



Tactical Talk

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"At least once, everyone should have to run for his life, so he will know that eggs don't come from stores, that safety does not come from police, and that 'news' is not something that happens to other people."
 --Robert Heinlein

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Here is a list of the top ten cities with 500,000 people or more, ranked by murder rate for 2012.

City	Population	Total Murders (official count)	Murders per 100,000 people
1. Detroit, Michigan	707,096	386	54.58
2. Baltimore, Maryland	625,474	219	35.01
3. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	1,538,957	331	21.50
4. Memphis, Tennessee	657,436	133	20.23
5. Chicago, Illinois	2,708,382	500	18.46
6. Milwaukee, Wisconsin	599,395	91	15.18
7. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	595,607	85	14.27
8. District of Columbia	632,323	88	13.91
9. Dallas, Texas	1,241,549	154	12.40
10. Indianapolis, Indiana	838,650	101	12.04

Comment: Memphis would be #1 every year but for one factor—The Med. The regional trauma center here is one of the best in the nation. They lose less than 1% of patients who are presented with vital signs. In simple terms, that means that if you arrive at The Med grievously injured and barely alive, you have a better than 99 out of 100 chance of walking back out later due to their excellent trauma care.



English is bad for you!

According to a recent study, the Japanese eat very little fat and drink almost no red wine. Their incidence of heart disease and stroke is much lower than that of Americans or the British. On the other hand, Italians eat an awful lot of fat and drink an awful lot of red wine. Their incidence of heart disease and stroke is lower than that of Americans or the British.

The conclusion? Eat whatever you like. It's speaking English that is killing us.

Some people like to plan ahead, so here are some of our training events around the country in 2014. We hope to see you at one of these classes.

2014 Event Calendar

Jan 25-26	Two-Day Defensive Shotgun, at Rangemaster, Memphis
Feb 21-23	Tactical Conference Fri-Sun Rangemaster, Memphis
Mar 8-9	Combative Pistol 1 Tucson, AZ
Mar 20-23	A Girl and a Gun Conference, Waco, TX
Mar 29-30	Advanced Pistol Skills (1 day)/Defensive Shotgun (1 day) Florence, SC
April 5-6	Combative Pistol 1 Athens, GA
April 12-13	Combative Pistol 1, KR Training, near Austin, TX
April 26-27	Advanced Pistol Skills and Defensive Shotgun (1 day each) Ft Meade, Florida
May 17-18	Advanced Pistol Skills and Defensive Shotgun (1 day each) Culpeper, Virginia
May 31-June 1	Advanced Instructor Course at Rangemaster, Memphis
June 6-8	Firearms Instructor Development West Elkton, Ohio
June 21-22	Advanced Pistol Skills, Defensive Shotgun, 1 day each Nappanee, Indiana
July 12-14	Combative Pistol 1 (2 day), Defensive Shotgun (1 day) Firearms Academy of Seattle, Onalaska, Washington
Aug 1-3	Instructor Development Course at Rangemaster, Memphis, TN
Sept 6	One Day Pistol Skills Eustace, TEX
Sept 7	One Day Pistol Skills ETRPC, Longview, TX
Sept 13-14	Combative Pistol 1 Americus, Georgia
Sept 19-21	Instructor Development Course, Chandler, OK
Oct 3-5	Instructor Development Course DPC Dallas, Texas
Oct 18-19	Combative Pistol II KR Training near Austin, TX



Lori Bigley shooting with her support hand only during an Instructor Development Course in Oklahoma. Great control, using proper technique. Note the ejected case right above her pistol, but gun already back on target, working on the next shot. Good work!



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Firearms Safety

Firearms safety is the responsibility of every person who uses firearms for any purpose, whether that's sport, hunting, target shooting, plinking or self-defense. You must constantly be aware that this is in fact a life and death issue.

