it is unloaded. Don't ever get shot with an "unloaded gun."
- Choose a concealed carry method that truly conceals your firearm. If you carry in a front pocket and the pants are tight enough for the outline of a gun to show, you are not carrying concealed; you are merely carrying covered.
- When you make it obvious that you are armed, you put yourself at a disadvantage. You simply become marked as the first target. On the other hand, when you truly conceal your firearm, you have an "ace in the hole."

Paul Benjamin is an NRA Certified Instructor, PA State certified Act 235 Lethal Weapons agent and instructor, Police Pistol Combat Competitor, and named to the PA Governor's Twenty for the past four years.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT HANDGUN FOR YOU

George Harris

There are a plethora of options and decisions to be made when it comes to selecting a concealed carry handgun. Most people want the most powerful, smallest in size, night sight and laser equipped, high capacity, recoilless handgun that weighs little more than the ammunition it carries for a bargain price. Unfortunately, in a world of compromise, this is a classic example. The concealed carry handgun for the serious carrier is a well thought out tool that speaks to the specifics of the individual's need and utility.

In keeping with the applied methodology of Objective Based Training, from which all classes at the SIGARMS Academy are based on, selection of a concealed carry handgun can be simplified significantly. There will be compromises for sure, but most likely they are compromises that we can live with once the concept is understood.

Let me say that what you are about to read is not all encompassing but it will give you food for thought and a starting point in the selection for the optimum concealed carry handgun for you.

Why you are carrying a concealed handgun in the first place needs an honest answer. Is it because you are an armed professional or are you a responsible citizen carrying concealed because you are exercising your right to legally do so?

As an armed professional the equipment selection is often limited to the issue duty gun or an optional piece that meets a specific criterion like brand or caliber parameters. Usually a qualification course must be satisfactorily completed as well to verify a maintained proficiency with the handgun of choice. Some organizations are more permissive than others but nevertheless, some of our decisions regarding weapon and ammunition are already made for us.

This leaves us with decisions on carry location, holster type, and how much spare ammunition to carry and where to carry it among the other items necessary for the job.

As a responsible citizen, the selection for concealed carry equipment is wide open. With so many choices to make, it is hard to narrow the field down to one gun and its support equipment. At the SIGARMS Academy we feel that the simpler you keep things the better. This means rather than having a variety of different types of guns and support equipment for the same job, make the best selection you can at the time and train hard with that equipment so that when the "time to perform" comes, your likelihood of success is great.

Using Objective Based Analysis to study the subject further, we'll first look at what the anticipated use of the handgun might be. As a responsible citizen it is reasonable to expect that an encounter requiring the use of a handgun would be in close proximity to the adversary and possibly take place in a spontaneous time frame with less than ideal light conditions. This suggests that the gun needs to be carried in a location where it can be quickly drawn and driven to the target with a single handed

grip that is conducive to delivering effective fire utilizing the methods of point shooting taught in our classes.

The recommendation for this application would be to carry a properly fitted gun, in a concealed holster on the dominant side, with the grip frame positioned so that a firing grip could be accomplished with a natural placement of the hand. The holster should be constructed so that a single hand recovery to the original carry location could be effected in case both hands were needed for control of the adversary or escape.

An individual's body size and type will determine whether the carry location should be in front of, at, or behind the point of the dominant side hip, inside or outside of the trousers, or at another location meeting the criterion. Waist size and individual range of motion of the dominant arm factor in as does the variety of body positions that the person may find them selves in when the gun is needed. Keep in mind that you may be standing, seated, flat on your back, or anywhere in between when the need for your gun is imminent.

Hand size is of particular interest when selecting a concealed carry handgun. If the gun is fitted properly to the shooter so that the muzzle is naturally positioned on the target as the hand is extended toward the target, the size and type of handgun can be validated for optimum performance. The size of the palm impacts significantly on the grip size that a shooter can accommodate and the length of the trigger finger is the final reference to determine the ideal sized pistol or revolver. That being said, there is such thing as a handgun being too small for practical use. If the grip of the gun is so small that at least two fingers can't be wrapped around it, stabilizing the gun for multiple shots is going to be challenging. The trigger must be pulled to fire the gun. Some hand sizes in proportion to gun sizes will not allow for sufficient range of motion to fully pull the trigger to fire the gun. The point is that if the concealed carry handgun can't be drawn and driven to the target to deliver the full complement of ammunition (if needed) with a high hit probability, another option should be exercised. You just can't miss fast enough to achieve success. It is bullet placement that is essential to realizing a positive outcome with a handgun.

Sights for the concealed carry handgun are a matter of personal preference. In a close range street encounter there is a good likelihood that they won't factor in as essential items. However, the fact that they are there, and are what you are comfortable with, gives a psychological advantage for success.

Ammunition selection is a highly debated issue and one of the things that keep us in the unending quest for the "magic bullet". If you want to get the best information available as to bullet performance on living tissue, contact several trauma room surgeons and see what they have to say about terminal ballistics in actual cases. You will find it interesting what the medical folks say as compared to accepted beliefs in the firearms community. Again! It is bullet placement on the target that is essential to realizing a positive outcome with a hand gun.

Have enough ammunition with you for a reload. The recent event of the Trolley Square shooting in Utah was a lesson learned in having extra ammunition available when the shooting starts.

The preceding information should help significantly in either validating your present choice of a concealed carry handgun or the selection of the best one to fit your needs. Above all, have a gun and be able to use it when the need arises.

About the Author:

George Harris has spent over 30 years in the field of Adult Education with more than 17 years at the SIGARMS Academy. George completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Virginia and earned his degree in Communications from the DeVry Institute of Technology. He has focused his efforts in the arenas of small arms, small arms training and combat skill development. George has evolved from an Infantry Soldier, Small Arms Repair Technician, and Drill Instructor to become the Coach and Firing Member of the Internationally recognized United States Army Reserve Combat Marksmanship Team. As a competitive shooter, George has the coveted distinction of being Distinguished with both the Service Pistol and the Service Rifle.

Rated as a Class "C" Coach by the National Rifle Association, George has a long list of Instructor certifications from Federal and State Agencies as well as private training organizations. He holds Armorer Certifications from the major firearms manufacturers currently producing small arms for law enforcement and the military.

George is active in a number of professional organizations which include among others, International Association of Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors, American Society for Training and Development and American Society for Industrial Security.

As Director of the SIGARMS Academy, George is committed to the safe and successful use of firearms by armed professionals and responsible citizens alike through using the SIG Principle of Training: Simple Is Good!

CARRYING A GUN IS NOT A HOBBY

Oleg Volk

Carrying a handgun has a lot in common with riding a bicycle. Both are skills which require practice, good hardware and are typically done for enjoyment and health benefits. Both practices require common sense for safety. For example, donning black clothes and riding a bike in the middle of a busy highway after dark would negate any benefits from improved cardiac health. Many smart people who are new to carrying a sidearm do things which are at least as counterproductive. Let's consider the case of a certain Joe Above-average.

Joe's first handgun was a full-size model. For the first days, he relished the feeling of heavy metal riding on his hip. By the second week, that weight became a bit of a nuisance. After a month, just as the weather got hot and concealing that gun became difficult, he left his pistol at home when running errands. After all, making a run to the local grocery store wasn't a high-risk mission. One day, he read about a hold-up at his local convenience store, thought about the large handgun left in the safe and decided that a small gun in his pocket would be far more useful than a big gun behind. He got the smallest weapon available and carried it with him at all times.

We all rationalize going with the most comfortable solutions. Joe reasoned that bringing any gun to a fight would be enough to scare any potential adversary. If that failed, surely a few shots would be enough to get him out of trouble. Fortunately, he got to test that theory and survive.

Joe's kids were playing in the yard when a clearly rabid raccoon wandered in. Joe had his tiny pistol in a pocket holster. As a good father should, he shot to stop the immediate threat to his children.

He hit the animal with all six rounds and watched it limp off into the nearest bushes. Although the danger was averted, Joe got to thinking about the incident. If a full magazine from his gun did not stop a twenty-pound critter, what good would it do against a motivated two-hundred-pound human adversary.

Why not get the best of both worlds, a gun which is powerful yet light and small? Joe did that and found that solution to have drawbacks of its own. Painful recoil discouraged regular practice.



Whether you're carrying a mouse-gun or a full size government model, you must practice accordingly or suffer the consequences.

Joe did the manly thing and ignored the pain until he could no longer feel his right hand. At that point, he decided to talk to other gun owners and find out which other bright ideas did not work so well in real life. Learning their experience would save him time and money.

Too many gun owners treat the serious business of going armed as an extension of their shooting sports hobby. Some carry a revolver one day, a double-action autoloader the next, and a single-action collectible on the weekend. Alternating between dissimilar designs invites trouble should one of the weapons be actually needed for defense. Why? Drastically different manuals of arms within the various handguns can lead to confusion during operation. An M1911 requires a downward swipe to disengage the safety. Consequently, a person accustomed to that design is likely to re-engage the safety on a Beretta 92 or a S&W autoloader, which require an upward sweep to make ready. A user habituated to using a Glock would find a Sig decocker lever where the slide stop was expected. In general, it is best to use different versions of the same line of handguns, such as compact, medium and large frame double action revolvers. Similarly, it is a good idea to stick to a consistent holster type and carry location. Forgetting which pocket contains the weapon, or neglecting to disengage a thumb-break on a holster could have fatal consequences.



Firearm enthusiasts like us sometimes carry a particular weapon just because they enjoy variety. I have observed a person who could have concealed a full-size handgun carry a Beretta Minx in .22 Short on a whim. While doing so made use of his right to carry, it provided only a tentative defense from any real threat. On another occasion, he picked a .45 Colt derringer for a week before learning that the gun was extremely inaccurate, shot well away from the point of aim, and that the trigger was so heavy that both hands were required to press it. Unusual or classic designs may be fun to use, but most of them are much inferior to the more conventional options.

The phrase "It will never happen to me" is an obvious example of comforting self-delusion. A slightly less obvious example is "This gun is meant for close range." That statement presumes that the defender will get to pick the range of the encounter, an obviously optimistic statement. Moreover, if the user can barely hit a passive, stationary silhouette target at just a few feet, how would he do against a moving, ducking opponent who is shooting back?

At the other extreme, selecting a target .22 pistol would help with scoring hits...but human foes are far more resilient than paper silhouettes.

Fans of small calibers like .22 Magnum like quoting paper ballistics to support their choices. They overlook the much-reduced velocity due to short barrel, and the unimpressive terminal effects of the diminutive projectiles. Although no handgun offers truly impressive stopping power, most common chamberings work well enough. The benefits of choosing exotic guns or calibers are slim compared to

the high cost and certain hassle of procuring enough ammunition for regular practice. Despite the advertising claims, magic bullets simply do not exist. At two dollars per round, few people can afford even a day's training with unconventional ammunition. Carrying untested cartridges is an invitation to malfunctions at the worst possible times.

Realistic and extensive training is essential for safe and effective deployment of the sidearms. In seeking training, it is wise to avoid "miracle workers", trainers who promise quick and overwhelmingly effective results through mastery on a single technique. Proper training mixes multiple methods of presenting and firing the weapon, and includes instruction in tactics as well as marksmanship.

Competitive events, such as IDPA shoots, are useful for learning to function under stress. They aren't as good for developing tactical savvy.

The lessons of competitive shooting tend to be of the "what not to do" variety. Learning that a gun cannot be drawn from under a zipped up full-length coat, or that glove material can get under the trigger of a revolver, disabling it, is best done at a safe range.

Uncover the weak links before the weapon has to be used in a real fight. If an enthusiastic draw breaks the holster in half, or causes the front sight to come off the gun, then the choice of gear may have to be adjusted. Same goes for trying new loads, testing new magazines and any other variables introduced to the personal protection equation.

Even simple techniques are best tested under controlled conditions, with hearing and eye protection. For example, most people instinctively get close to their cover. Not only does that expose them to hostile fire, it also reflects revolver cylinder gap flash off the nearest surface back into the shooter's face. Training with a partner and an Airsoft pistol also discourages other common but dangerous ways, like carrying an autoloader with an empty chamber.

Few people can make both hands available to rack the slide while fending off an attack. Point shooting, sometimes advocated to the exclusion of other techniques, should be similarly tested with targets placed above, below or to the side of the shooter. Learn your personal limitations as well as new skills.

