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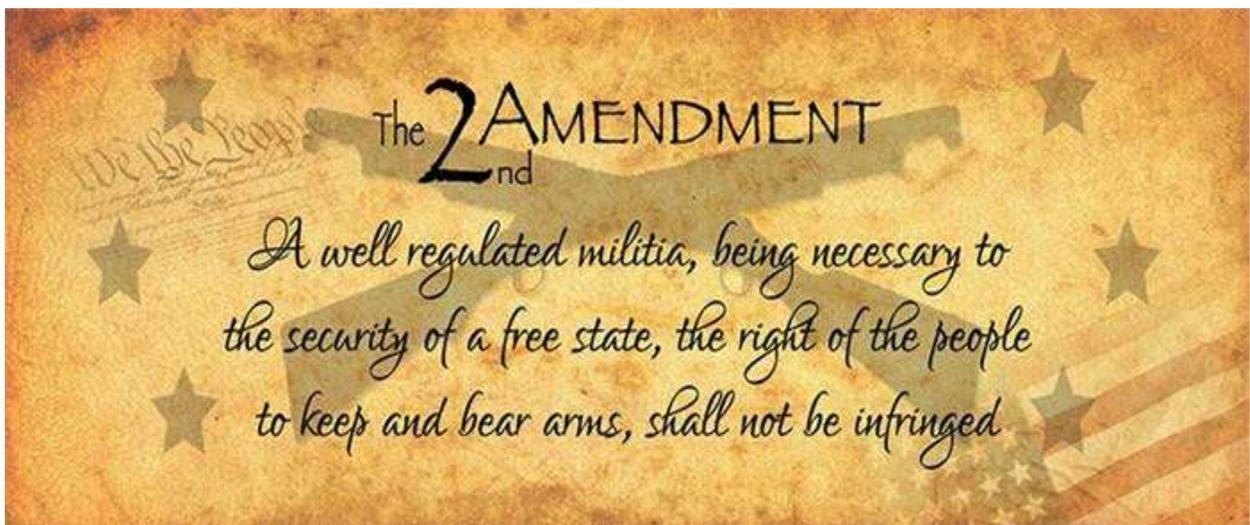
New Mexico Handgun Firearms Training Course Concealed Carry Manual

"Americans have the right
and advantage of being
armed . . . unlike the
citizens of other countries
whose governments are
afraid to trust the people
with arms."
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Information in this manual is deemed to be consistent with safe gun handling practices and allows for a safe shooting environment if followed. However, the author disclaims any liability for any accidents incurred in connection with the use of information in this manual.

This manual was written to provide a reference guide to improved knowledge of handgun safety, handgun operation, ammunition knowledge, shooting fundamentals, proper maintenance of handguns, proper storage of ammunition, and proper storage of handguns. If you pursue handgun training you will likely not absorb all the fundamentals taught during sessions and this manual will help keep you on track if you refer to it later when you might be struggling with accuracy and have questions as to the right fundamentals. If you can't afford to pursue training this manual should help you become a more competent handgun owner.



What to consider when buying a handgun.

As you may have already decided there are many questions you have to ask yourself and consider in selecting a handgun.

First question should be what type shooting do you intend to do with the handgun?

Will it be for hunting, target practice, competition, self-defense, or simply collecting? The answer to the first question will dictate the size and caliber of handgun to purchase. It may be that you need multiple pistols for varied purposes.

Second question, how much can you afford to spend for a reliable handgun? As a general statement there are few handguns that the author would stake his life on that cost less than \$350 in 2015.

The third question is what is the reputation of the manufacturer?

The fourth question is to buy a revolver or a semi-automatic?

The fifth question is, do you buy a polymer frame pistol or steel frame pistol?

The sixth question is whether to buy a handgun with a single stack magazine or a double stack magazine?

The last question is does the contemplated handgun purchase fit your hand properly?

Most handgun owners that practice regularly and want to be proficient with their handgun find that it takes firing a handgun multiple times at various distances and under different circumstances to determine the best handgun for their intended use. Some gun ranges rent handguns and this is a good way to try several different handguns before purchasing one. If you have friends with handguns they may allow you to accompany them to shoot their handguns to experience differences between handguns and calibers. Careful consideration in the shopping stages may save you buying the wrong gun and then having to deal with the loss of trading it in or re-selling it.

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Chapter 1

Handgun Owner Awareness & Safety

- ✓ IT IS THE GUN OWNER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT UNAUTHORIZED INDIVIDUALS CANNOT GAIN ACCESS TO HIS OR HER GUNS. IT'S THE LAW IN NEW MEXICO AND MANY OTHER STATES.
- ✓ IT IS THE GUN OWNER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO STORE, OPERATE, AND MAINTAIN HIS OR HER GUNS SAFELY.
- ✓ IT IS THE GUN OWNER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO LEARN AND OBEY ALL APPLICABLE LAWS THAT PERTAIN TO OWNERSHIP OF A GUN.

Not all pistols are handguns. A pistol is a handgun with the chamber built into the back (breach) part of the barrel. Semi-automatic handguns have a barrel with a built in chamber so they are all technically a "pistol" and a "handgun". However, revolvers have a cylinder that is separate from the barrel and contains multiple chambers and that makes them a handgun but technically not a pistol. A handgun is described as a firearm that can be held, carried, and fired with one hand. Therefore, throughout this manual the term "handgun" will be used.

Types of Handgun Owners

Handgun owners purchase or own handguns for different reasons.

- Personal Defense in The Home
- Defense in a Business
- Concealed Carry
- Target Shooting
- Hunting
- Competitive Shooting
- Collecting

Following are the Four Categories of Handgun Owners

1. **Unknowingly incompetent** – Handgun owners that purchase or own a handgun and occasionally practice shooting targets or don't practice shooting at all. They believe they have the ability to be effective in stopping an attack on themselves or their family. They often are too quick in firing their handgun without being certain of their target and what is beyond their intended target. They regularly put themselves and others at risk by not handling their handgun safely. Sadly, a very high percentage of handgun owners fall in this category. **They are the handgun owners that can get innocent people killed by lack of**

handgun safety, lack of knowledge about operating their handgun, or lack of training to improve their chances of prevailing in an armed attack.

2. **Aware improvement needed** – Handgun owners who understand that they do not know enough about handgun operation, safety, and struggle with shooting accurately. **They realize they lack the skills to safely handle and shoot handguns, can't shoot accurately, are unsure if they can adequately protect themselves or their loved ones, and seek out training to achieve a higher level of competence.**
3. **Consciously competent** – Handgun owners that take handgun ownership seriously, practice shooting and clearing malfunctions regularly, and take training courses to improve their level of skill. **They know the handgun laws of their state, the rules of gun safety, understand how to operate their handguns, know the fundamentals of handgun marksmanship, know how to clear malfunctions, understand defensive accuracy, understand ammunition management, practice proper maintenance of their handguns, and know their responsibilities on proper storage to prevent unauthorized access to their guns.** They form habits that lead to safe handling, accurate shooting, good handgun maintenance, and proper storage of their handguns and ammunition.
4. **Subconsciously competent** – This is the level you should work toward as a handgun owner. This level of handgun owner practices and trains for not only target shooting accuracy but possible life and death situations. **Repeated training and practice of the principles of handgun marksmanship, clearing malfunctions, shot placement, and ammunition management prepares you to be able to subconsciously react to challenges that may include your handgun or ammunition malfunctioning or to be able to function instinctively in a high stress environment.**

The NRA fundamental rules for safe gun handling are:

1. ALWAYS keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.

This is the primary rule of gun safety. A safe direction means that the gun is pointed so that even if it were to go off it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control where the muzzle or front end of the barrel is pointed at all times. Common sense dictates the safest direction, depending on different circumstances.

2. ALWAYS keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.

When holding a gun, rest your finger on the trigger guard or along the side of the gun. Until you are actually ready to fire, do not touch the trigger.

3. ALWAYS keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.

Whenever you pick up a gun, immediately engage the safety device if possible, and, if the gun has a magazine, remove it before opening the action and looking into the chamber(s) which should be clear of ammunition. If you do not know how to open the action or inspect the chamber(s), leave the gun alone and get help from someone who does.

Handgun Safety Rules

Rule #1 – Handle every handgun as if it is loaded!

