



# Tactical Talk

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"One of the ordinary modes, by which tyrants accomplish their purposes without resistance, is, by disarming the people, and making it an offense to keep arms."

-- Constitutional scholar,

Joseph Story  
1840

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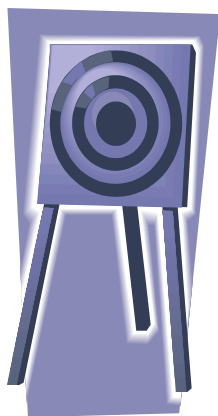
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## UPCOMING SPECIALIZED CLASSES

**April 14-15**, Dynamic Marksmanship Course  
Watervliet Rod & Gun Club, Watervliet, Michigan

**April 21-22**, Combative Pistol II  
South River Gun Club, near Atlanta, GA

**May 19-20**, Combative Pistol II  
Rangemaster, Memphis,  
TN

**Aug 3-5**, Three-Day  
Firearms Instructor  
Development Course  
Rangemaster, Memphis,  
TN

**Aug 25-26**, Combative Pistol II  
WSSA, Harrisburg, PA





# TRAVELING BY AIR WITH HANDGUNS

A lot of people have the mistaken notion that they cannot travel by air with a handgun. You cannot carry a handgun or ammunition onto a commercial airliner, either on your person or in your carry on luggage. You can, however, transport the gun/ammo with you in your checked baggage, as long as you follow some simple procedures.

The gun must be unloaded. Check that carefully before going to the airport. The gun must be in a hard-sided, lockable case, with a lock on it, nothing in the case but the unloaded gun(s).

Ammunition needs to be in the factory boxes it comes in, not loose or bagged. The factory boxes have dividers that hold each round in place. Ammunition can be in a magazine or speedloader, but only if the magazine or speedloader is secured inside a pouch designed for that purpose. Most airlines allow up to 11 pounds of ammunition, which is quite a bit for a handgun.

Upon arrival at the ticket desk, set your luggage on the scale and say, "I need to declare an unloaded firearm". DO NOT say, "I have a gun". If you say, "I need to declare an unloaded firearm", the ticket agent will give you a card to sign, and place that inside your suitcase with the gun case. At that time a TSA representative will look over your gear. If the gun is unloaded in a locked case, the ammo is stored correctly, and your card is filled out, they then place the luggage on the plane.

The TSA regulations are outlined above. Certain airlines have further policies, such as restricting the amount of ammo, or requiring ammo and gun to be in separate pieces of luggage. Check with your particular airline for peculiarities. I have never had a problem with Northwest, Delta, or American, but smaller airlines might have restrictions.

Federal law says you can have the gun in your luggage anywhere in transit, as long as it is legal for you to have it where your trip originates and where it ends. However, I strongly recommend against having a gun in your luggage if your flight has you checking baggage in New York City, Chicago, or D.C. These three cities flatly prohibit handguns and are apparently no longer in the United States. You WILL be hassled.

For more info, see [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov) or contact [tsa-contactcenter@dhs.gov](mailto:tsa-contactcenter@dhs.gov) or check your airline's website.

# Ready Positions with the Handgun

There has been a lot of confusion in the past few years about handgun Ready Positions. Most of this confusion stems from misunderstanding the difference between a position for movement to contact and a position for challenging a suspect. Add people using the wrong names for various positions and the confusion escalates. Let's look at some common Ready Positions.

The oldest is Low Ready, or to older Gunsite graduates, the Guard Position (as in *en garde*, with the sword). In Low Ready, the pistol is in both hands, with the gun lowered to about 45 degrees, trigger finger straight. This gives an unrestricted view of the downrange area, and is very fast to get on target. Simply raising the hands brings the gun to eye level, and gravity works to help you stop the gun when it reaches the correct point. Until the decision to fire is made, the gun is pointed at the ground, finger straight, enhancing overall safety. About the only real drawback to Low Ready is when working in very close proximity to threats, as in working corners inside a structure.



Traditional Low Ready, or Guard Position

Many current trainers espouse a higher ready position, with the gun at lower sternum height, in both hands, barrel parallel to the ground. This is sometimes referred to as Third Eye Ready, or Air Marshal Ready. The reference to Air

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Marshals has to do with the fact that they work in a linear environment (the tube) and they consider the safety of the passengers secondary to preventing take-over of the aircraft. I find that this position leads to throwing the first shot low, as the gun is thrust outward from the chest. YMMV. For typical civilian and civil law enforcement use, I also have a problem with pointing the gun directly at everyone you look at. It does bring the gun in closer to your body, aiding in retention in tight places.

Several years ago a high level IPSC/Steel Challenge competitive shooter was invited by the FBI to show them how to shoot faster. His High Ready position has the muzzle of the gun in the shooter's peripheral vision, just below eye level, pointed upward. This is similar to the eyes/muzzle/target version of High Ready taught by many trainers with the shotgun or carbine.

This position is seen with the handgun by FBI agents and officers the bureau trained. I see a lot of problems with it. Without a lot of practice, the first shot tends to be punched awful low. In close quarters, the gun is easiest to trap in



**High Ready, a la Barnhart**



**Air Marshal Ready, or Third Eye**

this position, and if I wrestle someone for my gun, I'd rather have the muzzle around my legs than my face/head. One also blocks a fair bit of vision with the gun in this mode, especially the hands and waistline of a potential target. Unfortunately, the hands/waistline are the most important parts for us to see.