Carrying a handgun is not a hobby. First and foremost, your sidearm is a tool for stopping aggression against you and yours. Just as a surgeon would not use antique tools on a patient, you shouldn't carry a weapon just because it is neat or unusual. Considerations other than effectiveness and efficiency should take precedence over all others.

AFTER THE SHOOTING STOPS

Steve Krystek & Micheal Potter

When he turned off the light and laid back on his pillow that night, 71-year-old retiree, John Madison, had no idea that 27-year-old, armed predator, Jonas Scott, was lurking outside of his home. But within an hour, Scott invaded the Madison residence and lay dead on the floor, felled by two shots that were launched by the homeowner. As the sound of wailing sirens came closer, Jonathan turned to his wife and asked simply, “What happens now?”

Let’s face it. Much time is devoted to the “how to” of self-defense. But just as important is its timing. The decision to fire is not one to be taken lightly. Because of the consequences, it’s worthy of close examination by everyone who carries a firearm, whether for law enforcement or for personal protection. Here, we’ll examine the aftermath of a lethal encounter. The key is keeping your wits about you after the shooting stops.

PRESENCE OF MIND AFTER THE SHOOTING After a defensive shooting, you may have successfully saved your own life or that of others. But make no mistake. You are at legal risk until the shooting has been officially characterized as “justifiable.” What you say and do in the minutes and hours after a lethal encounter will have a direct effect on how others perceive the shooting and how your actions will be legally treated later.

Even before calling 911, collect your thoughts. Replay in your mind the exact sequence of events. Recall precisely what you perceived on the part of your assailant before you drew your sidearm. Remember what it was that made you perceive an imminent danger, and then call 911 to get help on the way.

FIRST RESPONDERS ON SCENE It’s always best for you to call 911 and report what happened, rather than a third party who may distort or confuse the facts while trying to help. When the 911 operator answers, calmly and clearly state that an armed “suspect” assaulted you, give them your location, and request an ambulance for the suspect who has suffered a gun shot wound.

Remember that your 911 tape will probably be played back in court later. Stating your situation in these terms will get the communication process with law enforcement off to a good start. Once you’ve addressed those three main points, let the 911 dispatcher take over. Dispatchers care most about officer safety and necessary medical aid, so you should be prepared to provide the following vital information when asked:

- Number of “suspects” and number of “victims.”
- Who has been injured and what are the injuries?
- Where are those injured located?

- Who is armed and what are they armed with?
- Where are the weapons now (yours and the suspect's)?
- What is your exact location/position, and what are you doing right now?
- If you're in a house, is there anyone else there?
- How long ago did the

assault/shooting occur, and was it at the same location?

Once the exigent circumstances have been relayed, the call taker may request more specifics about you and the incident, and may advise you to do a few things:

- What is your physical description? (So the officers know who the "victim" is.)



- If you're in a house, is it safe for you to go outside (and away from the crime scene)?

- What exactly happened? (The short version. Do not volunteer too much information.)
- Do you know the suspect? If so, what is the relationship?
- Was there anyone else with the suspect?
- Are there any vehicles involved, and what are the vehicle descriptions?

- If you haven't already done so, secure your weapon before police arrive. Keep in mind, everything you say during this 911 call is being recorded, even the sound of your breathing. The tone of your voice and the words you choose will be listened to many times in the coming weeks or months by people who weren't there. Be careful about giving too much information. Keep your statements and answers simple and factual.

Most likely, the call taker will ask you to stay on the line until police arrive, which can be to everybody's benefit, especially if the situation changes and officers en-route need a critical update. Even though most law enforcement communication systems are very good, arriving officers will not know for sure if you are alone, whether you are still armed or if you were in fact the assailant. Upon initial contact, the police will present an overwhelming show of force to quickly dominate and control a (still) dynamic situation. This will likely consist of multiple officers tactically positioned with firearms at the ready, firmly issuing verbal commands. Expect to be treated like a "suspect" and do not take it

personally if you are forced into a prone position, handcuffed, disarmed and placed in the back seat of a patrol car. Specific circumstances will dictate the initial treatment you receive by law enforcement. In general, pay attention, cooperate, and be prepared for anything, as response protocols for these types of calls may vary from agency to agency.

Your post-conflict positioning and physical behavior are key to a safe and tactical after-action sequence. You may be required to multi-task like never before, depending on your environment, who is around you, the status of your assailant and how quickly law enforcement or EMS personnel may arrive. Do not let your guard down, but do not stand over your downed adversary with the smoking gun either. Do your best to balance readiness and the appearance of not posing an overt threat to anyone. If the incident occurred in your home, move your family to safety, inside or outside the residence, where this potentially horrific crime scene cannot be observed or disturbed. If the incident has occurred on the street, gain distance, get behind cover if possible, and stay aware of everyone and everything in your environment. Maintain control of your firearm, which may be holstered or at the ready, depending on the danger still perceived (until police arrive). Operate your cell phone with your support hand if possible, and verbally communicate with bystanders and/or the assailant if necessary.

Do not make the mistake of having a Clint Eastwood moment after you've won your gunfight. Blurting out macho, feel-good statements such as, "He had it coming." or, "One less scumbag to crowd our prisons, right guys?" will not be well received by responding officers or witnesses. Instead, try to make friends with those who witnessed what occurred and encourage them to stick around so they can give their statement to the police and/or further assist you in other ways. Clear thought and communication immediately following a shooting will be difficult for most. Good, deep breathing will help immensely. Taking in oxygen will help to lower the heart rate and achieve a better state of physical and mental relaxation. When you are calm, you are in control. And after surviving a lethal confrontation, you must have absolute control of yourself, your adversary and your environment.

When initially questioned by the police, think very carefully about what you will say. You should expect to be read your Miranda Rights if you are asked any questions about the incident by police while in custody. It is your right to request an attorney before giving any written or verbal statements. However, decline to answer questions in a respectful manner. Tell them that you fully intend to cooperate with the investigation, but you'd rather wait to answer questions due to the traumatic event that you've just experienced. If you choose to answer questions on the scene, stick to the facts, do not embellish, and make sure that what you say then will be consistent with what you will say later.

KEEP YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU This is a critical time. What you say and how you behave will make an impression on both the police and any witnesses. The comments you make now can make or break you.

Remember: You did not fire a "warning shot." You did not shoot to kill. You fired your weapon at another human being for only one purpose, and that was to "stop" the deadly attack initiated by the perpetrator. You took the action that you did because you were in fear for your life or the life of another, period. End of story. If you say more than that, you may dig yourself a legal hole. Whatever you

say will be written down or recorded, so don't hang yourself now by saying something macho or dumb that you'll regret later.

As you sit safely reading this article, remember that after a shooting incident, even the smallest aspects of each pertinent fact associated with the shooting will be looked at in excruciating detail by people who weren't there when it happened.

You will probably be asked the same questions, in different ways, several times over, to see if your answers are consistent or if you 'change your story' from interview to interview. And remember that people standing nearby as witnesses may have been thinking about something else when you perceived a danger. They simply may not have been aware of the same things that you were, and this may be the reason that they have a different "version." If the witnesses were completely unaware of the danger when you drew your sidearm, then from their perspective, they simply heard gunfire and turned to see someone (you) standing there with a gun over someone bleeding on the ground. For all they know, you may be the assailant. The witnesses may not have perceived exactly what you did, even though they may have been in close physical proximity to the event.

You will be questioned about details. The first police officers on the scene, as well as the investigators assigned to the homicide will take turns interviewing you. They will ask you questions such as: What happened? Why did you shoot your gun? What did the (dead) assailant do or say exactly? How far away from you (or the innocent intended victim) was the assailant at the time that you perceived a threat? Why did you think that this person was a threat? What did you do to avoid the incident, if anything? When did you act? Did you say anything before the shooting? What did he say? Repeat this phrase several times: "I was in fear for my life and I had no other choice, in order to stop him." When that consistently shows up in the incident report of several officers, the lead investigator will take it into account when deciding whether to press charges or let you go home.



THE EMOTIONAL AND LEGAL AFTERMATH

Mental and emotional suffering is common amongst survivors of lethal conflicts.

Depending on the circumstances of your encounter and whether or not you've experienced a situation like it before, your thoughts and feelings about the incident may consume you for a short to a long period of time. Some may experience the affects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), guilt, self-doubt or paranoia. These emotions resulting from a defensive shooting are normal; that is one of the reasons why police officers are routinely given time off after a shooting. During the following weeks,

professional counseling may be beneficial, and discussing what happened with trusted friends can help us decompress emotionally from the seriousness of the experience. To be successful in the legal aftermath, this is what you should keep in mind:

No Other Choice: When the decision was made to use deadly force, your perception must have been that you or the person you were defending were about to die at the hands of the perpetrator or suffer unavoidable, serious physical injury if you did not act immediately. Threat Specific Response: Remember, lethal force must be later determined to have been "reasonable" and "necessary," based on the surrounding circumstances at the moment force was used. What were "reasonable" and "necessary" will always be a deciding and critical factor in every single self-defense shooting.¹

CONCLUSION You have a duty to know how and when to use the weapon. Don't rely on friends at the range or the gun shop to give you the word. Get yourself properly trained, take part in the IDPA or USPSA to improve your skills, and by all means, take the time to learn your state's guidelines for the use of lethal force. If you have undertaken the effort to gain multi-state carry rights through reciprocity, then you have more than one state to deal with. Plus, there's one more perspective.

The old saying goes, "When the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem starts looking like a nail." So don't tie your own hands. Expand your range of defensive options.² Non-lethal force may be what's called for. If your only option is that of lethal force, and you're faced with a serious self-defense situation that calls for "something less," you are at a distinct tactical and legal disadvantage.

A prosecutor could then try to make you into a poster child for gun control, by saying that you had trained and armed yourself with only one option in mind – that of killing – and that you were just waiting for an "excuse" to use it. The argument would be that you were a "gun nut" with a predisposition to killing, by virtue of your exclusive training with only one single tool – your firearm.

However, having defensive skills in both firearms and non-lethal force may well be central to both your tactical and your legal defense. That way, you have been trained in more than one option and can be shown to recognize the difference when it is called for. Let's face it. Self-defense is serious business, no matter what tools are in your toolbox. But sitting months later in a courtroom, facing the jury in a civil or criminal trial, you will want to know in your "heart of hearts" that your actions were not only timely, but appropriate for the threat that you were facing at the time.

¹ 'Reasonable' under the law refers to what the "reasonable and prudent person" would have done under similar circumstances with the same knowledge that you had at the moment the incident occurred.

² Training in intermediate force options is prudent and street-wise for any CCW permit holder. Take it upon yourself to learn empty-hand tactics, takedowns, techniques, as well as the use of defense sprays and the proper use of the folding knife and kubaton. See www.pfctraining.com for more.

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STEVE KRYSTEK served as the senior team leader and trainer of a USAF Special Weapons and Tactics Team and later in U.S. Department of Energy Nuclear Protective Force Operations. He has trained thousands in tactical shooting, combatives and special operations, both in the U.S. and overseas. Steve is currently a full-time police officer for the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, a use of force consultant for the U.S. Government and Director of the Las Vegas based Progressive F.O.R.C.E. Concepts (www.PFCtraining.com).

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PRINCIPALS OF SELF DEFENSE

Tom Givens

Some years ago, Jeff Cooper wrote an excellent booklet entitled, Principles of Personal Defense. This brief work outlined seven principles that, according to Jeff, lay the groundwork for all successful self-defense efforts. This little book is available from Paladin Press (P.O. Box 1307, Boulder, CO, 80306). It should be required reading for anyone interested in personal security. I have taken the liberty of listing the seven keywords that Jeff used in enumerating these principles, and adding my own perspective to them. I truly believe that mastery of these principles as your standard operating procedure is the key to personal safety. Many of us concentrate too much on hardware (specific gun model, caliber, type of ammunition, etc.), when it is the software issue that really decides who wins. The seven key words used by Jeff Cooper to enumerate his principles of personal defense are used here with permission from Paladin Press.

ALERTNESS: This one trait is the cornerstone of all physical security. You cannot defend yourself against something you don't know is there. You must learn habits of alertness and awareness so that you are always in tune with your environment.

Elsewhere in this text, we discuss some of the important facets of observation skills, but you must grasp the importance of this principle. If you know who is around you and what they are up to, you are in control. Always be on the look-out for people, behavior and activity that are out of place or out of context. When you see something like this, question it. Ask yourself, "Why...?" If you don't get a satisfactory answer, treat this as a danger signal.