The more you handle a handgun and as your comfort level in handling a handgun increases you are more likely to accidentally discharge a loaded handgun. You may forget if the handgun is loaded between dry practicing (discussed later) and live firing the handgun. Treating every handgun as if it is loaded every time you touch it should create a habit that will help to reduce the possibility of an accidental discharge of your handgun.

Rule #2 – Never point the muzzle of a handgun at anything or anyone you don't intend to shoot.

If the handgun is fully assembled and has a live round in the chamber, without your memory or knowledge, you are at risk for an accidental discharge. With alternating dry practicing and live firing, you may forget if your handgun is loaded or unloaded. Never pass your hand in front of the muzzle of a handgun or point the muzzle at any portion of your body or someone else's. **Know where the muzzle is pointing every second of every time you are in possession of the handgun.** The muzzle should be pointed straight up if you are indoors and carrying the handgun in your hand or on a hard surface that could cause a bullet to ricochet in case of an accidental discharge. If you are outdoors the muzzle should be pointed away from the body at a downward angle away from the body until you are ready to aim at your target. When lowering your handgun below the target line after shooting you should always continue gripping the handgun with both hands, maintaining a proper grip and with the handgun pointed at a downward angle to the front of you. This will prevent you from pointing the muzzle at your leg or foot without realizing it. **Should you drop anything while handling a handgun you should always lay the handgun down prior to bending over to pick up what you dropped.** Failing to lay the handgun down will likely cause you to forget where the muzzle is pointed and your muzzle winds up pointed at something or someone behind you.

Rule #3 – Do not put your finger on the trigger until you are in a firing position ready to fire the handgun.

The trigger safety rule that you need to have programmed into your subconscious mind is: **OFF TARGET, OFF TRIGGER.** That means until you are in a firing position and have made the decision to fire your handgun your finger should be outside the trigger guard, pointed straight, and just above the trigger guard on a reference point (discussed later). **The time to put your finger on the trigger is when you have cleared your holster and are extending your arms toward your target or when you are in a “low ready position” when not drawing from a holster. Remember “off target, off trigger” and “on target, on trigger”.**

Rule #4 – Keep your gun unloaded until ready to use.

Ready to use is when you are standing on the firing line at a range or wherever you may be about to start recreational shooting or hunting. If you keep your handgun unloaded until you are in a location ready to commence shooting it reduces the chances of an accidental discharge. **The exception to the rule is if you keep a self-defense handgun at home, in your vehicle, or carry a concealed handgun then the handgun should always be loaded with a round in the chamber and if the handgun has a manual safety it should be engaged.** If your handgun is a 1911 style single action handgun with a hammer, then it should be cocked with the safety engaged. If it is a double action/single action semi-automatic handgun it should have a round in the chamber and then the hammer de-cocked.

Rule #5 - Never fire your handgun until you are sure that you have identified the correct target and what else, or who else, might be in your line of fire.

Many inexperienced shooters get excited just before firing a handgun and fail to verify that they have the right target or what is behind their intended target. On a firing range there is no real harm done (other than possibly offending a nearby shooter when you shoot their target by mistake) if you shoot the wrong target. However, in a real life self-defense situation it is likely you may not be able to tell a criminal from a good Samaritan or an innocent bystander. You may not be aware of other people in the line of fire in case you miss your target or your bullet passes completely through your target and hits an innocent bystander. **You are legally responsible for personal injuries, death, or property damage caused by you firing your handgun.**

Rule #6 – Be sure you know how to operate your handgun.

One of the biggest causes of handgun accidents is people not knowing how to operate a particular handgun. If you have not shot a particular handgun before be sure to learn how it operates. You should read the owner's manual and if you don't have an owner's manual you can download most owner's manuals from the manufacturer's web site. If you can't get an owner's manual for your particular handgun, then find someone who knows your gun to show you how to operate it before shooting it. It's a good idea to do both.

Rule #7 – Be sure your handgun is safe to shoot.

Handguns require proper maintenance and are mechanical devices so parts can fail or springs can weaken over time. **Always function check your handgun after disassembling and cleaning.** That confirms you have reassembled the handgun properly and the handgun is operational. Have a gunsmith dismantle and do a deep cleaning of your handgun at least every 8,000 to 10,000 rounds if you clean and maintain it properly or sooner if you routinely shoot more than 200 rounds between cleanings.

Rule #8 – Use only the correct ammunition for your gun.

Most modern handguns have the caliber stamped on the top of the chamber or on the side of the slide if they are a semi-automatic and on the side of the barrel if they are a revolver. Most modern handguns are rated for target ammunition but are safe to fire occasional higher pressure rounds rated +P. Most handguns are not rated to shoot +P+ rated ammunition. Check your handgun manual to see what your handgun is rated to shoot. **Always verify you are shooting the correct ammunition by checking your handgun manual, verifying the caliber stamped on the handgun, check the head stamp on the bullet, and verify the caliber and type ammunition printed on the factory container before loading the handgun.** Do not mix calibers of ammunition or different pressure loads in the same container.

Rule #9 – Always wear ear protection and eye protection when shooting.

Loud gunfire can damage unprotected ears. Semi-automatic handguns eject empty shell casings that are very hot and if they come in contact with exposed skin or eyes when ejected they can burn you. If you are going to be shooting and talking with others while wearing ear protection it is a good idea to purchase electronic ear protection that reduces the report of a gun to 20 to 25 decibels but yet you can hear normal conversation.

Rule #10 – Never use alcohol or drugs prior to or while shooting.

That includes over the counter medications that cause drowsiness or act as a stimulant as they can affect reflexes and judgment. Alcohol, drugs, and guns do not mix!

Rule #11 – Maintain a positive attitude toward safety!

This is another leading cause of handgun accidents; people that take a lax attitude toward gun safety and not knowing the rules of gun safety. Always practice safety first in any gun handling; it might save a life! You can't be too safe with gun handling!

Rule #12 – Store you guns and ammunition so unauthorized persons can't gain access, especially children!

You are responsible for any damage or injuries caused by your handgun; that is New Mexico handgun law! Proper storage means under lock and key, locking trigger lock, cable lock through the barrel, or lockout keys that make the handgun inoperable. Store ammunition in a separate location under lock and key.

Chapter 2

Owning the Right Handgun for Your Intended Use

Every shooter should own a handgun that fits their hand and the style of shooting they intend to do.

If the handgun does not fit your hand you will struggle shooting it accurately. To determine if a semi-automatic handgun fits your hand you should grip the handgun in your shooting hand, with the web between your thumb and index finger firmly pressed up against the curved area at the top of the back strap. Then place your finger on the trigger with the contact point of your finger being halfway between the tip of the finger and the first finger joint. You should not have to “stretch” your finger for proper placement of your finger on the trigger. By the same token you should not have a big gap between your index finger and the handgun frame, when looking down at the side of the handgun with your finger on the trigger. **Improper “trigger reach” may cause a shooter to pull or push the handgun to the left or right when squeezing the trigger.** The tips of the three fingers on the grip should not cover more than half of the side of the grip. You should have the non-shooting hand fingers placed over the front of your fingers and knuckles of the shooting hand (never place the index finger on the front of the trigger guard) and the base of the palm below the non-shooting thumb should fill the remaining exposed part of the grip with the palms of both hands touching together to complete a 360-degree contact with the grip. If you can't do that then the pistol grip is too large or too small for your hand. The same general rules apply to a revolver fitting your hand, with the exception there is no curved area at the top of the handle and the web of the shooting hand is placed at the top of the grip and the thumbs position is slightly different.

Proper fit & grip for Semi-Automatic



Proper fit & grip for revolver



Semi-Automatic Handguns vs. Revolvers

If you are buying a handgun for self-protection, then a semi-automatic offers the versatility of being a target shooting handgun and a self-defense handgun. Revolvers tend to be slightly more accurate since their barrels are threaded into the frame and are more commonly used in target shooting or hunting. A semi-automatic handgun holds more rounds of ammunition than a revolver and is easier and quicker to reload. Semi-automatic handguns are manufactured with a huge selection of sizes, weights, quality, and caliber. **The intended use of the handgun is critical to what you should buy.** While a small sub-compact handgun may be easy to conceal it is hard to shoot accurately at more than five to seven yards for most shooters and it will normally have a heavy trigger pull.



