

# Shooting First Steps

## Importance of Practice

Spending some time becoming familiar with your firearm is one of the most important things you can do. This should be done continually and regularly. Whenever you buy your first gun for concealed carry or add one to your collection, it is very important to become intimately familiar with the firearm. If you will be carrying it, it will need to become part of your body.

Someday you may need to use this firearm. When that happens, you will act on instinct. You will not have time to learn about the firearm at that point. You don't want to be fumbling around trying to remember how to use it when your life is in peril. Your expertise with your firearm is crucial to your ability to protect yourself and/or others.

## Loading & Unloading

Always familiarize yourself with the owner's manual for any specific loading instructions for your firearm.

Implement the Basic Firearm Rules:

- Always point the firearm in a safe direction.
- Always keep your finger off of the trigger until you are ready to fire.
- Always keep the firearm unloaded until you are ready to use it.
- Never cover anything with the muzzle that you are not willing to destroy.
- Be sure of your target and what is beyond.

Revolver Load:

1. Ensure that the hammer is not in the "cocked" position.
2. Place your dominant hand on the grip with your finger off of the trigger while keeping the firearm pointed in a safe direction. Cup the frame of the firearm with

your non-dominant hand and depress the cylinder latch (forward, in or rearward depending on the make/model) with the thumb of the dominant hand.

3. Fully open or expose the cylinder from the frame. As you push the cylinder open with your non-dominant hand, allow your two middle fingers to slide through the frame to ensure full exposure of all chambers.
4. Secure the butt of the firearm against your mid-section with your dominant hand. Develop a memory of this position. This will assist you in the event that you must reload in the dark.
5. Insert the cartridge, projectile first, into each chamber and press it to ensure that the cartridge is fully seated. Repeat this process until all chambers are loaded.

(Note: Speed loaders – a device that holds and positions all cartridges for loading all cylinders simultaneously. To use a speed loader, follow the previous steps 1-4. Grasp the speed loader with your non-dominant hand and align the cartridges with the chambers. Insert the cartridges and release the speed loader with a ¼ turn. The cartridges will fall away. It is recommended to seat the cartridges with your thumb before continuing.)

6. With your non-dominant hand, push the cylinder back towards the firearm frame until you hear the cylinder latch lock into position with a “click”.
7. Gently attempt to rotate the cylinder clockwise by hand to ensure it is locked. It is locked if it does not move. If it does move, re-open the cylinder and close the cylinder to be sure.
8. Once you have completed the load, move into firing position.

#### Revolver Unload:

1. Same as in loading process.
2. Same as in loading process.
3. Same as in loading process.
4. Rotate the firearm into a “muzzle-up” position while securing the cylinder from spinning. Use the palm of your non-dominant hand to firmly press down on the ejector. Press it all of the way down to release all of the spent casings. There is no need to depress the ejector down several times in a manic fashion. If the casing does not fall free, manually extract them with your non-dominant hand.
5. Verify that the firearm is fully unloaded making sure the cylinder is fully exposed and all chambers can be seen and felt to ensure you have a fully unloaded firearm.

### Semi-Auto Load:

1. Point the firearm in a safe direction. Place your dominant hand on the grip of the pistol while keeping your finger off of the trigger.
2. Press the magazine release button.
3. Verify the firearm is fully unloaded and there is no ammunition in the chamber. (Most semi-autos will lock the slide open when the last round is fired) In the event the slide is not locked open, pull the slide to the rear with your non-dominant hand while pushing up the slide stop/release. Visually check the chamber.
4. Insert ammunition into the magazine. Set the magazine base on a hard surface and support it with your non-dominant hand. Place the cartridge so the case of the ammunition rests on the top 1/3 of the top of the magazine with the "bullet" facing forward. Push down firmly with your thumb on the center of the cartridge and slide it back under the retaining lips of the magazine. Repeat until the magazine is full.
5. Hold the magazine in your non-dominant hand with the "bullets" facing forward, the higher angled side, toward the exit end of the barrel.
6. Insert the magazine by pushing firmly upward into the frame until you hear a "click" indicating the magazine has locked in place.
7. Disengage the slide lock/release and allow the slide to ride forward on its own. This action loads the top round into the chamber.
8. The firearm is loaded, move into a firing position.

