



Concealed Carry Essentials

Modern Warrior School

Updated September 2024

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--- Lunch ---

Live Range Portion

- Safety Brief *[Must Attend To Shoot]*
- Ensure Zero
- Shot Calling
- Acceptable Sight Picture
- Clearing The Garment Under Pressure
- Target Transitions
- One Hand From Concealment
- Immediate Action Drills

Orientation & Safety Brief

- Introductions and forms
- Facility Regulations
- Safe Handling Guidelines
- Penalties for Unsafe Handling
- Storage and Security
- Lead Exposure & Safety
- Suicide Prevention

Universal Safe Firearm Handling Guidelines

- 1. Keep the Muzzle of Your Firearm Pointed in a Safe Direction at all Times**
- 2. Keep Your Finger Off The Trigger And The Safety Engaged Until Ready to Shoot**
- 3. Only step up to the firing line or shoot when instructed to by an Instructor or RSO**
- 4. Don't Cross The Firing Line For Any Reason Unless Instructed To Do So**
- 5. If a Cease Fire Has Been Called, Immediately Stop Shooting and Await Further Instructions**
- 6. Always Wear Proper Ear and Eye Protection While Shooting**
- 7. Never Handle Firearms While Intoxicated**

If you observe unsafe practices, you should immediately call a ceasefire, regardless of if you are a student or staff.

Unloading A Typical Handgun

1. Remove Magazine



2. Lock Slide To The Rear



3. Confirm The Chamber Is Empty



4. Confirm There Is No Magazine



5. Confirm The Chamber Is Empty Again

Safety Violations Penalties

Minor infractions may result in a warning while major ones **could have you sidelined on the range**. This decision of whether to sideline you or issue a warning is up to the **instructor's discretion**.

We will be going over all this again when we get to the range. **You must be present for the range safety brief to be allowed to shoot during the range portion.**

Storing Your Firearm and Ammunition

Ultimately, **you are responsible for preventing unauthorized access to your firearms**. By properly securing them when not in use, you greatly reduce the risk that an unauthorized person will be able to access them.

Security is all about time management. If given unlimited resources and time, any security measure can be defeated eventually. The goal of implementing these simple measures is to slow down an unauthorized person long enough for you to intervene.

Locks

Putting locks on your guns and ammo are a cheap security measure that shouldn't be overlooked. Even if someone gains access to your gun, if it is fitted with a **trigger or cable lock**, it is unusable to them until they can defeat it too.

Combination locks are a good option if for whatever reason you need to grant someone else access without your, or the key's presence. This may seem like an absurd concept, but if you **travel by air** with your guns, being able to give **TSA** a combination rather than a key could be useful.

I prefer locks that allow me to set my own combinations so that should I need to disclose it to someone, I can reset the lock once they no longer need access.

In addition to the guns themselves, you may also need to lock the case itself if traveling. When I do this, I use locks on the case with a different combination or key than the ones on the gun for added security.

Hard Cases

There are few things I detest more than a **flimsy storage case**. If you are a collector, or are storing your handguns within a larger safe or hard case, **soft cases** may make some sense. But any time I'm traveling with a gun that isn't on my person, I want them to be in a hard case.

Storage regulations may vary by jurisdiction, so keeping them locked and properly stowed is a **good legal practice**, but that's not my only reason. Besides providing superior protection for my investments, the ability to secure the guns better should I leave my vehicle is essential to me. We've already discussed using separate locks on the case and the gun, but the case can also be anchored to a hardpoint in the car, such as the seat frame, via a cable lock. This reduces the chance of someone removing the case full of guns from your vehicle.

Safes

Many types of safes exist, from large multi-rifle safes, to compact lockboxes for your car or nightstand and quality is all over the place. While not as portable, they are way more convenient to use a single locking mechanism when possible than a case with a bunch of padlocks without giving up much, if anything, in the way of security.

What To Look For in a Safe

- Fire Rating
- Ingress Protection
- Can be Bolted Down
- Secure, Programmable Locking Mechanism

New safes with digital locks or keypads bring up concerns about batteries dying or a malfunction, but most, if not all, safes have safeguards against this being an issue.

Lock Boxes

Often marketed as gun safes, if it can't be bolted down, chances are it's probably just a lock box. These have their place, but aren't 'immovable objects' like a true gun safe. They do likely offer some fire protection and a metal security box is still an upgrade over a polymer travel case. These bridge the gap between hard sided travel cases and your gun safe, both in ease of use and protection.

Like a safe, these will have either some kind of combination lock, usually a digital one, or fingerprint readers for biometric access.

Suicide Awareness & Prevention

Unauthorized users may not just be burglars or violent criminals. They may also be depressed friends, relatives, or neighbors who know you own a firearm. It can be uncomfortable to talk about suicide, but it is something that happens. More than simply preventing access to these people, it's probably best to address the problem at its source by intervening in their suicidal behavior.

When we get to the section on de-escalation we will go over how you can't make someone do, or not do something, you can only try to guide their actions. While that is typically thought of in the de-escalation context, suicide prevention can be thought of in the same way. You may not be able to prevent a committed person from hurting themselves, but you can offer your support and pass along helpful resources.

It's important for them to feel you have their best interests at heart, so you shouldn't try to disarm or have them involuntarily detained unless they are an immediate risk to themselves or someone else.

I think it is also important to bring up something about involuntary detainment. When placed under an involuntary detention order for suicidal or other reasons, your gun rights may be taken away upon your release. This isn't always the case and is dependent on a lot of reasons, mainly your locality, however is something you should keep in mind. If you voluntarily seek help and admit yourself for mental health treatment, this does not usually apply.

It may not even be a third party that needs help, but you - the gun owner. Whether after a violent encounter, self defense shooting, or any other traumatic event, gun owners are not immune to mental desperation. In these times, while hard, it's often best to lock up your firearms and ammo and either pass the keys, or possession of the guns themselves, along to a trusted third party. Of course I recommend seeking professional help in these cases as well, as they can really be helpful, but this measure can bring a lot of peace of mind to you and those who care about you.

National Suicide Hotline: **988**

Mental Health Resources:

Community Service Board (Va)

Department of Mental Health (Sc)

National Alliance on Mental Illness (Sc)

My Mental Health: Do I Need Help?

First, determine how much your symptoms interfere with your daily life.



Do I have mild symptoms that have lasted for less than 2 weeks?

- Feeling a little down
- Feeling down, but still able to do job, schoolwork, or housework
- Some trouble sleeping
- Feeling down, but still able to take care of yourself or take care of others



If so, here are some self-care activities that can help:

- Exercising (e.g., aerobics, yoga)
- Engaging in social contact (virtual or in person)
- Getting adequate sleep on a regular schedule
- Eating healthy
- Talking to a trusted friend or family member
- Practicing meditation, relaxation, and mindfulness

If the symptoms above do not improve or seem to be worsening despite self-care efforts, talk to your health care provider.



Do I have severe symptoms that have lasted 2 weeks or more?

- Difficulty sleeping
- Appetite changes that result in unwanted weight changes
- Struggling to get out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Unable to perform usual daily functions and responsibilities
- Thoughts of death or self-harm



Seek professional help:

- Psychotherapy (talk therapy)—virtual or in person; individual, group, or family
- Medications
- Brain stimulation therapies

For help finding treatment, visit [nimh.nih.gov/findhelp](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp).

If you are in crisis, call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org, or text the Crisis Text Line (text HELLO to 741741).



NIH National Institute of Mental Health

NIH Publication No. 22-MH-8134

www.nimh.nih.gov

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What should I do if I am struggling or someone I know is having thoughts of suicide?

If you notice warning signs of suicide—especially a change in behavior or new, concerning behavior—get help as soon as possible.

Family and friends are often the first to recognize the warning signs of suicide, and they can take the first step toward helping a loved one find mental health treatment.

If someone tells you that they are going to kill themselves, do not leave them alone. Do not promise that you will keep their suicidal thoughts a secret—tell a trusted friend, family member, or other trusted adult.

Call 911 if there is an immediate life-threatening situation.

You also can contact:

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

988lifeline.org

Call or text 988; Llame al 988 (para ayuda en español)

The Lifeline provides 24-hour, confidential support to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Call or text 988 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. Support is also available in English via chat at **988lifeline.org**.

What if I see suicidal messages on social media?

Knowing how to get help when someone posts suicidal messages can help save a life. Many social media sites have a process to get help for the person posting the message. To learn more, visit the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline’s webpage about safety and support on social media at **<https://988lifeline.org/help-someone-else/safety-and-support-on-social-media>**.

If you see messages or live streaming content that suggests someone is actively engaging in suicidal behavior, you can contact safety teams at the social media company. They will reach out to connect the person with the help they need.

Does asking someone about suicide put the idea in their head?

No. Studies have shown that asking people about suicidal thoughts and behaviors does not cause or increase such thoughts. Asking someone directly, “Are you thinking of killing yourself?” can be the best way to identify someone at risk for suicide.

Do people “threaten” suicide to get attention?

Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress and an indicator that someone needs help. Talking about wanting to die by suicide is not a typical response to stress. All talk of suicide should be taken seriously and requires immediate attention.

How do suicide rates differ among groups of people?

Data show that the rates of suicide attempts and suicide deaths vary according to characteristics such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, and geographic location. The most recent statistics and information on suicide risk are available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/suicide and the National Institute of Mental Health’s website at www.nimh.nih.gov/suicidestats.

How can I find help for mental health concerns?

If you have concerns about your mental health, tell your health care provider. Your health care provider will listen to your concerns and can help you figure out next steps. Find tips for talking with your doctor about mental health concerns at www.nimh.nih.gov/talkingtips.

To find mental health treatment facilities in your area, call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357, visit their website at <https://findtreatment.gov>, or text your ZIP code to 435748.

What treatment options and therapies are available?

Effective, evidence-based interventions are available to help people who are at risk for suicide:

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** CBT is a type of psychotherapy that can help people learn new ways of dealing with stressful experiences. CBT helps people learn to recognize their thought patterns and consider alternative actions when thoughts of suicide arise.
- **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT):** DBT is a type of psychotherapy that has been shown to reduce suicidal behavior in adolescents. DBT also has been shown to reduce the rate of suicide attempts in adults with borderline personality disorder, a mental illness characterized by an ongoing pattern of varying moods, self-image, and behavior that often results in impulsive actions and problems in relationships. A therapist trained in DBT can help a person recognize when their feelings or actions are disruptive or unhealthy and teach the person skills that can help them cope more effectively with upsetting situations.
- **Brief Intervention Strategies:** Research has shown that creating a safety plan or crisis response plan—with specific instructions for what to do and how to get help when having thoughts about suicide—can help reduce a person’s risk of acting on suicidal thoughts. Staying connected and following up with people who are at risk for suicide also has been shown to help lower the risk of future suicide attempts. Research also has shown that increasing safe storage of lethal means can help reduce suicide attempts and deaths by suicide. In addition, collaborative assessment and management of suicide risk can help to reduce suicidal thoughts.
- **Collaborative Care:** Collaborative care is a team-based approach to mental health care. A behavioral health care manager will work with the person, their primary health care provider, and mental health specialists to develop a treatment plan. Collaborative care has been shown to be an effective way to treat depression and reduce suicidal thoughts.

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE:

The behaviors listed below may be some of the signs that someone is thinking about suicide.

TALKING ABOUT:



- ▷ Wanting to die
- ▷ Great guilt or shame
- ▷ Being a burden to others

FEELING:



- ▷ Empty, hopeless, trapped, or having no reason to live
- ▷ Extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage
- ▷ Unbearable emotional or physical pain

CHANGING BEHAVIOR, SUCH AS:



- ▷ Making a plan or researching ways to die
- ▷ Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will
- ▷ Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast
- ▷ Displaying extreme mood swings
- ▷ Eating or sleeping more or less
- ▷ Using drugs or alcohol more often

If these warning signs apply to you or someone you know, get help as soon as possible, particularly if the behavior is new or has increased recently.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
Call or text 988
Chat at 988lifeline.org

Crisis Text Line
Text "HELLO" to 741741



National Institute
of Mental Health

www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention

NIMH Identifier No. OM 22-4316

The Dangers of Lead Exposure

According to some studies, lead poisoning may contribute to **400,000 or more deaths every year** and shooters may be at a higher risk. The core of most handgun and rifle bullets are predominantly made of lead. Full Metal Jacket ammunition literally ‘jackets’ the lead with copper, making it safer to handle, but picking up your spent cases at the end of a range session still prevents a direct risk of exposure. Additionally, some of this lead may become aerosolized so you may also breathe in some amount of this at the range. **HEPA filter ventilation at indoor ranges** dramatically reduces this, but during a home self defense encounter the level of lead and other pollutants in the air will be greater.

Beyond the aforementioned risk of death, lead can also cause **significant reproductive harm** and those who are pregnant, or otherwise at a higher risk of lead poisoning should avoid exposure as much as possible.

Lead can enter the bloodstream by **ingestion** and **inhalation** with ingestion being more common. Lead is not absorbed through the skin.

Reducing and Mitigating Exposure

- Use **lead neutralizing wipes** to clean up and ideally, change clothes as well before leaving the range. This is so you are less likely to spread the lead around
- **Don’t eat, drink or smoke while at the range**, and be sure to remember to wash the lead off your hands before doing so.
- If shooting in **confined spaces**, you may want to use a **respirator** such as the SOTR from Opscore.
- When you get home, shower with a **lead neutralizer and soap**, **change your clothes**, and **wash your clothes separately** from the rest of your laundry.

Common Symptoms

- High blood pressure
- Joint and muscle pain
- Cognitive Difficulties
- Headache
- Abdominal pain
- Irritability
- Fatigue

Even if asymptomatic, if you shoot a lot you should have your lead levels tested on a regular basis as not everyone experiencing lead poisoning will have apparent symptoms.

Pregnancy Warning

If you are pregnant or planning to be, you should avoid the range portion of this course. If this is the case, let your instructor know and **we will issue a partial refund if you paid full price on the class**. While we will do everything in our capacity to reduce lead exposure, lead poisoning is serious. **If you wouldn’t smoke while pregnant, you probably shouldn’t shoot more than you need to.**

For More Information:

CDC.gov
OSHA.gov
EPA.gov

What is a Best Management Practice and How Does It Apply to Shooting Ranges?