Semi-automatic pistol



Revolver

Gun Caliber Choices

The caliber of the handgun is an important consideration with respect to the intended use and cost of shooting the handgun. For self-defense purposes it is recommended that you own a handgun in the largest caliber you can shoot accurately, considering recoil management. Larger caliber handguns have more recoil (muzzle rise and backward movement), which means it takes longer to get back on target for a second shot. **If you can't control the recoil, then it is better to shoot a smaller caliber that you can shoot while maintaining proper sight alignment and regaining a rapid sight picture for any follow-up shots.** If you are going to be a licensed concealed handgun carrier then you may need to own two handguns for concealment purposes, depending on what you are wearing or options for concealment. During summer months when you wear lighter clothing it is more difficult to conceal a handgun on

your person so a smaller handgun may be necessary. The weight of the handgun is another factor in what to purchase. Steel frame handguns tend to last longer than polymer frame handguns but most steel frame handguns are heavier. The 1911 style handguns are considered to be the most accurate and dependable semi-automatic handguns but most are typically a larger frame handgun.

The least expensive handgun to shoot is a 22 long rifle caliber. This caliber is great for target shooting at a low ammunition cost. However, shot placement must be extremely accurate with a 22LR in a self-defense situation to stop an adversary. In fact, any caliber handgun smaller than a 9mm has limited effectiveness in a self-defense situation. **Any caliber less than 9mm lacks the energy and bullet mass to effectively stop an attacker without a precise shot or multiple shots to a vital area. Arguably, the best calibers for self-defense are 40 S&W and 45 ACP.** These both have heavier grain bullets that penetrate deeper and leave a larger damage cavity; thus have more “stopping power”. An attacker shot in the heart may not stop their attack for ten to fifteen seconds after being shot because it may take that long to deprive the brain of blood. A properly placed shot with most handgun calibers between the bridge of the nose and eyebrows will stop an attacker. However, that shot placement is extremely difficult with a moving target. Larger caliber handguns often stop an attacker instantly with two well placed shots to the chest area unless they are wearing body armor. Unlike what you see on TV a person doesn’t just collapse when shot unless the bullet severs a component of the central nervous system or the bullet has enough force to knock them down by hitting a large bone. The best self-defense handgun for any one person is one they can shoot accurately and quickly in a caliber of .380 or greater. There has been a lot of improvement in personal protection ammunition in recent years, making .380 and 9mm calibers more effective in defensive use. The following Winchester ballistics chart for full metal jacket target ammunition demonstrates the differences in muzzle velocity, muzzle energy, and bullet energy at fifty yards. Muzzle velocity and muzzle energy vary with different ammunition loads by each manufacturer.

These are the three major components of a pistol:

Frame, barrel, and action

The cylinder:

The part of a revolver where cartridges are held in a circular pattern or wheel.

The trigger mechanism:

Releases a spring-powered hammer or striker to fire the cartridge.

These are the four components of a pistol cartridge

Case, Primer, Powder, and Bullet

This is how to ensure you use the correct ammunition for your gun:

Look at the information on the barrel or slide, the owner's manual, and the cartridge box and head stamp.

Magazine Types for Semi-Automatic Handguns

There are two basic types of magazines for semi-automatic handguns

- **Single Stack Magazines**
- **Double Stack Magazines**

Single stack magazines are narrower and each round loaded in the magazine is directly on top and in line with the round below it. Single stack magazines are more limited in the number rounds they hold but are easier to load and less likely to cause a misfeed into the chamber. 1911 frame pistols have single stack magazines, as well as most of the higher priced pistols. Double stack magazines are wider, which in turn requires the grip of the handgun to be wider and for a person with smaller hands it may present challenges in proper grip and firing. The double stack magazine is loaded with rounds stacked like barrels with half the round lined up with half the round above or below it. Double stack magazines hold more rounds but are more prone to causing misfeeds if the springs get weak or the magazine gets dirty. Most law enforcement personnel today carry a semi-automatic pistol with a double stack magazine on the theory you can never have too many rounds available in a gunfight and changing out a magazine in the middle of a gunfight may give the criminal an advantage. Single stack magazine lovers claim they would rather trust their life on a lesser chance of a misfeed or malfunction. A longer range gunfight normally allows for shooters to move quickly to cover that will stop a bullet or concealment that will hide their whereabouts and hopefully cover their backside. There they should be able to manage a couple of seconds to exchange the magazine for a fully loaded magazine. On the other hand, if you get into a shootout with multiple adversaries the double stack magazine is definitely the best choice. **Your intended use of a handgun is a factor in deciding whether to buy a handgun with a single stack magazine or a double stack magazine.**



Single stack magazine



Double stack magazine

Trigger Safety Features

The other consideration in buying a handgun is the safety features. 1911 frame handguns have a thumb safety that is moved to the firing position for the handgun to fire. 1911 frame handguns also have a back strap safety that has to be depressed to fire the handgun. While the manual thumb safety is a good safety feature it requires one additional movement of the hand in a self-defense situation that commonly lasts three to five seconds from beginning to end. Some semi-automatic handguns are manufactured with safe triggers, where there is a small trigger within another trigger that protects the pistol from accidental discharge if the handgun is dropped or something hits the side of the trigger. Both the small and larger trigger has to be depressed simultaneously for the handgun to fire. There are also semi-automatic handguns with the safe trigger system and a back strap safety that has to be depressed for the handgun to function like a 1911 frame handgun. Other semi-automatic handguns may or may not have a manual safety. Yet others have a hammer that can be cocked and have a de-cocker lever that acts like a safety and protects the handgun from accidental discharge if something hits the hammer or the trigger. There are also semi-automatic handguns that have no manual safety but have a longer trigger travel and heavier trigger pull to protect from accidental discharge. Semi-automatic handguns have a firing pin block that prevents the firing pin or striker from making contact with a round in the chamber unless the trigger is depressed far enough to release the firing pin or striker. This is the safety feature that prevents the gun from firing if it is dropped unless the trigger is somehow depressed far enough to release the firing pin block. The safety feature of a revolver with a hammer is to have the hammer de-cocked. **However, a safety or de-cocker is a mechanical device and mechanical devices can fail so you must assume that any handgun may accidentally fire with the safety engaged or the trigger de-cocked.**



Springfield 1911 trigger



Springfield XD trigger

Types of Sights

➤ Night Sights

Night sights are considered a plus by some shooters since they enable you to line up your sights in a low light condition. They are typically titanium filled and add to the cost of a handgun. They are available on most semi-automatic handguns as an option. **The negative to night sights is should you become a target by multiple adversaries in a low light situation your night sights may pinpoint your position to someone behind you since they glow in the dark.**



Night sights



Night sights in dim light

➤ Laser Sights and Flashlights

Laser sights allow you to pinpoint your target area at either short distances or long distances, assuming they are sighted in properly. **Some say that regular shooting with a laser sight makes a shooter subconsciously dependent on finding the laser dot on their target before squeezing the trigger and in a life and death encounter the shooter can't see the dot. This could cause a delay in defending oneself while you are trying to locate the dot. Night shooting with the use of a tactical flashlight is considered by many experts to be the best line of defense against a night attack.** You can line up iron sights quickly, momentarily blind your attacker, and control how long the beam of the flashlight illuminates your target. During daylight hours a laser sight dot is much more difficult to see on your target and like night sights they can pinpoint your location at night for your adversary in a self-defense situation. Laser sights are also more expensive.



Glock Rear Laser Sight



Sure Fire Tactical Flashlight

➤ Standard Factory Sights

Handguns with larger factory sights allow you to acquire your target in proper sight alignment faster. Smaller handguns tend to have smaller sights and some have just a small notch for a rear sight which makes it more difficult to line sights up on target. Some semi-automatic handguns come with sights that can be adjusted but most come with dove tailed sights that require a special sight tool to adjust. If a handgun has adjustable sights (called target sights) you adjust the elevation and windage to move your shot grouping on the target. If your shots are striking the target high you lower the rear sight and if your shots are striking the target to the right move the rear sight to the left. Move the rear sight in the direction you want to move your shot group. Factory sights rarely need any adjustment from the factory for the handgun to shoot accurately. Many semi-automatic handguns come with sights that are three white dot sights. Another common sight is a front sight with a white dot and a rear sight with a white outline on the sides and bottom of the rear sight. Also, another less common sight is a white dot front sight and a single dot at the bottom of the rear sight, sometimes referred to a straight eight sight. Sights can be either target sights or combat sights. The difference is combat sights tend to have a larger and a wider front sight for faster sight alignment and target sights have elevation and windage adjustment settings for more precise sight alignment in slow fire exercises to improve target shooting accuracy. Most semi-automatics come with combat sights.