### Semi-Auto Unload:

If you have finished firing a full magazine, most semi-auto pistols will lock the slide open. If it did not, or you did not shoot all of the ammunition, the slide will be closed.

1. Point your firearm in a safe direction.
2. Press the magazine release to eject the magazine.
3. Verify the firearm is fully unloaded and there is no ammunition in the chamber. If the slide was not locked open, pull the slide to the rear and manipulate the slide lock/release up to lock the slide open.
4. Lay the firearm down with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
5. If there is any ammunition remaining in the magazine, press down slightly on the top round with your thumb and slide the round forward and out of the magazine. Continue until all of the ammunition is removed from the magazine.
6. Safely store your firearm and ammunition separately.

## Stance

There are a number of “named” shooting stances and even more options about which is the best. There are some key aspects of the shooting stance that are necessary for safety, speed and accuracy. We will discuss the variations below, but first we will discuss the key aspects.

First, the stance must be comfortable and exude self-confidence. Your stance should be forward leaning and aggressive, not leaning back and passive. The stance should be well-balanced with slight bends at the knees and waist. Lastly, the stance should enhance your grip, not work against it.

### Isosceles Stance

Most new shooters take to this stance instinctively. Fully extend both arms towards the target with your shoulders perpendicular to the target and both elbows locked. The arms and chest form an Isosceles triangle. Whereas this is a proven shooting stance for speed and accuracy, it lacks the flexibility for movement required for defensive situations.



### Modern Stance (Modified Isosceles)

Here your weight is shifted forward; feet are staggered but still pointing toward the target. The upper body curls forward keeping your arms in line with your shoulders. Your head is further forward giving a more clear view of the sights. This stance allows for greater recoil absorption in the shoulders and have reduced muzzle rise.



### Weaver Stance

This stance makes your body a smaller target as one of your shoulders is turned toward the target. In this stance, you are able to pivot your body, rotate your arms, adjust your shots, keep your target in view and stay better balanced because you are shooting from your core. Both elbows are bent with the dominant arm bent less than the support arm.



## HOSS Firearm Training

### Chapman Stance (Modified Weaver)

This stance is identical to the Weaver with one significant difference. Here you lock your dominant hand and arm. This helps you to reduce/remove trembling while still taking advantage of the push/pull grip tension.



### Bulls eye Stance (One-hand)

This is a good stance to practice in the event you are injured and only have one hand to shoot with. Turn your body perpendicular to the target and extend your arm straight out to the side and directly toward the target. The non-shooting hand should cross your chest. One advantage of this stance is that it makes your body a smaller target. It is recommended to practice dominant and non-dominant hands.



Firearm Training

## Grip and Trigger Pull

Getting a proper grip on your firearm is very important. Your firearm must become an extension of you. It replaces the finger in pointing at an object. It affects your aim, your ability to manipulate the hammer, to pull the trigger, and to absorb as much of the recoil with as little discomfort as possible.

For self-defense, two-handed grip is always better. As the support (although, it is recommended to practice and become comfortable shooting with one hand as well) hand helps to stabilize the firearm and makes the shooter more accurate.

Each hand has its own place and function in the grip. You need a firm and solid grip. Get the web of your hand as high into the grip frame as possible to get near the center of the bore. This allows for better recoil absorption and muzzle control. Your grip will differ from a revolver to a semi-auto.

The grip for a revolver starts with the firearm in the dominant hand with it pressed deep into the web of the hand and high on the backstrap. The top of the barrel of the firearm should be in alignment with your forearm. Your trigger finger should be pointed and off of the trigger. The non-dominant hand should wrap firmly around the shooting hand. This steadies the grip and allows for proper trigger pull, recoil absorption and follow through.

For single action revolver shooting, in which you must manipulate the hammer to align the next cartridge, the thumb of your non-dominant hand should be high enough to access the hammer so your dominant hand grip never changes position.

For double action revolver shooting, the grip is the same, but the thumb of the non-dominant hand is dropped down to provide maximum leverage for the longer, harder pull of a double action trigger.

The semi-auto grip is slightly different. When the semi-auto is fired, the slide moves rearward and back forward. This is not a place you want your hand to be! Most semi-autos are designed with a hood that should keep your dominant hand from crossing into the slide's path.