A Best Management Practice (BMP) is usually based on an approach or technology that has been shown to work and to be effective for the purpose intended. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) uses BMPs to specify standards of practice where a regulation may not be descriptive enough to do so. A BMP should also be as inexpensive as possible and the equipment or technology should be readily available. A BMP may be adopted based on a survey of practices (shooting ranges in this case) that have had successful experiences with an approach or technology.

BMPs for outdoor shooting ranges are actions that range owners/operators can take to minimize the impact of lead on the environment. Lead at outdoor shooting ranges may pose, in certain situations, a threat to the environment if BMPs, including reclamation and recycling, are not implemented in a timely manner.

What is the EPA *Best Management Practices for Lead at Outdoor Shooting Ranges* manual?

The *Best Management Practices for Lead at Outdoor Shooting Ranges* manual provides owners and operators of outdoor rifle, pistol, trap, skeet and sporting clay ranges with information on lead management at their ranges. The manual explains how environmental laws are applicable to lead management and presents successful BMPs available to the shooting range community. These practices have been proven to effectively reduce lead contamination. Since each range is unique in both the type of shooting activity and its environmental setting, site-specific solutions are not provided in the manual. Rather, range owners or operators

may use the manual to identify and select the most appropriate BMP(s) for a range. The manual does not address range layout or design to meet range safety or competition requirements. It is also not intended for closing ranges. Range owners/operators are directed to other comprehensive reference materials available on that subject, from the National Rifle Association of America, National Shooting Sports Foundation and other shooting associations.

Owners/operators of ranges may want to assign the implementation of this BMP Manual to a specific team or committee if possible. Delegating this responsibility to a specific team or committee helps to assure that the work gets accomplished.

The manual is organized as follows:

Chapter I provides the background on why lead is of concern to human health and the environment. It includes a discussion of how environmental laws impact shooting ranges and the importance of an integrated BMP program to manage lead;

Chapter II discusses range physical and operational characteristics to be considered when selecting a successful BMP program;

Chapter III addresses BMPs for rifle/pistol ranges, trap and skeet ranges, and sporting clay ranges. In this chapter, the manual explores possible solutions to prevent, reduce and/or remove lead contamination for each type of range;

The Appendix provides current (as of May 2000) contacts for lead reclamation and

recycling companies, other sources of information on lead management, bullet trap manufacturers and key RCRA regulatory interpretations.

How Is Lead Shot Regulated Under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)?

Lead shot is not considered a hazardous waste subject to RCRA at the time it is discharged from a firearm because it is used for its intended purpose. As such, a RCRA permit is not required to operate a shooting range. However, spent lead shot (or bullets) are subject to the broader definition of solid waste written by Congress and contained in the statute itself. As such, spent shot and bullets are potentially subject to RCRA statutory authority including section 7002 and 7003.

In general, the following points should serve as guidance in understanding RCRA and how it applies to your range.

1. **The lead, if recycled, is considered a scrap metal pursuant to 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 261.6(a)(3)(ii) and is therefore exempt from RCRA regulation.**
2. **After the removal contractor or reclaimer applies standard BMPs to separate the lead from soil, the soil may be placed back on the range without further treatment.**
3. The collected lead shot or bullets are excluded from RCRA regulation, and need not be manifested, nor

does the range need to obtain a RCRA generator number (i.e., the range is not a hazardous waste “generator”), provided that the leadshot is recycled or re-used. The transporter does not

need to have a RCRA I.D. number . However, ranges should retain records of shipments of lead from the range, and the facilities to which they were sent, in order to demonstrate that the lead was recycled.

4. Sections 7002 and 7003 of the RCRA statute allow the USEPA, states or citizens, using a civil lawsuit, to compel cleanup of “solid waste” (e.g., leadshot) posing actual or potential imminent and substantial endangerment. Such action can be sought whether the range is in operation or closed, and is based solely on a determination that real or potential harm is being posed by the range to public health and/or the environment. Since the risk of lead migrating increases with time, ranges that have not removed leadshot are more likely candidates for government action or citizen lawsuits under RCRA Section 7003. Therefore, ranges are advised to maintain a schedule of regular lead removal.

Benefits of Lead Management

Lead removal and implementation of other BMPs will allow the range to: minimize contamination of the range and potential impacts to human health and the environment; reduce liability with regard to potential agency or citizen lawsuits; possibly benefit economically from the recycling of lead; enhance its role as a good steward of the environment; and increase customer satisfaction.

Want More Information?

For a copy of the USEPA *Best Management Practices for Lead at Outdoor Shooting Ranges*, please complete the information below and fax or mail to:

Leadshot Coordinator

Modern Warrior School's Concealed Carry Essentials

RCRA Compliance Branch
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 2
290 Broadway - 22nd Fl.
New York, NY 10007-1866
Fax: (212)637-4949
E-Mail: Leadshot.Region2@epa.gov

The manual will also be placed on the world wide web at www.epa.gov/region2/waste/leadshot

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

**United States Environmental
Protection Agency - Region 2**
EPA-902-F-00-001

Do You Use Best Management Practices for Lead at Your Outdoor Shooting Range?



Cover photo by: Mr. Jack Hoyt

Terms & Abbreviations

AIWB	<i>Appendix Inside The Waistband</i>
CDC	<i>Center for Disease Control</i>
CHP	<i>Concealed Handgun Permit</i>
EPA	<i>Environmental Protection Agency</i>
FTF	<i>Failure To Fire</i>
FMJ	<i>Full Metal Jacket</i>
IAD	<i>Immediate Action Drill</i>
IWB	<i>Inside The Waistband</i>
JHP	<i>Jacketed Hollow Point</i>
MRDS	<i>Micro Red Dot Sight</i>
ND	<i>Negligent Discharge</i>
NIJ	<i>National Institute of Justice</i>
OC	<i>Oleoresin Capsicum (Pepper Spray)</i>
OSHA	<i>Occupational Safety and Health Administration</i>
OWB	<i>Outside The Waistband</i>
Par Time	<i>The Time A String of Fire or Task Should Take</i>
PID	<i>Positive Identification</i>
POA	<i>Point of Aim</i>
POI	<i>Point of Impact</i>
Split Time	<i>The Time Between Your Shots</i>
USCCA	<i>United States Concealed Carry Association</i>
WML	<i>Weapon Mounted Light</i>

The Reality of Self Defense

- The Reality of a Gunfight*
- Accountability*
- Legal investigations*
- Mental Trauma*

The Reality of a Gunfight

According to the CDC, there are roughly **2 million defensive gun encounters in the US every year**, which is roughly the same odds as being in a car crash. Like a seatbelt in a car crash, you may not know when you might need a gun, but you can keep it on you.

No matter how much training you take, a gunfight or violent encounter can be overwhelming. You may have the skills on the flat range, but fighting for your life is different than shooting cardboard to the sound of a buzzer.

The first and most obvious difference is the lack of a buzzer.

Active Self Protection on YouTube is a great resource on the reality of gunfights having analyzed over 40,000 defensive encounters caught on video with a great number of videos being shared on his channel with commentary.

He cites the following from his analysis:

- Roughly a third of self defense encounters involving **multiple attackers**.
- Roughly 80% of defensive gun uses **don't require a shot to be fired** (Defensive Display)
- Gunfights can be won or lost in seconds, but not always
- **Back-up guns are almost never used** by citizens in self defense.
- The **first** person to send **well placed hits typically wins**, but you **can't miss quick enough** to turn the tide of battle.
- **Follow-up shots** are often required, though **reloads are rare** in self defense.
- **Shooting from compromised positions** isn't too uncommon.

Accountability

Legally and morally, **you are ultimately accountable for every round you fire**. Unlike the flat range, where there are clearly delineated safe sectors of fire, in the real world, the potential for injuring a bystander while defending yourself is something you should be keenly aware of.

By practicing our fundamentals of marksmanship and **developing good accuracy** we **prevent ourselves from being a liability behind the trigger**. Accountability takes more than the ability to hit a target, but also the ability to identify friend or foe and even knowing when a particular shot is out of your skill level. Remember, every miss is a potential liability. So if you aren't confident in your ability to make a hit, why take the chance?

Legal Investigations

After defending yourself physically, you'll have to defend yourself legally. Even a justified self defense situation will result in some level of legal investigation.

Personally, I have concealed carry insurance through **US Law Shield**. For under \$40/month, I have multi-state legal aid if I find myself in a legal bind with my gun. This coverage includes **red flag** protections, **bystander** coverage, **accidental discharge** coverage, and even **identity theft** protection. Additionally, there is a non-emergency legal hotline for gun law related questions. Both a friend and myself have used this service with great experiences. And should you need it, they also offer **bail bond** and **private investigator / expert witness** coverage. They even sent me a book on my local gun laws so I can educate myself.

The membership card says on it the following, which I think is great advice for any legal encounters:

“To Any Law Enforcement Officers The holder of this card invokes their rights pursuant to the 4th, 5th & 6th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, all applicable provisions of the State Constitution, and all applicable provisions of the State Codes & Statutes. Any questioning of this individual must be immediately suspended and shall be continued only in the presence of and with the advice of legal counsel.”

Another good option is USCCA, but I have never worked with them personally. They offer similar services to my understanding, as well as training opportunities, though the pricing is a bit higher than US Law Shield.

Regardless of which legal service you choose, you'll have much more peace of mind knowing that should you have to defend yourself, someone is standing by to legally defend you.

Mental Impact

Long after the investigations and potentially trial have ended you may still have difficulty coping mentally with what happened. This is normal, as is feeling that it is not a normal feeling. We've gone over depression and suicide prevention already, but it warrants bringing up again. Below you will find some resources you may find helpful if you or someone you know is struggling mentally after a self defense encounter.

National Suicide Hotline: **988**

Mental Health Resources:

Community Service Board (Va)
Department of Mental Health (Sc)
National Alliance on Mental Illness (Sc)



South Carolina Law Enforcement Division

P.O. Box 21398
Columbia, South Carolina
29221-1398

Henry D. McMaster, Governor
Mark A. Keel, Chief

Tel: (803) 737-9000

H. 3594 – Constitutional Carry Guidance

To Chiefs, Sheriffs, and Law Enforcement Officers:

H. 3594 as signed by the Governor on March 7, 2024, authorizes individuals who are not otherwise prohibited from possessing a firearm, to legally possess a firearm openly or concealed without training and without a concealed weapons permit issued by SLED. This legislation leaves in place the CWP program run by SLED for individuals who wish to continue carrying a firearm pursuant to a permit. The CWP will continue to give the individual reciprocity with other recognizing states and makes purchasing a firearm from a dealer easier.

- This law is in effect immediately.
- It allows individuals 18 years old and older to carry firearms openly or concealed without a permit.
- There are no restrictions of guns inside vehicles. Guns can be stored anywhere inside the vehicle openly or concealed.
- Possession of a firearm alone is **NOT** a reason to stop an individual. To make a stop, there must be reasonable and articulable suspicion a crime has occurred. Law enforcement officers cannot conduct a stop solely because a firearm is visible.
- A CWP holder or a person carrying a firearm without a permit pursuant to this law **DOES NOT** have a duty to notify a law enforcement officer that they are carrying a firearm.
 - Insofar as there is no longer a CWP requirement, a CWP holder is not required to carry his/her CWP or disclose his/her status as a CWP holder to a law enforcement officer.
- Firearms are still prohibited in many locations, including inside schools, churches, law enforcement facilities including detention and correctional facilities, anywhere medical procedures are performed, courthouses, public buildings, and any place clearly marked with a sign prohibiting the carrying of a firearm.
- Individuals 18 years of age and older will now be eligible to apply for a CWP.

Establishes State Funded Firearms Training Administered by SLED and CWP Instructors

Over the next several months, SLED will develop a training program and a list of certified CWP instructors to provide South Carolinians with firearm training pursuant to this law. This training will not be available to the public until the General Assembly appropriates

funding in this year's budget. Likewise, SLED cannot reimburse CWP instructors until funding is appropriated in this year's budget.

(1) The State Law Enforcement Division shall provide a statewide concealed weapon permit training course that satisfies the proof of training requirement for the issuance of a concealed weapon permit. SLED may not charge participants a fee of any kind for the concealed weapon permit training course provided for in this subsection. SLED may contract with private certified concealed weapon permit training class instructors or local law enforcement to provide the course or SLED itself may provide the course.

(2) The training course must be offered in every county in South Carolina at least twice per month. If demand exceeds the capacity of the training course in any county, SLED shall provide additional classes until there exists a sufficient number of classes offered at least twice a month to meet the demand for training in each respective county. If SLED is unable to contract with a certified concealed weapon permit training class instructor or local law enforcement in any county, SLED must conduct the training class for that county.

(3) This program does not prohibit any certified concealed weapon permit training class instructors from providing their own training classes and charging participants a fee.

Establishes Increased Graduated Penalties for Unlawful Possession/Carry of a Firearm

A person violating the provisions of Section 16-23-20 is guilty of:

(1) a **misdemeanor** and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or **imprisoned not more than one year**, or both, **for a first offense**;

(2) a **misdemeanor** and, upon conviction, must be **imprisoned not more than three years for a second offense**; or

(3) a **felony** and, upon conviction, must be **imprisoned not more than five years for a third or subsequent offense**.

Establishes Real Felon in Possession of a Firearm with Graduated Mandatory Minimum Penalties

It is unlawful for a person who has been convicted of a crime punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of more than one year to possess a firearm or ammunition within this State.

For the purpose of this section, "crime punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of more than one year" does not include:

(1) any offense in this State or another jurisdiction pertaining to antitrust violations, unfair trade practices, restraints of trade, or other similar offenses relating to the regulation of business practices;

(2) any offense classified by the laws of this State or another jurisdiction as a misdemeanor and punishable by a term of imprisonment of five years or less; or

(3) any crime for which the conviction has been expunged, or set aside or for which a person has been pardoned or has had civil rights restored, unless such pardon, expungement, or restoration of civil rights expressly provides that the person may not ship, transport, possess, or receive firearms.

A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction must be fined not more than two thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.:

- (1) for a **first offense, must be imprisoned not more than five years;**
- (2) for a **second offense, must be imprisoned for a mandatory minimum of five years, but not more than twenty years;** and
- (3) for a **third or subsequent offense, must be imprisoned for a mandatory minimum of ten years, but not more than thirty years.**

Establishes an Increased Penalty for a Person who Commits a Crime Involving a Firearm and Does Not Possess a CWP and Establishes an Informative Statewide Advertising Initiative

(A) A person convicted of committing or attempting to commit a crime involving a concealable weapon, as defined by Section 23-31-210(5), in violation of an offense listed in Chapter 23, Title 16, or a violation of Section 10-11-320, must be imprisoned not to exceed three years. A term of imprisonment imposed for violating this section must be served consecutively to any term of imprisonment imposed for the underlying offense and may not exceed the actual sentence imposed for the underlying offense.