Most Common Sights

These are the elements or stages of aiming:
Sight alignment and sight picture

Where to focus while aiming:
Always focus on the front sight when aiming?

Breaking the Handgun Down for Cleaning & Inspections

Another consideration in buying a handgun is the ease of breaking down the handgun to clean it. Some handguns can be disassembled within five seconds and others may take fifteen minutes. Semi-automatic handguns with a slide release lever that can be flipped up or down with the slide in the locked open position are the easiest to disassemble (called field stripping). With them all you have to do after locking the slide open is flip the lever, release the slide, and move the slide forward until it separates from the frame of the handgun. Some require you to depress the trigger to fully release the slide before it will separate from the frame. Then you depress the guide rod and spring toward the end of the barrel and move it upward to remove the guide rod and spring. Then the barrel will move forward slightly and can be lifted up to be removed from the slide. That is all there is to breaking it down to clean and inspect it for damage. Reassemble it in the reverse order. Other semi-automatics have a pin through the frame that has to be pushed out when the slide notch is aligned with the center of the pin. Depending on how strong the guide rod spring is, it may be difficult to hold the slide in proper position to be able to push the pin out of the frame. A few handguns have such a strong recoil spring that they require inserting a small pin or tool to lock the slide in position to remove the pin for the slide.

Often handgun owners will only clean handguns that are challenging to break down when they start getting misfeeds or malfunctions due to excessive gunpowder residue and carbon buildup.

You have to determine if the merits of a handgun difficult to break down is offset by positives. A good rule of thumb is you should clean and lightly oil your handgun at least after every two hundred rounds are fired but ideally after every use. An easy to field strip handgun will most likely be better maintained and be less likely to malfunction.

Chapter 3

Handgun Knowledge

Knowing the Operation of Your Handgun

Part of practicing good safety and being a responsible handgun owner understands the operation of the handgun and how to clean and take care of your handgun. In the previous chapter we discussed the ease of breaking down your handgun for cleaning, inspection, and oiling. In addition to the knowledge of how to disassemble and reassemble your handgun you need to be very familiar with its parts and functions.

There Are Three Types Of Trigger Systems In Handguns:

- **Single Action**
- **Double Action – Single Action**
- **Double Action Only**

Single Action

Each pull of the trigger performs a single action: Releasing the hammer or striker each time the trigger is pulled. The hammer must be manually cocked or the slide pulled back to cock the hammer or reset the striker for the handgun to fire. When firing a single action semi-automatic handgun, the cycling of the slide to extract the fired round and load the next round from the top of the magazine cocks the hammer or striker again until the magazine is empty. A single action revolver requires cocking the hammer each time between shots.

Double Action – Single Action (DASA)

Pulling the trigger both cocks the hammer or striker and releases it. The first shot fired without first cocking the hammer has a longer trigger travel with a heavy trigger pull. Follow-up shots are fired from single action because the slide is re-cocking the firing mechanism each time the slide cycles. Each follow-up shot has a shorter trigger travel and lighter trigger pull in the single action mode. Double action/single action revolvers simply require pulling the trigger for each shot or can be fired single action by cocking the hammer between shots.

Double Action Only

Each pull of the trigger both cocks and releases the hammer or striker. After the handgun is fired the hammer returns to the de-cocked position or the striker is cocked in an intermediate position. Pulling the trigger then completes the cocking of the hammer or striker and completes the firing sequence for double action only handguns. There are a number of modern semi-automatic handguns

that are difficult to tell whether they are a single action or double action only handguns, since they appear to function the same when shooting.

Semi-Automatic Handgun Operation

Semi-automatic handguns may have a hammer or they may not. Most will have a slide lock/release lever that locks the slide open after the last live round in a magazine is fired or the slide can be manually locked open by the shooter to inspect the handgun to make sure it is unloaded. The slide lock/release lever may or may not be ambidextrous. The handgun will also have a magazine release button that may be pushed with the thumb from the left side of the handgun and on some handguns the magazine release will be ambidextrous. The magazine release button on some semi-automatics will be on the bottom of the grip in front of or beside the magazine foot. Double action/single action semi-automatics will have a hammer and can be fired just like the double action/single action revolver by simply squeezing the trigger or with the hammer manually cocked and then fired single action. They will have a de-cocker lever that allows the shooter to de-cock the hammer after loading a round into the chamber or deciding not to fire after the hammer is cocked. Double action only semi-automatic handguns reset the trigger each time a round is fired and most do not have a hammer and they may or may not have a manual safety. Semi-automatic handguns with high capacity double stack magazines can be single action only, double action/single action, or double action only handguns.

Revolver Operation

Revolvers have less working parts and are somewhat simpler handguns. They may be single action only, where the hammer has to be cocked each time a shot is fired. Most of today's revolvers are double action/single action revolvers where the handgun can be fired by either just pulling the trigger or by cocking the hammer between each shot. Cocking the hammer moves the trigger position to single action mode with a shorten trigger travel and lightens the pressure needed to release the hammer. Revolvers have a rotating cylinder that can hold from five to eight rounds of ammunition in its chambers. Each time the hammer is cocked the cylinder rotates to align the next round with the barrel. The barrel and frame of a revolver are combined into a fixed frame and the barrel can't be removed without special tools. Double action/single action revolvers have a release button on the side of the revolver that releases the cylinder to swing out away from the frame to allow for loading or unloading. Rounds can be loaded individually into each cylinder chamber or can be loaded with a speed loader that loads all chambers simultaneously. To unload the cylinder, you press the cylinder release, hold the cylinder open with the revolver pointed straight up. Using the non-shooting hand, push the ejector down to push the rounds out of the cylinder chambers. To close the cylinder, you simply push it back into the frame until it locks into place. The safety on a revolver is the hammer. When it is in the cocked position the revolver can be fired. If the hammer is cocked and you don't want to fire the revolver then use the shooting hand thumb to gently pull back the hammer, while inserting the non-shooting thumb between the hammer and the frame, and slowly allow the hammer to return to the un-cocked position with the

shooting thumb while removing the non-shooting thumb just before the hammer meets the frame. However, it is safer to unload a revolver then de-cock it to prevent the possibility of your thumb slipping off the hammer causing an accidental discharge.

The frame of the pistol is:

The central component of a pistol and made of steel, aluminum, titanium, or polymer materials.

Magazine Checks

With a semi-automatic handgun, you should perform a magazine check every time you pick the gun up after it has been out of your sight and prior to loading the handgun. You should also perform a magazine check when storing your handgun or taking it out of storage. If there is a magazine in the handgun you depress the slide release and catch the magazine as it drops out of the handgun or pull it out if it does not drop freely out of the handle. This procedure is to verify whether there is live ammunition in the magazine.



Magazine Check

Chamber Checks Are A Must For Safety

You must know how to safety check your handgun for live rounds in the chamber. Any time you pick up a handgun you should develop a subconscious habit of doing a magazine check and a chamber check. That means picking up or drawing the handgun from a holster and holding it in front of you with the muzzle pointed at the ground away from your body, making sure your hand never passes in front of the muzzle. This is often referred to as the low ready position in handgun training. Holding the semi-automatic handgun in the low ready position pull the slide back far enough so you can verify if there is a round in the chamber. If your handgun has a hammer you first need to cock the hammer to release some tension on the slide. After verifying there is no live ammunition in the chamber the handgun is in a safe condition and you can re-insert the magazine into the magazine well only if it is empty, then close the slide, and press the trigger. If you are shooting a revolver you have to release the cylinder lock and swing the cylinder down from the frame to determine if a live round is in any of the chambers. With a revolver you need to know which way the cylinder rotates when cocking the hammer so you will know which round in the cylinder chambers will be aligned with the barrel when you close the cylinder. Always de-cock a hammer after doing a chamber check and engage any manual safety.

➤ **Method number one for chamber checking semi-automatic handguns**

Pinch the top of the slide just behind the muzzle with your thumb and fingers. Be very careful to not muzzle any part of your hand. After seeing if there is a round in the chamber, release the slide. If you pulled the slide back far enough to cock any hammer you will need to de-cock the hammer.



Chamber check #1

➤ **Method number two for chamber checking semi-automatic handguns**

Method number two is used if you lack the dexterity or strength to use method one. In this method cock the hammer (if your handgun has a hammer) to release tension on the slide then cup your hand over the slide, grasp the slide between the base of your palm and finger tips on each side of the slide just behind the ejection port. Pull the slide back just enough to verify there is no round in the chamber then release the slide and either re-engage the manual safety or de-cock the handgun if you cocked the trigger while doing a chamber check.

