



WEAPONSPRO

HANDGUN PRO



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Use a Hand Gun Like a Pro

If you're looking for a weapon to defend yourself, a hand gun is an obvious choice because of its massive stopping power. Despite being positively lethal, you can find models that are able to be carried in your handbag or tucked under your jacket in a holster, ensuring you've always got a means of defending yourself close at hand. For a survivalist, knowing how to fire a gun safely and accurately is a key skill to learn, but for beginners everything about a hand gun can be intimidating.

The weight. How it works. How dangerous it can be. Even the smell.

But all of these can be overcome, and with a little guidance gun ownership can be a fun process that forms a key part of your ability to defend yourself, your family and your home from anyone seeking to do them harm. Our team of weapons experts will guide you through everything you need to know about safely using a gun, so you're ready for anything.



Does your situation warrant a gun?

Guns are a powerful weapon, and in the wrong hands can produce irreversible consequences. Before we get started with the guide, I'd like to cover one key point about using a hand gun responsibly and appropriately, should they need to defend yourself arise. As yourself each of these questions:

- Will you be appropriately training in the use, maintenance and safety measures of your gun?
- If you have no other option, would you be willing to take a life to defend your own?
- Is there a chance someone will try to break into your home to harm you and your family?

If the answer to these three questions is a yes, purchasing a firearm could be one of the smartest purchases you will ever make. Dad grabbing a baseball bat to investigate a noise makes for a great scene in Hollywood, but defending yourself with a firearm gives you a greater range, especially if the person who broke into your home has a gun of their own.

Proper training to use a firearm is a strategic decision, as many people will go their entire lives without ever having to open fire at an opponent in self defense. The key though is being able to defend yourself if a particular situation calls for it, so you're no longer a victim, but an empowered citizen who is able to protect the people you love.

The morality of shooting a person

The lethal force a firearm delivers requires you to answer a moral question before you can use it effectively. Are you willing to use lethal force to defend an innocent life? The answer differs from person to person, and you're the only one who can answer this for yourself.

If you do believe that lethal force in this situation is justifiable, a handgun becomes more like a utility, something you have in your house "just in case." You've probably also got a fire extinguisher in your home, and while you hope that your house never catches fire, it's there and available should you ever need it. For the majority of Americans, it's statistically *very* unlikely you're going to become a victim of a violent crime, but knowing you can protect yourself if need be can go a long way to getting a good night's sleep.



Most gun owners believe that using a firearm to defend an innocent is justified, (which is usually why they're a gun owner in the first place), but the next moral dilemma is a tad trickier.

Are you ready to use lethal force on your attacker?

Data from the FBI's Justifiable Homicide reports show that between 170 to 210 assailants are killed each year by a private citizen who has used a gun to defend themselves. That's frighteningly high, and means that you need to prepare yourself for one of these two situations:

1. How would you react after taking someone's life? Would you be able to take the shot and be able to deal with the aftermath?
2. How would you feel if you or your family suffered a violent crime but you were unable to protect them. What do you think this situation would feel like?

Again, you need to consider your personal feelings to these situations and make a decision yourself as to whether purchasing a firearm is the right one. For our team, we are all responsible gun owners, proficient from training in the effective use of our firearms and confident we know when bringing a gun into a situation is warranted.

Safety comes first

A handgun is one of the most dangerous items you can own, because of the force it's able to deliver and how simplistic it is to use. I'm sure even our readers could recite a handful of recent news cases where accidents have occurred involving guns, and sadly many of these could have been avoided if the owners were practicing responsible gun ownership.

Before you even consider buying a gun, you need to be aware of the cardinal rules that go alongside gun ownership. Following these are the only way you can protect yourself and those around you from an accident, as your new gun is intended to be a weapon of self-defense, not something that causes harm to one of your loved ones.

Treat every firearm as if it's loaded

The first rule is to treat every gun as if it may go off at any time. Even if you've just unloaded it. Seriously. When you handle your gun, for any reason at all, always check first to see if its unloaded. If you're not confident doing this yourself, please don't continue to handle the weapon. Put it down, and seek help from someone who can show you the correct way to do this.

Being safe with your firearm requires you to be actively aware of the damage it can do, making it vital you are always in control of your weapon. In addition, performing awkward actions with a loaded gun is definitely not recommended, so avoid scaling trees or jumping fences with a loaded gun in your hand, if you have no other option ensure you've secured your gun in its holster. If your ever in any doubt, unload your gun, so you never risk an accidental fire.