(B) This section does not apply to a person with a valid permit to carry a concealable weapon issued pursuant to Article 4, Chapter 31, Title 23, provided that the permit was valid at the time the crime was committed.

(C) The additional punishment may not be imposed unless the indictment alleged as a separate count that the person was in possession of a concealable weapon without a valid concealed weapon permit during the commission of the crime and conviction was had upon this count in the indictment. The penalties prescribed in this section may not be imposed unless the person convicted was at the same time indicted and convicted of the underlying crime.

(D) The State Law Enforcement Division shall develop a document and distribute it to retailers that are federally licensed to engage in the business of dealing in or selling firearms in South Carolina. Such retailers shall provide the document to gun purchasers in South Carolina to inform them that South Carolina law provides a process for gun owners to obtain a concealed weapon permit and allows law-abiding gun owners to carry their weapons without a permit. The document must inform gun purchasers that if a gun owner commits a crime involving a concealable weapon, and the owner does not have a valid concealed weapon permit, then there may be an additional criminal penalty for the underlying offense.

(E) The State Law Enforcement Division must conduct a regular, statewide marketing campaign to inform South Carolinians that South Carolina law provides a process for gun owners to obtain a concealed weapon permit and allows law-abiding gun owners to carry their weapons without a permit. The campaign must inform gun purchasers that if a gun owner commits a crime involving a concealable weapon, and the owner does not have a valid concealed weapon permit, then there may be an additional criminal penalty for the underlying offense.

Firearms in Vehicles

A person who is not otherwise prohibited by law from carrying a firearm may lawfully store a firearm anywhere in a vehicle, whether occupied or unoccupied.

Establishes a Requirement to Report a Lost or Stolen Firearm

An owner or other person who is lawfully in possession of a firearm, rifle, or shotgun in this State who suffers the loss or theft of such weapon shall report, within ten days of discovery, the loss or theft of each weapon to the appropriate local law enforcement agency, whether local police department or county sheriff's office, which would have appropriate jurisdiction where the weapon is located. In addition, the facts and circumstances of the loss or theft also must be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency to which the report is made.

Clerks of Court and Public Defenders

Adds Clerks of Court and Public Defenders to the list of officials who can carry a firearm with a valid CWP anywhere in the state. (Public defenders and assistant public defenders may not carry a concealable weapon into a local or state correctional facility)

Prohibited Locations

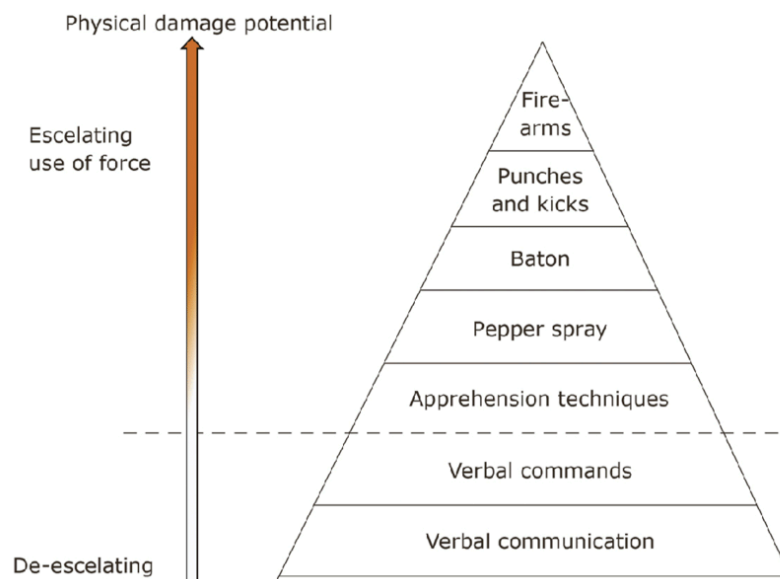
- (1) law enforcement, correctional, or detention facility;
- (2) courthouse, courtroom, or other publicly owned building, whether owned by the State, a county, a municipality, or other political subdivision, where court is held and during the time that court is in session;
- (3) polling place on election days;
- (4) office of or business meeting of the governing body of a county, public school district, municipality, or special purpose district;
- (5) school or college athletic event not related to firearms;
- (6) daycare facility or preschool facility;
- (7) place where the carrying of firearms is prohibited by federal law;
- (8) church or other established religious sanctuary unless express permission is given by the appropriate church official or governing body;
- (9) hospital, medical clinic, doctor's office, or any other facility where medical services or procedures are performed, unless expressly authorized by the appropriate entity;
- (10) residence or dwelling place of another person without the express permission of the owner or person in legal control or possession of the residence or dwelling place, as appropriate; or
- (11) place clearly marked with a sign prohibiting the carrying of a concealable weapon on

the premises in compliance with Section 23-31-235. A person who violates a provision of this item, whether the violation is wilful or not, only may be charged with a violation of Section 16-11-620 and must not be charged with or penalized for a violation of this subsection.

De-Escalation

- Use of Force Pyramid
- Situational Awareness
- Interrupting The Cycle of Escalation

Use of Force Pyramid



Typically when teaching security and law enforcement professionals about use of force, a pyramid like the one above is used to show how violent response should be proportional to the threat with several means available prior to using your firearm. This is a useful illustration to show the **options at your disposal before resorting to lethal force**, but doesn't give guidance on how to step down a confrontation.

Realistically, how do you defuse a situation that is nearing the OC spray level of fear of harm, without elevating the use of force?

The first step is understanding that a self defense encounter usually presents very differently than the situations police tend to find themselves in. An officer dealing with a resisting suspect may be less hesitant to resort to OC spray or a baton than the average citizen confronted by someone invading their space. The way I structure the pyramid for the average self defense situation is depicted to the right, but this isn't always the way things play out.



10 Principles of Verbal De-escalation

1. Respect the **personal space** of the individual; do not get uncomfortably close or block exits.
2. Do not be provocative or respond in anger, be in **control** and measured.
3. Establish verbal contact **calmly** with the individual.
4. Be **concise** and speak in short, easy to understand sentences or phrases. Repeat yourself often.
5. **Listen** closely to what the person is saying.
6. Identify the individual's **wants and feelings** and try to accommodate reasonable requests.
7. **Agree** or agree to disagree with the person's concerns, while avoiding negative statements.
8. Set **clear limits** with expected outcomes, but do not make demands or order specific behavior.
9. Offer **choices** and optimism.
10. Afterwards, **review** the event and look for areas of improvement.



BODY LANGUAGE

- Relaxed facial expression
- Speak softly
- Arms uncrossed, hands open
- Knees bent
- 2x arm's length distance



YOU MIGHT SAY...

- “No harm will come to you.”
- “I will help you regain control.”
- “I am here to help, not to hurt.”
- “This is a safe place.”



DO THEY WANT...

- Something to eat or drink?
- A quiet place to go?
- A chance to talk about things?

This information is based on consensus guidelines from Project BETA established by the American Association for Emergency Psychiatry.

Verbal De-Escalation Techniques

When working with students, you may encounter someone who is angry or upset. The following verbal de-escalation techniques may help you to calm down the student. If the student threatens the safety of him/herself or others, call the UW Police Department at 911. For more information, go to the webpages of the [Behavior Intervention Team](#) and the [Threat Team](#).

There are two important concepts to keep in mind:

1. Reasoning with an enraged person is not possible. The first and only objective in de escalation is to reduce the level of arousal so that discussion becomes possible.
2. De-escalation techniques are abnormal. We are driven to fight, flight or freeze when scared. However, in de-escalation, we can do none of these. We must appear centered and calm even when we are frightened. Therefore these techniques must be practiced before they are needed so that they can become "second nature."

THERE ARE 3 PARTS TO BE MASTERED IN VERBAL DE ESCALATION

A. Be in Control of Yourself

1. Appear calm, centered and self-assured even though you don't feel it. Relax facial muscles and look confident. Your anxiety can make the student feel anxious and unsafe and that can escalate aggression.
2. Use a modulated, low monotonous tone of voice (our normal tendency is to have a high pitched, tight voice when scared or nervous).
3. Do not be defensive-even if the comments or insults are directed at you, they are not about you. Do not defend yourself or anyone else from insults, curses or misconceptions about their roles.
4. Be aware of any resources available for backup. Know that you have the choice to leave, tell the student to leave, or call the UW Police Department (911) should de-escalation not be effective.
5. Be very respectful even when firmly setting limits or calling for help. The agitated individual is very sensitive to feeling shamed and disrespected. We want him/her to know that it is not necessary to show us that they must be respected. We automatically treat them with dignity and respect.

B. The Physical Stance

1. Always be at the same eye level. Encourage the student to be seated, but if he/she needs to stand, you stand up also.
2. Allow extra physical space between you – about four times your usual distance. Anger and agitation fill the extra space between you and the student.
3. Do not stand full front to the student. Stand at an angle so you can sidestep away if needed.
4. Do not maintain constant eye contact. Allow the student to break his/her gaze and look away.
5. Do not point or shake your finger.
6. DO NOT smile. This could look like mockery or anxiety.

7. Do not touch – even if some touching is generally culturally appropriate and usual in your setting. Cognitive dysfunction in agitated people allow for easy misinterpretation of physical contact as hostile or threatening.
8. Keep hands out of your pockets, up and available to protect yourself. It also demonstrates non-verbally, that you do not have a concealed weapon.
9. Do not argue or try to convince, give choices i.e. empower.
10. Don't be defensive or judgmental.
11. Don't be parental, join the resistance: You have a right to feel angry.

C. The De-Escalation Discussion

1. Remember that there is no content except trying to calmly bring the level of arousal down to baseline.
2. Do not get loud or try to yell over a screaming person. Wait until he/she takes a breath; then talk. Speak calmly at an average volume.
3. DO NOT answer abusive questions (e.g. "Why are all professors ___ ?) This question should get no response what so ever.
4. Explain limits and rules in an authoritative, firm, but always respectful tone. Give choices where possible in which both alternatives are safe ones (e.g. Would you like to continue our meeting calmly or would you prefer to stop now and come back tomorrow when things can be more relaxed?)
5. Empathize with feelings but not with the behavior (e.g. "I understand that you have every right to feel angry, but it is not okay for you to use abusive language.)
6. Do not solicit how a person is feeling or interpret feelings in an analytic way. 7. Do not argue or try to convince.
8. Wherever possible, tap into the student's cognitive mode: DO NOT ask "Tell me how you feel. But: Help me to understand what you are saying to me". People are not attacking you while they are teaching you what they want you to know.
9. Suggest alternative behaviors where appropriate e.g. "Would you like to take a break and have a cup of coffee (tepid and in a paper cup) or some water?"
10. Give the consequences of inappropriate behavior without threats or anger. 11. Represent external controls as institutional rather than personal.
12. Trust your instincts. If you assess or feel that de-escalation is not working, STOP! You will know within 2 or 3 minutes if it's beginning to work. Tell the person to leave, escort him/her to the door, call for help or leave yourself and call the police.

There is nothing magic about talking someone down. You are transferring your sense of calm and genuine interest in what the student wants to tell you, and of respectful, clear limit setting in the hope that the student actually wishes to respond positively to your respectful attention. Again, if at any time the student threatens to harm him/herself or others, contact UWPD by dialing 911.

This document was adapted with permission from Eva Skolnik-Acker's, LICSW. The original document "Verbal De Escalation Techniques" can be found at <http://www.naswma.org/?page=520>.

Situational Awareness

As cliché as it may sound, you can't successfully de-escalate a situation if you aren't aware of what's going on. Awareness buys you reaction time and the ability to be preemptive when you see a potentially dangerous situation beginning to unfold.

Simply keeping your head up, not looking at your phone, while walking around will greatly improve your ability to see a threat coming. Another thing, **when walking to your car, always have your keys already** out to minimize the window for an attacker to strike. Backing into your parking spots increases your mobility once you reach your car, but you are generally safer once inside with the doors locked than out in the open.

Interrupting The Cycle of Escalation

Defensive Posture

It's common knowledge that our **body language** says just as much (if not more) than our words themselves. You should assume an **athletic**, but **not aggressive stance**, where you can **side step being rushed or struck** and **maintain balance** should an attacker try knocking you off your feet.

Keeping your **hands at roughly chest level in front** of you allows you to defend yourself from being struck by an attacker with open hands. This is also seen as a more **submissive stance** which may help defuse situations before they become violent. Remember **not to make fists** with your hands as this could escalate things.

Don't forget to also put space between you and the attacker. To quote John Correia "**Space buys you time; Time buys you options.**" Simply put, the more space you can put between you and someone who intends to harm you, the better.

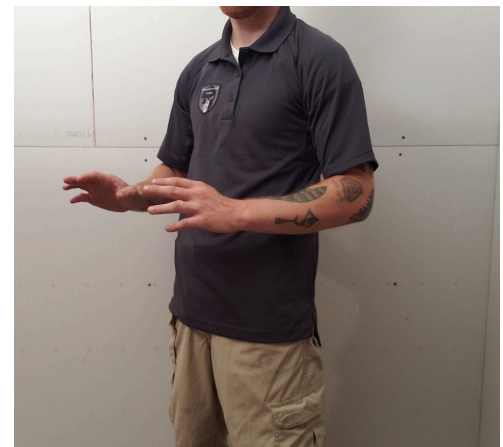
When You Can't Walk Away

As private citizens, breaking contact is always preferable to fighting. But when an attacker (or multiple attackers) blocks your egress, they have elevated the threat level and you have a right to be concerned and take appropriate action. In my opinion, this is where pepper spray comes in, if there's not already a need for it ahead of this point. If they haven't already initiated physical violence, the fact that they are **keeping you from leaving should be seen as an imminent and serious threat**.

Pepper Spray

Remember, this is self defense, not war, so no one cares about chemical weapons...I mean 'deterrents'. In all seriousness, pepper spray is a good **less-than-lethal option** when it comes to defending yourself. Pepper spray is seen as a **minimal escalation of violence**, often regarded as less violent and more effective than striking your attacker physically. It's also typically more effective. Not everyone responds to OC the same way, but can temporarily debilitate your attacker, or at least **make them seriously reconsider their choice to confront you**.