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Retention Ready, or Indoor Ready is for use in confined spaces, such as approaching doors and corners indoors, hence the name. The gun is held at Step 2 of the presentation, in one hand or two. This is probably the most secure of the common ready positions, but still leaves a hand free to reach out to turn door knobs or fend off a sudden rush.

Position SUL is probably the most mis-understood and mis-applied ready position of all. In SUL, the hands are brought back to the sternum and the support hand collapsed against your chest. The trigger guard of the pistol rests on the index finger of the support hand, with the gun's muzzle pointed down (Sul, or South in Portugese). I know Alan Brosnan, the inventor of this technique pretty well, and he has lectured on its origins at one of our annual Tactical Conferences. SUL is NOT meant to be a position for challenging a suspect or for holding someone at gunpoint. It is intended to allow several armed men to work through doorways and narrow corridors without pointing their guns at each other. As such, it is a position for movement to contact, not a contact ready.



SUL, useful for movement in tight spaces

Although it's not "new and improved" I consider good old Low Ready/Guard about ideal for movement to contact in open spaces or when challenging a suspect beyond a few paces away. In tighter spaces, a Retention Ready/Indoor Ready prevents extending the gun, and allows movement without preceding ourselves with the gun through doorways and corners. SUL has its place, largely as a non-threatening looking way to scan around in after-action mode, to look less like a target to responding police.

# The Front Sight Re-visited

By John Burns, Rangemaster Instructor

The human eye is an extraordinary organ, capable of discerning a wide range of color in daylight, having an adequate amount of black and gray night vision, possessing tremendous powers of acuity and the ability to focus from our just beyond our nose tips to infinity. What it cannot do, is focus on two things at once. It is here that the shooter's dilemma presents itself. Most serious pistol shooting enthusiasts know how important the front sight is to accurate placement of shots down range. In the alignment of sights with the target, it is the front sight that absolutely must stay crisp while we compromise the focus of rear sight and target.

Many of us who had normal vision in our misspent youth slide into our middle years in a state of stubborn denial about how fuzzy that front sight appeared when we went for our last range outing. We eventually relent by buying a pair or two of cheater glasses "just for reading and shooting". Over time we buy a few more, even stronger pairs of glasses. Soon we have dozens of the things around the house, car and office so we won't ever be too far from them when we need them for the increasing number of things that we can no longer see well enough to read. Our vanity prevents us from admitting to the "weakness" of failing eyesight in our advancing years. Since most of us have an unrealistic fantasy of being attractive to members of the feminine persuasion and perceive glasses as "un-cool", we cling desperately to this mindset instead of going with the flow and allowing ourselves to age gracefully by getting appropriate eyewear.

As I approach my first Social Security check, I acknowledge that the only thing that could make me attractive to women is a Gulfstream V and a yacht large enough to have a heliport. That has pretty much been the case since I turned forty, so throwing in the towel and buying glasses wasn't much of a sacrifice for me after I got over the dozen-pair-of-cheater-glasses phase. It was a lot less expensive than scoping all my handguns! I remember going to the range and saying to myself, "So, *that's* what my front sight looks like!"

My first set of bifocals wasn't cheap. I insisted on getting the "Transition"

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lenses that darken in sunlight, eliminating the need for a separate pair of sunglasses or those fruity-looking, computer-geek, flip up lenses that clip onto eyeglasses. That first pair of glasses performed admirably for quite a few years and I've never regretted getting them (you never quit regretting *needing* to get them, however). For quite a few years they kept the front sight in fairly sharp focus and I could manage great hits with the reading lens if given time for an aimed shot. I suppose I got attached to them and, given their cost, was reluctant to "pony up" for a new set until recently. I gave my wife a new HDTV for Christmas (yes, I get to watch it, too, but life gets more practical after sixty). She kept commenting on the great picture and I suspected time had come for me to get new glasses if the hi-def picture was to look great to me. Here's where things become "deja vu, all over again - all over again".

For the past few years I admit the elusive front sight has gotten fuzzy (again) and good hits downrange have become increasingly elusive (again). A grudging trip to the optometrist resulted in the expected need for a new lens prescription. Determined to make the best of the situation, I explained my need to see my front sight clearly to the technician who helped me choose my lenses. When she suggested tri-focals, I was hesitant at first. At least, until she pointed out that the third lens would focus at the distance of my front sight!

*P.T. Barnum's competitor, George Hull (not P.T. Barnum), is actually the one who said, "There's a sucker born every minute."*

The famous quotation\* attributed to P. T. Barnum notwithstanding, I was sold on the spot. A few hours of dry-fire practice with the tri-focals and several trips to the range later confirm that I chose wisely, reaffirming conventional wisdom that anything that helps a shooter see the front sight better has to be worthwhile. So, my advice to aging shooters is this: Do whatever you need to do to keep the front sight in sharp, clear focus - even if it means going to the optometrist.

And, for all you young guys struggling with your youthful fantasies and vanity, here's a heads up. Getting old *is* better than the alternative.

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## Mississippi Permit Reciprocity

A fair number of our students live in DeSoto County, Mississippi and have Mississippi handgun carry permits. We are often asked what other states recognize a MS permit. They are:

**Alaska**

**Alabama**

**Arizona**

**Colorado**

**Florida**

**Georgia**

**Idaho**

**Indiana**

**Kentucky**

**Louisiana**

**Michigan**

**Montana**

**North Carolina**

**New Hampshire**

**Oklahoma**

**South Dakota**

**Tennessee**

**Texas**

**Utah**

**Vermont**

**Washington**

**Wyoming**

That's 22 states in all.

