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DEFENSIVE TACTICS
FOR THE REAL WORLD

Firearms Training Services

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

A critical step in increasing your defensive shooting skill is to be able to set up S.M.A.R.T. training goals. Think of it as driving your vehicle from your home to some other destination. You could drive around aimlessly and hope you eventually arrive at the address you seek. A better solution would be to get

The problem is, after the training their practice is disorganized, haphazard, and without real goals. Since they practiced so inefficiently they come to class shooting no better than when they came to the last class. We basically start over with these folks every time we get them in class. For your practice regimen to be of any real value you have to set goals and attain

Specific. Each range trip or dry practice session should be planned around working on and improving one or two specific skills. The skill should be identified in advance so that you can have the correct supplies, targets, and any other equipment you need to work on those



directions, plot them on a map, and follow those directions directly to your destination. That is our goal in S.M.A.R.T. training.

I've been teaching people professionally for over 35 years, for 18 years I owned a range where people often came to practice, and I teach almost every weekend somewhere in the US. On my range I frequently saw people come and practice with no plan, no goal, and little or no organization. When they left they were not one bit better than when they arrived, and they could have accomplished every bit as much with dry practice at home. In our classes no matter what part of the country we are in I see the same errors by shooters who have had a fair bit of prior training.

them. You can't just say your goal is to be a better shot, or to be "really good." That is so vague as to be meaningless. We need a standard to achieve and roadmap to get there.

For a goal to be effective and useful to you, it should be S.M.A.R.T. — Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. Overly broad, unfocused goals, generally speaking, will not be achieved. So, let's look at each of these criteria and see how they apply to the defensive shooter.

specific skill sets. Trying to work on everything at once leads to improving nothing significantly. It is far better to concentrate your attention on one or two skills in each session. In advance of your range trip or dry practice session identify the skill set you want to work on and then identify the drills that would help polish those particular skills. For instance, if you want to work on accuracy, a bull's-eye course of fire may be in order, or perhaps one of the small dot drills.

Measurable. A time and accuracy standard gives you a metric for seeing if you are actually getting better or not. Never just blow rounds down range. Every drill fired and practice string should be

critiqued and or scored, and targets taped or replaced so that you can see exactly where hits are going. Never rely on your subjective idea of how fast you're working. You will just about always be wrong. Instead, you can have a training partner with a stopwatch, or if you practice alone you can use an electronic timer to verify your progress. Many smart phones now have timer apps available, so there's really no excuse for not using a timing device in your range trips.

To accurately measure your progress you can use standardized drills, exercises, and courses of fire. By scoring your targets and noting your time it's pretty easy to track progress or the lack of it. There are many standardized drills that emphasize discrete skills with well-known time and accuracy requirements. The FAST drill devised by Todd Green is just one example. You either get your hits into the 3 x 5 card and the 8 inch circle or you don't, and you either make the time specified or you don't. It's a great idea to use a small notebook as a log and note the date and time of practice, the individual drills worked on, and your scores/times. Tracking your progress in this manner gives you an accurate idea of how you are progressing.

Attainable. Be fair to yourself when setting your goals to avoid frustration and burnout. If you're just starting out as a defensive shooter, a 1.2 second draw from concealment to a hit at seven yards is probably beyond your reach. Find your current baseline by shooting scored drills, record your score or time and set a reasonable goal for improvement. For instance, if a slide lock reload currently takes you four seconds, make your goal cutting your time to three seconds. Once you achieve that goal, make your next goal cutting the time to 2.5 seconds. Each time you have a major improvement, it is going to be harder to

make it to the next level, so work in increments that you can manage. Trying to go from that four second reload to a two second reload in one jump is a lot to ask. If you shot the current FBI pistol qualification course at 75% today, make your next goal shooting 85%, rather than 100%. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

Realistic. When setting goals, take into account your physical attributes, your training resources (time, ammunition, and money), your equipment limitations, and the context for which you are training. For instance, it is counterproductive to set goals built around what Grand Master USPSA shooters do with match gear worn openly if you are wearing a compact pistol concealed under clothing in an IWB holster. If you are older or have physical limitations, take those into account realistically in your training plan.