Chamber check #2

Loading & Unloading A Semi-Automatic Handgun

To load the handgun, you insert a loaded magazine into the magazine well at the bottom of the grip and tap it with the base of the palm of your hand to be sure it is securely locked into place. Then you release the slide release if the slide is locked open or pull back on the slide and release it if it is closed to load a round in the chamber. **For instinctive training always pull the slide back and release it to load the handgun instead of releasing the slide lock lever. To rack the slide, you should grasp the slide behind the ejection port with your non-shooting hand, base of the palm and finger tips on each side of the slide, pull the slide all the way back in one smooth motion and release it as it hits the rear stop to load a live round in the chamber. Don't hold on to the slide after you feel it hit the slide stop.** This is called "riding the slide" and causes misfeeds. After loading a round in the chamber do another chamber check by pulling the slide back just far enough to verify there is a live round in the chamber. Tap the bottom of the magazine to verify it locked into the magazine well. Do not pull the slide all the way back when the gun is loaded or you will eject a round and load the top round from the magazine. Next put the safety on or de-cock the hammer (if the handgun has either of these). **When you finish shooting remove the magazine first, then pull the slide**

back all the way to eject any round that might be in the chamber and lock the slide back. This is also referred to as “unload and show clear” in instructed shooting drills. If there is a live round in the chamber you can tilt the handgun so the ejection port is toward the ground and using the non-shooting hand, cup the hand over the ejection port to catch the round being ejected as you pull the slide all the way to the rear, and release it all in one motion with the non-shooting hand moving toward the body to ensure it does not pass in front of the muzzle. By doing this you will catch the ejected round in your hand and won't be picking up live rounds from the ground. **Make sure you keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction while unloading the handgun.** If there was no round left in the chamber after firing the handgun the slide will lock in the open position and all you need to do is remove the magazine, re-verify there is no round in the chamber, release the slide release to close the slide, press the trigger, engage any safety, and lay the handgun down or re-holster the handgun.

Breach-Loading Handgun - A breech-loading handgun is a firearm in which the cartridge or shell is inserted or loaded into a chamber integral to the rear portion of a barrel.



Chapter 4

Shooting Fundamentals

Proper Handgun Grip

Proper grip of a handgun is important to accuracy, managing recoil, and managing the flip of the muzzle. Holding the handgun in a low ready position you hold the handgun with your shooting hand pushed tightly up against the top of the back of the grip (called back strap). **Your index finger should be straight and resting on a reference point on the frame of the handgun above the trigger guard.** You should be squeezing the handgun about the same as if you were holding a hammer to drive a nail. Squeezing too tight as you press the trigger will cause you to shoot low on your target.

Below are examples of proper grip for a semi-automatic handgun and a revolver



Finger on frame



Thumbs stacked



Finger on frame



Thumbs pressed downward

Trigger Finger Resting Position

If a range safety officer is looking down the firing line on the left side of right handed shooters the range safety officer should see little or no shooting fingers through the trigger guard. They should be above it resting on a reference point that will vary with the handgun. Always remember **“OFF TARGET, OFF TRIGGER”** and this has to become a reflexive action any time you are not actively firing the handgun.

Handgun Alignment

The barrel of the handgun should be in alignment with the shooter's forearm when shooting from a Weaver Stance, which will help in controlling recoil and muzzle rise when the handgun is fired. When shooting from the Isosceles Stance the barrel of the handgun will be a little right or left of the center of the isosceles triangle formed with the arms.



Weaver stance



Isosceles stance

Support Hand (Non-Shooting Hand)

The shooting hand should be holding the handgun with a proper grip outlined earlier and the finger on the reference point. The non-shooting or support hand is placed below the trigger guard and in front of the shooting hand with fingers overlapping fingers of the shooting hand and touching the knuckles of the shooting hand. The non-shooting hand fingers should be pressed up against the bottom of the trigger guard. **Never put your index finger on the front of the trigger guard. The palms of both hands should be touching on the side off the grip to completely encircle the grip.** The shooting hand thumb should be resting on top of the non-shooting hand thumb and both thumbs pointed at your target. Natural hand and eye coordination works best with the thumbs pointed at the target and relaxed, without putting any pressure on the side of the handgun. **Never, ever place the non-shooting hand thumb behind the slide or just below it by crossing your non-shooting thumb over the shooting hand or you may lose a lot of skin.** Thumbs position on a revolver is pressed downward on the side of the grip to prevent interfering with the rotation of the cylinder as you fire the handgun.



Fingers over fingers



Stacked thumbs



Thumbs pressed down



Palms together

Proper Shooting Stances

The Most Common Stances Used In Shooting A Handgun

The Traditional Isosceles and Modern Isosceles Stance

In the Traditional Isosceles stance both arms are extended toward the target with elbows locked and the handgun gripped as described previously to form a triangle. The shoulders should be square to the target and the feet should be shoulder width apart. Legs can be straight or be slightly bent (whichever gives you the most stability during recoil) and your upper body should be straight or leaning slightly forward with your weight on the balls of your feet, which will help manage recoil. This is the most common shooting stance. The Modern Isosceles stance has the same stance with the exception that the shooting side foot is pulled back no further than the heel of the other foot, the knees are slightly bent, and the upper body is leaning slightly toward the target. The Modern Isosceles stance allows for better recoil management and for some shooters it allows the upper body to move easier to be able to shoot multiple targets. **In shooting while moving the elbows should be relaxed to maintain better control of the sight picture.** Recoil is a bit more difficult to manage with the elbows relaxed unless you are a muscular person, an experienced shooter, and depending on the caliber of handgun.



Isosceles Stance



Modern Isosceles

The Weaver Stance

In this stance the body is turned away from the target at approximately a 30-degree angle to the strong side (shooting hand side). The weak side foot (non-shooting hand side of the body) is in front of the strong side foot with the toes of the strong side foot pulled back to about the middle of the weak side foot and feet spaced about shoulder width apart. The feet should be parallel to each other and the shoulders should be parallel to the toes. The right arm is straight, elbow not locked, and pushing toward the target. **The left arm is bent with the elbow pointed toward the ground and pulling slightly against the shooting hand. This helps in controlling the movement of the muzzle before firing, as well as the muzzle rise of the handgun when fired.** The shooter should have their knees slightly bent and their weight on the balls of their feet and leaning just slightly toward their target.



Weaver stance

The Modified Weaver Stance or Chapman Stance

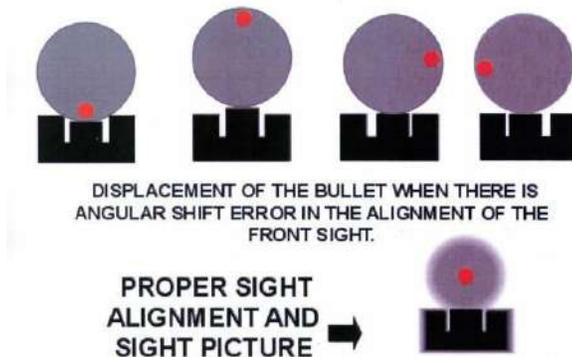
This stance is the same as in the Weaver Stance except the shooting arm elbow is locked to help reduce natural muzzle movement prior to shots, to help prevent the shooting arm from overpowering the non-shooting arm in the push-pull grip of the handgun, and to better manage recoil. This form of Weaver stance is often better for shooters who lack upper body strength.



Modified Weaver Stance

Aiming Consists of Proper Sight Alignment & Sight Picture

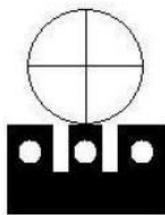
Proper sight alignment is required for accurate shooting. The front sight should be lined up level with the rear sight, with an even amount of space between the front sight and the two sides of the rear sight.



Target Aiming Points or Sight Picture

- **6 O'clock Method – Normally only used in bullseye competitions.**

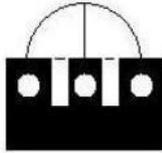
In the 6 o'clock method the front sight, when properly aligned with the top of the rear sights is placed at the 6 o'clock position at the bottom of the bullseye of your target. This method does not work well when you have a large bullseye or no mark on the target. It does do well shooting at smaller bull's eye's in helping to see your intended target but would be a marginal sighting method in a self-defense situation and may lead to shots hitting below the intended point of impact.