You cannot rely on the "safety"

In addition to treating your gun as if it's loaded and can fire at any time, you can't actually rely on the safety. Just like any other piece of mechanical equipment, these can malfunction, or (more likely) you may actually find that despite *thinking* you've set the safety on, it's not actually on. Of course, the safety switch is a fantastic addition to modern handguns, but you should not learn to rely on this one alone. Carelessly handling a gun is not safe, not ever, even if the safety is on. In actual fact, hitting your gun hard enough can actually set it off - without touching the trigger. If you drop a gun, or have yours loaded and live, resting against anything, if it slips and falls the movement can be enough to set it off. The only time you can be sure your gun is truly safe, is when the action is open and your gun is completely empty.

Always point your gun in a safe direction

Fundamental to safe gun use is to always point your gun in the safest possible direction, at all times, and never at another person. This means that even if it does accidentally fire, you cause minimal damage to any property, and zero chance you will injure any people. If this rule was always followed, there would be virtually no gun accidents. Unfortunately while even experience gun users try to follow this one, they can get distracted, especially if they're checking out a new gun for the first time. When you're practicing this rule in real life, be aware of the position you are holding your gun in when your loading and unloading it. If you do happen to accidentally discharge your gun, so long as you've got it pointed in a safe direction no one



will get hurt. Along with this, you also need to be aware of how a bullet can ricochet, and that they can penetrate walls and ceilings. Don't point your gun at a surface it may ricochet from, or any walls or ceiling unless you're sure it will not be able to pass through (or you know precisely what is on the other side). The key to using a firearm safely is only ever point your gun at an object you're intending to shoot.

Never rest your finger on the trigger

The correct position for your trigger finger is resting on the outside of your trigger guard. You only ever place your finger on the trigger once you've made the active decision to start firing. With your index finger fully extended on the outside of the trigger guard it's not the most comfortable position, but it greatly reduces the chance you will accidentally set your gun off.

The problem with resting your finger on the trigger is that we're not always 100% in control of our movements. Imagine you're startled as you're investigating a sound in the night. If you've been resting your finger on your gun's trigger as you seek the source of the disturbance, the involuntary flinch in your muscles from your reflexes is often enough to squeeze the trigger and fire off a round. Unfortunately, this is a reason for many accidents, as once your initial surprise wears off and a split second later you recognize your cat, your partner or your kid was the source of the noise, you cannot simply "un-shoot" your firearm. Movement can also cause your firearm to discharge, if you're running from an attacker and stumble and fall you may also set your gun off, potentially grievously injuring yourself, or someone in the immediate vicinity.

The key to this rule is that the trigger is for firing. You should keep your fingers away from the trigger at all times, unless you're wanting to fire your gun. This is especially important when loading or unloading your gun, even if the safety is on. Some older models may also fault here, if you pull the trigger with the safety on, sometimes (without even touching the trigger again) when you release the safety at a later stage the gun will fire. Of course, this is a fault in the gun, but if you practice safety when using your firearm you can greatly reduce the risk of any accidents occurring.

Know what's in your line of fire

After you've taken a shot and the bullet is speeding towards a target, you no longer have any control over what it will strike, or any ability to stop the bullet. Because of this, you should never, ever, shoot a firearm unless you have a clear line of fire, and you're confident that there are no obstacles in or around your target that you may unintentionally hit.

In a gun range, this isn't typically a concern. The targets will be at one end, with the shooters another, and you can clearly see that there is nothing impeding your line of fire. But in the real world it's not as straightforward. You need to be able to clearly see what you're aiming at, but you also need to know what else you may potentially hit, as well as what else is behind your target. Before you pull the trigger, a responsible gun owner knows their gun is not going to hurt anyone.

This is especially important for hunters, as firing at a noise or movement is not safe. You have no idea what you're actually shooting at, or what else you may potentially hit, and by doing so you're

putting the safety of other people at risk. When you're on a property, ensure you're clear what else may lay beyond your target. If you miss completely, or your bullet penetrates the target, it will continue its trajectory, and injure or damage any people or property that lays beyond. If you have any doubts about this, do not shoot. No target is so important that you cannot take the time to be certain of your target and your line of fire before you take a shot. A .22 bullet can travel over a mile if you're using high velocity cartridges, and a 30-06 is able to send a bullet over three miles. Keep these distances in mind, a bullet may travel much farther than you think and knowing what's in your line of fire is important to keep you and the people around you safe.

Know how to properly handle your gun

It's critical as a responsible gun owner that you're familiar with every aspect of your gun, and know how to properly load, fire, unload and clean your gun. In addition, you should have a working knowledge of your guns mechanics, so you can clear any malfunctions and get your firearm back in working order. Not all guns are (mechanically) the same, so take the time to read the owner's manual, and never assume that what applies to one make and model will be applicable on another.