Since we're here about teaching people to carry firearms for self-defense, the first thing we need to do is get that into the proper context. Basically once your students are issued a permit to carry a gun or a law enforcement commission, they have been given the power of life and death over everyone with whom they come in contact from that point on. They will be able to pick people out on the street and make them die on the spot. No appeal, no recourse, no way to fix it if they are wrong. Think about that. The President of the United States can't do that, the Queen of England can't do that, the Pope can't do that, but our students will be able to. With that kind of power goes accountability, and responsibility. Our students will be held accountable for what happens with their firearm regardless of the circumstances, regardless of their intentions, and regardless of what anyone else did or didn't do.

You may have to remind yourself exactly why you carry a gun in the first place. One carries a concealed firearm in case one has to shoot someone else. If you find yourself in a circumstance where your life or the life of a loved one is in grave, immediate, unavoidable mortal danger then you'd better have a gun. However, if you shoot someone we want that to be a conscious, deliberate, willful act on your part, not a careless, stupid, or inattentive act on your part. The result will be the same, the person is shot and is injured or killed as a result of your actions.

This would be a good time to discuss the issue of accidental discharges and negligent discharges. In my career I have investigated over 200 negligent shootings, but I've looked into exactly one accident with a firearm. What's the difference? An accidental discharge involves a mechanical failure of the firearm that causes the gun to fire without input from the user but typically without damage to anyone. An example might be a semi-automatic pistol with the firing pin stuck forward protruding from the breech face due to a broken firing pin or to excessive crud in the firing pin channel or some similar cause. When the user inserts a loaded magazine, pulls slide all the way to the rear and releases it, the stuck firing pin protruding from the breech face can actually slam fire the primer of the cartridge being fed into the chamber resulting in an accidental discharge. The gun discharged without input from the user, such as putting pressure on the trigger, so it was an accidental discharge. However, if someone was struck by the bullet it was probably not an accidental shooting but a negligent shooting. The gun had to be pointed toward that person when it discharged for the bullet to strike that person under normal circumstances. So, even though the discharge was accidental there was negligence involved on the part of the shooter for the projectile to strike another person, making it a negligent shooting.

Most negligent shootings however, don't involve anything this complicated, but are really just straightforward violations of one of the four cardinal safety rules. A negligent shooting automatically involves negligence (carelessness, inattentiveness, or ignorance) on the part of the

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shooter. As examples, holstering a handgun with a finger on the trigger often results in a bullet down the shooter's leg, and is a direct violation of one of the major safety rules, i.e., having a finger on the trigger when the sights are not on the target and the shooter does not intend to fire. In the slam fire case described in the previous paragraph, the negligence was having the gun pointed at a person when you pull the slide back and let it go. Almost all negligent shootings boil down to violating one of the four cardinal safety rules. These rules have been in use practically verbatim for about 50 years, they cover everything we can do with the gun, and strict adherence to them will prevent negligent shootings.

Before we get into the four rules, there are a few things we need to stress about them. First we were talking about being armed on a continuous, routine basis in order to be armed when a sudden unforeseen crisis erupts. Of course the reason we carry pistol, is in anticipation of sudden unforeseen crises in which our lives or life of a loved one is in grave immediate danger. The key words here were **sudden** and **unforeseen**. About the only way we can be assured of having the handgun on our person when the flag flies is to make a routine habit to carry one in our daily activities. We refer to this as the armed lifestyle. This is why the four cardinal safety rules have to become literally part of our character, and they must be adhered to at all times in all places, without exception. These four rules apply to all types of firearms, whether they are handguns, rifles, shotguns, submachine guns, flamethrowers, or any other type of firearm. These rules apply all the time everywhere. They apply on the range; but they also apply in your home, in your place of business, on the street, and in a gunfight. You will not be allowed to handle your weapon in a careless, sloppy manner in a fight any more than you would be on the range. Even in a fight, you will be held accountable for what happens with your weapon, so handling it properly and safely must become second nature.

Now, let's look at these four rules in detail and we will see why they are so important, and how they cover just about everything we can do with a firearm.

Firearm safety rule number one: ALL guns are always loaded. This applies to every firearm you come across. This applies to the gun you're wearing, the guns in your gun safe, your brother-in-law's gun on the shelf, the guns in the counter at the gun store, and any other guns you come in contact with. If we could just get everyone to follow this one simple rule this would probably eliminate 90% of the problems. Don't pay lip service to this, be deadly serious about it. ALL guns, regardless of the circumstances, should be treated as loaded guns.