6 O'Clock Sight Picture

- **Center Hold – Most common aiming point.**

Another aiming point/sight picture is called center hold and is the most common sight method recommended. It involves lining up your front sight, centered between the sides of the rear sight, and level across the top of the sights. The top of the front sight is placed at the exact point where the bullet should strike the target. In other words, "split the bull's eye". This is the most common method gun manufacturer's use in factory sight alignment of new handguns.



Center Hold Sight Picture

➤ Sight Alignment rule:

Move the rear sight opposite the direction you want to hit on the target to move.

Trigger Control

To shoot accurately you must learn good trigger control. When pulling (better term is pressing) the trigger you must apply even pressure on the center of the trigger and the trigger finger must move independent of your hand like it is a detached limb. The trigger break (the exact point at which the firing pin or striker is released) should come as a surprise to you every time you press the trigger. A steady trigger pressure without hesitating during the trigger press helps to ensure a surprise trigger break. **Forcing the trigger break by jerking the trigger will normally cause a shot to strike the target to the left and low if you are right handed and low right if you are left handed. This is one of two of the most common shooting mistakes for inexperienced shooters.** If you are right handed and you place just your finger tip on the trigger (assuming the handgun is a proper fit) you may slightly push the handgun to the left when you press the trigger. If you place your finger on the trigger at the first finger joint you may find that you shoot to the right of your target because you torque the handgun to the right as you press the trigger. This is one of the reasons why it is important for the handgun to fit your hand. You should not increase the squeeze pressure on the grip of the handgun while pressing the trigger as you will torque the handgun downward as you squeeze the trigger. Experienced shooters do not release the trigger back to its original position after firing; they release it just enough between multiple shots for the trigger to reset. This is called “trapping the trigger” and helps to prevent subconsciously torquing the handgun while pressing the trigger. As soon as the trigger breaks you momentarily hold the trigger against the back of the trigger guard then release it forward just enough to allow the trigger to reset. The trigger reset will be a noticeable click or in a live fire environment you will feel the reset occur as the trigger moves forward. This keeps the slack out of the trigger travel to enable you to fire the handgun again quickly and accurately.

Trigger Break Variances in Handguns

Different manufacturer's handguns come with the triggers set with different trigger break tension. The trigger break is the amount of pressure in pounds on the trigger press that it takes to make the handgun fire. Single action or double action only handguns will normally have the same weight trigger break each time you squeeze the trigger. Double action/single action handguns normally have a much heavier trigger break on the double action mode (when the hammer is not in a cocked position) and a lighter break on subsequent rounds fired single action until the magazine is changed out or reloaded. Most single/double action handguns will have a shorter trigger travel after the first round is fired until the magazine is empty. It is difficult for some shooters to learn good enough trigger control so that they can press the trigger equally as well with a heavier trigger break as with a lighter trigger break. For this reason, a lot of shooters prefer a double action only handgun where the trigger break is more consistent. **In a gunfight you won't have time to cock the hammer on a double/single action handgun and if your handgun is a double/single action handgun you need to practice shooting your first shot without cocking the hammer until you can shoot it accurately.** The ideal trigger break is considered to be between 3.5 lbs. to 4.5 lbs. for experienced shooters but few manufacturers will set a trigger break at 3.5 lbs. because the risk of accidental discharge increases with lighter trigger breaks. Semi-automatic handguns will commonly have a trigger break set at around 7 to 8 lbs. in double action mode and 4.5 to 5.5 lbs. in single action mode. Revolvers can have as high as a 13 lb. trigger break on some of the small double action only revolvers. **Here you have to balance safety concerns with desired accuracy in buying a handgun or having a gunsmith change the trigger system or adjust the trigger break.**

Eye Domination

You need to determine which eye is the dominant eye. Take your thumb and hold it straight up and align it to the center of another person's nose that is eight to ten feet away from you. Ask them to tell you which of your eyes your thumb is in front of when you align it to the center of their nose and that will be your dominant eye. If you are right eye dominant you would normally shoot with your right hand and left eye dominant shooters should learn to shoot with their left hand. **If you are left eye dominant, right handed, and can't adjust to shooting left handed, or the opposite, then you should learn to shoot using the dominant eye and align your sights to your target by turning your head away from the target slightly.** However, you will not likely shoot quite as accurately shooting with your head turned slightly to either side to align your sights to your target. Unless you are a highly trained shooter you should probably shoot with your non-dominant eye closed at any shooting distance of more than five yards. Highly trained shooters sometimes keep both eyes open to better see threats that may exist. Many shooters have difficulty with sight alignment with both eyes open. If you can't focus on the front sight with either eye, because of failing eyesight, then focus on the target impact point

with your sight alignment a bit out of focus but you should still be able to keep your sights in proper alignment.

Aiming and Sight Alignment

As discussed earlier you should identify your target and align your sights with the top of the rear sight blade and centered in the rear sight notch. **Then place the top of the front sight blade on your aiming point and then shift your focus entirely on the front sight with your target slightly out of focus but visible.**

Breathing Control

As you obtain your sight picture you should take a couple of deep relaxing breaths if you are nervous or experiencing excessive natural tremors (called arc of movement). Once you have your sights aligned, a sight picture, and you are focused solely on your front sight you should exhale and momentarily hold your breath through the trigger press. If you don't fire your handgun within four or five seconds of holding your breath, then you should relax and then repeat breathing control. This prevents natural tremors in the body that occur after holding your breath for more than a few seconds. In more rapid firing you simply pause breathing as you squeeze the trigger.

Hold your breath during breath control to minimize body movement.

Hold Control

Hold control is keeping the handgun perfectly still through the shot or shots without moving the front sights off target while pressing the trigger. Hold control is achieved with a proper stance and balanced weight on the balls of both feet, proper grip, keeping the arms fully extended when target shooting, applying some pull pressure with the non-shooting hand against the shooting hand on the front of the grip, momentarily holding your breath through the trigger press, and maintaining all shooting fundamentals through the shot.

Trigger Control

As outlined earlier trigger control involves first taking up any slack in the trigger until you feel resistance then when ready to press the trigger apply steady pressure on the trigger until the handgun fires. It should be a surprise when the handgun fires if you have good trigger control. **You should momentarily hold the trigger all the way back after the trigger press then allow it to move forward just far enough to reset the striker or hammer and never let your finger lose contact with the trigger.**

Follow Through

You should not close your eyes as the handgun fires so you can stay focused on the front sight and quickly get back on target. You must stay focused on the front sight and allow the handgun to fall back on your aiming point, maintaining proper form, to be ready to fire any follow-up shots. This is necessary follow through to help prevent anticipating the “bang”, or flinching, and to get back on target quickly. **You should not be looking at where your shots are hitting the target until after you are finished firing whatever number of rounds you are planning to fire. This could cause you to subconsciously start moving the handgun downward as you press the trigger to get a better view of your intended target. You aren’t going to change the impact point of your rounds by looking at the target as soon as you fire the handgun. You should be more concerned with the pattern of hits to tell you what you are doing right or wrong.** Wait until you fire the last shot of a group and then get a final shot picture without firing before verifying the location of your hits.

The reason follow-through is important.

To continue your shooting fundamentals before, during, and immediately after firing a shot.

Reading Your Target

Firing several shot groups should give you an indication of what you need to correct for better accuracy. From a bench rest firing position three shots are probably enough for each shot group and from a standing position five shots may be needed for each group. **In both cases your target should be five to seven yards away while determining how your handgun is sighted in and what**

you need to work on. At five yards from a bench rest position you work toward grouping three shots within a three-inch group. At seven yards you should be able to group all your shots within a six-inch group after several practice sessions. As you continue to practice and become more skilled then you should be able to shoot 2 inch groups at five yards and 3 inch groups at seven yards

from a supported bench rest position. Don’t rest the bottom of your support hand on the bench rest; support only your forearm on the bench rest. If your groupings are larger than these, you have a problem with trigger control and possibly sight alignment.

Controlled Shot Groups

Controlled shot groups are multiple shots fired as quickly as you can get a follow-up sight picture on your target. If you are shooting one shot you want a sight picture prior to the shot and a sight picture after the shot before lowering the handgun to see where you struck the target.