Store your gun in a safe place

When you're not taking your hand gun out for training, it's going to live the majority of its life in storage. Your role as a gun owner is to ensure that where you keep it is secure, and you have taken steps to ensure no unauthorized people are able to get their hands on your gun. We recommend storing your ammunition and your firearm separately, as an additional precaution. Other gun users prefer using a trigger or cable lock so their gun cannot be fired without their consent. Along with this, you should only ever have a loaded gun when you're at the shooting range, or you're in a situation that requires you to keep your firearm ready to shoot. Guns are not toys, and it's your responsibility to ensure that no other people, especially children, are able to access your firearm.

But I've never held a gun before

If you're new to all this don't worry. Professional shooters, police officers, and even your local gun enthusiast all had a time in their lives when they were shooting a gun for the first time. The key is to understand basic gun mechanics and safety rules, following our recommendations in this guide and you'll be feeling like a pro in no time. For novice shooters, look for a smaller caliber for your first hand gun, like a .22. It will be relatively cheaper, and the ammunition won't cost an arm and a leg, giving you the ability to get a ton of practice in and really develop a feel for using the gun.

Types of Hand Guns

There are two main types of hand guns, which is simply the term used to describe a firearm that is able to be fired with one hand. For accuracy we don't recommend only using a single hand, and the proper grip technique will be discussed in a later section. Generally, you'll hear the term "hand gun" being used to describe either a revolver or a pistol.

Revolvers

Picture a cowboy movie, the "six shooter" the hero is running around with is called a revolver. The name comes from the cylindrical magazine that rotates after each shot is fired, which lines the following cartridge up with the firing mechanism. You need to load your ammunition manually into the cylinder of a revolver, and also empty the empty shell casings from this afterwards. A revolver is ready to fire when the hammer is cocked back into the firing position (usually the thumb is used to do this), and squeezing the trigger activates the firing pin, which fires the gun.



Pistols



What to look for when buying a Hand Gun

There are a number of factors to consider when you're looking to buy a handgun, and it makes sense to consider each of these before you head out to make your purchase. First, you need to ask yourself if you're looking for a simple handgun, or are you after a gun that is suitable for a concealed carry.

If you're looking for a weapon to carry with you at all times throughout the day, the reputation of the handgun is critical, as it will be with this weapon you trust your life. Do your research and check the reviews to see what other users have found with any particular model, because there really is so many options out there you need to ensure the gun you buy is suitable for the use you intend.

The next concern is your budget. If you've had a chance to investigate already, you've probably got a fair idea that shooting is an expensive hobby, especially when you also factor in cleaning supplies, ammunition, and time on the shooting range honing your skills. In addition, if this is your first gun purchase, it's probably not going to be your last, so be prepared to invest some serious cash into this

new hobby. The good news is that there are many hand guns available for a reasonable price, but we do recommend staying away from the cheapest options on the market. Pick a reputable brand you can trust, if you think about it a firearm is essentially a controlled explosion continually going off in your hand. You don't want anything to malfunction, just because you were afraid to spend an extra couple of hundred dollars. Buying the right gun will give you a lifetime of service, especially if you take care of it.

Finally, the feel of the gun, and how it sits in your hand is important. You want it to feel comfortable as you use it, so once you have an idea of 3 to 4 different models you like the sound of from your research, head down to your local gun shop and see what each gun looks like in person. You should be able to tell when you first pick it up if it's the right gun for you, and remember that there's no need to rush into anything. Spend the time learning which gun will be best for you, see how each fits into your hand, and if you can, try out each model on a shooting range so you know exactly what it feels like to fire that particular weapon. Pretty soon, you'll find a handgun you really love.

Can I legally own a Hand Gun?

The specifics of the laws vary from state to state, but in general firearms are legal to own in the United States. This is written into the US Bill of Rights and the second amendment, and reads:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

If you're a law abiding citizen over the age of 21, you will be able to buy hand guns from any licensed dealer. Convicted criminals, non-US citizens as well as any person suffering from a mental illness are not legally allowed to own a firearm, and there are also specific regulations in place to keep firearms away from schools, government buildings and courthouses. There are slight variations in this law from state to state, and if you are considering to purchase a firearm we recommend talking to your local police station or your firearms dealer and clarify what regulations are in place in your area.



Around the world, gun laws vary quite dramatically from country to country. Germany has some of the tightest restrictions in place, requiring an ownership license for every gun, but this does not allow you to carry it in a public place outside of a locked container. In Switzerland, nearly all men are conscripted into the military, and per military obligations their personal weapons are required to be stored in their home, giving the country one of the highest gun ownership rates in the world.

Your best bet is to research the laws surrounding firearms in your country, before you make your purchase.