This leads to a simple two-way branch. If you want to shoot it, shoot it! If you wish to do anything else with it, then you must clear it first. Before you can clean it, tinker with it, paint the sights, tighten the grip screws, show it to your friend, or do anything else with it other than fire it, you must first clear it. When you clear a gun, you remove all ammunition, lock the action open, double check to make certain all ammunition is out, and leave the action open while you do any administrative handling of the firearm.

To clear a revolver, work the cylinder latch, open the cylinder, dump out all ammunition, go back and check each individual chamber to be sure all ammunition is out, and simply leave the cylinder open while you administratively handle the firearm. In this condition it cannot fire, so we can perform administrative tasks safely with it. If we clear the revolver ourselves

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and put it down on the table it becomes a loaded gun again. If it has been out of our hands it has been out of our control, therefore, we must treat it as a loaded gun. This simply means that if we pick it up again we will clear it again. Simple! If I clear a gun right front of you and put it down, and you pick it up, then you must clear it. When you pick it up it becomes your responsibility.

To clear a semiautomatic pistol the first thing we want to do is remove the pistol's magazine. The magazine is much like the gas tank on your car-- without gas your car won't go very far. Without a magazine there is nothing to feed into the chamber of the semiautomatic pistol, so the first thing we will do is remove the magazine to cut off the supply of ammunition. Next, we will eject the round from the chamber, whether we think one is there or not. Next we lock the slide to the rear and visually inspect the chamber and the magazine well to verify that all ammunition has been removed from the pistol. Once we've done that we will simply leave the slide open while we perform whatever administrative functions with the pistol.

Do not give a handgun to someone else without first clearing it, and leave the action open. Do not accept the handgun from someone else unless they have cleared it and left the action open.

Firearms safety rule number two: never let your handgun point at anything you're not willing to destroy. The sole function of your gun is to launch bullets, the sole function of bullets is to punch holes in things. So, do not point your bullet launcher at anything you don't want to punch a hole in. This includes your body parts, persons around you, and anything else of value.

With the long gun, which means typically a shotgun or rifle, this is fairly easy to keep up with since you have two different handholds on the weapon, and a much longer barrel. A handgun, however, is so short that it's like an extension of your hand and it is really easy to point it at various places without realizing it unless you pay attention. If you have your handgun out of the holster, you must constantly be aware of where it is pointed, and make certain you don't point it at anything you don't want to shoot. There is a fairly simple way to keep up with this. Unless your gun is locked up in the gun safe there are only three acceptable places for it to be: **in the holster; at the ready; or indexed on target.** Unless you need it out for a specific purpose keep the handgun in the holster. If you believe you may have to fire the gun in the next few seconds, go to the ready. At the ready position the gun is under control, you know where it is pointed, and it is ready for instant use. So, if you need to shoot, get to shooting. If you believe you're about to have to shoot, go to the ready. If you don't believe you will need to shoot anytime soon, put the pistol back in the holster. The holster is a safe, secure, readily accessible place to keep the pistol where it is under control, and pointed in a safe direction, yet you can access the pistol in a heartbeat if you need it. Wandering around with the pistol in hand unnecessarily often causes problems. The longer the gun is in your hands the harder it is to keep up with where it is pointed. This is why the holster is so critically important. With the pistol safely holstered, we no longer have to worry about where it is pointed.

Muzzle awareness is a critical skill and it takes a bit of attention at first to learn it. When loading or unloading your pistol on the firing line for instance, you must keep it pointed forward, not inadvertently pointed toward people to your support side as you work the slide. If you turn to say something to an instructor, you will make certain you leave the gun pointed downrange

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and only turn your head to speak to that person. These are just examples of the sort of muzzle awareness you must build.

Firearms safety rule number three: keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target and you intend to fire. The sole function of your trigger is to release the hammer, striker, or firing pin, and cause the gun to discharge. The only time we want the gun to discharge is when it's aimed at something we wish to shoot. When you draw the gun from the holster, your trigger finger must be straight. When you put the gun back in the holster, the trigger finger must be straight. When you're at the ready looking for something to shoot, the trigger finger must be straight. The only time the trigger finger enters the trigger guard is when we want the gun to fire, period.