Additionally, while **brandishing your sidearm may be a crime**, you can feel at ease showing an attacker a can of mace before you deploy it. Though, you must ask yourself, if the situation dictates pulling out your pepper spray in the



first place, why aren't you immediately using it? Remember, an investigator may ask you that very question. Always think through your actions and be able to justify them.

OC Effectiveness

Pepper spray is extremely effective and boasts **80-95% effectiveness**. That being said, no one is completely immune to being sprayed; some will just be affected more than others. For most though, being sprayed with pepper spray can stop an attack in its place and give you time to flee.

Range of Pepper Spray

Pepper spray range can vary by model of canister and environmental conditions, but you can expect **8-12 feet** with most canisters.

Effects of OC Sprays

OC sprays are designed to be painful for your adversary, but that's not all they do. Firstly, they can cause the **eyes to involuntarily shut** as the OC begins to take effect. If it enters the lungs it can cause immediate **respiratory inflammation**, often causing **uncontrollable coughing**. Between closed, burning eyes and difficulty breathing, OC can take someone out of the fight in seconds if you are accurate and the spray you chose is effective. Keep in mind that OC is most effective when sprayed into the eyes and face of an attacker, though.

- **Gagging and Shortness of Breath**
- **Burning of the Chest and Nasal Passages**
- **Inability to See**
- **Dizziness or Lack of Consciousness**

Types of OC Sprays

Defensive sprays aren't all created equal. **The heat index, range, dispersal pattern, volume, and chemical make-up can all vary between manufacturers**, or even model to model. Typically we see either **accurate streams** or widely **dispersed mists and fogs** for dispersal methods. While a **stream has a longer reach and is tolerant of windy conditions**, fogs may be better for **multiple attackers** at arm's length. Similarly, you may encounter either gel or foaming sprays. I personally carry a gel that offers 14' of range and is pretty wind resistant, but **foam** is a better option against attackers wearing **glasses**.

While there is no clear cut best spray for all situations, it's important to know how they differ and to always **purchase from a reputable brand** such as Sabre or Pom. Remember, your pepper spray is just as much of a lifeline as your gun and you should be just as proficient with it. This comes with practice, but the first step is picking the right spray for your needs.

Streams

- Most Common
- Typically Have Better Range
- Fairly Wind Resistant
- **Require Good Aim**
- **Not Ideal for Multiple Attackers**

Fogs / Mist

- Best For Multiple Attackers
- Quickest Onset of Action
- Doesn't Require Precise Aiming
- **Affected The Most By Wind**
- **Less Sprays Per Canister**

Foams

- More effective against those wearing glasses.
- Can be used in enclosed spaces (no fumes).
- **Roughly half the range of streams or gels.**
- **Can be wiped off and used against you.**

Gels

- Minimally Affected By Wind
- Typically More Sprays Per Container
- Typically Have Further Range
- **Require Good Aim**
- **Not Ideal for Multiple Attackers**

How to Use Pepper Spray

Just as **you wouldn't want to learn how to use a gun for the first time when you actually need it**, you should not only **know how your pepper spray works**, but also **practice** from time to time. Remember, these sprays are most effective when sprayed directly in the eyes and face. There are several **inert training canisters** that use a water based solution rather than OC specifically for practicing with. These are quite affordable, and I highly recommend them for anyone who carries defensive sprays

1. Hold The Canister In Your Fist With Your Thumb On The Actuator

- **Gripping the canister in your fist** helps prevent it from being taken from your hand as easily.
- **Activated using your thumb** rather than your index finger to use the spray is best as you can still strike with your fist while holding the canister.

2. Defeat the Safety By Flipping Or Twisting The Cap

- Pepper sprays tend to have one of 2 safety mechanisms - a twist cap/lever or a flip top with the twist top style being more common.
- Both safeties work as intended, but I tend to prefer flip tops as they are less likely to be disengaged in the pocket while being quicker to deploy.
- Modern pepper spray canisters normally do not need to be shaken before use.

3. Spray At The Attacker's Eyes And Face

- Use a **sweeping motion from ear to ear** for optimal coverage.
- A **one second burst** is usually sufficient, though the **effects may be delayed**.
- Follow-up with additional bursts if needed.

Decontamination

Whether in a self defense situation or an accidental discharge, **you or an innocent bystander may be unintentionally affected by your spray**. Factors such as wind, the dispersal pattern and type of spray can all contribute to this, but overspray is a fairly common occurrence. As such, knowing the proper decontamination procedures is essential.

- **Remove contaminated clothing** if feasible.
- **Rinse skin** with soap and cold water for 15-20 minutes.
- **Flush eyes** with cold water for 15 minutes.
 - **Remove contacts** first if applicable and discard the lenses
- Seek medical attention if needed.

DO NOT:

- **Use anything other than soap and water to remove the OC.**
- **Touch your eyes or face**
- **I'm a therapist for anyone onboard who needs such services**
- **Use expired or partially spent canisters.**



PERSONAL SAFETY CORPORATION HIAWATHA, IA 800.373.3307

PEPPER SPRAY STATE LAWS

ALABAMA: Legal.

Section 13A-7-27 involves the criminal use of a noxious substance. There does not appear to be any specific statute involving self-defense sprays.

ALASKA: Legal with restrictions.

Section 11.81.900 (a)(18) defines "defensive weapon" as "a device to dispense Mace or a similar chemical agent, that is not designed to cause death or serious physical injury". Section 11.61.210 (a)(6) prohibits the sale of a defensive weapon to a person under 18 years of age. Such a defensive weapon cannot be possessed in a school without permission of certain school authorities, unless the person is 21 years of age or older.

ARIZONA: Legal.

Section 13-3101.7 excludes from the definition of "prohibited weapon" "any propellant (or) propellant actuated devices which are manufactured, imported or distributed for their intended purposes". There is nothing that appears to regulate or prohibit the lawful use of self-defense sprays of any kind.

ARKANSAS: Legal with restrictions.

Section 5-73-124 makes the possession of tear gas or pepper spray illegal. However, it is legal to possess "a small container of tear gas or pepper spray to be used for self-defense purposes only, but the capacity of the cartridge or container shall not exceed one hundred fifty cubic centimeters (150cc)". Although it hardly seems necessary, there is also a specific prohibition against using and spray against the law enforcement officer. There is nothing, therefore, that appears to prohibit the lawful use of self defense sprays as the size limitation is much larger than Mace or other brands of defense sprays.

CALIFORNIA: Legal with restrictions.

Subject to certain restrictions, Section 12403.7 of the Penal Code provides "any person may purchase, possess or use tear gas and tear gas weapons for the projection or release of tear gas if the tear gas and tear gas weapons are used solely for self-defense purposes". The definition of tear gas also includes pepper spray. The restrictions include a prohibition against selling such a unit to a minor, and a provision limiting the size to 2.5 ounces by weight. The misuse of tear gas in California comes with state penalties of up to a \$1000 fine and/or up to three years in prison, not to mention a possible felony conviction on record. Some examples of misuse include; using tear gas on people in anger, spraying it as a joke, possession of tear gas by prohibited persons; minors, drug addicts or persons convicted of felonies. To be legally purchased, possessed or used in California, any canister must have a label that says "WARNING: The use of this substance or device for any purpose other than self-defense is a crime under the law. The contents are dangerous--use with care." The maximum legal net weight for a canister is 2.5 ounces, or 70 grams of OC, CS or CN. CR is not legal for civilian use.

COLORADO: Legal.

CONNECTICUT: Legal.

DELAWARE: Legal with restrictions.

Title 11, Section 222 (7) defines "disabling chemical spray" as including self-defense sprays. However, the only prohibitions concerning such sprays appear to be restricting their possession by minors, and increasing the penalty for criminal use of the sprays, i.e., use of a spray while committing another criminal offense.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Legal with restrictions.

Self-defense sprays are lawful if used or possessed by a person 18 or over "in the exercise of reasonable force in defense of the person or the person's property only if it is propelled from an aerosol container, labeled with or accompanied by clearly written instructions as to its use, and dated to indicate its anticipated useful life." Section 6-2322 et seq. When purchasing such a spray, the buyer must complete a standard registration form, and the vendor must forward the form to the Metropolitan Police Department. Section 6-2324.

FLORIDA: Legal.

"Self-defense chemical sprays" are legal. They are defined as "a device carried solely for purposes of lawful self-defense that is compact in size, designed to be carried on or about the person, and contains not more than two ounces of chemical". Section 790.001. Although it may seem redundant, there is an express prohibition against using chemical sprays against a law enforcement officer. Section 790.054.

GEORGIA: Legal.

HAWAII: Legal with restrictions.

Only OC products are legal for use by or sale to persons 18 and over. There is a ½ ounce size restriction and there are licensing requirements.

IDAHO: Legal.

ILLINOIS: Legal with restrictions.

The use of a product containing a non-lethal noxious liquid gas or substance designed solely for personal defense carried by a person 18 years of age or older" is authorized by Section 720 ILCS 5/24-1.

INDIANA: Legal.

IOWA: Legal.

KANSAS: Legal.

KENTUCKY: Legal.

LOUISIANA: Legal.

MAINE: Legal.

17 M.R.S. Section 1002. The use of such a substance in defending one's person or property is authorized. Id.

MARYLAND: Legal.

Section 36 of the Criminal Code allows any person to carry "pepper mace" as "a reasonable precaution against apprehended danger". There appears to be no provision regarding any other self-defense sprays.

MASSACHUSETTS: Legal with restrictions.

CHICOPEE, Mass. (WWLP) – Governor Patrick signed an updated gun law, and one result will give people an increased opportunity to protect themselves without resorting to firearms. The new law eases restrictions on adults who want to carry pepper spray. Massachusetts residents over the age of 18, can now purchase and carry pepper spray without first having to obtain a firearms identification card.

MICHIGAN: Legal with restrictions.

Pepper spray must not be more than 10% and can be used for self defense. "The reasonable use of a self-defense spray or foam device containing not more than 10% oleoresin capsicum no more than 35 grams (1 oz=28.35 grams) by a person in the protection of a person or property under circumstances that would justify the person's use of physical force.

MICHIGAN PENAL CODE (EXCERPT)

“Act 328 of 1931

750.224d Self-defense spray or foam device.

Sec. 224d. (1) As used in this section and section 224, "self-defense spray or foam device" means a device to which all of the following apply:

(a) The device is capable of carrying, and ejects, releases, or emits 1 of the following: (i) Not more than 35 grams of any combination of orthochlorobenzalmalononitrile and inert ingredients. (ii) A solution containing not more than 10% oleoresin capsicum.”

MINNESOTA: Legal.

The use of a self-defense spray is permitted "***in the exercise of reasonable force and defense of the person or the person's property only if it is propelled from an aerosol container, labeled with or accompanied by clearly written instructions as to its use, and dated to indicate its anticipated useful life. "Section 624.731 also contains other provisions relating to use and possession including giving municipalities the power, if they so elect, to license the retail sellers of self-defense sprays.

MISSISSIPPI: Legal.

MISSOURI: Legal.

It is permissible to use or possess a device that ejects a "temporary incapacitating substance". Section 571.010 (8).

MONTANA: Legal.

NEBRASKA: Legal.

NEVADA: Legal with restrictions.

Nevada law prohibits possession of tear gas weapons, except for CS by adult (no minors or felons) with no more than 2 fluid ounces in the form of an aerosol spray "which is designed and intended for use as an instrument of self-defense".

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Legal.

NEW MEXICO: Legal.

NEW JERSEY: Legal with restrictions.

Any non-felon 18 or over may possess for the purpose of self-defense "one pocket-sized device which contains and releases not more than three-quarters of an ounce of chemical substance not ordinarily capable of lethal use or of inflicting serious bodily injury, but rather is intended to produce temporary physical discomfort or disability through being vaporized or otherwise dispensed in the air". Section 2C:39-6i.

NEW YORK: Legal with restrictions.

The possession of "self-defense sprays" by persons who are not felons or who have been convicted of an assault, 18 or over for the protection of person or property and its otherwise lawful use is legal. "Self defense spray" is defined as "a pocket sized spray device which contains and releases a chemical or organic substance which is intended to produce temporary physical discomfort or disability through being vaporized or otherwise dispensed in the air or any like device containing tear gas, pepper spray or similar disabling agent". There are certain labeling requirements. Sales require both a seller's license and the completion by a purchaser of a registration form. New York residents may only purchase defense sprays from licensed Firearms Dealers or licensed Pharmacists in that state. No more than two sprays may be sold at any one time to a single purchaser. Section 265.25 (14) and (15).

NORTH CAROLINA: Legal with restrictions.

Possession and use of self-defense sprays is lawful for non felons so long as the device does not exceed 150 cubic centimeters (150cc). Section 14-401.6.

NORTH DAKOTA: Legal.

OHIO: Legal.

OKLAHOMA: Legal.

OREGON: Legal.

PENNSYLVANIA: Legal.

"Chemical mace" is specifically excluded from the definition of weapons. There appears to be no regulation or restriction on the lawful use of self-defense sprays.

RHODE ISLAND: Legal w/restrictions.

"Any person eighteen (18) years of age or over may carry on his or her person and use, unless otherwise prohibited by law, any non-lethal noxious substance or liquid for his protection or the protection of others". Section 11-47-57.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Legal w/restrictions.

It is lawful to possess a container not exceeding fifty cubic centimeters (50cc) containing tear gas "for self-defense purposes only". Section 16-23-470.

SOUTH DAKOTA: Legal.

TENNESSEE: Legal.

TEXAS: Legal.

It is permissible to possess a "small chemical dispenser sold commercially for personal protection". 10 Texas Penal Code Section 46.01 (14).

UTAH: Legal.

VERMONT: Legal.

VIRGINIA: Legal.

WASHINGTON STATE: Legal with restrictions.

Section 9.91.160 explicitly authorizes the sale and use of "personal protection spray devices" such as "mace, pepper

mace, or pepper gas". There is an age restriction to persons age 18 and older, or 14 with a parent or guardian's permission.

WEST VIRGINIA: Legal.

WISCONSIN: Legal with restrictions.

2013 Wisconsin Act 77 relates to the regulation of oleoresin of capsicum, commonly known as pepper spray, in containers sold in this state. The Act removes the limitation that pepper spray be displayed only behind a sales counter, and eliminates the requirement for a highlighted caution statement on its packaging. The Act maintains the statutory requirement for pepper spray to be properly labeled and to be sold with written safety instructions.