Where to buy a Hand Gun

If it's the first gun you've ever bought, we recommend shopping locally as you can hold each gun in your hand before you commit to buy, and you can buy firearms at a gun shop, trade shows, pawn shops, at the shooting range, in sporting goods stores and even Wal-Mart. Licensed firearms dealers will conduct a background check, a requirement that is not required should you purchase a used gun from an individual (though the law states that the seller is prohibited to sell a gun to anyone who is otherwise prohibited to own a gun through federal law).

Online you'll find a number of sellers specializing in firearms, in addition to a whole host of information and reviews which you should research before committing to a purchase. Our team of weapons experts do not recommend buying used firearms online, as you lose the ability to inspect the gun before you buy. If you make a purchase from out of state, the gun will need to be shipped to a local licensed firearms dealer, and is where you will need to pick the gun up from.

Before Using a Hand Gun

Once you buy your gun, there's a few things to keep in mind (in addition to the safety rules) to ensure you're taking care of this weapon.

1. **Have a great place to store it.** Your gun is going to be in storage almost the entire time you will own it, so you can get to it in an emergency, but it's secure and out of reach of any curious children.
2. **It takes effort to maintain a gun.** Depending on the gun you have bought, there will a number of pieces that you need to clean, inspect, lubricate and maintain. You need to learn how to disassemble and reassemble the weapon, how to adjust the sights, how to take apart the bolt to clean it, and inspect the firing pins for any imperfections. Figuring all of this out takes effort, but it's very easy to screw up just one little part, which will render your entire gun inoperable.
3. **Accurately firing a weapon is hard.** It takes time on the shooting range to learn to fire and actually hit what you're aiming at, especially over a greater distance. You need to understand how the sights on your gun works, and the process of firing accurately takes time to master. It's highly recommended you get professional training to learn how to safely use, control and aim your weapon, so you can place your shots exactly where you want them to land. Hitting cans off a tree stump at the back of your property sounds like good practice, but there's a good chance you'll develop bad habits if you do it all on your own. Let a professional guide you, at least when you're just getting started. Having a gun that you're not confident to use in a self-defense situation is more of a liability than a help, so never neglect your practice sessions.
4. **Emergencies will happen, but just because you have a gun it will not always make it safe.** What if there's more than one attacker, or the person breaking into your home has a bigger

gun, or they break in while you're not home, take your gun and then wait for you to return from work. What if your attacker is a child? Being prepared is great, but there are other options to consider, like a good security system and making your home less of a target.

Finally, remember that by design guns are a lethal weapon. If you've bought yours for self-defense, you need to prepare yourself for the situation that you may actually need to use it. As soon as you pull a gun, you need to be prepared to actually use it. Having a gun between you and an attacker can be very intimidating, but what if, instead of running, your attacker becomes more violent. What if they charge you intent on taking the gun from your hands? Taking their knee out or shooting the knife from their hand is the appropriate Hollywood response, but in real life, with your heart pounding in your ears from the adrenaline, you're probably going to struggle just hitting them in the chest as they run towards you. Could you really shoot someone?

If that isn't a troubling enough question, you also need to be aware that in 65% of attacks, the offenders were previously known to their victims. What if the person attacking you is a relative, a friend, or a neighbor down the street. Would you still be able to take the shot?

Getting your gun ready to fire

It doesn't matter if your gun has been bought new or used, until you've been using it yourself there are a few important steps to take before you take it out on the shooting range. This helps to avoid causing any problems with your gun, as most can actually be avoided with a little diligence.

Check to make sure the pieces are all there

If you've just bought your gun, go through everything you've been sent, to verify that everything you're expecting to be present is actually there. It's not normal that incorrectly sized magazines will be sent to you alongside your firearm, but it does happen. What we've seen a tendency to happen much more frequently is that there are pieces missing, perhaps you only receive one magazine instead of two. If you're buying your gun new, check it thoroughly before you leave the store.

Go through your owner's manual

This isn't a fun step, but it's important. Unfortunately, the quality of gun manuals can vary significantly, leaving you either ready to take the entire piece apart with a blindfold on or scratching your head as you continue to wonder how it all works. Generally, you'll find that the basic functions of loading, using and maintaining your new weapon are covered in the manual, in addition to some common problems you may encounter. If you don't get a manual (which may often happen with purchasing a used firearm), check the manufacturers website, many companies now offer these as a downloadable file.

Check the gun is in working order

Some problems are blatantly obvious, but others, like hairline fractures in the frame will only reveal themselves after careful inspection. Give the gun a good look over, and take a bore light to ensure

the barrel is clear from any obstructions that may hinder firing. If you've bought a used gun, take it to a gun shop and get a professional to inspect your weapon, before you use it.