DECISIVENESS: You are going to have to select a course of action and implement it right then! No one is going to be there to tell you what to do. You're on your own. This is especially difficult for us these days because all decisions are made by committee, and no one likes to sign off on anything any more. Always do something immediately.

AGGRESSIVENESS: This is another principle that is difficult for the average person, as aggressiveness is systematically being bred out of us. You have been taught all of your life that fighting is bad, human life is sacred and you should play nicely. The trouble is that you will be up against someone who shares none of these sentiments!

To a degree, we do a disservice to our students when we harp continually on the "defensive" nature of the pistol. The pistol is defensive in concept, but not in use. Gunfighting is just a form of fighting, and any type of fighting is, by definition, an aggressive activity. You cannot win any type of fight by being passive. Imagine yourself in a fist fight where all you do is block punches, but never throw any of your own. Gonna win? The same goes for armed conflict. If I have to defend my life with a firearm, I will use it vigorously, with all of the violence, aggressiveness and commitment I can muster because my life is at stake!

Once the fight starts, failing to respond aggressively is the same as surrender. If you let evil people do evil things to you, guess what will happen? You have a duty to resist evil. You owe this duty to your family, to society and to yourself. If attacked, attack him right back!

SPEED: Speed is the defining element of any form of fighting. Whoever moves faster, wins. You must develop quickness in your presentation and your firing stroke. This comes only through structured, careful, frequent practice. You also must develop speed in your ability to assess developing situations and make sound decisions. Again, this comes from prior preparation. Play the "What if...?" game, to develop responses in advance of need. The time to debate strategy is not while someone is trying to kill you.

COOLNESS: If attacked, you must keep your wits about you and do what you have to do to win. You must concentrate on the task at hand, and in our context, that task is to focus on the front sight and press the trigger.

Invariably, when I discuss this with a new group of students, some of them look incredulous and say something like, "How am I supposed to keep cool while someone a few steps away is trying to kill me?" The answer to that is simple. Every day, a large number of people have to do this. I personally know a very large group of people who have done this successfully. The key is in prior mental preparation. You must consider the possibility of an armed conflict, and be prepared mentally to deal with it.



Part of the answer is practice. Practice builds skill. Skill builds confidence. If your mind knows you have a fair degree of skill, your confidence in that skill will help you remain calm. Police officers in this country have an average hit ratio of about 18%. That means that in the field they hit with 18 out of every hundred shots they fire. This is due to several factors. The first is startled response, which is from not being mentally prepared for an attack and being caught completely off guard. This always is a training issue. The second is infrequent or poor practice. For instance, one major East Coast agency fired 1293 shots on the street in 1996, and only hit 64 bad guys! (They also hit 11 bystanders!) This agency gets one day of live-fire firearms training per year, and you can bet that the vast majority of the officers

never fire their weapons in practice on their own time, and never do any homework. As a result, when suddenly confronted with a shooting situation, they panic, stick the gun out in front of them and empty it as fast as they can. This is called the "spray and pray" method, and it almost always results in two things: an empty gun and a pissed off bad guy.

Over the past several years, the school where I work has trained almost 16,000 students, and a fair number of them have been involved in shootings. As far as I can tell, they have about an 85% hit ratio. This is because they come here on their own time, and spend their own money, and then spend the time and effort it takes to achieve and retain basic proficiency with their weapons. Do your homework. Repetition is the mother of all physical skill. Make time to get to the range. By constantly repeating the motions involved in your presentation and your firing stroke, you burn a neural pathway from your brain to your fingertips, eventually ingraining the proper response into your "muscle memory." Sports physiologists will tell you that it takes between 2,500 to 5,000 correct repetitions of any complex motor skill to automate it. To "automate" the skill means to be able to do it reflexively, without conscious thought or effort, and this is the goal. You must concentrate your mental effort on the evolving tactical situation, not on marksmanship, and this is how you remain in control and hit under stress. Get some practice shooting under stress. Engage in realistic competition, like IDPA events. Hunt deer or similar game, and learn to control "buck fever."

RUTHLESSNESS: Many people think that this is an odd word in the context of self-defense, but in reality, ruthlessness is a vital element of fighting to stay alive. In our context, ruthlessness means "absolute single-mindedness of purpose." Once the fight starts, there are absolutely no considerations other than winning! It doesn't matter why he chose you; it doesn't matter why he's a criminal. All that matters is winning. Bear in mind, in our context, "losing" can mean "dying." Hit him fast, hit him hard, hit him with everything you've got, then assess, and if needed, hit him some more.

SURPRISE: Surprise is deliberately put last in this list, because surprise is the first element of offensive combat. Surprise comes in two forms: strategic surprise and tactical surprise.

Strategic surprise is what the bad guy plans on. I recently got my hands on a captured copy of "The Bad Guy's Training Manual," and when I opened it up, I found only this: "Sneak up on 'em and jump on 'em." That is the entire strategy! Surprise is the only true advantage that the bad guy has over you. He is typically not as smart, as well armed or as well trained, but if he surprises you, the advantage is entirely his. Then how do we neutralize his advantage? It's simple. Be alert! If he cannot surprise you, he probably cannot harm you. This is a looped system that goes right back to the beginning of this chapter. Be alert and aware, so no one can surprise you.

The other form of surprise is tactical surprise, and that is your weapon. If attacked, do something that he least expects. Make him react to you, rather than you reacting to him. Initiate a violent, explosive counter-attack. Action is faster than reaction.

He is just as culturally indoctrinated as anyone else. When he attacks, he believes that you are a helpless victim. What does he expect you to do? Whimper and whine belly up, and do whatever you are told. Think about it. If he points a gun at you and tells you to do something, what does he expect you to

do? Comply, of course. The reason he didn't shoot you was because he believes that you will comply. If you do something else, he has to process that information and decide what to do. And only then can he act. It should be over by then.



OODA

This is a good time to mention the OODA Cycle, which is used in training fighter pilots and others who engage in forms of one-on-one combat. This was the brainchild of Col. John Boyd, USAF. Understanding this cycle is critical to your training. OODA is the acronym for "observe, orient, decide, act." It doesn't matter if someone's I.Q. is 40 or 140. One's mind has to work through this sequence before any deliberate action can take place.

Observe: For the tenth time now, you cannot do anything about a problem until you detect it. Get your head up, open your eyes, and look around.

Orient: This means to turn your attention to the person or circumstance that caught your eye. Assess the person as a potential threat. Evaluate your tactical position. Consider your options for dealing with the threat.

Decide: Action is needed. Select a course of action to fix the problem.

Act: This is the physical action of self-defense, which can only occur after you have gone through the first three stages. You cannot act until you detect the threat, evaluate it, and select an option for dealing with it. The time it takes to process this information and act is reduced greatly by being alert and having practiced emergency responses before the crisis occurs.

The same OODA Cycle applies to the bad guy. When he tells you to do something, do something else! He will have to see that action, realize that it is not what he told you to do, decide what to do about it (run, shoot, etc.), and only then can he act. By being alert and having pre-planned tactical responses, you can short-circuit his reaction process.

If he is in the act stage while you are entering the observe stage, you have lost. Be alert. The same works in reverse. If you are acting while he is looking, you should be finished before he can move through the orientation and action phases.

Tom Givens is a full-time trainer, with over twenty five years of experience. He has had about 85 articles published over the years in SWAT Magazine, Combat Handguns, Petersen Handguns, Soldier of Fortune and other publications. He is certified as an expert witness on firearms training in both state and federal courts, and he has a firearms training school, Rangemaster, in Memphis.

CONDITION ONE AND ONLY

Robert H. Boatman

Texas Ranger Charlie Miller was minding his own business when a concerned citizen came up to him, noted the hammer cocked back on the big 1911 dangling from the Ranger's belt, and asked, "Isn't that dangerous?" Charlie replied, "I wouldn't carry the son-of-a-bitch if it wasn't dangerous."

The sight of a cocked-and-locked single-action auto gives some people the willies. It just looks too ready for action, like a hungry lion lowered on its big paws in preparation for a lunge at Bambi's throat. A hammerless Glock looks downright peaceful in comparison, as does a double-action auto with its hammer at rest, even though both can be fired just as quickly.

You need not concern yourself with what your gun might look like to other people since it's concealed from their view. But you do need to be confident that the pistol in your holster is both safe and ready, going into action instantly and instinctively with no fumbling or uncertainties on your part, and safely returning to your holster when its job is done.

It is possible to carry a 1911-pattern single-action auto in three very different conditions. These conditions have parallels in safe-action Glocks, double-action/single-action autos and double-action-only pistols.

Condition Three. Chamber empty, hammer down. This requires you to manually cycle the slide before firing. To return the gun to its carry position after firing, you have to drop the magazine, empty the chamber, drop the hammer, reload and reinsert the magazine, all without shooting an innocent bystander.

Condition Three is a dangerous sop to the excessively squeamish who can't stand the sight of a firearm that looks like it might be useable. Do not carry your pistol with an empty chamber. Because it is a giant step away from coming to your rescue, it poses a hazard to you and those around you, though not particularly to the criminal who might be attacking you. You would be better advised to carry a baseball bat, which you are more likely to be able to operate under stress than an unready gun.

Condition Two. Chamber loaded, hammer down. On a 1911, this requires you to cock the hammer with your thumb before firing. It also requires you to very carefully pull the trigger as you use your other hand to lower the hammer over a loaded chamber before returning the gun to its holster. The technique for manipulating a Condition Two carry is best practiced out in the country in a freshly plowed field, where the bullets will not ricochet off the pavement or the occasional rock every time you re-holster your weapon.

Carrying a 1911 in Condition Two is comparable to carrying a double-action auto with its counter-intuitive manual safety in the on position. Both place an awkward and unnecessary step between you and survival.

Condition One. Cocked and locked. Chamber loaded, hammer cocked, thumb safety on. This requires you to snick the safety down before firing and snick it back up when you're finished, a test of manual dexterity that can be learned by any creature equipped with opposing thumbs and probably by a few equipped with paws or hooves instead.

A 1911 in Condition One is comparable to a Glock, which is always in a semi-cocked condition when a round is in the chamber anyway, and the initial pull of the "small trigger" performs the same function as the thumb safety of a 1911. It's also comparable to any variety of double-action auto with the safety off, as the trigger pull cocks the hammer and fires the gun in one single motion, though the long and cumbersome double-action trigger pull is designed neither for control nor accuracy.

The greatest benefit of cocked-and-locked carry in a 1911, besides instant readiness, is the excellent trigger control it makes possible since the only job the trigger must perform is to simply drop the hammer. No other type of semiautomatic can provide the precise and consistent trigger pull of a 1911, a trigger pull as fine as can be achieved with the best revolvers, readily available to the shooter with the thumbing down of the safety lever.

Condition One is obviously the fastest way to get your 1911 into action, the least prone to mistakes, the most direct path to precise trigger control, and by far the safest way to carry and operate the gun. It is, therefore, the only way. That John Browning intended the 1911 to be carried in Condition One is evidenced by the fact that a major feature of the gun is the thumb safety. There is no earthly use for the thumb safety – the part doesn't even function – unless the hammer is cocked.



It should also be noted that the up/safe, down/fire operation of the single-action 1911 thumb safety is natural, intuitive and proper. Just to be contrary about it, Walther, who invented the double-action/single-action mechanism with the little Polizei Pistole in 1929, and Smith & Wesson, who eventually copied the mechanism and has tried with some success to promote it to the American public and the law enforcement community ever since, went out of their ways to reverse the safety procedure. On a double action auto, the thumb lever up means ready to fire (requiring only a very long and awful trigger pull), thumb lever down drops the hammer on a firing pin block (or right through the block onto the firing pin, an explosive occurrence which is not unknown, especially with some earlier aluminum-frame models). To be fair, it wasn't Carl Walther who designed the double-action PP, it was his son Fritz. Some kids just never learn.

It's popular for gunwriters to say that the proper operation of a 1911 pistol requires more training than other guns. As usual, the popular gunwriters have things the other way around. While the operation of anything at all requires some training to ingrain the proper muscle memory, the 1911's

single-action mechanism is easier to learn than the double-action/single-action system because it is less complex and more instinctive.



Kimber RCP II and Glock 36 are both ready for action, requiring only the snicking down of the Kimber's thumb safety or the press of the Glock's inset trigger.