If you are shooting multiple shots, you always want one final sight picture after the last shot fired before you lower your handgun to see your shot grouping. You may have heard the term “double taps” mentioned frequently among handgun owners. That is firing two shots as fast as you can pull the trigger without obtaining a follow-up sight picture for the second shot. The second shot of a double tap will typically be high of the intended point of impact for most shooters at five yards and it takes less than a half second to obtain a follow-up sight picture on your target and fire a second shot more accurately in a “controlled pair”.

A missed shot has far worse potential consequences in a life and death situation than a controlled shot. Accuracy with the first shot can save your life so train to make the first shot accurate in case you ever have to defend your life.

Misfire

A misfire or failure to fire occurs when the trigger is pulled but the primer or powder in the cartridge malfunctions, causing the firearm not to discharge. Misfire rounds can still be dangerous and should be deactivated and disposed of properly. (Wait 30 Seconds)

Hang fire

A hang fire (also delayed discharge) is an unexpected delay between the triggering of a firearm and the ignition of the propellant. Whenever a firearm fails to fire, but has not clearly malfunctioned, a hang fire should be suspected. When this occurs, the correct procedure is to keep the firearm pointed downrange or in a safe direction for thirty to sixty seconds, then remove and safely discard the round (which is now a dud as explained above if the primer was struck, otherwise the gun itself may have malfunctioned). The reason for this is that a round functioning outside of the firearm, or in the firearm with the action open, could cause serious fragmentation hazard.

Squib load

A squib load (also squib round, squib, squib fire, insufficient discharge, and incomplete discharge) is an extremely dangerous malfunction that happens when a fired projectile does not carry enough force and becomes stuck in the gun barrel instead of exiting it. In the case of semi-automatic or automatic weapons, this can cause successive rounds to be fired into the projectile obstructing the barrel, which can cause catastrophic failure to the structural integrity of the firearm, and pose a threat to the operator or bystanders. The bullet from a squib stuck in the barrel must never be cleared by subsequently attempting to fire a live or blank round into an obstructed barrel. Furthermore, blank rounds use a type of powder different from that of other rounds, and generate much more pressure. Therefore, the presence of a bullet or other obstruction in the barrel may cause the firearm to fail.

This is what to do upon a misfire or hang fire: i.e. when a cartridge fails to fire immediately.

Keep the pistol pointed in a safe direction and wait at least 30 seconds before opening the action and removing the cartridge.

Clearing Malfunctions

There are five basic exercises to become proficient at managing and clearing malfunctions of a semi-automatic handgun. These exercises train the subconscious mind to react instinctively should you ever be in a defensive situation.

➤ Press Trigger, Handgun Does not Fire

If, during a shooting exercise your semi-automatic handgun fails to fire, you should quickly glance at the slide to see if it is open or fully closed. **If it is fully closed, there could be a delayed firing (called hangfire) of the round so you should hold the handgun on target for several seconds to allow time for the round to “cook off” before ejecting the round. If the round does not “cook off” and fire after several seconds then tap the bottom of the magazine to make sure it is properly seated, then in one motion tilt the handgun so the ejection port is toward the ground and rack the slide all the way to the rear, then release it while returning the handgun to a firing position.** Keep the handgun in a high position and stay focused on your target once you get the hang of it. This procedure should become instinctive. This is often referred to **“assess, tap and rack”**. If you are shooting a double action revolver, simply wait a few seconds then pull the trigger again when ready to fire to advance the cylinder to the next round or cock the hammer on a single action revolver to advance the cylinder for the next round.



**Tap magazine to
make sure seated**

**Rack bad round out
& new round in**

➤ Press the trigger, Abnormal Bang Or Recoil occurs:

If, during a shooting exercise your semi-automatic handgun fires but the bang is muted or you notice abnormally less recoil then you are at risk of having a round where the primer ignited but the powder charge did not, or the powder charge created insufficient pressure to propel the bullet out of the barrel.

This is a very dangerous situation. Lock the slide open, remove the magazine and use a flexible plastic tie strip that can be pushed into the barrel from the rear to make sure there is no lodged bullet in the barrel. If you are shooting a revolver, simply open the cylinder and run a plastic tie down the barrel to check for obstructions. If you can't push the flexible tie strip all the way through the barrel, keeping the muzzle pointed in a safe direction then take your handgun to a gunsmith to have the bullet removed from the barrel and the barrel inspected for damage. If there is a round lodged in the barrel and you fire another round your handgun will likely blow up in your hands. Always pay attention to the sound of your handgun firing to safeguard against faulty ammunition rounds lodging in the barrel. Shoot only good quality ammunition to lessen the chances of rounds loaded with insufficient or low grade powder, often referred to as "squib" rounds.



Check chamber



Lock slide open



Remove magazine



Rack slide to unload



Verify no round lodged in barrel using a plastic tie

➤ **Slide Locks Open & You Are Not Finished Shooting**

If your handgun fails to fire and a quick glance at the slide reveals you are out of ammunition (your slide will be locked open) you should develop a habit of reaching for another fully loaded magazine with the non-shooting hand and while that hand, holding a fully loaded magazine, is moving toward the handgun being held in the firing position you push the slide release with the shooting hand thumb. Let the empty magazine fall to the ground and wait until after your shooting exercise to lay your handgun down and pick it up. **Insert a fully loaded magazine, tap the bottom of it to make sure it is seated properly, and rack the slide to load a live round in the chamber. This procedure should become instinctive. This is often referred to as an “emergency reload”.**



Remove magazine and insert loaded magazine



Tap magazine to be sure it is seated



Rack slide to load new round

➤ **Failure to Eject Round**

You may have heard the term “**stove piping**” mentioned in shooting semi-automatic pistols. That is where a shell casing is not properly ejected and is caught in the ejection port. This happens frequently with shooters who do not maintain a firm grip on a handgun while firing it or allow their arms to recoil with the gun and the slide does not cycle properly. It could also be attributed to rough edges on the feed ramp of the barrel that a round could snag on, the ejector could be excessively worn, or the ammunition you are using is not compatible with your handgun. When your weapon fails to fire because there is a round trapped in the ejector you tip the handgun muzzle up enough to see the ejection port and verify the type malfunction. If there is a round lodged in the ejector port tap the bottom of the magazine to make sure it is seated, then tilt the handgun sideways so the ejection port is pointed toward the ground and rack the slide all the way back, release it, then return the handgun to the firing position. The shell casing will fall to the ground as a live round is loaded into the chamber.



Tap magazine



Flip & rack to clear jam



Ready to fire

➤ **Round in the Chamber and Round Lodged Against it (Double Feed)**

The last malfunction and the most difficult to clear quickly and safely is a round stuck in the chamber and another live round jammed against it. In this type malfunction you lock the slide open while holding the handgun just below the firing position, push the magazine release and pull the magazine out of the handgun with your non-shooting hand and let it fall to the ground, or if you don't have another magazine place the magazine between your last two fingers of your shooting hand on the handle and hold it there while racking the slide. Rack the slide all the way back two or three times to make sure the jammed rounds are cleared, then insert a loaded magazine with the non-shooting hand, tap the bottom of the magazine to make sure it is properly seated, and rack a live round into the chamber. All this is done while remaining in a high position just below your target line.



Verify jam & lock slide open



Strip magazine & let fall to the ground



Rack slide 2-3 times to clear jammed rounds



Insert loaded magazine



Tap magazine



Rack live round



Ready to fire

Clearing malfunctions should become instinctive after lots of practice so that you will be able to clear malfunctions under the stress of a potential life and death situation. Otherwise, you will likely freeze under a stressful situation if clearing malfunctions is not instinctive.

This is as important as learning to shoot accurately and also teaches you how to safely clear malfunctions without pointing your muzzle at someone or something you don't want to shoot.

Accidental discharges can happen while someone is clearing a malfunction and they are not trained properly on how to do it.

Dry Fire Practice Is Very Important

One of the most important but most often overlooked handgun training tools is dry practicing with your handgun. Dry practice is accomplished by following all the proper steps in setting up your handgun to fire a live round. The only difference is you don't have live rounds in your chamber or magazine.

Dummy rounds, or A Zoom snap caps work well for dry practice and clearing malfunctions exercises. You can buy them at some gun ranges or order them online from several retailers. They are metal dummy rounds without any primer or powder. While you can dry fire almost all modern semi-automatic handguns without using snap caps, which have a striker pad to protect the firing pin, it is a good idea to use them. If you shoot a revolver that has the firing pin on the hammer or a 22 long rifle caliber they are important in protecting your firing pin while dry firing. **You will also need them to learn to clear all malfunctions safely and quickly.**

You should never dry practice with family in the area, or in front of a TV, and there should never be live ammunition in the room or area where you dry practice. You should never dry fire your handgun at anything that will not stop a round, as the more comfortable you get with a handgun the probability increases that you might not realize you failed to remove the live round from the chamber when you last shot your handgun.