Clean your gun before every shooting

It's good practice to always give your gun a quick clean before using it, conducting a once over to check all the mechanics and perform any necessary preventative maintenance before you start to shoot. This is especially important if you're using an unfamiliar gun, treat it as if it is dirty because you never know when the previous owner last cleaned it. If you've just bought a new gun this also applies, as many manufacturers pack their guns with grease or cosmoline for shipping which can also contain metal shavings and grit. You need to remove all of this before the gun can be used. Many guns will not operate effectively if they haven't been cleaned before they're used, as powder residue and even old lubricants turn sticky which can hinder your gun's ability to shoot.

Take your manufacturer's instructions and strip the gun, cleaning it out per their guidelines. It may seem counter-intuitive, as you're going to have to do this after your shooting practice, but it's better to be safe than sorry. Make sure you take a look at all the components inside the gun as you do this, searching for any visible cracks or breaks like you did the exterior.

Tighten every component

No matter how big a gun is, every piece on a firearm has been designed to be removed and replaced, in order for it to be cleaned. The downside is these attached parts can work themselves loose over time, and many are prone to disappearing altogether as they drop off while you're using your gun. If you don't want to start losing valuable parts of the gun you've just bought, check the tightness of every screw and removable piece of your gun before you head out for a shooting session. If a particular part looks like it's going to cause you a problem, bring the right tools with you to keep it tight, or add a drop or two of liquid thread to help lock it in place.

Check you've got compatible ammunition

It's not always clear what size ammunition a firearm can safely chamber, as many guns are able to use different calibers interchangeably. The responsibility of using the correct ammunition in your firearm is your own, not the clerk at the shooting range, or the gun store owner. Read every warning and instruction on both your owner's manual and the box of ammunition to ensure you're using compatible caliber ammunition for your handgun.

Only ever load your gun with the ammunition it has been designed to handle. As an example, the .45 Colt is able to fire .410 shotgun shells as well as its own .45 Colt revolver rounds. In addition, many defensive handguns are now able to take ammunition with a +P configuration, which fire the bullet at an increased velocity. Using these types of cartridge in older guns can seriously damage them, even though the caliber is correct. Make sure you're 100% confident the ammunition you're using is correct. One fired cartridge of the improper type can destroy your gun completely, or result in serious injury, so take the time to double check as you're loading it.

Do a dry run

Once you're happy with the state of the gun, the last step is to test the controls and functions (without firing any rounds). Ensure your gun is unloaded, and then run through the set of motions you would use to operate and fire the gun. Pull back the charging handle, check the manual safety works, cock the hammer, drop the magazine, and so on. Once you're sure the gun is in good working order, it's time to grab your ammunition and go shooting!

Using a Hand Gun for self defense

Guns are one of the most lethal ways to defend yourself, but sometimes you have no other choice. Using a gun for self defense is legal, and while the specifics of the law can vary from state to state, in general you are allowed to defend yourself with lethal force in the United States, so long as an attacker is intending to harm you.

Now this is the part that gets tricky. If you do encounter a situation and you've had to shoot someone, you now need to prove that you exercised your right legally. This is determined by evaluating what a reasonable person would do in the same situation, and would they have also chosen to use deadly force to end the attack? Three elements usually come into play in reaching a decision here, as the definition of reasonable is established on:



- **Ability.** There must be an ability for your attacker to either hurt you really badly, or kill you. Basically, this means that they are armed with a weapon, like a gun or a knife, during the confrontation. But they also do not need to have their own weapon. If multiple attackers are facing you (or even just one) and they are causing you serious harm with their bare hands, the use of lethal force may also be justified.
- **Opportunity.** Your attacker must be able to reach you with the weapon they are brandishing when you take the shot for it to be justifiable self defense. You can't shoot an attacker who is on the other side of the room holding a knife, you have to be in immediate danger because you're in range of their attack. But how close is close enough? This one is usually determined by the judge (or jury), and can be subjective. In addition to the range, the opportunity to harm you must be in the present time. Worrying that someone is planning to harm you at a future date is not a legal justification for using lethal force on anyone.
- **Jeopardy.** Finally, your life needs to be in serious danger, or you must be able to prove your attacker intended to cause you harm. Just because they're in front of you and they have a

concealed firearm (like most private security contractors), doesn't give you the right to shoot them. Your attacker must be intending to cause you harm, for your actions to be considered self defense. If a maniac is charging at you with a knife in hand, screaming how they're "gunna kill you," you've probably got a good argument that your life is in jeopardy.

These three factors boil down to a single element. To be able to use your hand gun for self defense, you need to genuinely believe that you're in mortal danger, (as well as actually being in mortal danger). When the only solution is to use your gun, or be killed, this is when it becomes legal to use deadly force.

When should you draw your gun

By carrying a gun you've decided to shoulder the moral responsibility that comes with protecting yourself against the threats out there, but more so, you're accepting the moral and legal consequences of carrying a weapon capable of inflicting lethal force. Drawing your firearm to stop a conflict can be a life-altering decision, and it is not one to be made lightly.