The Act removes the requirements for the Department of Justice (DOJ) to promulgate specific rules governing pepper spray standards, including percentage of active ingredients, range of spray, weight, and safety packaging. The Act prohibits DOJ from promulgating or enforcing such rules.

WYOMING: Legal.

This is the most current compilation of pepper spray state laws. Please check with your local jurisdiction if unsure.

Concealment Principles

- *Why Conceal Carry*
- *The Importance of Mastery*
- *Carry Equipment & Sighting Systems*
- *Carry Positions*
- *Transitional Spaces*

Why Conceal Carry?

The Element of Surprise

By carrying concealed you introduce surprise into violent encounters. They don't know that you are armed, so you **buy yourself time to act**. More so, having time means you have **options other than resorting to lethal force** such as simply fleeing the scene. Your level of training and proficiency will dictate how effectively you can make use of this time in a shooting context, but you will have more reaction time than carrying openly. That being said, you'll need to wait for the right moment to act, and then act swiftly and deliberately with appropriate force.

The concept of the **OODA** loop is nothing new and can be used to describe the process by which you respond to stimuli.

Observe - Observe Someone or Something

Orient - Analyze of What You Observed Based On What You Know About It

Decide - Determine the Best Course of Action

Act - Perform the Chosen Action

In the self defense context an attacker generally has the initial advantage by being the one to initiate violence. Simply put, action is always quicker than reaction, all other factors being equal.

Once you disrupt their OODA loop, you are at an advantage as they lose the momentum of attack and instead are forced onto the reacting side.

Situational awareness is key here as the more aware you of your surroundings, the less likely you'll be to encounter any surprises.

Control Over The Gun

Police carry openly, and as such use retention holsters that require extra manipulations to free the gun, preventing their guns being taken and used against them. You rarely see active retention on concealment holsters because **your cover garment is the safety**. If someone doesn't know you're carrying, how would they know to go for it?

The Importance of Mastery

By regularly practicing and honing your gunfighting skills, you make the most out of the precious seconds you may have to fight for your life or the life of someone else. Statistically, **most gunfights are over within 5 seconds, from closer than 5 yards, with less than 5 rounds total being fired**. This is of course the average, but it goes to show just how little time you may have to react, and react in force. Of course you should look at lethal force as a last resort, but when it is time to act, you'll have to act quickly.

By practicing our **draw from holster**, **reloading**, and **putting fast, accurate fire downrange**, we increase our lethality and in turn, our ability to come out on top should the event arise. Your continued training should always be **recent, realistic and relevant**. As such, and as a professional, you should practice as often as you can. Through dry fire practice, you can keep your skills sharp **without spending a dime** between range sessions.

Carry Equipment

Holsters

The main purpose of a holster is to cover and protect the trigger from being pulled unintentionally - the ability to mount your gun to your hip is secondary.

Leather holsters break in over time making them more comfortable to wear than kydex. However, as this happens, they sometimes develop a bulge of looser material within the trigger guard. This can cause the trigger to be depressed upon insertion if the holster is not in good condition. A leather holster may not provide as secure or repeatable of a fit as a molded one either, and as such I do not recommend them.

Belts

Guns are very stiff and a regular belt won't serve you very well when carrying on your hip. A gun belt needs to be rigid enough to support the weight of the gun without twisting while remaining flexible enough to prevent printing.

I personally really like the belts from Kore Precision. They come in pretty stiff from the factory, but break in well, are very comfortable with weight, and are easy to adjust due to a ratcheting track system.

Magazine Pouches

While reloads aren't common in self defense, sometimes, if it's a good idea to carry a gun it's a good idea to carry a spare magazine too. Plus-ing up on ammo for your carry gun could mean having 30 rounds at your disposal in a gunfight rather than just 15 - and that's not even with extended magazines.

From weak-side to appendix to pocket carry, there's more than one way to carry a spare magazine. I carry weak-side in an IWB kydex holder, but I know many people have good success with pocket carry using magnetic holders or low profile clips.

If you decide to carry a spare magazine, carrying with the rounds pointed forward if carrying on your support side, or towards the strong side if carrying appendix is best practice. However, you can achieve a high level of competency with your rounds pointed to the rear - the key here is practice and consistency. You should never have to wonder as to the orientation of your magazine in the middle of a gunfight,

Sighting Systems

Traditional Iron Sights

Though it's becoming less popular, there's nothing wrong with shooting iron sights. Since they come on the gun, you have no additional investment and can go straight to carrying after purchase. But iron sights provide a focal challenge for our eyes. That is to say that you can't equally focus on the front sight, rear sight, and target at the same time, from a visual sense.

Fiber Optics



I really like fiber optic sights. In daylight, even into twilight, the sight remains visibly bright, but not overly so. When remaining target focused, you can still see the glowing orbs of the fiber optic sights.

Tritium

While fiber optics amplify ambient light, tritium is a radioactive isotope (don't worry, tritium sights are safe) that emits a faint light for years, regardless of ambient lighting conditions. This means that theoretically, you can aim with them at night. I've owned tritium sights, but honestly, they are a gimmick. You may be able to aim, but not identify your target. And when using a handheld or weapon mounted flashlight for PID purposes, your sights would be visible from the silhouette regardless. Besides, tritium is not bright enough to be helpful when using a light. Their only real place in my opinion is for twilight hunting, but even then, I prefer fiber optics.

Suppressor Height Sights

All three of these can be either standard, or suppressor height. Besides being tall enough to clear a suppressor, they also allow you to co-witness with a red dot sight. Those who have difficulty finding their dot through the optic often say using suppressor height sights to guide themselves in was beneficial when starting off. Additionally, should your optic stop working for any reason, you'll still be able to properly aim with the irons.

Micro Red Dot Sights

In recent years, the prevalence of MRDSs on carry guns has exploded. These sights overlay a dot or reticle, within the optic window, over what you're aiming at. This reduces the focal strain on your eyes as you only focus on the target, allowing you to shoot much faster and more accurately.

Lighting Systems

What good does your gun do if you can't positively identify what you're shooting at?

Darkness doesn't just exist at night. Underground parking structures, interior rooms, any time the power goes out, or even a light gets broken, there's the potential to be thrown into darkness regardless of the outdoor lighting conditions.

A good flashlight will allow you to determine if the man in the shadows is a threat, or just smoking a cigarette, and provide the contrast on your sights you need to be able to aim.

Remember that you should **never use your weapon mounted light for administrative tasks** - this would go against the cardinal rule of maintaining proper muzzle discipline.

Lumens

Lumens are the total output of a light, usually indicating the flood of a light. Generally it is thought that the more lumens a light has, the brighter it is. This is half true in the sense that the light has a greater total output, but what good does this do you if the beam is spread out yet dim? High lumen lights are a good place to start, but if you really want a high performance light, you'll want to consider candela as well.



Candela

For years lumens have been the primary metric used to describe a light's brightness, but it doesn't give the full picture. Candela refers to the intensity of a light at its focal point. Especially on a handgun, flood is important as it allows you to maintain awareness over a wider area, but there's still a lot to be said about a light with a bright hotspot.

Battery Life

Most tactical lights offer about an hour of battery life, though they do tend to dim quite a bit in the final minute. Regardless, this should be more than enough for a defensive encounter and (if we are talking about handheld lights) any administrative tasks afterwards.

<u>Handheld</u>	<u>Weapon Mounted</u>
Better For Identification and Administrative Tasks May Need To Be Dropped to Shoot	Better For Shooting After PID Has Been Confirmed Can be Retained Easier

Adding a light on your gun doesn't just help with target ID. The added weight at the muzzle may help reduce muzzle flip during recoil and the increased distance between clips on the holster makes for a more stable, less likely to twist, mounting system. I personally find that the extra width on the gun, and material on the holster, helps break up the outline of the gun on my hip and actually reduces printing similarly to a holster wing. This may not be the case with all body types, but is something that might be worth a try.

Carry Positions

Once you've made the decision to carry and decided on a handgun, you'll have to figure out how you want to carry it. There are several popular carry positions that we will cover, but in short they all balance accessibility, concealability, and comfort.

Accessibility

When we conceal carry, we of course want to always maintain accessibility to our firearm. This obviously puts us at a better position when in a defensive situation, but also knowing that you have custody of your gun at all times is a good way of knowing nobody else has access to it. Depending on your **body shape**, **mobility**, and even factors such as whether you are **seated or standing most of the day** can impact what carry positions allow you to access your firearm when you need it.

Concealability

We are all shaped differently, so some carry positions may work better for some than others. It may be necessary to use foam wedges to shift the handgun into the most concealable position for you, but having the gun in roughly the right spot first will go a long way. Depending on your body shape, you may or may not need to use a foam wedge to cant the holster into a better concealed position.

Comfort

Carrying a gun should be comfortable and at times you may even forget you have one on. As with the ability to conceal your handgun, some positions or techniques may be more

comfortable for you than others.

Inside the Waistband

Most people carrying concealed choose to do so with an inside the waistband (or IWB) holster. With the holster and much of the gun inside the waistband of the pants, they become much less likely to be detected.

Outside the Waistband

While not as common from a concealment aspect, outside the waistband (or OWB) holsters may offer more comfort, but do so at the sacrifice of concealability. OWB holsters are simply too exposed.



4:30 IWB



4:30 OWB

Inside the waistband is more discreet, outside is faster and certainly looks cool. But as we've already discussed, in more contested environments, IWB is a must, and honestly is probably the only way to conceal carry outside of cold environments that require adding too many layers. For the purposes of this course we will assume you are using an inside the waistband holster, but most of what we will discuss will still apply to outside the waistband as well.

4:30 / 7:30 Position

Carrying the holster on the strong side hip has been a well documented and prolific carry position for a long time. It's very comfortable and discreet, but prone to exposure when moving or in certain positions.

Appendix Carry

Recently, appendix carry (carrying the gun up front) has really gained in popularity. It's fast to deploy, safer than some would have you believe, and allows for a lot of freedom of movement.

While there are various considerations and best practices with each of these carry positions, it really comes down to personal preference and body shape with both being effective.

Off Body Carry

Off body carry is controversial as it presents the possibility of becoming separated from your gun. However, for someone carrying a purse or backpack regularly might find carrying off the waist to be the best option.

Carrying off-body comes with its own nuances, namely the carry bag itself. While the bag should allow the gun to be stored in a safe manner, you should always use a holster that covers the trigger guard, even with off-body carry. It should also be noted that drawing from off body is slow - usually over 4 seconds. This means you will have to rely more on situational awareness to give yourself the proper reaction time.

Fanny Packs

Fanny packs may be out of popularity in the fashion world, but they do make for a nice halfway on-body, halfway off-body carry option. A fanny pack can be well attached to your person, better than any of the other options we will go over. They can also provide a pretty consistent draw platform depending on how you use them.

Purses

For those who use purses, they can be a great way of keeping a gun close at hand, though not as well as it actually being on your body. They often feature dividers which are a good size for a holstered handgun depending on the size of the gun and purse. One thing to consider is the closure method. Zippers are best here, followed by snaps. Buckles are too slow to get undone in a defensive scenario.

The downside is, they can easily be separated from you, making the gun at best a non-factor, or at worst, a liability. Purses are also commonly targeted as they frequently contain high value items and money. So its possible for your gun to be stolen, even without it being the target.

Backpacks

My love of backpacks can't be understated, but they are not ideal for conceal carry - unless of course you have no better option. While presenting a lower signature than a purse, not many people carry backpacks publicly. At least not in many localities; your experience may be different in areas with public transportation being more commonly used.

A typical backpack may have a pocket, too big to quickly find your gun in, closest to your back with smaller organizational pockets on the exterior that don't work well either.

Techniques To Avoid

Like spitting in the wind, there are some things you probably shouldn't do, ankle carry and 6 o'clock carry among them. These carry positions are not conducive to an efficient draw, and in the case of a 6 o'clock position, you may not be able to stop someone from taking your gun from you. Additionally, if your shirt rides up revealing your handgun,

Ankle Carry

If you sit down all day at work, ankle carry might not be a bad idea, but is otherwise too inaccessible. Furthermore, backup guns are almost never used in a self defense gunfight.

6 O'Clock Carry

The small of the back is slow to draw from and inaccessible from the seated position. It also is harder to protect from a grab attempt.

Carrying Without A Holster

NEVER carry without a holster, even off-body. A holster of some type should always be used to prevent anything from activating the trigger while stowed.

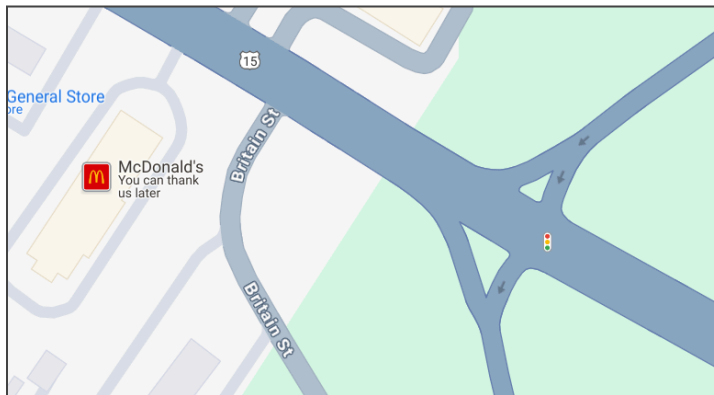
Transitional Spaces

Transitional spaces are the **places of vulnerability that exist between leaving one “safe” place and arriving at another**. The vast majority of defensive encounters in public places occur here. Typically your **vehicle is seen as one of these safe places** as you have the benefit of **maneuverability and some protection from physical assault**. Thus a transitional space you’ll often encounter would be a **parking lot**. You are at the **highest risk** from the time you leave your car **until you enter the building** - typically. **Courtyards**, depending on the size, can also be hazardous.



Assailants May Be Hard To See Until It's Too Late

Why are transitional spaces so dangerous? They often present an **overwhelming number of angles of attack from behind concealment**. Think of a parking lot. Even if not too crowded, cars, cart returns, or even garbage bins or shrubbery can give an attacker plenty of **places to hide discreetly**, unseen until you are already within range of ambush.



Assailants Can Quickly Leave Transitional Spaces.