Timely. Set a real-time goal for your desired improvement. This helps you stay on track and put in the work. If you want to improve one specific skill such as the slide lock reload mentioned above, you might set a goal of shaving the time from four seconds to three seconds in three months of combined range work and dry practice. If your goal is to reach a certain score on a broad course of fire that covers a lot of different skills, you might set a time limit of say, six months. As mentioned before, use a logbook to record your efforts and your achievements as you work toward your goal.

By using the S.M.A.R.T. approach, you can make the most of your training resources; and I assure you, you will progress faster and get a lot more out of your limited training time. ■



Here, Lynn works on her accuracy by engaging an eight-inch round steel plate from 25 yards. She is working on hitting it reliably and more quickly.

POP QUIZ!

TRIVIA TIME!

What was Col. Jeff Cooper's actual first name?

- A) Jeffrey
- B) Jefferson
- C) Dean
- D) John

The first person to post the correct answer on our Rangemaster Facebook page will win this knife!



facebook.

Quick Tip: Taming Your Tritium

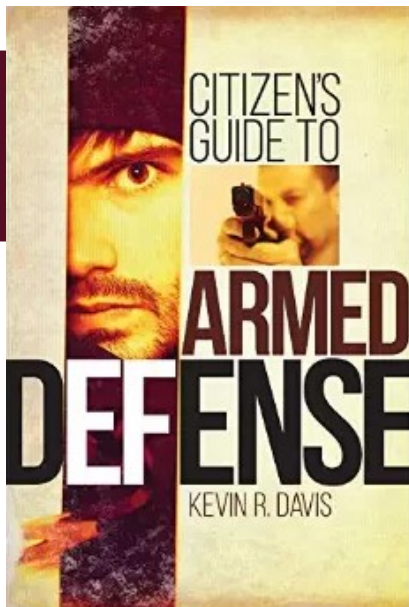
Many people using a service-sized semiauto pistol choose — or are issued — one with tritium night sights installed. One issue many shooters then have is the rear sight being too "busy" and taking visual focus off of the front sight or giving a cluttered sight picture. This can be due to having white outlines around the rear tritium vials, or having tritium vials in the rear sight that are the same size and color of the vial in the front sight. Equal-sized and similar-colored vials on the front and rear sights can lead to difficulty seeing the front sight in low light conditions. Since the rear sight is much closer to the shooter's eye, it sometimes visually overpowers the relatively distant front sight.

Several manufacturers have offered a commercial solution by designing tritium sets in which the front vial and the rear vials are different colors. But tritium sights can be expensive to replace, and sometimes agency policies prevent people from altering their duty gear at all. So, one common fix has been to use a Sharpie marker to black out either the rear white outlines (if any), or the tritium vial, or both.

While darkening the white contours with a black Sharpie is very common (and something I have done in the past to improve front sight visibility on my agency-issued service pistol), the downside to this resort is that it often leaves the rear tritium vials invisible or nearly invisible to the shooter in low light.

Through a bit of experimentation, I have found another approach to dim down the rear tritium vials without rendering them ineffective in low light. Instead of just blacking out the white outlines on the rear sight, I also use a red Sharpie to mark over the rear tritium vials themselves, essentially re-coloring them. This provides a low-light sight picture that is very similar to what people get from multi-colored replacement sights, without the expense and hassle of after-market modifications. ■

- By Chuck Haggard
Agile Training & Consulting
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A good book to add to your personal defense library is "A Citizen's Guide to Armed Defense" by Kevin R. Davis. Kevin is a 30-year veteran of law enforcement. Currently assigned to the Training Bureau of his mid-state midwest law enforcement

Book Look

by Tom Givens



READ IT
SKIP IT

agency, he instructs in use of force, firearms, tactics, and suspect control. Previous assignments include corrections, patrol, street narcotics investigation, SWAT Team leader, and lead instructor. Kevin is a prolific writer who contributes to Officer.com, LawOfficer.com, Law & Order, Tactical Response, Tactical Weapons, Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement, The Book of the AR15, and many more publications. Kevin is a member of both IALEFI and ILEETA (the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association). He also authored "Use of Force Investigations: A Manual for Law Enforcement," a 2012 text for police investigators and prosecutors handling deadly force incidents.