Are you prepared to go to jail in order to stop a crime?

You risk your life and your freedom when you bring a gun into a conflict, because it immediately escalates the situation you're in to a life or death experience. Self defense isn't always clear cut, and sometimes you can make the wrong choice. You should also be aware of the ramifications of using your gun to defend yourself in your particular state. In Arizona as an example, using deadly force to stop a crime in process is legal so long as another person's life is at risk. In Florida there is a "Stand Your Ground" law which gives you even more rights to defend yourself, because it releases an individual from the duty to retreat and avoid confrontations in any public places you have a right to be. Learn what applies in your state, so you know how any actions you take will be interpreted in a court of law.

Training and Practice

The next part of this training guide is critical, and while it is relatively straightforward to physically fire a gun, we recommend that you ensure you've had adequate training and practice so you're confident in using your gun in any situation.

Get the right gear

In addition to your hand gun and ammunition, you will need eye and ear protection at a minimum when you head to the shooting range. Even if you're just practicing with a .22 pistol, these small-caliber guns will damage your hearing over time. But it's not just that, they also throw out powder residue, small carbon particles and even brass casings that can damage your eyes if you're not careful. The most inexpensive ear protection you can get is simple foam earplugs, or if you're looking to spend a little more the "active" hearing protection will dampen out the noise from gunshots while allowing you to hear normally. The only time you will not need hearing protection is if your pistol has

been fitted with a suppressor, and if you are missing both ear and eye protection, most shooting ranges will have them available to buy, borrow or rent, just ask the staff when you arrive.

Selecting a place to shoot

Because of how far bullets will continue to travel after being fired, it is a serious crime in many places to shoot your weapon. The safest place to practice is a shooting range, but if you're able to legally shoot outdoors in your area, pick a location that has a backstop, like the tall side of a hill or a ravine that will absorb any of your bullets which miss the target. While you're practicing, remember to never point your handgun in any direction other than directly at the backstop. This is even more important in a shooting range, and you must be careful. Both novice shooters and the professionals will often inadvertently commit this safety breach when they're first getting their guns ready to shoot, showing off a new firearm to their friends.

Loading a gun

Depending on whether your hand gun is a pistol or a revolver, the way you load you gun will differ. There are also certain nuances within the different types of gun, but in general the concept is the same. Magazine fed pistols, like the famous Glock require two steps to load. First, you insert your ammunition (the cartridges) into the magazine. This magazine is then inserted into your gun, usually through an opening in the base of the handle. Then you simply need to pull and release the slide, manually sending the first bullet into the chamber so your pistol is ready to fire. Again, always remember to keep your finger off the trigger during this process.

Revolvers require a different technique, simply releasing the cylindrical magazine so it flips open, and then inserting the cartridges one at a time. Some revolvers allow you to use a clip to help with this process, and then gently close the cylinder. Be careful you don't slam the cylinder shut, this can damage your revolver. To get ready to fire, you just need to click the hammer back with your thumb.

Gripping your Hand Gun

For accuracy when you shoot, especially for beginners, it's important you use two hands to grip your handgun. Using two hands adds stability from both your wrists and gives you more control over your weapon. Place your dominant hand high on the back of the grip on the gun, to give yourself more leverage against any recoil that comes when you fire. Place your other hand firmly against the exposed (lower) part of the grip that your dominant hand isn't covering. The fingers of your non-dominant hand should be wrapped tight around the handle, and your index finger should butt up against the bottom of the trigger guard. Point your thumbs forward, these should be resting at about the section where the slide meets the frame. Your thumb and forefinger should be resting high along the



gun, but not so high it interferes with the slide (or the hammer of the revolver). Now lock your wrists, as this will help to absorb any recoil so you can shoot your firearm rapidly and accurately. If you look at the back of your hands, these should now connect together like two pieces of a puzzle.

Standing in position

Your body is at rest when you've got your weight on your heels, distributing your weight equally across both of your feet, with the joints on your knees fully extended. This is how our muscles have been designed to hold our weight, and it requires the least amount of effort to keep you upright. Unfortunately, this position is not ideal for quickly or accurately shooting a hand gun.

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, one foot slightly in front of the other, bend your knees in a defensive stance, and raise the gun to your target. This is one of the most practical stances to shoot with, and is known as the modified isosceles shooting style.

Sighting and Take Aim

The sights on your gun are designed to help you better aim your firearm. There will be two sections on your gun, that you can align to ensure an accurate shot. There are many different types of sights, but they all have a small post on the front of your gun, and a notched blade on the rear. Take a look at your gun. Look at the notches for sighting on the front and rear of your gun. When you bring your gun up to take aim, use your dominant eye to aim your gun at the target and align the top of the front sight with the top of the rear sight, ensuring there's equal amounts of empty space on both sides of the front sights (in the gaps).