Marine could pull off the same two-second routine at the end of it.

Bob Young, Vice President of Operations at Arizona's Gunsite Academy (928-636-4565), recently told me that back in the days when he was a US Marine Corps colonel teaching recruits how to shoot 1911s, it took him 4½ days and 500 rounds of ammunition to train a 19-year-old Marine to draw his 45 from a tied-down GI flap holster and shoot an adversary twice at seven yards in two seconds flat, including the draw. When he taught Berettas – whose double-action/single-action mechanism operates in two different modes requiring two different grips and two different trigger pulls – it took another entire day and an additional 300 rounds and Young never said whether that 19-year-old

Jeff Cooper, who revolutionized handgun shooting techniques four decades ago, dubbed double-action/single-action autos “crunchentickers” because the first double-action shot is a crunch and the follow-up single-action shots are ticks. Faced with this kind of mechanical schizophrenia, the shooter often tosses his first shot somewhere out in left field, notwithstanding the fact that “It's the first shot that counts” – a reminder often repeated by Max Joseph, founder and head instructor of Tactical Firearms Training Team in Southern California (714-846-8065).

While there is no problem at all in applying 1911 training to pistols devoid of thumb safeties, such as the Glock and the new derivative generation of trigger-cocking double-action-only autos, there are severe and potentially deadly problems involved when you try to apply that training to double-action/single-action pistols with upside-down thumb safeties that operate backward. Is it any wonder that soldiers fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq have been known to hurl their Berettas at the enemy and trade cold hard cash and all the fruitcakes and love letters from home for 1911s at every opportunity?

Here's one final bit of advice to those who believe the 1911 carried in Condition One is somehow out to get them. In addition to your normal carry pistol, shove a cocked and locked, and unloaded, 1911 in a holster or your underwear or wherever. Check it several times a day to see if it has surreptitiously disengaged its own safety and pulled its own trigger when you weren't looking. After several weeks or months or years of this, draw your own conclusion.

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IS YOUR CONCEALED CARRY PISTOL RELIABLE?

George Harris

The question in the title of this article seems like the proverbial no brainer since most of us carry concealed with self preservation in mind. Even those that carry for other reasons expect their pistol to operate flawlessly when put into service. The problem is: how do we guarantee to the best of our ability that the pistol will work first time every time? Beyond that, what is acceptable as to how many shots the pistol will fire before a stoppage takes place? Pistol reliability requires sound equipment, regular maintenance, quality ammunition that has been inspected, and frequent range practice by the user to be considered satisfactory.

The pistol itself should be of a reputable manufacturer and should be inspected for smooth operation of the moving parts. As the action is being cycled, any part or assembly that binds, sticks, or exhibits rough movement must be identified and repaired. A simple function check as recommended by the manufacturer will most often fulfill the task.

The magazines should be individually checked for structural integrity. No cracks or deformities are acceptable on the magazine body, follower or the base plate. The follower should move smoothly from top to bottom of the magazine body and accept the full capacity of ammunition without unusual force to seat the last few cartridges. Each magazine should be function checked in the pistol that it is to be used in after individual inspection. This three step process will virtually guarantee that a previously inspected magazine will perform as designed and desired.

Start by inserting the empty magazine into a previously checked empty pistol. The magazine should move into the magazine well smoothly and freely with the magazine catch fully depressed. When the magazine is fully seated, release the magazine catch and pull on the base plate to ensure the magazine is locked in place in the magazine well. Next, retract the slide to the rear to prove the magazine follower will contact the slide stop and cause it to interlock with the slide to hold it open when there is no ammunition present. This proves that the empty magazine will lock the action open after the last shot is fired, which is the signal to the operator that an emergency reload may be in order. Finally, the magazine should drop free of its own weight when the magazine catch is depressed to facilitate a reload without excessive manipulation.

The final proof for the magazine is for it to be cycled several times through the pistol that it is to be used in. This should be done with a full load of ammunition each time and without a stoppage or interruption in the cycle of operation. Magazines in general are relatively cheap. Proven magazines that work every time are worth their weight in gold.

When it comes to maintenance on a pistol or its associated equipment there are no set answers. There are, however, some guidelines that will go a long way to ensure the reliability of a pistol. Cleaning the pistol means the magazines, holster, magazine pouch and any other components of the concealed carry ensemble. Dirt, lint, dust, firing residue etc. needs to be brushed, wiped or blown off with the

appropriate tools on a regular schedule. A general rule is that if it didn't come on the gun out of the box, it needs to be removed from the gun before being considered clean. This includes the barrel, magazines, frame and slide, inside and out.

Equally as important is the lubrication of the pistol. Understanding why we lubricate goes a long way as to understanding where we lubricate and how much to use to be effective. Lubrication is used primarily for three reasons, friction reduction, oxidation reduction, and ease of cleaning. An easy guideline to remember is that if any part of the pistol is shiny due to friction or is a natural location for collection of firing residue, lube it with enough lubrication so that it can be seen and felt on the affected surface. Too much lube will run under the force of gravity and won't stay on the pistol, therefore contaminating the area immediately surrounding the pistol. For concealed carry purposes the pistol needs to fire the normally available amount of ammunition without interruption. It needs proper lubrication to be protected from perspiration or other substances harmful to the surface finish.

Ammunition in itself will greatly affect the reliability of a pistol. Some guns work better with some types and brands of ammunition than others. Buy several different varieties and shoot them for function and accuracy. If one stoppage is experienced that can be blamed on the ammunition, move on to the next choice. Once a selection is made, buy as much of that ammunition as you can afford and practice with that pistol/ammunition combination to build confidence in the system you have chosen and your ability to safely and successfully operate the system. Each time a change in ammunition brand or type is made, you must go through the same process to verify the reliability of the pistol/ammunition combination.

There is no substitute for practice in handling, marksmanship, and tactical employment of the pistol, to ensure reliability when the time comes to actually use it.

Reliability is almost a given when attention to detail is paid to the equipment, maintenance, ammunition, and proficiency of the operator. When the pistol must work first time, every time, the preceding guidelines are well worth following.

COMPLACENCY

Benjamin M. Sheperd

Simple, it goes like this: Joe Average decides to go through the steps necessary to obtain his CCW permit. He goes through the required class, and he submits the paperwork to the proper law enforcement agency. He does his homework and buys a suitable gun. He buys premium ammo, and he buys a high quality belt and holster. He even goes to the range for practice every week. No once a month stuff for him; he is serious about his skill maintenance. So far, so good, right? Right. Our boy Joe is the poster child of correct CCW in every way: He trains regularly, he has high quality equipment, and he has the proper mindset. He has taken a high-end training course at a nationally recognized school (which he passed with flying colors). Yes friends, Joe has this CCW stuff DOWN. He's had his permit for a couple years, and he's living the CCW lifestyle.

Now let's look down the road six months. Here we find Joe, after a long day at work, sitting in the den watching that new episode of his favorite TV show, when his wife hollers from the other room, "Honey, I forgot to get milk at the store. Would you please run down to the Mini-Mart on the corner and grab a gallon?" Now friends, at this point, Joe has "shut 'er down" for the day. It's Friday, he's just finished a 50 hour work week and he is enjoying a show that he's been looking forward to all week. But being the loving husband he is, he says, "Sure, be back in a few minutes." And he heads out to the local stop-n-rob, which is only three bocks away, so his kids can have cereal for breakfast.

At this point, nothing out of whack, right? Wrong!!! You see, part of Joe's routine is to always put the gun in the little mini-vault in the master bedroom as soon as he gets home. It's a good spot, tactically speaking. It's out of the reach of his children, but the way his house is laid out, he can get to it before anyone on the outside can get to the area that his family is usually found in. And today, our boy Joe has followed his routine to the letter.

But he's in a hurry. His show is on, and he wasn't planning on going out again tonight. If he hurries, he will only miss a little bit of his show. And the gun is in the opposite direction of the front door. So, instead of going in and taking ONE ACTUAL MINUTE to thread his holster back on and put the gun in it, he heads out...

Now friends, there is ONE good outcome to this: Joe does the down-n-back in record time, while following all applicable traffic laws, and he is back in his chair before the commercial break even ends!



Does anyone reading this care to guess how many bad outcomes there are for the above situation? We could very easily fill this entire magazine several times over with bad outcomes, so I'll just hit a couple.

1. Joe walks into a holdup in progress, startling the crack-head holding the clerk at gunpoint. Said paranoid crack-head panics and shoots Joe, thinking he is a plain-clothes policeman responding to a silent alarm.

2. Joe comes back from the store just in time to see someone loading his stereo in their car. His wife and kids are tied up and being held at gunpoint by said someone's accomplice. Either way, Joe misses the entire last half of his show instead of just a minute of it.

These scenarios may seem far fetched, but that doesn't change the fact that they are perfectly plausible.

There is a big difference between complacency and paranoia. If you have a back-up gun for your back-up gun's back-up, and two reloads for each, and you have Kevlar bed sheets, me thinks you are over the line. This, friends, is officially paranoia territory.

The other extreme? You carry a derringer in 22 short because you know for a fact that 22 rimfires kill more people in the U.S. per year than any other caliber, and you have also learned that only 2 to 3 shots are fired in the average civilian gunfight (if there is such a thing). So you are covered. He'll only get one shot off before your highly trained, super-ninja, tactical mind takes over and you shoot him twice, once through each eye. There, see, three shots. And your little 22 is easy on your ears as well.

It is my sincere hope that readers of this magazine fall somewhere in between these 2 extremes. I may be having a little fun with it here, but to me, complacency is one of our worst enemies as CCW holders. Be flat-out honest with yourself right here, right now. How many of us could fit in Joe's shoes? I think more of us than will comfortably admit to it, especially the veteran CCW'ers here.

The person new to CCW still thinks it's a little cool, with maybe a little tactical edge to it. This person is fresh out of class and rightfully proud of obtaining his/her permit. They are now legal to carry a concealed weapon, and they ARE going to exercise that right. They look forward to the range trip once a week, even though it's 45 minutes each way. They look forward to cleaning their gun when they get home because they want to see how all the little pieces fit together again. This individual, as taught in class, is always in a light condition yellow. (For anyone new here, this is the level of alertness you need when driving a car, a sort of relaxed attentiveness.) This person is good to go.

But our veteran guy has grown weary of the gun's weight, even though by now he has downsized from the full-size, all steel 1911 to an ultra-light, titanium snubby. He no longer carries 24/7 where legal. He has a busy schedule, so range trips are now every other month or so. Besides, cleaning the darn thing once a week is a pain in the rump. And another thing, friends have noticed that compared to the average person, he is always looking around, and they are starting to tease him about being paranoid. Heck, he has carried long enough, he has renewed his permit twice, and he hasn't once needed his gun. So now he only carries in the bad part of town, after dark.



Friends, this is not where we want to find ourselves, is it? I confess to being a little complacent here and there. We all do it occasionally. But when occasion turns into habit, we are just asking for it! Remember, there is a difference between being prepared and being paranoid. As for specifics on where that line between the two lie? You have instincts; use them.

But as far as carrying goes, it's like wearing your seat belt; there is no good excuse not to! You can justify not carrying all you want. But just as with wearing your seat belt, you may not get a second chance!

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FORCE ON FORCE NOTEBOOK: THE GUN GRAB

Jack Rumbaugh



Hands off my Glock! Appendix carry keeps the gun out of harm's way.

Over the past month or so there has been a fairly active thread on the forum about gun disarms and grabs. The initial post by forum member jasonjbaer appears below.

Scenario:

You are attacked by a BG and he is able to wrestle your gun away from you. Can you grab the gun by the barrel (auto) and inhibit it from cycling to stop a discharge? On a revolver, can you grab it so that the wheel stops spinning and causes it not to discharge? Thanks for the help on this one.

The short answer is yes, you can. But are you willing to bet your life on it?

Gun disarms are more art than science. They need a fair amount of skill to accomplish reliably. I am by no means an expert in gun disarms or retention, but I have been trained in some techniques by William Aprill, a presenter at several of the Warrior Talk symposiums I have attended. William is an accomplished martial artist, firearms trainer, and has an extensive law enforcement background. He taught the attendees a few no-nonsense approaches to disarming an assailant and a few good techniques for retaining your own gun. I'll be using some of his techniques as well as "making it up as I go along" when dealing with the various situations we chose to examine.