When the gun goes on the target, the trigger finger goes on the trigger. When the gun comes off the target, the trigger finger comes off the trigger. If we draw a straight line from your eye to the center of your target that line would be called "the eye – target line". When the gun comes up to the eye target line the trigger finger goes to the trigger and removes the slack. The instant the gun comes off the eye target line the trigger finger must go straight and return to its register position. Gun goes on, finger goes on. Gun comes off, finger comes off.

It is not enough to have the trigger finger straight and outside the trigger guard. We must find a position on the pistol for the trigger finger that places the finger as far away from the trigger as possible and gives it a tactile indicator of where it should be located until the decision to fire has been made. This point on the pistol is referred to as the "register" for the trigger finger. When the trigger finger is in register it is in a consistent place on the pistol that is as far away from the trigger as possible, in a consistent spot, that is repeated until it becomes an automatic reflex. The register position may be the flat part of the frame above the trigger guard, it can be the flat of the slide, or it could be the edge of the ejection port. Different people have different amounts of mobility in their trigger finger due to flexibility, age, arthritis, and other factors. Thus, the register position will not be the same for every shooter. The individual shooter must find a spot that gives tactile feedback for the register and is as far away from the trigger as can be comfortably maintained.

The vast majority of negligent shootings involve having the trigger finger in the trigger guard at inappropriate times. Modern handguns are equipped with various devices such as firing pin safeties, transfer bars, hammer blocks, etc. that prevent the weapon from firing unless the trigger is pulled to the rear. If your handgun discharges, the odds are overwhelming that it did so because something put pressure on the trigger sufficient to cause the gun to fire. The object that put pressure on the trigger is almost always your trigger finger. The startle response or inter-limb reaction are well-known reasons for unintentionally pulling the trigger on a firearm. Neither will cause the gun to discharge if the trigger finger is properly in register.

The correct way to teach this is not "don't put your finger on the trigger now, now, or now." The correct way to teach it is, "only put your finger on the trigger when you have made a decision to shoot and you have your sights on your target". There is only one time when it is acceptable to have your finger on the trigger, and that is when you are aimed in and you want the gun to fire.

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Firearms safety rule number four: be certain of your target, what is around it, and what is beyond.

In the movies bullets fired at someone that miss just seem to disappear. In reality, they fly until they strike something solid enough to stop them. That object might be a brick wall, a parked car, a tree trunk, or a five-year-old child. The bullet couldn't care less, it is just a chunk of metal with no soul and no will of its own. It simply goes where you send it. You will be held accountable for where it lands. Therefore, we must always be certain what we're shooting at and the background behind it so that we know where our bullets will wind up. We never fire at shadows, at noises, or rustles in the brush. We must know what we are shooting and why we are shooting it or we cannot fire our guns. Be aware that pistol bullets can travel as much as one mile. That creates a huge downrange danger zone. We must constantly be aware of the background behind our target.

Those four rules are basically it. They cover just about everything we can do with a firearm. If it's a gun it's loaded unless you personally have cleared it and it is still in your control. Keep up with where the gun is pointed at all times. If you no longer need it out, put it in the holster. Keep your finger in register well away from the trigger until you bring the gun to bear on a target. Know what you're shooting at, what's around it, and what's behind.

Now, can we make this even simpler? Actually we could. There are two safety checks that all by themselves will prevent most problems. These two are:

Muzzle Discipline

Trigger Finger Discipline.

Muzzle discipline: the firearm should always be pointed in the safest direction. That is, even if the weapon fired there would be no personal injury to anyone and only minimal property damage.

Trigger finger discipline: the modern handgun generally will not fire unless the trigger is depressed. Keeping your finger in register at all times when you are not actually firing will prevent almost all negligent discharges. If these two safety checks are in place, no one will be inadvertently shot.