In dry firing you do your magazine checks and chamber checks, just as you do when using live ammunition, so you don't confuse the subconscious mind when you go back to live firing exercises. After doing a chamber check and magazine check in the ready position, insert a magazine with at least one snap cap loaded in it and rack a round into the chamber. Bring the handgun up to the firing position, acquire your target with proper sight alignment, and squeeze the trigger until you get a surprise trigger break. Focus on the front sight to see if the sight alignment changes as the trigger break occurs. This will tell you if you are anticipating the trigger break or squeezing the grip as you squeeze the trigger, fail to maintain focus on the front sight, or have too much or too little finger on the trigger. If the muzzle dips your trigger finger is not squeezing the trigger in an even steady pull or you are squeezing harder on the handgun grip with the shooting hand just as the trigger break occurs. If the muzzle moves slightly left you may have too little finger on the trigger or you are squeezing the grip harder as the trigger break occurs. If the muzzle moves right you probably have too much finger on the trigger or you may be pushing against the side of the handgun with the support hand as the trigger break occurs. You don't want to see any movement in the front sight when you squeeze the trigger.

With using snap caps or an empty chamber to dry practice with a double action only handgun your trigger won't reset automatically because the handgun did not fire. To reset the trigger on a semi-automatic handgun, pull the slide back only far enough that you feel or hear the click of the trigger reset. It takes less than one-inch travel of the slide to reset your trigger and you are ready for the next dry fire. Leave your magazine out of the handgun so the slide will not lock back if you pull it all the way back. Some semi-automatic handguns have a magazine "lock-out"

that prevents the trigger from working without the magazine in the handgun. If this is your handgun, then just be sure you pull the slide back just far enough to reset the trigger. With a double action/single action handgun you simply need to recock the trigger. **Dry firing your handgun and lots of practice is necessary to break bad habits in trigger control and also helps to eliminate the anticipation of the handgun “bang” that a lot of shooters struggle with in live firing.** A live firing exercise to help eliminate the flinching or anticipation problem can be done at the range with the help of another person. Have someone else load two or three dummy rounds or snap caps in a magazine, intermingled with live rounds randomly, so that you never know for sure when the handgun will go “bang” or just “click”. Have the other person watch the front sight for signs of movement when you squeeze the trigger on a snap cap. It is easy to see what the muzzle does when squeezing the trigger on a snap cap round. It is very common to dry fire without the muzzle moving but then when live firing you subconsciously flinch as you squeeze the trigger. This will help overcome that. Using snap caps intermingled with live rounds also helps in training you to clear bad rounds quickly, reload magazines quickly, and continue firing. Repeat this exercise often until you overcome “anticipating” or “flinching”. Dry practice for trigger control is probably more important than live firing to improve your accuracy and it is a good idea to use dry firing between live firing shot groups to verify what you may be struggling with. You will generally shoot your next live fire shot group more accurately after a few minutes of dry firing practice. For every live round you fire you should dry practice fire at least ten times as much in practice sessions. **If you can set aside just a few minutes three times a week to dry fire practice in a safe place at home, you will gradually improve your trigger control and accuracy. Include malfunction clearings in that practice routine.**

Chapter 5

Handgun Storage & Ammunition Storage

Handguns should be stored under lock and key when not being used.

Trigger locks or barrel cable locks will prevent the handgun from being fired but with children they are very curious and will be tempted to handle the handgun when you are not around if they have access to it. You should never hide your handgun under the mattress, behind the headboard, in a chest of drawers, or hidden in a closet somewhere. That is not proper storage under New Mexico handgun statutes. There are gun safes and mini gun safes available that have bio-metric or combination locks that will safeguard you from a child finding a key to a locked box containing a handgun. If you keep a loaded handgun on the night stand or within reach of your bed at night, it is best to purchase one of the mini gun safes that allows you to access your handgun within two to three seconds. Large gun safes are best for storage but don't allow fast access to your handgun.

Handguns should be stored in a dry and relatively low humidity location.



Gun safe



Electronic handgun vault



Cable Lock



Trigger lock

Ammunition should be stored in a cool dry place. Ammunition should also be stored under lock and key to prevent children from having access to it. It should be stored away from chemicals and water to prevent corrosion of the primer in the rounds. It should be stored in the original container from the manufacturer to prevent possible casing dents from rounds being banged against each other, to make sure only one type and caliber ammunition is in the container, and to reduce handling that causes corrosion from body oils and fingerprints. Ammunition should be stored separate from your guns under lock and key also.

Handgun and Ammunition safe



New Mexico Concealed Handgun License Information

Obtaining a concealed carry license in New Mexico does not require any pre-training with a handgun and marginal accuracy skill. In this class, you will receive some basic safety and handgun use instruction, shoot twenty-five rounds (50 rounds for both Semi-Automatic and Revolver) in proficiency qualification on the range, and spend a total of 15 hours learning the handgun statutes and penal code, use of force and deadly force, and non-violent dispute resolution. Complete a written exam of fifty questions.

Carrying a concealed firearm is a very serious matter, requires a higher level of gun ownership responsibility, and you are held to a higher legal standard if you are ever involved in a shooting incident. It is highly recommended that you take some defensive handgun courses if you now have or plan to obtain a Concealed Handgun License to better prepare you for the unlikely event you are ever involved in a shooting incident.

If you don't know if you could shoot another person in a life and death situation then it is probably a mistake to obtain a Concealed Handgun License and carry a handgun, as you will likely freeze or hesitate when confronted by an armed assailant, and it may cost you or a loved one their life.

If you are ever involved in a shooting incident your body will naturally experience physiological changes that cause you to lose all fine motor skills, create tunnel vision, and make the event seem to be happening in slow motion. Extensive defensive handgun training is how you learn to manage the physiological changes and still be able to function. Using a gun is always the last option to saving your life or another person's and it would be an extremely traumatic experience that would be life changing. Be prepared for extensive attorney fees even if you do everything right because you will need legal representation in criminal and/or civil court.

Information for New applications:

- 1. Complete 2-Page Application**
- 2. \$56 for the Application Fee paid to NMDPS (Check or Money Order Only)**
- 3. \$44 for Background Check paid to Cogent (Paid Online Only)**

(Total fees cost = \$100)

- 4. Photocopy of New Mexico Driver's License or Identification Card**
- 5. Original birth certificate: Must be issued by a vital statistics or similar agency in the state in which you were born, no photo copies. Refer to 29-19-5 B(6)**
- 6. Certificate of Completion of Firearms Training (From your Instructor)**
- 7. Two (2) Authorization Release Forms:**

AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION (Must be notarized when signed)
AUTHORIZATION TO OBTAIN HEALTH INFORMATION (Must be witnessed when signed)

- 8. Electronic Fingerprint Background Check receipt (After being fingerprinted)**

Instructor notes:

Thank you for taking training with us. While taking a class or individual training is far better than learning from reading a manual you may not be in a position to take training and this manual will give you the basics to self-teach. Using this manual as an instructional tool and reference while you continue regular practice should help to introduce you to the principles of safety and knowledge for you to understand the fundamentals and safely operate a handgun. Safer handgun handling equates to fewer handgun accidents and fewer deaths resulting from incompetence with handguns. Guns are not unsafe when proper principles are followed in operating them and maintaining them. Accidents are rarely a result of a handgun malfunction; unsafe handling and lack of knowledge on the safe operation of a handgun are almost always the cause of gun accidents.

You should enjoy handgun ownership, shooting, and continue striving to improve your handgun skills. I've been told numerous times by individuals extremely intimidated by a handgun, or former anti-handgun people, that they were hooked on shooting after they received proper training. You should promote training and practice to other handgun owners you know that own handguns and do not take further training to improve skills that may save a life if they ever have to use their handgun in a defensive situation.

I hope that you liked the course; this manual and feel both have helped you in developing your handgun skills. There is no better way to show your appreciation than to refer someone else to take our training course. My goal in teaching handgun skills is to promote safe and competent handgun ownership for those that choose to own a handgun for recreation, competitive shooting, or self-defense purposes.

Anthony Segura

New Mexico Concealed Carry Instructor #556

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NRA Refuse To Be A Victim Instructor

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