From Amazon's listing: "Millions of citizens are purchasing firearms for personal safety,

and to protect their family and home in a day and age when police budgets have been slashed and violent criminals prey upon the defenseless. But owning a firearm is only one part of the equation. Knowledge is power and understanding the threat is key to successfully stopping it...."

With 11 chapters and 295 pages, "Citizen's Guide to Armed Defense" is an excellent textbook for anyone considering carrying a gun for self defense. The information is well organized, and there are numerous photos. There are also several case studies — real life examples to illustrate learning points. The section on dealing with police investigators after an incident is worth the price of the book. It lists retail for \$27.99, but [Amazon has it available for around \\$20.00](#). Highly recommended! ■

SOUTHNARC

on Tom Givens' book,
"Fighting Smarter"

Soooooooo.....

I finally finished my autographed copy of *Fighting Smarter*. Some thoughts in no particular order:

I think this is truly Tom's opus. As noted previously it represents him very well and I think it is a legacy piece that will continue after him. Not that he's going anywhere!

I REALLY appreciate the simple, elegant prose. So many firearms trainers and self defense instructors can't wait to use a word like "proprioceptive" when they teach or write. Tom never uses a big word where a small one will work just as well, and the writing is *engaging*. Even if you haven't trained with Tom and can't hear his voice like I can, when you read the book it feels like you're having a conversation with him. That's really **hard** to pull off in writing. An example:

Carrying a concealed weapon allows one, regardless of gender, age, or physical ability, to control his own immediate environment and thereby have options in various emergencies that unarmed people simply do not enjoy...

That's pretty concise and bulletproof logic.

The organization of the book is spot on: software then hardware. Chapters 6-9 are particularly noteworthy as they go beyond firearms into tactics and strategy.

In order those chapters are:

- Controlling Fear and Making
- Sound Decisions Under Stress
- Visualization, or Mental Imagery
- Awareness Games, Self-Training
- Intelligence Gathering for Personal Safety

I think these four chapters in particular would make an excellent mini paper on "mindset." Tom avoids this word which I again like, as so many toss it around like it's a verb. Tom gives **specific** advice on how people should go about making themselves more aware and easy steps for assessing the environment.

The hardware and "shooting" portion of the book are current and applicable. The track record of Tom's students shows this. I think Tom is one of the few people in the training industry who actually lives the idea that things change and we must change also. Tom's original pedigree is Gunsite but Tom's *doctrine* is...**Tom's**. He continues to watch and learn and shape his curriculum based on what's happening in the world.

Closing this out, if I had to smash the library down to one book as a definitive reference it would be *Fighting Smarter*. There's simply not a more comprehensive book out there on the subject written by someone as credible as Tom Givens. ■

- by Craig Douglas, a/k/a "SouthNarc"
www.ShivWorks.com



Tom's book is available at
www.createpace.com/5230622

Click here to get
your copy now!

TAC-CON-15 DEBRIEF

Greg Ellifritz
Active Response
Training

Craig Douglas
ShivWorks

David Zehrung
Dr. Zman Project

Tiffany Johnson
Rangemaster

Marty Hayes
Firearms Academy
of Seattle

John Farnam
DTI

Chris Fry
MDTS

William April
MDTS

Low Light
Pistol Match

David Zehrung ("Dr. Z") attended the 2015 Tactical Conference. While there, he conducted a number of video interviews with some of the trainers who presented at the conference, and did a video of his run through the Low Light Pistol Match. [Here is a link to the various topics](#) (or click any of the images). If you have not attended this event, these videos and interviews give you an idea of what goes on. Thanks to [Dr. Zehrung](#) for taking the time to provide these interviews! ■

ALL OR NOTHING: Red Dots

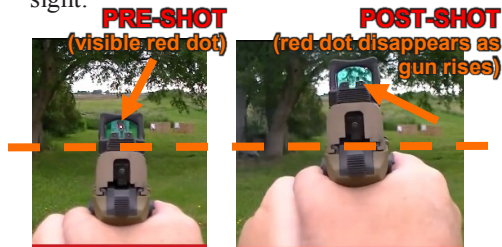
A never-ending topic of discussion these days is the pistol mounted MRDS (mini red dot sight) that is becoming more popular among shooters. As with so many things, it's yet another "All or Nothing," with too many people believing they're best or worst under all circumstances for all shooters. And as usual, that's just stupidly wrong.