Again, the higher hand on the grip, the better control you have over recoil. When gripping the semi-auto, you should see your flesh wrinkle a little behind the backstrap and under the hood.

The firearm is placed in the "V" created in the web of your hand. Your dominant thumb is high and slightly curled down. Your trigger finger should be pointed and off of the trigger.

## Preparing To Fire

When you raise your arms to a firing position, you apply forward pressure (push) with the firing hand and pull rearward with the non-firing hand with equal pressure. This creates a stabilizing tension to steady the firearm and reduce muzzle rise from the recoil.

## Trigger Pull

You will want the pad of the last joint of your trigger finger on the trigger. This will not only give you good leverage on the trigger, but it will assist in having a clean, straight trigger pull front to back.

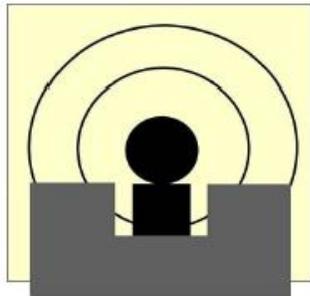
Handgun fit is essential to trigger pull. If the firearm doesn't fit properly, you will not have a proper trigger pull.

## Sighting the Firearm

Learning how to aim your firearm is one of the most basic skills you will learn when you first acquire your firearm. Properly aiming your firearm is not only a basic part of its normal use, but it is also essential in firearm safety. If you find yourself defending yourself with your firearm, aiming should be a higher priority than shooting. Hitting the target is the reason to own a firearm.

The sights are located on top of the firearm. The front sight should be centered in the notch of the rear and the top of the front sight should be level with the top of the rear sight.

There are many different types of sight systems. You must decide which type you like the best and are most comfortable with. The type of sight you use is less important than your



**SIX O'CLOCK HOLD**

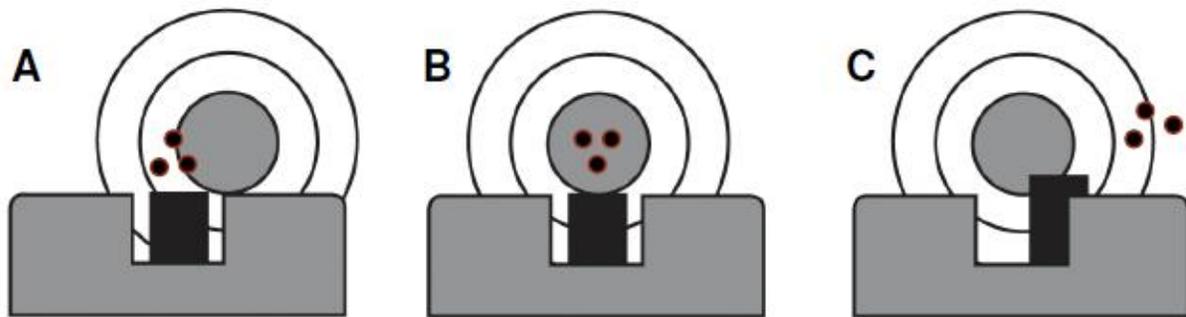
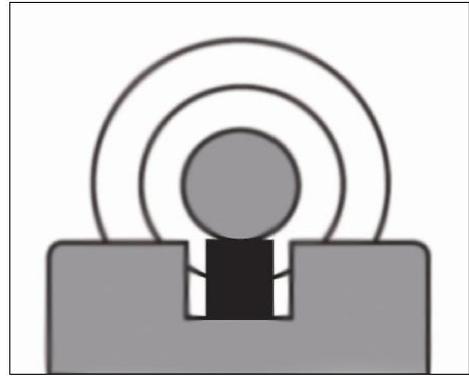


**CENTER HOLD**

ability to effectively align them to properly hit the target.

No matter which sight variety your firearm has, the key skill is to keep your eyes focused on the front sight as it is set in alignment with the rear sight. The target will be blurred.

Your instincts will want the target in clear focus. You must train yourself to focus on the front sight as it covers the target. Your firearm will move slightly, but with proper grip and stance, your movement will be reduced and predictable. Keep your sights aligned as you place your finger on the trigger and begin constant, smooth pressure.



## Dry Fire Practice

Dry fire is a generic term for practicing gun handling skills with an UNLOADED firearm. It is not limited to only pulling the trigger. It should certainly include practicing reloads, drawing or any other shooting skill. Dry fire practice is essential to improving your shooting skills.