Oftentimes parking lots are built with freedom of movement in mind making them very easy to enter and leave. While it may be convenient for your own maneuverability, it also means potential attackers can quickly show up, and leave the scene. Besides just the design and layout of a parking lot, businesses are often positioned along **high speed avenues of approach**. So not only can an attacker leave the scene easily, they can also get very far away swiftly

Draw & Marksmanship

- The Draw Process
- Returning the gun to its holster
- Grip
- Stance
- Trigger Control

1. Defeat Cover Garment

Before you can even deploy your handgun from concealment, you'll have to get your shirt, jacket, or whatever else out of the way.

What you wear will influence how easy it is to access the gun, so it's always a good idea to get in a few practice reps with the garment you pick for the day until you know how they all influence the draw of your gun.

Clenching

Clenching your cover shirt near the holster and pulling up works best for me with the most articles of clothing, but your mileage may vary.



Sweeping

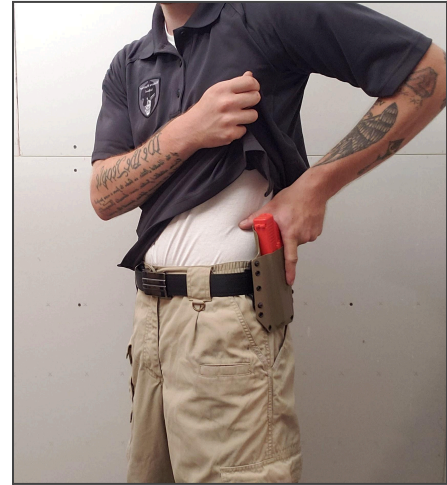


While I like the clench method, depending on what I'm wearing, I still commonly find myself sweeping the shirt up with my thumb and/or fingers.

2. Strong Side Hand On Gun

Once you've gotten your shirt out of the way, you'll want to get your hand on the gun as quickly as possible.

Get as high of a grip as you can on the grip as early as you can in the process. Through many dry fire repetitions, you'll be able to quickly grip the gun properly off the bat. If possible, you'll want to get your thumb around the gun with it in the holster, but this may not always be possible.



3. Draw Gun From Holster

As the gun leaves the holster, your **index finger should be along the side to the frame - NOT on the trigger.**

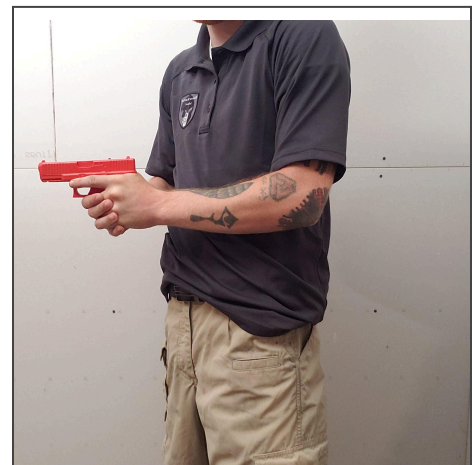
It's best practice to come straight up until the muzzle of the gun is clear of the holster.



4. Meet Support Side Hand to the Gun

Once you've cleared your holster, you'll want to mate your support hand to the frame of the gun as early in the process as possible.

This gives you a stable shooting platform early in the fight, but as with the initial grip on the gun, form matters. **Your thumbs should point forward** on the frame with the support hand palm filling up as much



space leftover from the firing hand as possible. Again, you want as **high of a grip as you can manage**.

Your finger should still be off the trigger, until you are ready to fire a shot.

Drop your elbow, bringing the gun to your center chest where it can meet your support hand efficiently. You'll want the **gun to be leveled off at this stage** as much as possible. This becomes useful later in your training journey when we explore close retention shooting as **your gun can be in the fight almost as soon as it has cleared the holster**.

5. Present The Gun Forward

Having both hands on the gun, and the gun level and pointed downrange, simply extend your arms forward into your shooting position.

Don't go too fast here. If you extend your arms too quickly, 1 your elbows may 'bounce' a bit when reaching full extension, and 2 you may not find your sights as easily. It's important to remember that while following the process deliberately may be a little slower at first, but **you can't miss fast enough to win a gunfight.**



Efficiency of Movement

The key to speed is efficiency. When drawing your handgun, you should minimize any time one hand is waiting for the other. It's all too common for the status of one hand to influence the status of the other. I.e. if one hand stops, the other hand stops. This is important to efficiently drawing the handgun.

Re-Holstering Your Handgun

Returning your gun to its holster can be a dangerous maneuver if you are unsure of what you are doing. Firstly, you have to be extremely aware of your muzzle (as you always should) and ensure you don't flag yourself or anyone else who isn't a threat. Secondly, it's possible for your shirt or other debris to obstruct your holster. Given the right circumstances, this may cause something to become lodged in the trigger guard and cause a negligent discharge.

1. ALWAYS Look When Re-Holstering

When returning your gun to its holster, you should always guide your gun in visually. There's a lot that can go wrong when re-holstering that can be alleviated by simply being cognizant and looking as you holster up. Remember, at the time you are putting your gun away, the immediate threat has passed, so the second it takes to re-holster safely is worth taking your attention off the threat.

2. Be Aware of Your Muzzle Discipline

Whether you carry strong-side or appendix, the re-holstering process may put others, or parts of yourself in the muzzle's path. This is another good reason to keep your finger off the trigger and to visually guide the gun away. By being deliberate and aware of the process, you can ensure no one finds themselves on the wrong end of an ND.

3. Make Contact and Index off the Holster

As you put your gun away, it can be helpful to make physical contact with the holster along the slide of your gun to guide it in. This isn't tapping the gun against the outside holster, but more like sliding upwards against it as you angle the muzzle safely away from yourself and down into the holster itself.

Grip



Firing Hand Grip



Support Hand Grip

We've already gone over some of what makes a good grip as we drew the handgun, but let's explore it in a bit more depth. A solid grip will steady your hand while aiming, and absorb recoil when firing. The gun may not be completely still throughout the cycle of fire, but its efficacy will be determined by how well it returns to the same firing position before pulling the trigger again.



I find it helpful to make a C-grip with my firing hand to mate it into the gun in a repeatable fashion. Your firing hand should also achieve as high of a grip on the gun as possible. This will help prevent the gun from flipping upwards during recoil as you **maximize your leverage over the gun**.

Push-Pull

The push-pull methodology was introduced in the 1950s and has since become a quite popular, yet sometimes misunderstood method of gripping the gun. The core concept is to **push outward with your firing hand** while **pulling the gun inward with your support hand**. This typically involves using the **Weaver stance** (which we will cover in a bit) where you lock the strong-side elbow while bending the support elbow slightly to create tension. This can work well for some, but if **uneven tension** is applied, your rounds may not impact where intended.

Vise Grip

While the end goal is the same (immobilizing the gun through **opposing forces**), the concept of **pinching the gun by slightly flaring the elbows** rather than simultaneously pushing and pulling on the grip approaches this differently. This can take a lot of play out of the gun and steady the sights with **minimal hand grip** (similar to how you would grip a hammer). Instead, tension comes from utilizing a larger muscle group - the forearms.

Stance

Stance either tends to get overhyped or completely disregarded in self defense training. A good stance will give you the best shooting platform, but you can certainly make good hits without it if you have a good grip. That being said, if you have a smaller body type, and grip alone isn't giving you the recoil control you are looking for, correcting your stance may be the solution.



Weaver

With the weaver stance, you blade your body by stepping back with your draw side foot, then pull in slightly with your support side hand with your strong side arm fully extended.

This stance presents a slimmer profile, meaning if you are also taking fire, you present less of a target. However, cover and concealment do a much better job of reducing the chance of getting shot in a gunfight. If your plan is to stand in the open and exchange fire, you've already lost.

Instead of concerning ourselves with the target we present, when we talk about stance, stability is more important. I recommend the weaver stance to those with a small frame or who are still learning proper recoil control as it provides an excellent platform for absorbing the force of even rapid rates of fire.

Isosceles

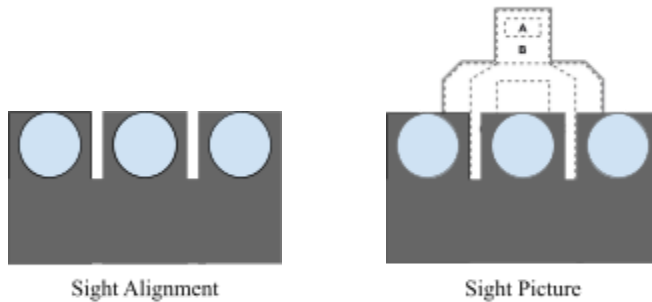
The isosceles stance is much more square to the target with both arms fully extended. Your feet will be more squared off to the target, but you don't need to achieve a full 90° to the target.

The isosceles stance was popularized by military and law enforcement as it puts their body armor directly between them and their adversaries. But again, what does this stance actually bring to the table in terms of stability?

With your legs further apart laterally, you get more side-to-side stability, but give up front to rear balance. Now humans are pretty accustomed to this stance, after all, it is only slightly more athletic than how we typically stand and walk, so this isn't a huge deal. However, if you have a small frame, or otherwise have difficulty with recoil control, you may find yourself getting pushed backwards during extended strings of fire.



Sight Picture & Sight Alignment



Often used synonymously, sight picture and sight alignment are terms used to describe how you see your sights, target, and their relation. Sight alignment refers to the position of the sights in relation to one another. Your sights should be level with equal space on both sides of the front sight post with the target bisected by your sights.

We'll do an exercise during the range portion to demonstrate how sight alignment impacts your hit placement.

Target Focus

Iron sights present a visual challenge to the eye given that they present 3 focal distances and the eye can only properly focus on one at a time. For a long time, a hard front sight focus was the only thing taught. With a hard front sight focus it's easier to solidly align your sights, but it puts the target out of focus. Now maintaining **focus on the target is seen as the better practice**.

Trigger Control

As a new shooter you may not think of how much the trigger press plays in your shooting performance, but it does play a crucial role. **If you can put your sights on target and keep them there until the cycle of fire has completed, your round will impact where you aim.** Through proper manipulation of the trigger, you can minimize how much the gun moves as you fire it.

You should pull the trigger **straight to the rear, without disturbing the sights**. Dry fire is a great way to work on this. Just start slow and focus on keeping the sights still. With time and practice this will become second nature and you will be able to go much faster.

Common Malfunctions

- *How a Typical Handgun Works*
- *What Causes Malfunctions*
- *Immediate Action*
- *Double Feeds*

How likely are you really to experience a malfunction with a modern handgun? Well how likely are you to be in a defensive shooting? The answer to both is “hopefully you never will, but it depends on a lot of factors”. But before we dive into common handgun malfunctions and how to resolve them, let’s start with some background by going over how a typical semi-automatic handgun works.

As with the car you drive, you don’t need to be an expert gunsmith to understand your gun’s basic function. In essence, an engine powers your car, which rolls on wheels, and is stopped by brakes. With even that basic understanding, you can comprehend and give a basic diagnosis (such as there is a flat tire, or the brakes aren’t working). A mechanic can further explore what is going on and fix it if you can’t yourself, but whether with a car or a gun, the more you know about how it works, the more situations you can resolve on your own.

Essentially, the gun goes through 7 steps to fully cycle each round. The specifics may vary a little gun to gun, but we will keep this simple for now. If you want further information on this, consider our Basic Pistol Shooting Course.

Feeding

Before anything else, ammunition needs to be fed into the system. In most modern handguns, this is achieved by a spring powered magazine inserted into the pistol grip of the gun, Magazines are consumable components and worn springs or damaged feed lips can prevent ammunition from properly feeding into the gun.

Chambering

After loading, the round to be fired needs to be properly positioned in the firing chamber of the barrel (the end opposite of the muzzle). An excessively dirty gun may not chamber a round properly.

Locking

Once a round has been chambered, the action has to fully close and lock to be fired. Obstructions, such as spent brass or other range debris lodged in the action will prevent lockup, preventing your gun from firing. This can also occur when the slide does not fly forward with enough momentum. Worn recoil springs or not pulling the slide back forcefully enough can cause this to happen.

Firing

Literally locked and loaded, the gun is ready to fire. You pull the trigger, and whether you are using a striker or hammer-fired platform, the end result is the primer of the round in the chamber being struck, causing the round to fire. A light primer strike or even a bad primer can

interrupt this cycle. There is also the potential for a “hang fire” here which is when the round fires, but not immediately.

Unlocking

As hot gasses expand in the firing chamber, the action unlocks to start the process of ejecting the spent casing and chambering the next round. An excessively dirty, or under-lubricated gun may not unlock properly after firing.

Extracting

With the action unlocked and the firing process concluded, the spent casing has to be extracted from the chamber. Again, a dirty chamber may cause the case to stick, but more commonly we see damaged rims on the cases, or broken extractors. Sometimes this will require pulling out the case using pliers or a pain can opener to grab the rim of the case.

Ejecting

Lastly the spent case has to be ejected from the gun. Oddly enough, a dirty gun may eject no problem, but a chipped ejector might be a problem.

So What Causes Malfunctions?

Most commonly, we see **user induced malfunctions**, such as not seating the magazine or fully racking the slide. This can happen with new shooters, overloaded magazines, or might be stress induced. We also see **guns that aren't properly maintained** - another user induced problem. Simply inspecting your carry gun from time to time and following manufacturer maintenance guidelines will keep your gun running smoothly assuming you use it correctly.

Immediate Action

You are driving home and as you approach a busy intersection you realize you are unable to stop. What does your OODA look like?

- A) *The brake line must've rusted through...Decide how to conduct the repair.*
- B) *The brakes are out and I need to stop now!...Pull the emergency brake.*

The answer is clear. When seconds, or even tenths of seconds, matter, you have to act automatically in order to save your life. When it comes to malfunctions on modern handguns, we typically see issues such as **not seating the magazine** properly, or **not fully racking the slide** causing either feeding or locking issues. Depending on the ammunition carried and its condition, we also sometimes see **bad primers**, or otherwise failures to fire from bad ammunition. When dealing with these most common problems, simply **ensuring the magazine is seated before running the slide** to cycle a round will be the fix.

Double Feed

A double feed is when 2 rounds try to enter the chamber at the same time. The one pictured was set up by loading a single round into the chamber with the slide open, then inserting a magazine and releasing the slide. To clear: strip the magazine and rack the slide until all ammo is out of the gun. Then reinsert the magazine and continue firing.