If you're unsure which eye is dominant it's not difficult to find out. Take the arm you write with and make a circle between your thumb and index finger. While you're holding your arm out look through the hole you've created at an object in the distance. Keeping both your eyes open, start slowly moving the circle back towards your face, while keeping both eyes open. Your hand will naturally start to gravitate towards one eye. This is your dominant eye.

To sight on your target, you need to first line up the front sight with where you want the bullet to go, and then align the notches with the rear sight. This is your sight picture, and the pattern your gun sights make in relation to your target. As you aim down the length of your gun, you're essentially taking three pictures into consideration, the front sight, the rear sight, and the target. Unfortunately, depth of field makes it impossible for your eye to focus on all three pictures simultaneously. Ideally, your front and rear sights should be clear, and your target just a little blurry when you've got this

right. The further away your target is from you, the more important it is to ensure you've got your front sight clear in your focus.

Your handgun should fire with the bullet making an impact just above the top of the front sight. Most pistols come with sights that can be adjusted should it need to be aligned accurately.

Pull the trigger

One of the most important aspects of firing a gun accurately is the trigger squeeze. Despite the phrase "pull the trigger," to actually fire a gun you don't want to pull the trigger. The pulling movement is too sharp and can move the position of your gun, ever so slightly, and throwing off your aim. Proper firing technique relies on your ability to gently squeeze the trigger in a controlled fashion.

Unfortunately, many people will jerk or flinch at the same time they fire the gun, either from squeezing too hard, or anticipating the gunshot, which will cause your bullet to fly off target. Getting your trigger pull to be calm, steady and smooth movement is one of the best steps you can take to improve your accuracy. Competition shooters spend hours practicing the ability to perfectly pull the trigger, and top marksmen get so good the gun never moves out of alignment as they take a shot. Most new shooters tend to be in too much of a hurry, which results in them quickly squeezing the trigger and causing a shot to miss. Remember to aim and squeeze the trigger slowly.



When you get this technique right, nothing except your trigger finger will move, and your hand gun will fire a round exactly where you had aimed for it to go. Raise your arms and bring your gun to bear on the target, as you disengage the safety. Some guns do not have a manual safety aside from the trigger. Pull the trigger backwards to the rear of the gun as you correctly grip the gun and focus on sighting your target through the front sight. Squeeze evenly applying a constant pressure on the trigger, taking the slack out of the trigger by applying pressure until you feel some resistance, and continue to smoothly pull until the weapon fires. If you've never fired a gun before ensure you seek proper training at a firing range before firing a shot, and talk to an instructor who will be able to safely guide you through the process.

Reloading your Hand Gun

It's inevitable that after practicing your firing technique, you will run out of ammunition and need to reload your gun. Always take your finger off the trigger, and keep your gun pointed in a safe direction before you try to reload. If you're shooting with a revolver you'll need to open the cylinder and release the empty shell casings, whereas a pistol will usually lock the slide back once the magazine's emptied. To get your pistol ready to fire again, you'll need to insert a new magazine loaded with ammunition, and then release the slide. You can do this by pulling back slightly on the

slide and then letting go, or simply using the slide release lever on the side of the pistol. Be very careful if you're using an older model of a pistol, as these may become automatically ready to fire once you insert a new magazine.

This is known as battery, as the action of loading a new magazine triggers the slide lock to release. If your finger is on the trigger, this will result in an accidental discharge.



Situations to use a Hand Gun

Having a gun in your home is a great way to feel confident about your family's safety, however actually using your gun is a different story entirely. There's many different situations that may call for you to bear your firearm, but the two most common are typically:

Intimidation

Guns are a frighteningly lethal weapon, yet the typical American normally only uses their gun is to intimidate, without ever actually having the intent to fire it. Just bringing a gun into a situation can be enough to startle and surprise your opponent, and give you the upper hand. If there's an intruder in your home, or an attacker demanding your wallet on the street, bringing your firearm out can be a swift end to the situation. Our recommendation on this point, is that whilst your firearm can be a great means of intimidation, only ever bring your gun into a situation where you plan to use it, because you can never be 100% sure what your opponent is going to do.

Self-defense

Our team of weapons experts only ever recommends using your gun for justifiable self defense, where your attacker has the ability and opportunity to hurt you, and you really are in jeopardy. Bringing your gun into any situation results in its escalation, and you should only ever point your gun at a target you want to destroy.

Keep it accessible

Finally, make sure that your hand gun is in a place you can access it if you do really need it. In a phone survey done by the Harvard Injury Control Research Center, other weapons were more commonly used to frighten off intruders, probably because they didn't have their guns handy when they were really needed.