A few of the readers posted videos and a couple of them deserve comment. One in particular shows obvious flaws in the training portrayed. The man holding the gun never inserts his finger inside the trigger guard as the unarmed man executes the disarm technique. If you have a red or blue gun, try this with a friend slowly, at half speed or less. With the finger outside of the guard, "peel" the gun out of the hand from left to right for right-handed shooters or reverse it for a left handed shooter. Observe how easily the gun is removed from the hand. Now bring the trigger finger into play. You should notice a marked difference in the effort required. Also, you will most likely



Grabbing the cylinder can keep the revolver from firing.



Once out of battery, a Glock will not fire.



Simple techniques keep the gun out of reach.



A gun grab is a fight for your life. Use every tool available like an elbow strike.

bind up the trigger finger. With the right pressure you will break the index finger of the assailant's hand. So be careful when practicing with a friend. It's also apparent that the trigger may very well be pressed and the gun fired during the disarm attempt. Which brings us to the first rule of a disarm. Get the muzzle pointed somewhere other than at our bodies. Why this is important should be obvious but it became very apparent with the drills we chose to run. It was time to gas up the airsoft guns and run some drills.

Drill One was simply a stick-up situation with the gun pointed at my midsection. My opponent was taller and heavier, which added a couple other problems to the scenario. I simply slapped the gun aside with my left hand as I bladed my body. I grabbed on with my right to control the gun. With my opponent using a one-handed grip, I was able to easily get the gun away by peeling left to right. The only issue was each time I went hands on, the gun fired. The only thing that saved me was the muzzle being averted and my bladed posture. We tried it the William April way. His technique is similar but rather than peeling the gun out immediately, he is a proponent of empty hand techniques to soften up your opponent. He taught us to avert the muzzle with our left for a right-handed assailant and with all our power, to drive a right hand through the head of our opponent. I may be misquoting him slightly but he said something to the effect of "Mustering up your righteous indignation that this person dared to pull a gun on you" and hitting them with all your might. That would seem to do the trick within the constraints of our drills.

During some of the iterations, my opponent also brought his support hand into play to aid in his retention of the handgun. This is where I had to "make stuff up", but stay 100% fight focused. With my opponent having two hands on the pistol, I found I couldn't get the gun out of his hands easily. I used a series of flowing elbow strikes to soften up my opponent. As I grabbed the gun, I turned, allowing my left elbow to naturally flow over his trapped arms, smashing him in the head. I then brought the same elbow down onto his arm while dropping my weight, flowing to another backhand elbow strike to the other side of his head. These were executed very carefully to not injure my partner in the drill, but he commented on how he could see that much punishment would evoke a change in him. Again, every time he was touched by my support hand, he was able to fire the airsoft gun. Each time, I had successfully averted the muzzle, saving my life. It is also worth noting that once I had my hands on the gun, it did not function past that first shot.

Drill Two was simply the same stick-up situation but the gun was aimed at my head. William also taught a technique for dealing with this. You would assume a compliant posture with your hands about mid torso. Shrug your shoulders and calm your assailant by saying something like, "Easy, buddy. Easy, easy." As soon as your hands are as high as you can get them by shrugging your shoulders, you shoot up both hands, making a V with your thumbs, catching the gun in the V you made. You simultaneously drop your body out of the way. The instant you reach the bottom of your drop, you explode through your opponent, forcing the gun back and over your opponent's hands. One of two things happens at this point. He lets go and you have the gun, or it ends up pointed at his own head or body. At this point, you may want to continue to attack your opponent with empty hands. Once you have the gun, you can create distance, fix the malfunction, and continue the fight. We tried this a few times, each time the gun fired over my head and then malfunctioned. It was fairly evenly split between getting the gun and it ending up covering his head or body. Both outcomes are worse for him than they are for you. If he happens to shoot himself in the process, bonus. Go to the corner store and get a lottery ticket. It's your lucky day.



Gaining distance as the gun is brought back into Close Contact position.



Turning to the back of the grabbing hand peels it off nicely.



Another angle, jamming the gun into the holster.

We then worked a few common retention drills. The most common method of carry is strong-side hip for most gun owners that choose to carry open or concealed. The retention method I used (courtesy of Mr. April) to combat a gun grab from this position was to jam my hand down onto his hand as he grabbed my pistol. This forces the pistol back into the holster and keeps it there. While holding his hand in place I turned rapidly and forcefully so that I was turning into the back of his hand. This bound him up and got me out of the way of his other hand. As I turn, he will be likely to let go to relieve the stresses I can place on the wrist and hand. If he does not let go, hopefully he will be nursing a nasty sprain or fracture. Once you have shed your attacker, simply create distance, and get your pistol into play. We then moved the gun to the appendix position and worked the same drill. This time I was able to fend off all the attempts to grab my airsoft pistol, draw to close contact position and start working the trigger. I was able to reliably place shots into my assailant every time. Just one more reason to consider in-the-waistband appendix carry for your primary carry method.

We worked on the gun grab from the front. Your opponent attempts to grab your drawn pistol as they charge into you. There is one very simple method to solve this problem. Pull the trigger. Anyone attempting to relieve you of your pistol does not have your best interests in mind and you should respond appropriately. If by chance your adversary does get the gun in his hands and out of battery, you want to

pull and twist the gun. You will be pulling with the large muscles of your upper back, not your bicep. You will be doing something similar to a dumbbell row while rotating the gun clockwise. You will be using your leverage against your opponent. This should get the gun free. At this point you may have to go hand-to-hand to gain distance and time to get the pistol working and into the fight. An interesting thing to note is that the shorter the slide on the pistol, the harder it is to get a good grip on the slide. You will be able to easily extract your Glock 27 sub-compact pistol out of the grasp of your adversary as opposed to trying to pull your full-size 1911 out of his hands. Short slides have much less to grab onto. The same works in reverse. When attempting disarms on an assailant armed with a small pistol, you will need to control the hands as well as avert the muzzle of the pistol. You may have nothing else to hold on to.

We learned a few very important things during the drills. One point is that if you get into a gun grab situation, a lot of other things have had to have gone wrong to put you in that situation.

In all likelihood, the gun will go off when you attempt a disarm. Averting the muzzle is your first priority. Be prepared for the noise, muzzle flash, and the hot gasses you will be exposed to when the gun goes off in very close proximity.

During the drills we induced a high percentage of malfunctions. Be prepared to deal with this fact during the fight.

In this situation you will be in a fight for your life so FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE. All bets are off. Poke out eyes, rip cheeks, crush noses, break bones, do whatever it takes to prevail. Be fight focused, not gun focused. If your gun is in the fight, shoot them to the ground.

Train these techniques with an expert. With just a few hours of training, I managed to pick up a few very useful tools to perform disarms and counter gun grabs. With a two day class you can be very effective performing these techniques on demand.

Re-evaluate your preferred method of carry. Appendix carry protects your firearm much better than strong side hip. If you can carry this way, I recommend you do so. At least try appendix carry on for size.

I hope this month's notebook answered a few questions the readers had. I know I had fun running through the drills. See you next month with a new scenario and with any luck, no little red welts.

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*If you would like to participate online in "The Force-On-Force Notebook," please visit:
www.usconcealedcarry.com*

Please go to "Force-On-Force Notebook Forum."

You will need to have a USCCA Deluxe Membership with a username and password in order to access the website.

If you would like to upgrade to a Deluxe Membership, please contact our customer service department--877-677-1919.

FUNDAMENTALS OF HANDGUN SHOOTING

Tom Perroni

I have been a Firearms Instructor for about 20 years now. I try to keep up on current trends, new training and consider myself well-versed in firearms. I also believe in order to be a good Instructor you must first be a good student. I have read many articles in handgun magazines as well as LE magazines, and have taken training from a lot of different instructors some with names you would instantly know and some you would not; good instructors and some not so good. But I have always learned something from each and every one of them.

As we have progressed after the incidents of 9/11, I believe the average citizen has become more aware of the need to be able to defend themselves. A handgun is the tool most often utilized. However please note it is my firm belief that the handgun is not a "man stopper". It is simply a tool; a tool to fight your way back to the shotgun or long rifle you should have had if you knew you were going to be in a fight.

I should also note that I firmly believe in 3 principals of handgun training Mindset, Tactics and Training. And that when training, there is a big difference between Qualification or "Target" Accuracy and Combat Accuracy. I remember my father telling me that when training for the fight keep in mind paper targets often do not move and do not shoot back. So having said all of that where does one start with their handgun training? At Perroni's Tactical Training Academy we feel the fundamentals are the foundation of your training. Without a good foundation nothing else will work. It's the idea that you have to crawl before you walk and walk before you run.

There are seven fundamentals of Handgun Shooting and, in my opinion, they are all equally important. The goal should always be to shoot to stop the threat. So let's examine them one at a time. They are:



Photograph courtesy of Perroni's Tactical Training Academy.

- 1. Stance**
- 2. Grip**
- 3. Sight Alignment**
- 4. Sight Picture**
- 5. Trigger Control**
- 6. Breathing**
- 7. Follow Through**

1. Stance - The Stance is the base for the shooting platform. Not only does a proper stance assist in controlling recoil, it also allows you to move and react quickly and to draw your weapon with minimal movement. The proper stance consists of:

- a. Shoulders square to the target.
- b. Feet shoulder width apart.

- c. Weight slightly forward on the balls of the feet.
- d. Head remains high and still with chin pointing at the target.
- e. Ears in front of shoulders, shoulders in front of hips.
- f. Be Comfortable.

Types of Stances:

- Weaver
- Isosceles
- Modified Weaver
- Modified Isosceles
- Dynamic



The shooting stance is basically a support or shooting platform. The quality of the stance is a major determining factor in creating conditions for maximum control and accuracy for shooting. A high degree of control is necessary to deliver a rapid, accurate shot. Every individual is unique and possess characteristics that are theirs alone. These characteristics include height, weight, muscular and skeletal development, degree of flexibility, and more. Therefore, there can be no universal shooting stance that can be utilized by all people.

Each shooter, under the guidance of the Firearms Instructor, and consistent with safety must find the shooting stance which is best suited to them and provides the greatest degree of stability and accuracy for shooting. The shooter must be able to assume their stance instinctively, as a reflex action with minimal effort or conscious manipulation of their body.

2. Grip - A proper grip aids in controlling recoil and muzzle flip. It also allows the shooter to obtain a second sight picture more rapidly. Hands must have a 360 degree grip around the weapon. This allows the shooter to engage more rapidly. Ideally, the weapon should be placed in the hand so a straight line is formed with the barrel of the weapon and the forearm. The webbing of the hand should be fully under the tang of the back-strap. The weapon must initially be gripped with sufficient force to cause shaking and then gradually released until the shaking stops. The support hand applies pressure in exactly the same fashion. The idea behind the two hand grip is to completely encircle the grip of the gun in order to be in control of recoil. The support hand thumb will be on the same side of the gun as the weapon hand thumb.

- The Grip must be consistent for each shot because a good grip enhances accuracy.
- Grip high on the back strap.
- Finger must reach the trigger.
- High grip will reduce muzzle rise and lends to faster recoil recovery.
- Grip should be just as firm as a handshake, no firmer.
- Weak side fingers should be wrapped around the strong hand.
- Wrists should be close together.
- Supporting hand heel should be in contact with the weapon grip.

- Thumbs should rest one on top of the other.
- Fingers over Fingers Thumb over Thumb.

Grip is acquired in the holster, prior to draw and presentation. The web of the shooting hand must be in the top of tang on the back-strap and no higher. If you are too high the slide will bite your hand. If you are too low with your grip you allow the gun to move more with recoil making sight recovery and follow-on shots more difficult and time-consuming. A key point is to have both thumbs pointing at the target. The heel of your non-shooting hand should cover the area on the grip that is exposed.

3. Sight Alignment - Sight alignment is the relationship between the shooter's eye, the rear sight aperture, and the front sight. The front sight blade is centered and flush with the rear sight aperture. "Equal Height; Equal Light".