Dry fire is an important component of practice. Practice is an important part of safe firearm handling. Practice is necessary if you plan on defending yourself or your loved ones. It is known that you are only half as good under stress that you were the last time at the range and you have to allow for shooting atrophy.

Dry firing is essential for developing proficiency with any motor skill that requires a significant amount of repetitions. Also, bad habits (flinching, blinking, and lack of follow through) are difficult to detect during live fire.

You should use dummy rounds (snap caps) for your dry fire practice. Although most modern firearms are not damaged by dry firing an empty firearm, the use of

dummy rounds is good practice and allows you to practice your skills with all of the necessary components.

Remember, follow the basic rules of firearm safety while dry firing. This can be dangerous if you are not always focused on safety. Safety rules ALWAYS apply.

Prepare: Remove all distractions. Turn off the TV, iPod, etc. Inform anyone necessary that you do not want to be disturbed during this time. If at any point you are interrupted, you must re-start a safe start.

Unload: Unload your firearm. Unload it again. Visually check the chamber/cylinders twice. Use your fingers to manually check that all ammunition has been removed.

Move: Remove ALL ammunition from the room. It is a good idea to have a container to house the ammunition that you removed to be used each time you dry fire practice. Count each round of ammunition as you place them in the container to verify they are all accounted for.

Select: Select or prepare your backstop taking into consideration those that are in the home and those that live nearby. Your interior wall and most exterior walls will not stop a bullet if you should have an accidental discharge.

Begin: Decide the amount of time you want to practice as well as the specific skills. 10-15 minutes is recommended. A training checklist can be very helpful. Before you begin, tell yourself out loud, "I am beginning dry fire practice." This verbal cue is important to correctly set your mind.

Finish: Complete your practice by telling yourself out loud, "Dry fire practice is over." This audible proclamation will keep you disciplined and help prevent you from "trying one more". When you are done, you are done. Remove the dummy rounds and verify the firearm is unloaded. Put all tools for dry firing away.

Take a break between dry fire practice and reloading your firearm with live ammunition. A pause is necessary because you were just focusing on pulling the trigger and doing that with confidence that there was no live ammunition in the firearm. So, pause between practice and safe carry.

It is recommended that you practice a minimum of once a week. Committing to this practice and developing a system will be an investment in skills and safety for you and those around you.

## Handling Misfeeds & Malfunctions

A firearm is a mechanical tool. As with any mechanical tool, a malfunction can occur. As a responsible firearm owner, you should learn the techniques for dealing with malfunctions quickly and safely.

There are a number of causes of malfunctions. The ammunition may not perform correctly, the firearms itself may have an internal mechanical issue, the firearm could be excessively dirty, or it could be human error. For this section, we will focus on misfeeds.

The misfeed is the most common malfunction. This happens when the ammunition does not chamber properly and the firearm ceases to work (jams). One advantage of a revolver is that if you have a malfunction, most are solved by pulling the trigger again.

A semi-auto relies on the action of the slide to eject the fired casing and load a fresh cartridge into the chamber. Sometimes, this doesn't work correctly and the fresh cartridge doesn't enter the chamber properly. So, you must clear the misfeed in order to continue to defend yourself.

The task is to remove the misfed cartridge and get a new cartridge into the chamber as quickly as possible.

### 3 Types of Misfeeds

1. Failure to Feed – A round was not loaded into the chamber. It is not necessarily visible, but nothing happens when you pull the trigger. This is usually caused by not operating the slide correctly when a full magazine is inserted or the magazine was not properly seated.

To clear: TAP – Firmly tap the bottom of the magazine with the palm/base of your hand. If the magazine was not firmly in place, the slide would have failed to pick up the next cartridge to be loaded into the chamber. This step ensures that the magazine is seated.

ROLL – Rotate the firearm about 90\* to the right (clockwise) to “tip” the ejection port.

RACK – Pull the slide back firmly and completely to the rear. If the previous round of ammunition was a misfire and not an empty chamber, it will be ejected now. Allow the slide to go forward freely and under its own tension. As the slide moves forward again, it will load a fresh cartridge into the chamber.

ASSESS – Visually check and assess your target. Verify that you need to continue to shoot.