Frequently Asked Questions

When you're using guns there's many things people still get wrong today, despite the abundance of information on the subject. Here's what the public are still getting wrong:

- Firing in poorly ventilated areas, as well as cleaning your gun and handling ammunition exposes you to a number of harmful chemicals. Wherever you are firing your gun, ensure there is adequate ventilation, and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.
- Guns are complicated mechanisms, and should not be modified, repaired or serviced by an unqualified person. It will often void the warranty, in addition to making the gun dangerous to use. They're designed to function properly in their original condition.
- If your gun fails to fire when you pull the trigger, keep the muzzle aimed in a safe direction, with your face away from the breech. Carefully open the action, and unload your firearm then dispose of the faulty cartridge.
- Owning a gun is a full-time job, and you must know how to use it safely, store it safely and handle it with confidence in any situation that calls for lethal force. There's no such thing as a foolproof gun, only a fool with a gun.
- Never load a firearm before you've checked the barrel for any obstructions. Even just a small bit of mud or grease can increase the pressure your gun contains, which leads to the chamber bursting on firing. If something seems "not quite right" cease firing and check your gun for any mechanical problems or obstructions.
- Smaller cartridges will not fire in a larger gauge gun. The trick you saw that guy on YouTube perform is not actually safe, and can obstruct the bore when you fire a cartridge of the proper size. Pay close attention to the cartridges you load, and never use an incorrect caliber.
- Clips are not magazines. The item most people imagine a clip to be is actually the magazine, and the clips are just part of it, holding the cartridges in the correct sequence to be fed into the magazine.
- Accuracy reflects a shooter's ability to consistently hit a target, while precision is the tightness of the groups of shots.
- Suppressor. You don't buy silencers as you can't actually silence a firearm like Hollywood. Suppressors attach to the muzzle of a firearm to reduce the noise of a discharge.

Being a responsible Hand Gun owner

In addition to the basic rules of gun safety, there are an additional set of safety points responsible gun owners cannot risk overlooking.

If you want to add yourself to the ranks of responsible gun owners, follow these rules:

- Never use a gun when you're in a highly emotive state, because your judgment may be off and you may do something you wouldn't normally. This includes situations where you're feeling anger or depression.
- Never fire guns to celebrate. It's unsafe and it's generally illegal across the United States. A bullet returning to the ground will normally have enough speed to cause an injury.
- Do not shoot at water, flat or extremely hard surfaces as ricochet's can cause the bullet to deflect and injure something other than your intended target.
- If you're handing your gun to another person, first verify that it's unloaded, and the cylinder is open. Only ever take a gun from someone if you're sure they've done this first, otherwise you risk an accidental misfire.
- Never use guns if you've been drinking alcohol or using drugs. Both of these substances can impair your decision making abilities, affecting your judgment as well as your physical coordination.
- Never use firearms if you're taking medications that cause drowsiness, or if you're taking any prescriptions that advise against operating heavy machinery.
- The noise from a fired gun can damage your hearing, and the gas and debris which is often emitted can damage your eyes. If you have a choice, always wear ear and eye protection when shooting your handgun.
- Keep your gun maintained, and in a state that is safe to shoot. Strip down your gun before ever practice session and clean and inspect it before you use it. If you're ever unsure, take it to a professional gunsmith for their advice. Old guns that have not been maintained are very dangerous, especially if you consider a gun is essentially just a machine that performs a controlled explosion in your hand.
- Be respectful, and practice good etiquette when you're on a shooting range, especially because you're surrounded by a group of people who are all armed! The best respect you can demonstrate is never doing anything that puts your fellow shooters in danger, so always be aware of where your gun is pointing.
- Remember that even a momentary lapse in safety can be dangerous, and your primary mission when you're handling a gun is to never be in a situation where you may shoot someone.
- Get training. Without it, you can pick up bad habits that lead to dangerous situations, especially if you're not keeping your guns clean and maintained. There's many options for classes, so do your research and find one near you.

Staying Safe



too difficult" to get into, so they move on to an easier target

Finally, you need to know that home owners are actually only present during 27% of break ins. Most break ins are non violent, as burglars are usually opportunists who don't like risk. If you want to reduce your chances of attackers coming into your home with you in it, make it obvious you're there. Turn on the lights (but keep your curtains shut at night), and make it not worth an attackers while to break into your home - because there's too many people creating too many chances for things to go wrong.

Protecting yourself and your family with a hand gun is one of the most effective ways you can stay safe, so long as your gun is in good working order, and you can confidently use it in any given situation. Pulling it out will bring a swift end to any conflict, just be sure you're ready to pull the trigger if it really does come to that.