In order for the bullet to hit the center of the target, the shooter must aim the pistol and give the barrel a definite direction relative to the target. In theory, accurate aiming is achieved when the shooter places in

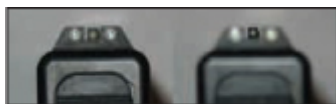


exact alignment the rear sight with the top and sides of the front sight and holds them in alignment in the aiming area. A requisite for correct aiming is the ability to maintain the relationship between the front and rear sights. When aiming, the front sight is positioned in the middle of the rear sight notch with an equal light space on each side. The horizontal top surface of the front sight is on the same level as the top horizontal surface of the rear sight notch (Figure above) A. RELATIONSHIP OF SIGHTS. It is necessary to be acutely aware of the relationship of the rear sight to the clearly defined front sight. Normal vision is such that the rear sight of the pistol will be as nearly in focus as the front sight. Some shooters may be able to see only the notch of the rear sight in sharp focus; the outer extremities may become slightly blurred. "The top of the front sight is even with the top of the rear sight and there is an equal amount of space separating the front sight post from the sides of the rear sight notch."

4. Sight Picture - Sight picture is the placement of the sights on the target while maintaining proper sight alignment.

Sight picture is the relationship of the target, the front and rear sights and the eye. Emphasis here is on the front sight. Inside combat distance, 7 yards and closer, if the front sight is on the target, the target will be hit when the weapon is fired. In combat shooting, this is the most important fundamental. "The eye can only focus on one object at a time. It can not keep the rear sight, the front sight and the target in focus simultaneously. The shooter must concentrate on the front sight.

Your eye can only focus on one thing at a time....You must focus on the front sight while keeping good sight alignment. When you pull the trigger you do not want to disrupt sight alignment.



Photograph courtesy of Defensive Training Concepts, Inc.

1. The Target should be blurry.
2. The rear sight should be blurry.
3. The front sight should be sharp.

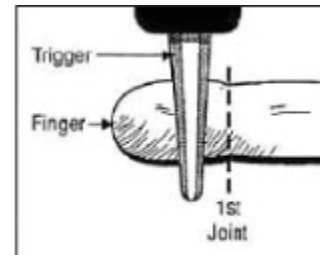
"Remember Point of Aim is Point of Impact"

5. Trigger Control - in either double action or single action mode, it is defined as steady pressure exerted on the trigger straight to the rear to release the hammer and fire the weapon and immediately allowing the trigger to return, so the weapon can be fired again. Descriptive term here is a press and not a squeeze. Note the trigger finger continually maintains contact with the trigger.

When pressing the trigger, the shooter should use the tip of the index finger. This should be accomplished by utilizing a smooth movement isolating the trigger finger only. All other fingers must remain still during the trigger press. Another important part of trigger control is trigger reset. Once the trigger has been fired, slowly release pressure on the trigger until an audible click is heard and felt. At this point, the shooter need not release any more pressure on the trigger to fire again. This maintains a proper sight alignment and sight picture more easily.

Trigger Manipulation

- Speed at which the trigger is pulled -- a single gear, one smooth continuous motion at a single speed... not increasing as you apply pressure.
- Motion in which the trigger is pulled -- a smooth continuous motion, not a jerk, not a little at the time.
- Always remember that you press or pull a trigger, you never squeeze or jerk the trigger.



Photograph courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard.

The finger is placed so that the trigger is halfway between the tip of the finger and the first joint. "The trigger is squeezed straight to the rear in a smooth continuous manner without disturbing sight alignment." You should not be able to predict the instant the gun will fire. Each shot should come as a surprise. Note the trigger finger continually maintains contact with the trigger.

To begin proper trigger control, the shooter must first properly place the index finger on the trigger. The index finger is placed in the middle of the trigger at the most rearward curved portion, to apply pressure to the trigger. The trigger should cross the finger approximately halfway between the tip of the finger and the first joint, over the swirl of the fingerprint.

Trigger Press

After attaining proper placement of the finger on the trigger, proper trigger pressure can be applied to the trigger. There are three parts of trigger pressure each time the weapon is fired. They are slack, press, and follow through.

All three parts are important to proper trigger control.

1. Slack. The shooter must first take up the slack at the beginning of the trigger movement by applying slight pressure to the trigger. The trigger will move slightly to the rear until the internal parts of the trigger mechanism come into full contact with each other, and the "softness" in the tip of the finger is eliminated.

2. *Press.* The trigger is then in the squeeze portion of its movement, which is when the internal parts of the weapon are being disengaged from each other to allow the hammer to fall. The pressure should be a smooth, constant, and even pressure, applied straight to the rear so that the sights are not misaligned at the instant the hammer falls. Once the hammer begins to fall, the follow through portion of trigger control begins.

3. *Follow Through.* Follow through is the continued steady pressure applied to the trigger until the trigger reaches its most rearward point of travel. If the shooter does not continue to apply the constant, even pressure during follow through, it is possible that the impact of the round could move on the target, thus spoiling an otherwise good shot.

6. Breathing - is an important factor that impacts the accuracy of your shot. One can practice sight picture, sight alignment, natural point of aim, and optimum shooting positions, but if one does not breathe properly, one may never engage the target as accurately as possible. Also, the further away the target is, the more important breathing comes into play.

- Don't try to hold your breath while you shoot.
- Don't Shoot on a natural respiratory pause -- on the inhale or on the exhale.
- We recommend a "half-breath," inhale, let some of the air out, then fire. (B.R.A.S.S. -- see below)
- Vertical tracking is sometimes noticed in long range shooting when the shooter fires on the inhale, then the exhale causing the muzzle to move up and down.

In order to maintain body movement, your breath must be held while firing a shot. "Before each shot take a breath, let enough air out so you are comfortable; hold the remaining breath while firing the shot. If you hold your breath for more than 8 seconds muscle tremors may start. The breathing process provides the body with oxygen and eliminates waste elements from the blood. Correct breathing while shooting is essential to proper body functions. A complete respiratory cycle last for 4-5 seconds (inhaling and exhaling) and between each cycle, there is a pause of 2-3 seconds.

Proper breath control allows the shooter to remain steady once a good sight picture is attained. The shooter should inhale while bringing the pistol to eye level. When the weapon is at eye level, the shooter should exhale approximately half of a breath. By allowing some air to remain in the lungs, the shooter will not fight to exhale or inhale. The optimum time to fire the round during slow fire is four to seven seconds. During slow fire, if the round has not been fired after ten seconds, the shooter should relax and begin again. This allows the weapon to remain steady until the weapon is fired. The acronym for proper breath control is

"B.R.A.S.S."

- (1) Breathe.
- (2) Release halfway and hold.
- (3) Aim.
- (4) Squeeze.
- (5) Shoot.

7. Follow Through - is the end of the cycle the fundamentals of shooting. It is at this point, after you have fired a round that the fundamentals begin all over again. Resetting the trigger; obtain a proper sight alignment and sight picture, and begin asking yourself these important questions:

- Do I need to take another shot?
- If I do, will I hit my target?

Continuing to do everything that was being done at the time the shot was fired. "Follow through prevents any unnecessary movement before the bullet exits the barrel.

Follow through is the continued steady pressure applied to the trigger until the trigger reaches its most rearward point of travel. If the shooter does not continue to apply the constant, even pressure during follow through, it is possible that the impact of the round could move on the target, thus spoiling an otherwise good shot. The key elements we teach at Perroni's Tactical Training Academy are:

- Always finish the shot, never quit the shot.
- Keep the gun at eye level doing the exact same thing as the shot breaks that you were doing prior to the shot... aligning the sights, maintaining target acquisition.
- Maintain the gun in front of the eyes long enough to ask two questions:

- a. Did I hit the target?
- b. Did it work?

Well there you have it. I think this would be a solid foundation for any shooter. You can learn a great deal from a basic class; it's the foundation of your shooting skills. So before you take that "ADVANCED HANDGUN COURSE" make sure you have a solid understanding of the Fundamentals of Handgun Shooting. Remember you have to crawl before you walk, and walk before you run.

Stay Safe & Shoot Straight!

Tom Perroni is the owner, President and Chief Instructor of Perroni's Tactical Training Academy. Pulling on a five-year law enforcement operational background, Tom has spent the last fifteen years delivering training to government, military, law enforcement, and private security companies. Tom is also the lead contract instructor trainer for the Virginia Dept. of Criminal Justice Services, responsible for vetting private security trainers approved by DCJS. Tom is also a Contract Instructor for Blackwater Training Center. Tom appreciates feedback and can be reached through the Contact page on his company website at <http://www.perronitactical.com>.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CARRYING YOUR GUN 100% OF THE TIME

Mark Walters, aka 'The Ordinary Guy'

The decision to carry a concealed firearm for protection is a very personal one. It was for me. It is a decision that puts you within a split second of the ability to take a life or disfigure another human being for the remainder of theirs. It is a decision that requires you to make profound changes in the way you conduct yourself while going about your daily routine if armed, and forces you to act more responsibly than you may be capable of. It is one of, if not the most important decision you will ever make during your lifetime. To exercise this uniquely American right, the right to keep and bear arms... requires you to make an unbridled commitment to carry your firearm with you everywhere you go, every single day.

Several years ago while driving down the road one Friday evening; I had a gun flashed at me while stopped in traffic. I had honked my horn at the car ahead of me for failing to move through a green light. I realized then that I deserved to be shot for being so foolish as to expect someone to move forward at a green light however everything turned out OK. It was at that exact moment that I made the decision to go the extra step and obtain a concealed carry license. I was fortunate that this incident did not lead to further violence as I was unarmed and most likely wouldn't be here writing this article.

After receiving my permit I became a fervent supporter of the right to concealed carry and practicing as much as possible with my firearms became a passion. I took "one on one" personal tactical training and became a NRA Certified Instructor in three disciplines and although I had my permit and trained regularly, I still found myself carrying only when it was convenient...and comfortable. For example, I found myself leaving my gun behind when I went to get the car washed or to a movie with my wife. These places were right down the street from my house in a very nice area of town. I was certainly safe in my own neighborhood, right? I would soon find out just how wrong I really was and how lucky I was to be armed one particular morning.

Shortly after the birth of my first child while en route to work at 6:30 am, I found myself witness to an attempted carjacking directly in front of my vehicle while stopped at a traffic signal. When the two criminals were unable to get into the automobile in front of mine, they immediately turned their attention towards me. Within a split second, I was forced to make a life and death decision. I chose life...my own. From under my shirt in an inside the waistband holster, I retrieved a Glock 36 and leveled it at the man bent on violently attacking my person in an attempt to take my car or worse, the barrel resting against my windshield. It was at this point that I realized just how valuable my training would become.

As my gun rested upon the steering wheel, business end flush against the windshield and held firmly in my grasp, everything I had been taught began to explode in my mind. My first thought was "watch his hands, not his eyes", after which I began thinking about what or who was behind this dirtball in the

event I had to fire my weapon. Would I permanently lose my hearing from the explosion of my gun while firing inside the enclosed car? Where was his partner? Would my rounds continue in the intended direction after exiting my windshield? Watch his hands...watch his hands.... WATCH HIS HANDS! This encounter had ended peacefully but I had become a statistic. I became one of the estimated 2.5 million times a gun is used in self defense, in particular, one of the 90% of that 2.5 million who never had to fire a shot. The mere site of my firearm pointed directly at his chest was enough to stop the encounter in its tracks. The two individuals retreated to their car (probably not theirs to begin with) and escaped into traffic. But something more important had happened that morning... Myself and those around me went home safe that day. My beautiful daughter Lindsey, now 2 years old (and her new baby brother Ryan) still have their father, the lone woman in that car in front of me wasn't harmed, and any other potential victims of these two scumbags were spared, at least at that particular event.

The reason this situation ended peacefully was because someone was armed. If I had not had my weapon strapped to my body that morning two weeks before Thanksgiving, something terrible would likely have occurred. Someone may have been killed and that someone would have been me. My daughter would be fatherless, my son never born, and my wife a widow.

A person more knowledgeable than myself who had been the victim of a violent armed assault and kidnapping once told me, "Never leave home without it, don't get gas at the familiar station down the road, don't go grocery shopping at the local market, don't walk to the store to get your newspaper without your firearm". You must never take your safety for granted, as it is the one time, the ONE time you don't have it with you that will be the one time you let your guard down. It will be that one time that you become a victim.... And you may never get a second chance.

GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TRAINING

John Perz

Up until thirty years ago, if you wanted serious training in the use of firearms for self-defense, you had only one choice, which was to join the police force and go to the police academy! Such training simply wasn't otherwise available to civilians in any way, shape, or form. In fact, in those days, civilians weren't even allowed to shoot at human silhouette targets in NRA sanctioned matches!