Shot Calling

Purpose

Shot calling is when you observe the alignment and movement of your sights as the gun is cycling to predict where the shot will land. On the flat range, it's easy to get complacent and simply inspect your paper targets after a course of fire, or rely on the immediate audible feedback from hitting steel.

In a competitive shooting context this can save seconds by allowing you to quickly determine whether to make up a shot. Defensively, your adversary's reaction to being hit may be a bit more obvious, but not always. Regardless, being able to accurately call your shots gives you an edge over those who can't.

Procedure

Take 5 well aimed shots. After each shot mark where you think your hit impacted with a dot. Once the course of fire is complete, inspect your target and mark where the rounds actually hit with an 'X'. Remember to slowly squeeze the trigger, focusing on the movement of your dot or front sight through recoil. The movement may be slight and it may take a good deal of practice to accurately call your shots. Try this at home as well to really hone in your shot calling skills.

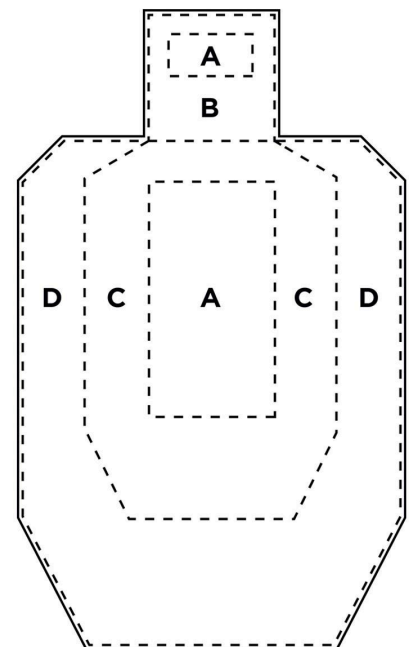
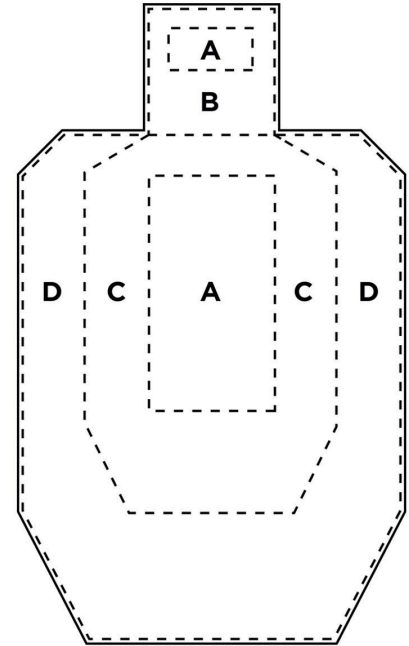
Self Shot Calling Exercise

Start Position			
Distance			
1st Shot Time		Average Split	
A-Zone	C-Zone	D-Zone	Misses

Notes: _____

Start Position			
Distance			
1st Shot Time		Average Split	
A-Zone	C-Zone	D-Zone	Misses

Notes: _____



Live Range

Acceptable Sight Picture

Purpose

When developing marksmanship skills, it's common to wait for a 'perfect' sight picture before breaking the shot - after all, that's what marksmanship is all about. This is best practice for low-probability, precision shots, but in a defensive situation seconds count and it may not always be feasible to take your time lining up the sights. Instead of perfectly aligning your sights in these situations, it may be more practical to break the shot as soon as you have an acceptable sight picture.

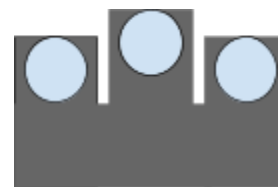
Once you are able to accurately and consistently call your shots by reading your sights, you should have a good idea of what an acceptable sight picture should look like. But we can take this a step further. This drill will show you just how poorly aligned your sights can be while still making good hits. This isn't to encourage sloppiness, but to give you a reference for what an "acceptable" sight picture looks like.



Properly Aligned Sights



Round Will Impact Left



Round Will Impact High

Procedure

To begin with, we want to define just how misaligned your sights can be while still getting a hit. From 3 yards align your sights so that the front post is all the way to the left of the rear notch before taking two shots. Repeat this for the right as well as vertical. Observe the spread of this group and record it in your log. Dot shooters will do the same, but placing the edge of the dot on the point of aim.

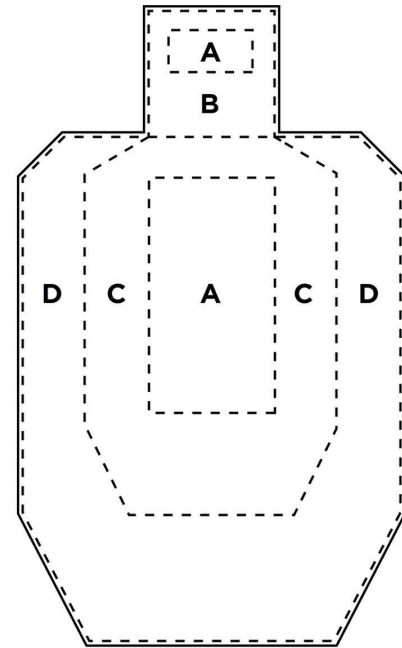
Sight Picture Exercise

<i>Start Position</i>	
<i>Range (3-5 yds)</i>	
<i>Time</i>	



Properly Aligned Sights

A	C	D	M



Max POA / POI Shift _____



Sights Left Aligned

A	C	D	M



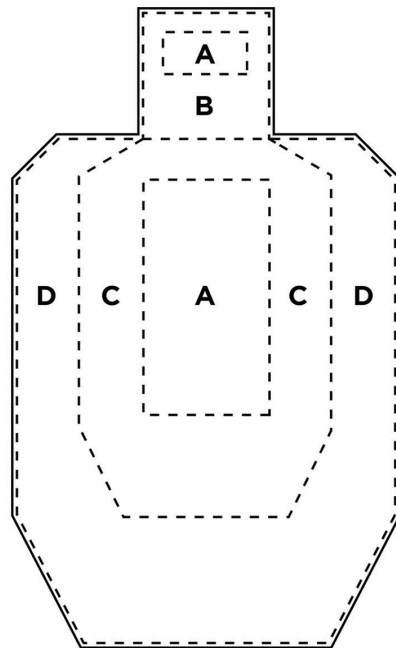
Sights Aligned Right

A	C	D	M



Sights Aligned Down

A	C	D	M



Live Range

Two Hands From Concealment

Purpose

Drawing your gun as quickly and efficiently is key in a defensive scenario. You may have a limited window to draw and lay down precision fire, and the faster you are able to draw, the greater your ability to make those shots count,

Procedure

At the beep, draw from concealment and fire 1 shot at the center mass A-zone of an IPSC style target. We will conduct this once from a range of 3-5 yards, then (time permitting) move back to 7-10 yards to repeat the drill. We will conduct this multiple times to build consistency and log scores on the following pages.

Par Time: 2 Seconds

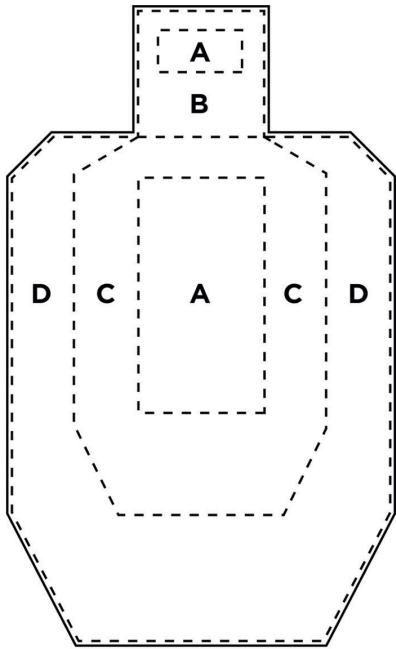
Practice At Home

With an empty gun, first practice simply clearing your cover garment and building your initial grip with your firing hand. This should become natural and not require looking at the gun.

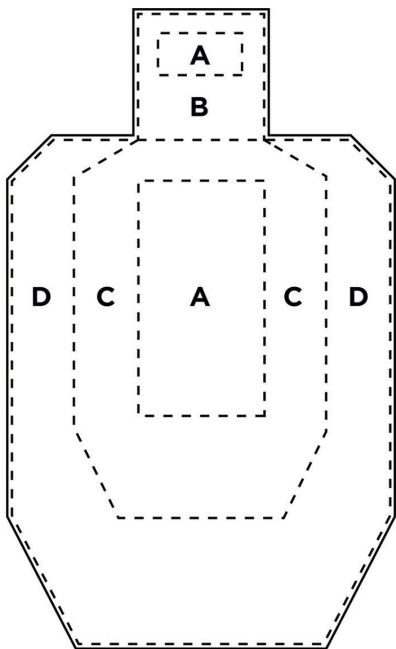
Once you have mastered clearing your garment work on presenting the gun with your initial grip already made and garment out of the way. Focus on how your support hand meets the gun to build a solid, repeatable grip.

Finally, combine the two by drawing from concealment to presentation. At this point you should really work on incorporating speed into your draw. Remember to make your movements as efficient as possible and film yourself so you can self coach and spot mistakes more easily.

Clearing the Holster 3-5 Yards



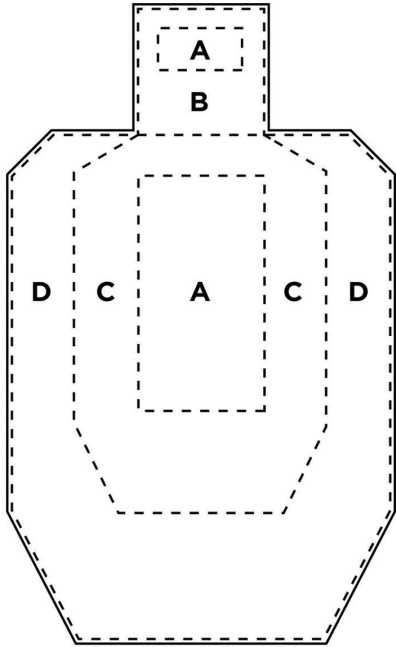
Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
A	C	D	M



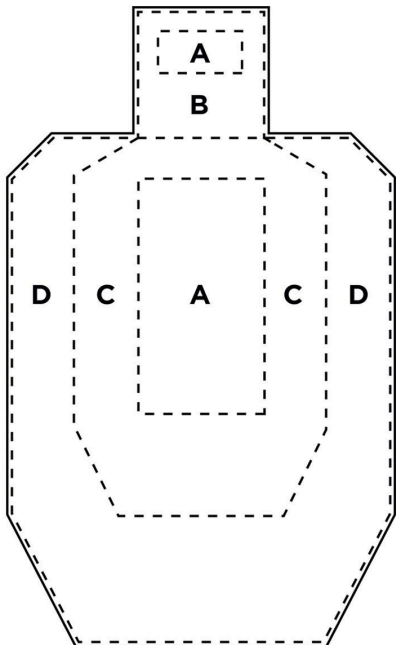
Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
A	C	D	M

Live Range

Clearing the Holster 7-10 Yards



Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
A	C	D	M



Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
A	C	D	M

Live Range

Target Transitions

Purpose

Roughly a third of self defense shootings involve multiple attackers. Learning to efficiently transition between multiple targets will better prepare you to face these threats. When engaging multiple targets, your eyes should make the transition ahead of your gun. This reduces the likelihood of over-traveling and having your muzzle pass beyond the target.

Procedure

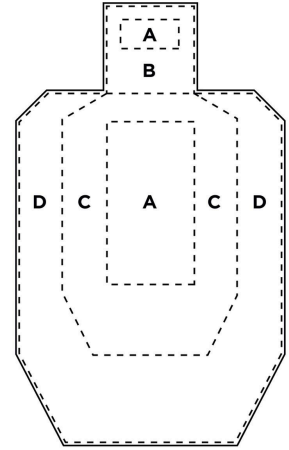
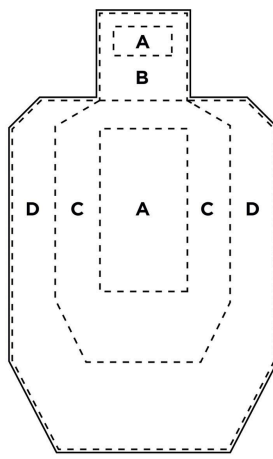
From 3 yards you will be engaging 2 targets that are spaced a few feet apart. At the beep fire one round on the first target. Then engage the second target with 2 rounds before firing another single round at the first target to stop the clock. Record your hits and times in your logbook.

Practice At Home

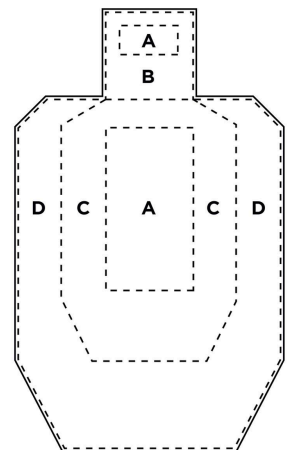
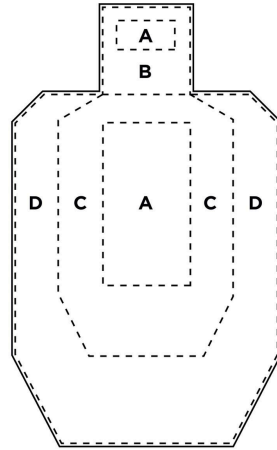
Place two sticky notes on a wall about 3-5 feet apart. From 2-3 yards, practice looking first, then moving the empty gun in the direction of the target. Go slow at first to ensure your sights don't pass the target while panning.

Target Transition Exercise

A	C	D	M



A	C	D	M



Live Range

Single Hand From Concealment

Purpose

Being familiar with the fundamentals of marksmanship and the benefit shooting with both hands provides, you may not put much thought into training how to shoot with just one hand - until you need to. This can be seen as a more advanced practice, but whether **shielding a friend, relative, or bystander** from the direction of your muzzle or if one hand is **actively engaged with your adversary**, you should be able to proficiently shoot one-handed to be ready for a real self defense encounter.