2. Stove Pipe – A stove pipe occurs when the casing from a fired cartridge is not fully ejected and is caught in the ejection port by the slide.

To clear: TAP – Firmly tap the bottom of the magazine with the palm/base of your hand.

ROLL – Rotate the firearm about 90\* to the right (clockwise) to “tip” the ejection port.

RACK – Pull the slide back firmly and completely to the rear. The non-ejected casing will fall away as the pressure has been released and the firearm is rolled to the side. Allow the slide to go forward freely and under its own tension. As the slide moves forward again, it will load a fresh cartridge into the chamber.

ASSESS – Visually check and assess your target. Verify that you need to continue to shoot.

3. Double Feed – A double feed happens when two rounds try to enter the chamber of a semi-auto at the same time. Since there is not enough room for both, the firearm malfunctions with the slide open partially to the rear. The slide has limited motion and the magazine will not eject by pressing the magazine release. The firearm cannot fire again until this malfunction has cleared.

To clear: TAP – ROLL – RACK

After performing these actions, it will become evident that you have a double feed because the slide will not function correctly. Even if you are certain you have a double feed do not skip step.

UNLOAD – First, press the slide stop/release and lock the slide to the rear. You will have to pull harder than normal because there is a lot of pressure on the slide. Second, press the magazine release and strip the magazine from the mag well. It will not drop free on its own and you may have to pull hard to release it.

CLEAR – Rack the slide a full 3 times to clear it of all ammunition.

RELOAD – Insert a new loaded magazine.

RACK – Pull the slide full to the rear to insert a fresh cartridge into the chamber.

ASSESS – Visually check and assess your target. Verify that you need to continue to shoot.

It is important to note that the immediate action drill for all three malfunctions is initially identical. If all three were cleared differently, then under extreme stress, it would take time you don't have to assess the malfunction and decide how to clear it.

Ammunition malfunctions can be causes for stoppages as well. A misfire is an ammunition malfunction in which the ammunition fails to discharge. You should follow the clearing drills above. TAP, ROLL, RACK, ASSESS! After a misfire occurs, it is always a good idea to have the firearm inspected by a competent gunsmith to ensure that the firearm is not the root of the problem. It is possible that excess dirt, worn springs, clogged firing pin channels or broken transfer bars could all cause a light strike or non-strike on the primer resulting in a misfire. TAP, ROLL, RACK, ASSESS is a temporary solution and should be further investigated after the defensive situation is resolved.

## **Where to Shoot?**

### Locally

#### *Ascension Parish Sherriff's Range:*

- On Landry St in Gonzales (across from Lamar Dixon Expo Center)
- Open to the public on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month from 2-6PM

#### *Precision Firearms & Range:*

- 11426 Cloverland Ave, Baton Rouge, LA (225) 754-7264
- Indoor facility [www.precisionfirearm.com](http://www.precisionfirearm.com)

#### *Diamond Training Center:* Firearm Training

- 9378 S. Choctaw, Baton Rouge, LA (225) 615-7162
- Indoor facility [www.dtchandgun.com](http://www.dtchandgun.com)

#### *The Range:*

- 3220 Jefferson St, Baker, LA (225) 775-2268
- Indoor facility [www.bakerrange.com](http://www.bakerrange.com)

## Regionally

### *Palo Alto Rifle & Pistol Club:*

-Hwy 943, Donaldsonville, LA \*Members Only\*

-Outdoor facility [www.paloaltogunclub.com](http://www.paloaltogunclub.com)

### *Hunter's Run Gun Club:*

-1365 Northwest Dr., Port Allen, LA \*Members Only\*

-Outdoor facility [www.huntersrunclub.com](http://www.huntersrunclub.com)

### *Nick's Shooting Range:*

-5192 W. Airline Hwy, Garyville, LA \*Open to Non-members

-Outdoor Facility [www.nicksshootingrange.com](http://www.nicksshootingrange.com)

### *Bass Pro Shop:*

-175 Bass Pro Dr., Denham Springs, LA \*Open to Non-members

-Indoor facility [www.basspro.com](http://www.basspro.com)

### *Sherburne WMA:*

-1132 Sherburne Rd, Lottie, LA \*Must have a valid hunting or fishing license\*

-Outdoor facility



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