That all changed in 1977. Ray Chapman, who became the first IPSC World Pistol Champion in 1975, opened the Chapman Academy in Columbia, MO. Its purpose was to teach serious defensive pistol techniques to any good guy, be he military, law enforcement, or civilian. A year later, in 1978, Col. Jeff Cooper opened what is now probably the most famous and influential such school in the country, the American Pistol Institute at Gunsite Ranch in Paulden, AZ.

Today there are numerous schools and instructors all over the country. Some teach pure marksmanship and gun handling and some teach tactics, the combat mindset, and/or self-defense law as well. Most offer courses in defensive shotgun and defensive rifle or carbine, as well as pistol. Basic, intermediate and advanced level courses are common, and some schools offer some very advanced courses. Precision Long Range Rifle and Close Quarter's Battle (CQB) are a couple of examples.

It's now possible for a dedicated shooter who's willing to invest the time and money in training and practice to reach a level of proficiency to rival that of a SWAT cop. In fact, SWAT cops and military personnel spend their own money to attend some of these schools! But you don't need to have an interest in taking things that far to justify attending one of these schools. Anyone who carries a pistol or keeps a gun to defend his home should give serious thought to taking one or two of the basic courses. As Col. Cooper once famously observed, "Owning a gun doesn't make one a gunfighter any more than owning a Stradivarius violin makes one a concert violinist."

WHAT YOU NEED

First of all, you need to pick a school and course. These days, they all have websites that describe their course offerings and schedules. You also have the option to write to them and get their latest catalogs through the mail. (See the sidebar to this article.) The sole criterion for attending one of these schools is that you are a certifiable good guy, and all you will need to prove that is a CCW. If you're one of the unfortunates that live in a state that won't issue a CCW, there are ways around that as well. Ayoob's Lethal Force Institute (to use one example) will also accept a letter of reference from a local official: police chief, sheriff, district attorney, judge, etc. or a letter from a practicing attorney stating that you have no police record or history of institutionalization for mental health care.

Most schools expect you to have some minimal familiarity with your gun. The NRA's excellent basic safety courses take care of that nicely. Some schools will take you even if you've never touched a gun before. My personal opinion is that paying a big name instructor to teach you the basic stuff, such as

how to load and unload your gun, is not the most cost effective way to acquire such fundamental skills, but alas, sometimes your local conditions make this necessary. Take the local NRA courses first if at all possible. If not, then discuss this with the school that you are interested in before you sign up. Be sure that you know how to break down, clean, reassemble, and lube your gun. You will almost certainly need to do so every night during your course, so you will need a cleaning kit.

MINIMIZING THE COST



You will need to pay for tuition, and you will need to bring or buy ammunition, which will be anywhere from several hundred to a couple of thousand rounds, depending on the course. You will also have to pay for transportation to and from the school, and probably for meals and some place to sleep.

Obviously, your choice of school will affect the overall cost of attending. If you have to fly half way across the country, stay in a motel, rent a car and eat in restaurants, you can expect to add hundreds or even thousands of dollars on to the basic costs of tuition and ammo. On the other hand, if you can find (or organize) a course close to home, you can reduce those travel expenses down to just the cost of the gas needed to drive back and forth to the range.

Many of the best known instructors: Massad Ayoob, Chuck Taylor, John Farnam, Louis Awerbuck, Ken Hackathorn, etc., travel around the country teaching. If you can't find any courses scheduled close to your home, perhaps you can arrange for one. If you belong to a gun club, or otherwise can arrange access to a suitable range in your area, and can talk a dozen or so of your friends into signing up for the class with you, many of these instructors will be happy to schedule a class there.

If you must travel and you have access to a camper (or a tent and camping gear), you can save significantly over staying in a motel and eating in restaurants. Some schools will let you park right on their grounds. (There will be information about this at their web sites or in their catalogs.) You will certainly have no trouble finding a commercial campground close by to most schools, and the savings over a motel (and restaurants) can be significant. If you have a family, the campground option can make for a great family vacation. Take the whole family along, and while you're in class all day, they can be enjoying the recreational activities and playing tourist in the surrounding area. Personally speaking, on various occasions, I've spent several weeks in a very pleasant New Hampshire campground while taking courses at Ayoob's Lethal Force Institute. The campground was full of families with kids. There were swimming, boating, several ball fields and other recreation areas. The surrounding area was full of antique shops, old bookstores, and ample tourist information about all of the nearby local attractions.

Okay, so you've picked a course and a date. Now you need to start planning what you need to bring, checking over what you have and deciding what you need to beg, borrow, or buy. I will discuss this in general terms, but keep in mind that you will also receive a specific list of items from your instructor that he believes are necessary, which you should pay careful attention to.

WHICH GUN SHOULD YOU TAKE?

You're going to gun school, so naturally, you need to bring a gun, right? Well, not necessarily. For example, Sigarms Academy advertises that if you sign up for one of their courses, you can borrow any model Sig pistol that you'd like to use in the course, and they will also provide necessary holsters and such. And I've seen at least one instance of a student from Boston who made arrangements to borrow a snub .38 from the instructor. But in general, you will probably be bringing your own gun. And this is a good thing. If at all possible, you want to take the course with the actual gun and holster that you will actually be carrying. If your hunting shotgun sits near your bed and doubles as your house defense gun, then that is the shotgun that you want to take to your combat shotgun course. Of course, if you've been looking for an excuse to buy a nicely tricked--out, new defensive shotgun or tactical carbine, taking a course that needs such a gun can be a dandy justification!

As you study the various schools and their course offerings, you will note that many have a minimum caliber requirement, perhaps .38 Special, .380 ACP or 9mm. A few schools will let you bring anything you want, even the little calibers. This may be a factor in choosing a school. The gun should fit your hand. The safety and other controls should be easy for you to manipulate. The sights should be easy for your eyes to see. Obvious, right? Well, I once witnessed a woman struggle through an entire course with a Browning Hi-Power that was way too big for her hands. The gun had great sentimental value. It had belonged to her deceased father, and she was determined to master it. Sadly, she didn't. I hope that she learned from the experience and retired it to a place of honor and moved on to another gun.

The trigger should be light enough to be easy to shoot, yet not so light (or hair-trigger) that the gun fires before you intend it to, which is known as an unintentional discharge, an accidental discharge or a negligent discharge. In short, whatever gun you bring needs to be mechanically safe.

It also needs to be mechanically reliable. Many classes call for 500 rounds in two or three days, and some of the advanced classes can call for 2,000 or more. Round counts like these quickly separate the good guns from the junk! I've seen a number of guns fail while taking courses. Most schools expect problems like this. Usually, the instructor or one of his assistants is a qualified armorer, and minor problems like sights that have shot loose can be corrected in short order and with minimal disruption to the rest of the class. Major problems may not be correctable.

If at all possible, consider bringing a second, spare gun. Otherwise, if your one and only gun fails and can't be corrected or fixed, you may be forced to withdraw from the course. It will simplify your life considerably if it is the same caliber as your primary gun. Otherwise, you will also have to bring a separate ammo supply for it, as well as a spare holster, magazines, etc. Obviously, this would be a lot easier to do if you drive than if you fly!

AMMUNITION CHOICES

Ammunition is heavy, and if you are flying, it will be impossible to legally take as many rounds with you as you will need. In some instances, you can arrange to ship your ammo directly to the school via UPS, and they will hold it for you until you arrive for the course.

Buy quality ammo for the course, which is available from a good company like CCI, Federal, Remington or Winchester. It need not be their premium, expensive stuff. They all have economy lines as well, which are perfect for training. I've used Federal's American Eagle, Winchester's White Box and CCI's Blazer Brass at different times, and they've all worked well for me. I would urge you to stay away from the cheap, imported brands. Some of the imported ammo is loaded with very "dirty" powder that can foul your gun and cause malfunctions. Some is loaded in steel cases. Steel case ammo has been known to damage extractors on some guns. Quality control is not always up to what I would consider acceptable standards.

If you reload, you should know that while some schools have no problem with you bringing reloads, some will strongly try to discourage you. This is usually because they have had a number of bad experiences with students using reloads in the past.

At some schools, it is possible to arrange to buy the necessary ammo directly from them. However, the Smith & Wesson Academy warns that Massachusetts law makes it illegal to sell any ammunition to non-Massachusetts residents. So you will not only be prohibited from buying it from the Academy, you will also be prohibited from buying it from a local K-mart. I've run into a similar situation in Illinois. No IL Firearms Owners Identification Card (FOID), no ammo sale.

On the other hand, Sigarms Academy requires lead free ammo and provides all needed ammo, with its price included in the tuition. However, they only have 9mm, 40 S&W, and 45 ACP, so your gun needs to be one of those three calibers to take a course there.

CARRY GEAR

You will be expected to provide spare magazines or speedloaders, their corresponding pouches, a holster, a belt, etc. Many basic level courses will discuss and demonstrate such equipment choices, so it might be wise to hold off on buying new leather until after taking such a course, provided that you have or can borrow something that will get you through your first course.



Ideally, your holster and your gun should be the ones that you carry on the street every day. However, that's not always possible. If you favor a cross draw or shoulder holster, drawing from it may allow your muzzle to cross another student standing in line next to you. Neither your instructor nor the student standing next to you are going to be happy about that! If you are the only one with such a rig, it may be possible to accommodate you by putting you on the end of the line. You might want to discuss it with the school before you sign up if it is important to you.

To be on the safe side, you should have a strong side belt holster. You also need a good, heavy gun belt and it should be matched to your holster. If your holster has slots for an inch and three quarter belt, you shouldn't be wearing an inch and a half belt. You will also need a magazine or speedloader pouch, and if the course requires a flashlight for low light shooting, you should have a carrier for that.

EYES AND EARS

Eye and ear protection are mandatory at all good schools. A separate article could probably be devoted to the fine points of choosing these. Here's a short and sweet summary instead: If you wear regular prescription eyeglasses, they will suffice. Otherwise, you will need one or more pairs of either shooting glasses or safety glasses. If your prescription is for distance, you may need bifocals in order to also see the sights clearly. If you wear contact lenses, be sure you bring your spare eyeglasses with you, and I mean in your range bag and not in your suitcase back at your motel. Many ranges are dusty, and if it gets windy, you may find yourself needing to switch to the prescription glasses. I always take two pairs with me, one pair with dark gray sunglass lenses for use in bright sun, and one pair with clear lenses for use in dim light and for night shooting classes. I've tried the yellow shooting glasses and I just can't get used to the unreal look they give to the whole world. They do, however, make dandy driving glasses for use in the fog. Speaking of fog, I always carry a spray bottle of anti-fog liquid with me, and treat my glasses every day that I am shooting. How long have I done this? Ever since my glasses fogged badly on a hot, muggy August day during my final exam qualification shoot at LFI!

Hearing protection breaks down into plugs that are put into your ears (which I hate) and muffs that are worn over your ears. Simple muffs are fine for just shooting, but for going to school, I strongly urge you to spend the money for "active" muffs. These contain speakers, microphones, batteries and electronic circuits. The microphones pick up all outside sounds and relay them via the electronic circuits to the speakers inside of your muffs. The electronic circuits amplify quiet sounds, but attenuate any loud noises like gunshots. They permit you to hear everything that is said around you, which can be an important safety feature when you are surrounded by a crowd of people with guns, and more importantly, they permit you to hear everything that your instructor says, which you are paying hundreds of dollars for the privilege of hearing in the first place. I bought my pair from Dillon Precision, but you can find them from a number of manufacturers and sources, including both Cabela's and Gander Mountain.

CLOTHING CHOICES

Clothing should be comfortable, and suitable for the temperatures that you expect. Days that start out cold but get hot require a layered outfit, which is shed bit by bit as the day warms up.

Shorts are not usually a good idea, even if it's very hot. They offer no protection from insects or sunburn. They also offer no protection for your knees if the course includes shooting while kneeling. Some tactical style pants have knee pockets to hold pads, and some experienced students have the same external knee and elbow pads that the SWAT guys wear. They're not really all that expensive and are a nice touch if the course will include a lot of shooting from the ground. Finally, pants need belt loops to hold your gun belt and holster in their proper place, so sweat pants and the like are also out.

Shirts should be fairly close fitting around the neck to minimize the possibility of someone else's freshly ejected, very hot cartridge case (hot brass) from going down your neck and getting trapped against your skin. And trust me; once you are standing on a firing line with a dozen other people, you are going to be

hit with hot brass sooner or later. If it hits outside of your clothing, it will bounce off. If it gets trapped between your skin and your clothing, it's going to burn! How do I know this? Trust me, I know this!