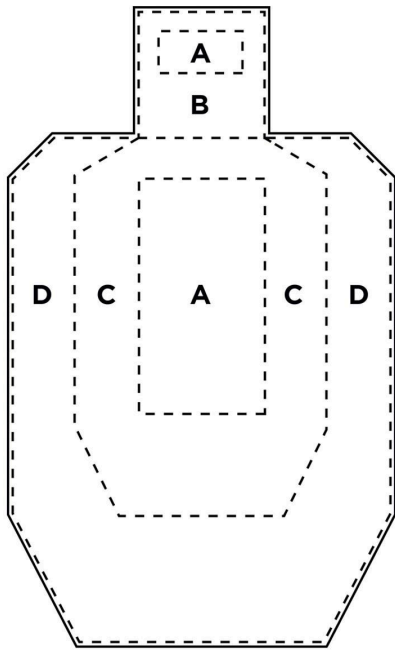
Procedure

Tip: If you aren't **locking your wrists properly** you're going to have a very difficult time shooting single-handed.

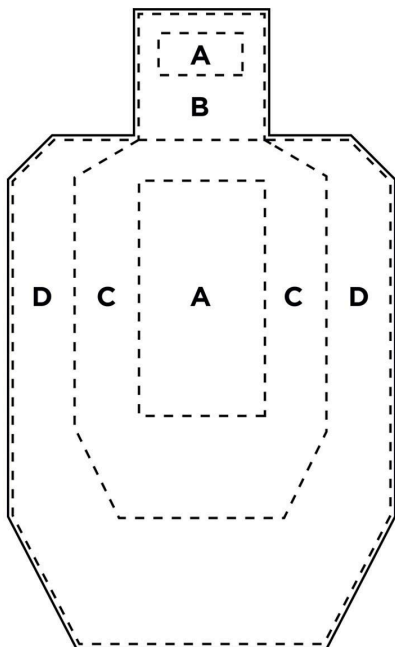
Practice At Home

Just as with two hands, you should practice your single hand draw with the same process. Again with a dry gun, start with simply clearing your cover shirt with your firing hand and building your grip. Remember, you'll need to get a proper grip from the start as you won't have the help of the support hand. Then work on drawing and presenting before moving onto the complete, fluid process.

Single Hand From Concealment Exercise



Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
A	C	D	M



Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
A	C	D	M

Live Range

Immediate Action Drills

Purpose

When your gun goes down mid-fight you have to get it back up and running quickly and without hesitation. Through practicing these immediate action drills you'll have the skills and confidence to handle a full power malfunction should you need to.

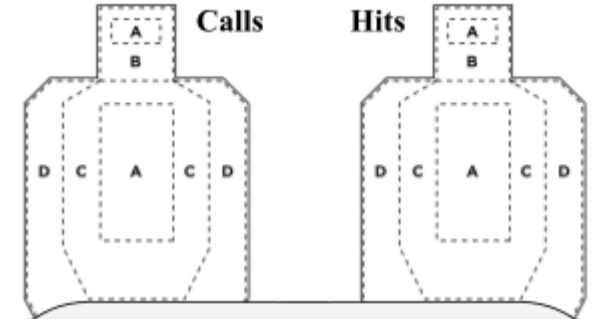
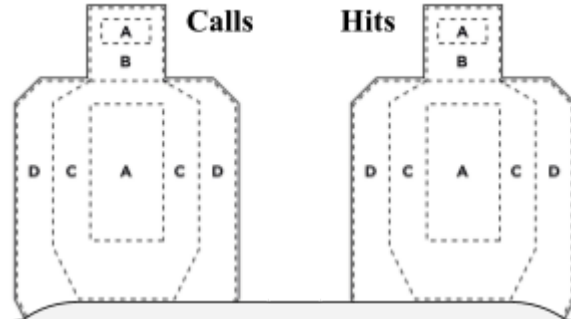
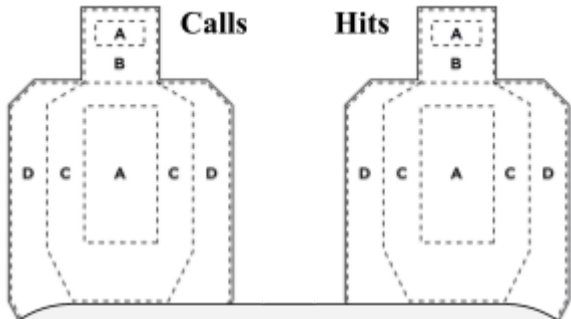
Procedure

We will use two drills to practice clearing malfunctions as follows.

1. A magazine will be loaded with the first round in your gun being a dummy round. You will rack the slide so the dummy round is in the chamber and draw from concealment. After pulling the trigger, tap, rack, and fire again for time.
2. A magazine will be loaded with 4 live rounds and a dummy round randomly fed into the mag. You will fire into the A-zone all 5 rounds for time.
3. A double feed will be induced in your gun using dummy rounds. You will clear the malfunction and fire a single live round for time.



Defensive Handgun Training Log



Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Firearm Used: _____

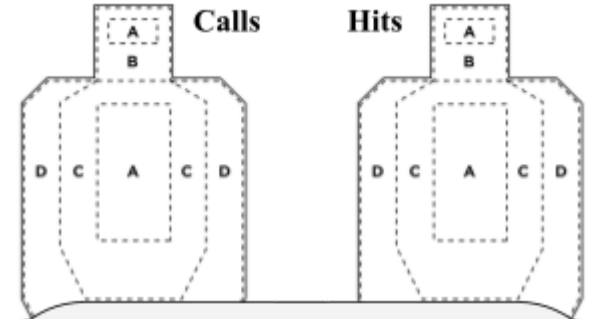
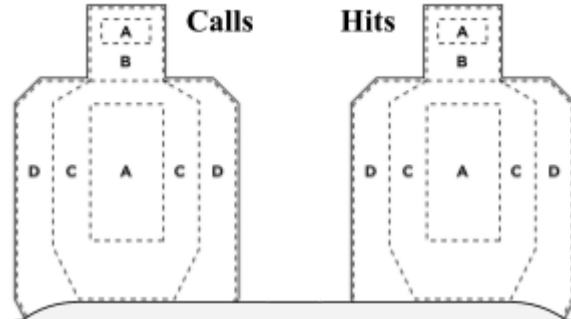
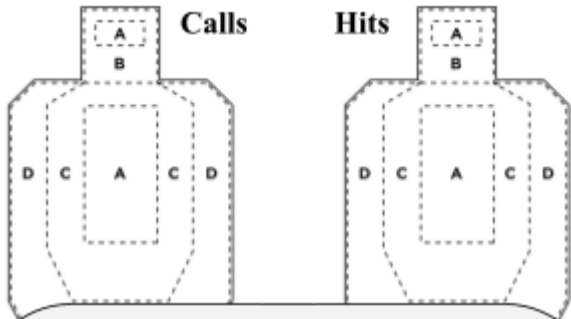
Open Carry / Concealed Carry

Cover Garment: _____

Notes: _____



Defensive Handgun Training Log



Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Firearm Used: _____

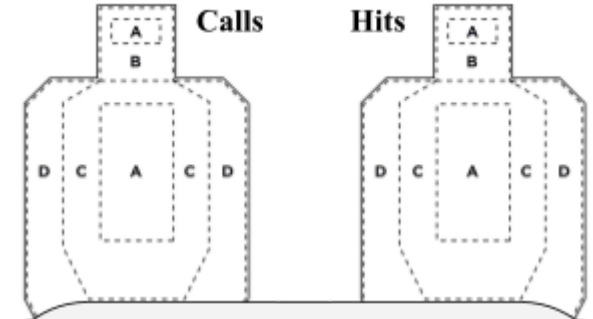
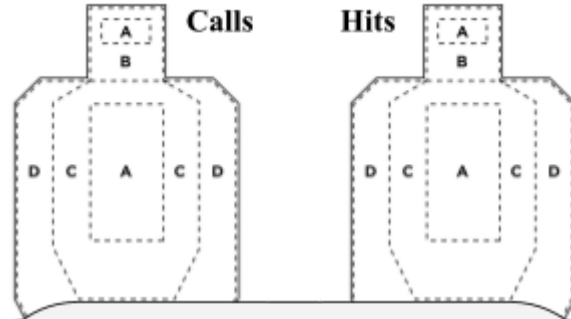
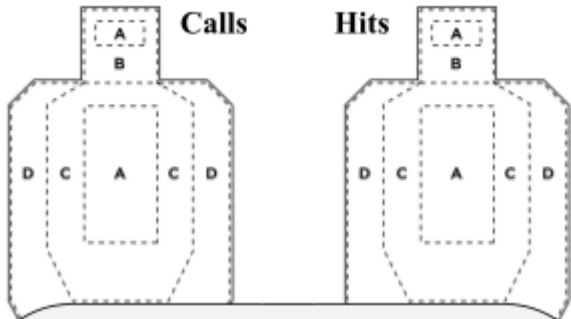
Open Carry / Concealed Carry

Cover Garment: _____

Notes: _____



Defensive Handgun Training Log



Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Firearm Used: _____

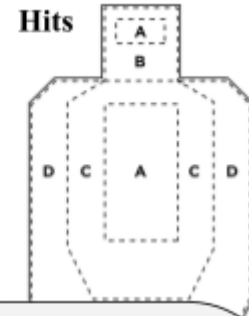
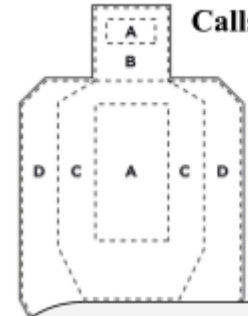
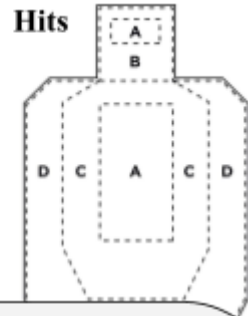
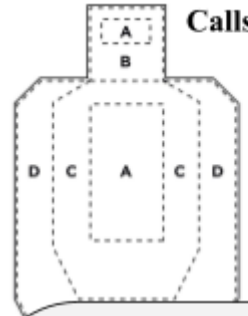
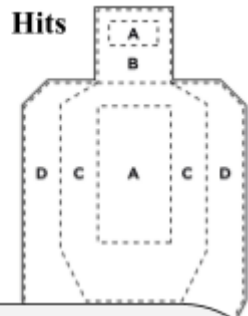
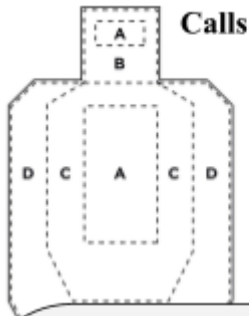
Open Carry / Concealed Carry

Cover Garment: _____

Notes: _____



Defensive Handgun Training Log



Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Firearm Used: _____

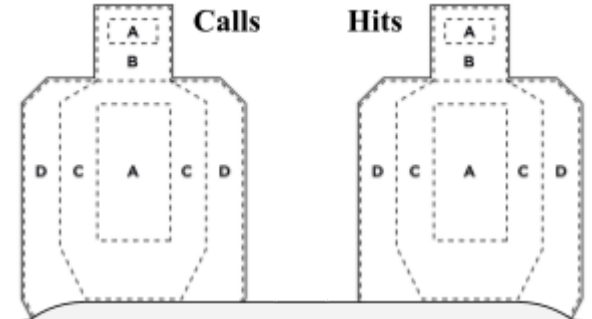
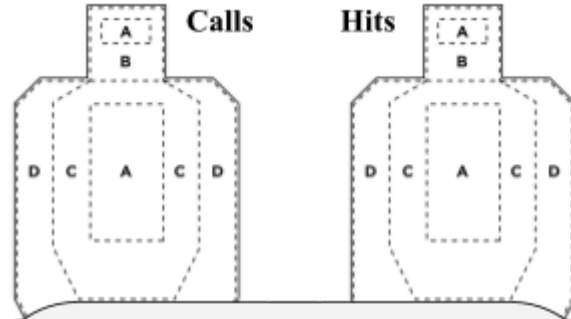
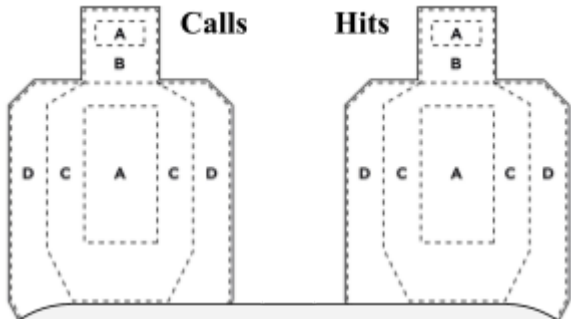
Open Carry / Concealed Carry

Cover Garment: _____

Notes: _____



Defensive Handgun Training Log



Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Drill: _____

Focus: _____

Total Time: _____ **Avg Split:** _____

A	C	D	M

Firearm Used: _____

Open Carry / Concealed Carry

Cover Garment: _____

Notes: _____

Recommended Resources

Lead Resources

[CDC.gov/lead-prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention)

[EPA.gov/lead](https://www.epa.gov/lead)

[OSHA.gov/lead](https://www.osha.gov/lead)

Books

Kyle Lamb - *Stay in the Fight*

Gavin De-Becker - *The Gift of Fear*

George Thompson - *Verbal Judo*

Gavin De-Becker - *Just 2 Seconds*

Ben Stoeger - *TAPS*

Dustin Salomon - *On Training*

Process and Progress Pistol Training
- Drew Estell

Defensive Education

Pat Mcnamara

Sage Dynamics

AMTAC

Orion Training Group

Tim Herron

NIJ (National Institute of Justice)

Active Self Protection Extra

Legal

[USLawShield.com](https://www.uslawshield.com)

[USConcealedCarry.com](https://www.usconcealedcarry.com)

[ActiveSelfProtection.com](https://www.activeselfprotection.com)

[NIJ.OJP.gov/Library/Publications](https://www.nij.ojp.gov/Library/Publications)

Mental Health

Department of Mental Health

Community Services Board

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Suicide Hotline: **988**

Concealed Carry Essentials



Safety & Orientation

- *Unloading Process*
- *Safe Handling*
- *Suicide Prevention*
- *Lead Exposure*

The Reality of Defensive Encounters

- *Self Defense Statistics*
- *Legal Investigations*

De-escalation

- *Threat Escalation Pyramid*
- *Defensive Posture*
- *How To Walk Away*
- *Pepper Spray*

Mastering the Draw & Fundamentals

- *Clearing the Garment*
- *Drawing the Handgun*
- *Stance*
- *Grip*
- *Sight Picture & Alignment*

Clearing Malfunctions

- *Why Malfunctions Happen*
- *Failure To Feed/Fire*
- *Stovepipes*
- *Double Feeds*