For those not familiar with the MRDS, it is an optical sight that has no magnification and produces a red dot (usually battery powered) as an aiming point on the lens. The optic is mounted to the pistol's slide and moves just as the slide does during recoil.

There are some undeniable benefits to an MRDS. The biggest is that it allows a shooter to focus on the target yet still see an aiming reference. There is no need to choose between the front sight and the target. You look at the target and the red dot is just *there*. For the majority of pistol owners who aren't going to achieve the level of skill & discipline to choose the front sight under extreme stress, it essentially combines aimed shooting with target-focused shooting.

The MRDS also benefits shooters whose eyesight no longer allows them to get a clear sight picture with iron sights, particularly those who are far-sighted. *Any* sight is better than *no* sight.

There are some undeniable disadvantages to an MRDS, also. And the biggest of those is that the sight has a fairly narrow "viewable angle." When the gun fires, the dot disappears as the slide cycles and rises in recoil [as shown in the frames below, taken from a YouTube video]. It comes back into view once the slide is back in battery and is relatively level along the eye/target line of sight.



Stills from video posted by PrimalRights.com:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2L0BzySrUM>

Advocates of the MRDS often try to compare it to a rifle red dot scope, but that's invalid. A rifle's recoil arc is substantially less because the rifle has *four* (thanks SLG!) points of solid contact rather than being controlled solely by the arms. Similarly, comparisons to IPSC Open-style guns are wrong because (a) the red dots on Open guns aren't moving back and forth on a reciprocating slide and (b) the Open



guns have compensators which keep the muzzle level during recoil.

For beginning and intermediate level shooters the "disappearing dot" is no problem because they normally lose track of iron sights in recoil, too. But for more experienced shooters who understand proper *sight tracking* — keeping visual control over the gun through the *entire* arc of recoil — the MRDS actually slows them down. Instead of following the aiming point as it comes down from recoil as they'd do with an iron front sight, they must wait until the gun is level enough to make the red dot visible. Only then can they adjust their aim as necessary and press the next shot.

We all agree that blinking every time you fire the gun is bad. But somehow MRDS proponents don't mind that their sight blinks in and out of sight with every shot. Curious.

The dot also disappears as things other than recoil make the gun move around. The best example of this is, not surprisingly, *movement*. While it's easy to keep the gun very level when moving in straight lines (forward, back, left, right) at a controlled speed, it's a lot more complicated when you're moving in more realistic and dynamic ways....

When the dot isn't visible, you have to wait on it before you can shoot. With an iron sight, the front sight is always right there where it's supposed to be. With the MRDS, the dot is only visible when the gun is relatively level.

The other major issues with MRDS are their visibility under certain weather conditions and their durability. These are problems which are both likely to be addressed as the technology advances.

For the vast majority of shooters, the MRDS is an advantage. It allows them to aim precisely when they'd otherwise get too rough (or no) sight picture for the needed shot. If I were outfitting a large police

department or military unit with pistols, I'd want to put MRDS on those guns. It simplifies teaching and delivers acceptable performance with less time and effort expended.

But the MRDS, because it appears and disappears as the gun moves in recoil, has a lower **performance ceiling** than iron sights. In other words, your maximum potential speed with the MRDS is less than your maximum potential speed with an iron sight. That's why pistol shooters tend to eschew the MRDS as they get more skilled, at least for close to moderate range shooting where speed is as much a factor as accuracy....

Of course, many fans of the MRDS don't want to be told that their improved performance is due to a lack of shooting skill. I've even had one proponent claim that *sight tracking* was impossible and made-up! Seriously. They don't want to hear that they're not yet in the top five percent. As I've said before, 95% of shooters believe they're in the top 5%.

If the MRDS lets you do what you want to do better than an iron sight, than the MRDS is good for you. That doesn't mean it's the best choice for everyone under every circumstance. And the reverse is also true. Just because you might have the skill level to eek a little more performance out of iron sights than an MRDS doesn't mean that everyone is being held back the same way. Find what works best for you and don't fall into the trap of assuming it's the best for everyone else. **Train hard & stay safe!** ■

- by Todd Green
www.Pistol-Training.com