For the same reason, a cap with a visor is a virtual necessity. Otherwise, there is a real possibility that hot brass may slip between the top of your shooting glasses and your face and get trapped between your glasses and your eye(s).

Shoes need to be comfortable enough to stand around in all day, and suitable for use off of pavement. Some (particularly police and military) wear combat boots or derivatives thereof. Personally, I wear a pair of New Balance running shoes.

Into each life some rain is going to fall, and most schools are going to shoot through the rain. Rain gear is a necessity. Experience has taught me that a Gore-Tex rain suit is the way to go if you are going to be standing around in a heavy rain all day. This is supplemented by a pair of Tote's type rubbers pulled over the running shoes.

COMFORT ITEMS

The rain suit will keep water off of your outside, but the one thing that you desperately need to do on a hot day is to keep pouring water into your inside! Dehydration is no joke, and I consider a personal cooler full of some suitable, non-alcoholic beverage an absolute necessity at the range. Likewise, a folding chair will give you a comfortable place to rest your weary body during breaks in what can otherwise be a very long day.

Your range bag should include the following comfort items:

1. A good sunscreen with a high SPF rating. It's either this or a good sunburn cream to treat the painful sunburn that you will get if you don't use a sunscreen.
2. A good insect repellent. The stronger, the better.
3. Bandages for dealing with the inevitable cuts and nicks that a lot of gun handling and magazine loading are going to cause to your hands. I've tried a lot of them over the years, and I've finally settled on Johnson & Johnson's Active-Flex. It's a clear one that sticks amazingly well in spite of all of the gun handling, it's waterproof, and it's even thin enough to use on your trigger finger if needed.
- 4: Over-the-counter pain relievers & rubs for aching muscles. You don't need to be in super-good physical shape to take a course like one of these. I would rate it as equivalent to a long day spent doing yard work. But if you mostly sit at a desk all year, you are probably going to find yourself with sore, tired muscles towards the end of the day. But trust me, the great feeling of accomplishment you get from finishing a course like one of these more than compensates for a few muscle aches!

John Perz lives in upstate New York. He's had a CCW since 1972 and has completed a number of training courses over the years with Massad Ayoob, John Farnam, Tom Givens and others.

MANAGING UNCERTAINTY

Bruce Eimer, Ph.D

If you want to give God a good laugh, tell him your plans. -- Old Yiddish folk saying



Who knows what the world will be like five years from now, let alone in twenty years? The only thing we know for sure is that change and uncertainty will continue, and that those who know how to adjust to change and uncertainty will live more comfortably and successfully. Unfortunately, the life skills you need for coping with change and uncertainty are not taught in school. Uncertainty is an ever-present issue, as is the need to cope with it. This has always been so and probably always will be so. For many people, it is often the cumulative stress of the

small hassles of daily life that gets to them, or contributes to their eventual ill health by precipitating stress-related disorders.

Uncertainty is a condition in which you lack knowledge or confidence about what will happen to you in your daily life as it relates to your job, financial security, health, wellness, shelter, family, and safety on a personal, family, and community level. This brief article will address the issue of successfully dealing with the ever present uncertainty about your personal safety, security and survival. The way you deal with uncertainty has an impact on your overall health and well-being. The ability to cope successfully with uncertainty is necessary and essential to leading a productive and happy life. Failure to cope with uncertainty has unhealthy effects on your mind and body.

The key point to coping successfully with uncertainty is to stay calm, keep a cool head, and apply logical, rational, and effective ways to mastering the perils of uncertainty (i.e., good tactics). Staying calm means controlling the intensity of your negative emotions: anxiety, fear, anger, grief, sadness, rage, helplessness, alienation, cynicism, and the feeling that you have no future. When these emotions are not controlled, they impede your ability to think clearly and to process the information and facts around you in an effective and organized fashion.

Staying calm is a way of taming your emotional brain so that your executive, logical brain can rationally assess the facts in the present and plan your actions to be the most effective for your day-to-day living. The payoff for staying calm in the face of uncertainty is that you are able to see your options and choices more clearly and thus make the right choices. Staying calm enables you to ignore matters that could intrude and hinder you from achieving your goals. Here, we are referring to distractions that create noise and more anxiety.

The costs of not staying calm in the face of generalized uncertainty involve damaging your health, family life, effectiveness on the job, and the possibility of ending up feeling miserable and hopeless. When uncertainty in daily life is not effectively managed, your body may become a dumping ground for negative emotions, and you may experience a variety of bothersome physical symptoms. This negative mental and physical state is not conducive to maintaining personal security and assuring survival.

In addition, ineffective management of ongoing generalized uncertainty can lead to a chronic sense of feeling alienated from society. This can manifest in the form of cynicism, rejection of all moral and religious principles, and the feeling that life has no meaning, causing you to feel lost, dejected, and adrift, without purpose or direction. When you feel alienated like this, you become internally distracted and unable to stay abreast and aware of what is really going on in the immediate world around you.

Uncertainty is a fact of life. I believe that all uncertainty is fruitful, as long as it is accompanied by the wish to understand. On the other hand, uncertainty becomes an unnecessary burden when the fact of its reality is accompanied by the wish to deny that it exists, avoid the unknown, and by maladaptive efforts to manufacture evidence for certainty.

Nowadays, there seems to be more reasons to be afraid than in previous decades. The world is a more uncertain place than ever. There has been a sharp increase in the frequency of terrorist acts around the world, including in the United States. People are living with the threat of further terrorism, and the television and news media provide a continual stream of information that heightens the focus on these threats. Understandably, all of this has led many people to feel frightened of what the future may bring.

During this first decade of the 21st Century, many people, with good reason, have become less trusting in general, given increased media exposure of new kinds of scams, and a wide range of ways in which innocent people have been criminally victimized. Threats of violence, local, domestic and international, wars around the world, unstable and oppressive governments, and the use of terror also have contributed to instability. This has been reflected in a major change in the stability of the world economy. In addition, technology is changing at a pace that can be described conservatively as "warp speed." All of this change, instability, and uncertainty have made people feel more vulnerable.

Vulnerability stems from the feeling that one has no control over the outcomes of what happens in the world. Feeling vulnerable leads people to feel more endangered and threatened. It can shatter our basic sense of trust and security in the world, our belief that the world is a safe place to live in, and our expectations that we will be here tomorrow. Our vulnerability can become a breeding ground for fears of all types, and erode our feelings of comfort and security in carrying on our day-to-day activities. The lack of adequate support and connectedness to other people can also become a breeding ground for alienation.



Given all the instability and uncertainty in our world today, my purpose in writing this brief article is to empower you by giving you five simple and practical solutions for coping with daily uncertainty. These solutions can help you to counter your feelings of vulnerability, fear, and alienation, and aid you in mastering your fears of the future. For a more detailed exposition of these concepts, see our book, *Coping With Uncertainty: 10 Simple Solutions* (B.N. Eimer and M.S. Torem, 2002).

1. Accept uncertainty as part of life:

Let's face it. When you leave the house in the morning, we don't know for sure what is going to happen to us. We can get hit by a Mack truck, attacked by terrorists, accosted by criminals, come home to a burglarized house, and so on. So, it is necessary for us to accept uncertainty as a fact of life. We must follow the Boy Scout motto and be prepared for the worst and expect the best.

2. Learn to think tactically:

Prepare yourself mentally for tactical situations. Use mental rehearsal to go over different scenarios in your mind and rehearse mastery of them. Learning to think tactically means learning to think about how you can apply various self-defense and personal security techniques to accomplish survival tasks. These can be as simple and as common place as entering and exiting your vehicle.

3. Stay present and aware:

This means avoiding distractions. Awareness refers to self-awareness as well as other and environmental awareness. You want to nurture a developing, ever present awareness of how you appear and employ your personality in different situations. And you want to develop a continual 360 degree awareness and attention to the world around you. You do not want to let people sneak up on you.

4. Manage your negative moods:

Our moods include negative feeling states as well as positive feeling states. Managing negative moods is imperative for maintaining your personal safety. When you are depressed, or angry, or afraid, you are often focused inward and not paying attention to the world around you. You then become a prime target for victimization. Additionally, if you suffer from chronic feelings of fear, which can often turn into depression and anger turned inward, this is not conducive to carrying concealed. Your focus instead is on how you feel rather than what you can do. It has been said that chronic feelers are losers. The solution is to act healthfully no matter how you feel. Don't dawdle. Make decisions even if they are small ones. Take action. Don't languish in regret. Focus on what you have to accomplish.

5. Improve your tolerance for frustration:

Improve your tolerance for frustration so you can weather any storm. Frustration means not getting what you want or getting what you don't want. It refers to an obstruction that prevents you from reaching your goals. It refers to being hindered or restrained. Unfortunately, frustration is a fact of life. Ever since we humans were thrown out of the Garden of Eden, instant gratification has been a rare

event. So, to live a healthy life, you must improve the coping skills that enable you to deal with frustration. Frustration tolerance refers to the ability to continue living a balanced, healthy, life despite encountering repeated interferences. It refers to how robust you are in the face of life's stressors and challenges. How well you handle frustration forms the basis for how well you cope with uncertainty. When you build strong frustration tolerance skills, you empower yourself to cope more effectively in times of uncertainty.

Chronically facing uncertainty with no resolute strategy or tactics for handling it can lead to a state of chronic stress. This is because we have a basic biological need to resolve uncertainty. This need to resolve uncertainty is what motivates new learning experiences. In fact, there is an optimal level of uncertainty. Too much uncertainty may provoke excessive anxiety and tension; too little uncertainty may lead to boredom and indifference.

So, one key to not becoming worn out by persistent uncertainty is to find ways to moderate the degree of uncertainty that you deal with in your day-to-day living. A second key is to control your anxiety about uncertainty. This entails learning how to accept and tolerate uncomfortable feelings. Unbound continuing uncertainty extracts a toll on your body. It triggers the "stress response," also called the "fight-flight response." This set of physical and mental reactions to uncertainty, to excessive demands, and to perceived or real threats is actually an adaptive response. It motivates you to reorient yourself in a reflex-like way, so that you can better cope with the stress of uncertainty.

This set of basic responses was necessary for survival in prehistoric times when humans lived in the wild with regular exposure to danger and life-threatening uncertainties. In fact, this fight-flight response continues to be basic to survival. However, when it is excessively or unnecessarily activated, your mind and body wear down. When the fight-flight stress response continues activating various cascades of hormonal and biochemical changes in your body, even after the reasons for your stress are gone, then you don't get any rest. Eventually you and your body become exhausted from the continual strain. Your body is like a brilliantly designed machine. Without proper tune-ups at appropriate intervals, you are likely to wear it out.

Your brain and body work in harmony together because there is a feedback system of chemical messenger molecules and hormones called neurotransmitters. Chronic stress triggers this hormonal-neurotransmitter system to work on overdrive, and eventually it gets worn down and you get worn down with it. A variety of mental and physical disorders may result.

The neurotransmitter system is a communication system. It exists so that your cells can communicate with each other. It transmits electrical and chemical messages up and down your nervous system, to and from your brain, with the rest of your body. It needs to be well cared for and not to be on "red alert" all the time for your body and mind to function properly. Paranoia is not good.

Chronic states of stress throw this system out of balance. When we are over-aroused and anxious most of the time, this may result in certain conditions associated with running continually on overdrive. This may eventually lead to a system slowdown, producing other conditions, such as burnout or paranoia which then may lead to clinical depression. Moreover, being habitually stressed-out often leads to

painful, distressing symptoms such as, insomnia, general fatigue, loss of energy, loss of enthusiasm, impaired concentration, being easily distracted, indecisiveness, lapses in judgment, slowed thinking, feeling drained, nervous, and irritable.

Summary:

Learn to manage uncertainty and stay safe and secure. Remember to pack your personal defense tools on and around your person every day, and don't forget to be as prepared as you can be for every conceivable emergency.

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For a schedule of upcoming classes, you can log on to the PDS website:

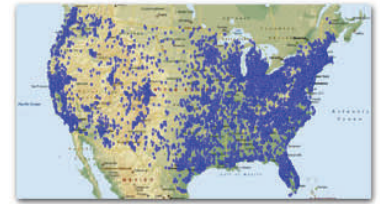
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Bruce is also the co-author of the "Essential Guide to Handguns: Firearm Instruction for Personal Defense and Protection."

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