The two major causes of unintentional shootings are **IGNORANCE** and **CARELESSNESS**. Ignorance is represented by that vast body of people who go out and buy gun, obtain no training with it, and therefore do not know how to handle it correctly. Carelessness generally refers to people who know the rules but don't follow them. The court will make no distinction between the two. The court's position is that if you have a deadly weapon it is incumbent upon you to seek proper training in its use and then to follow the rules.

Range procedures: in addition to the basic safety rules we have discussed there is basic firing range etiquette of which you should be aware.

1. Once you're on the firing line stay there until you are dismissed by the instructor. It is very poor form to walk off the line without permission. The instructor will give you an opportunity to get more ammunition, hydrate, or do whatever you need to do. It is

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hard enough for the instructor to observe and control everyone on the firing line as it is. Help him by staying in your assigned spot on the firing line until given permission to leave it.

2. Do not handle your firearm off the firing line. The instructor has to focus his attention on the firing line, so he should not have to watch out for people behind him with guns out. Your handgun should not be out of the holster unless you are on the firing line, facing the backstop, and you have permission to do so.

3. Do not dangle your handgun by your side. Unless you are at the ready or on target the gun should remain in the holster. If you blow a shot, don't throw up your hands or drop them by your side with a gun in your hand. Keep the gun under control and again, if you don't want it in your hands put it back in holster.

4. Don't turn around with a gun in your hand and sweep the line, the instructors, or observers. Always holster the gun before walking off the line, picking up any object, or doing anything else not directly involved in firing.

5. On the firing line there should be no casual chatting. Wait until you are off-line to talk about your performance, or anything else with other students. When you are talking you cannot be listening to the instructor's comments, to range commands, or to other important input. An exception would be when you are acting as a coach for another shooter, however, if the primary instructor begins talking you should stop talking and listen to him. You can resume your coaching when the primary instructor is finished.

6. Immediately obey any instruction or command from the instructor. Do what he says first, and you can question it later. There may be circumstances of which you are unaware.

Firing ranges may be run as "cold ranges" or "hot ranges". On a cold range no one wears a loaded gun unless they are actually on the firing line and are actually involved in a firing drill. The shooters only load on the command of the instructor, and at the completion of the drill or the course of fire all shooters will unload and holster empty guns. Persons on the range but not actually online firing would have unloaded guns. The cold range is normally used for the most basic types of instruction, such as a beginners' or introductory class or a typical handgun permit class, especially in its early stages. Since the students involved do not yet know how to handle the gun properly they are instructed to load it and to unload it under direct supervision, and they are not allowed loaded guns except while under direct supervision. Cold ranges can be very dangerous places. The problem is that once off the line everyone considers all of the guns to be "unloaded", leading to sloppy handling, and poor muzzle discipline. This leads to negligent shootings. As such, cold ranges are properly only used in those very early stages of training and they require constant supervision by an adequate number of trained instructors. Hot ranges refer to facilities where everyone routinely wears a loaded handgun. The handguns remain holstered at all times unless actually involved in the firing drill. No guns are taken out of the holster anywhere except on the firing line. Hot ranges are probably actually much safer than cold ranges because everyone knows all of the guns are in fact loaded and they treat them that way. Training beyond the introductory level should probably be conducted as a hot range.

CARTRIDGE CONFUSION

The following is intended to help you with ammunition designations, which are often confusing. Loads that are interchangeable are essentially the same cartridge, designated by different names. If they are listed here together, you can fire them in the same gun.

Autopistol cartridges:

- ◆ .22 Long Rifle
- ◆ .22 Magnum, .22 Rimfire Magnum, .22 WRM (not interchangeable with .22 S,L, LR)
- ◆ 5.7mm FN
- ◆ .25 Auto, .25 ACP, 6.35mm
- ◆ .32 Auto, .32 ACP, 7.65mm Browning
- ◆ .380 Auto, .380 ACP, 9mm Kurtz, 9mm K, 9X17
- ◆ 9mm Makarov, 9X18
- ◆ 9mm Auto, 9mm NATO, 9mm Parabellum, 9X19
- ◆ .356 TSW (Team Smith & Wesson)
- ◆ .38 Auto, .38 ACP, 9mm Largo, 9X21
- ◆ .38 Super, .38 Super Auto, same size as .38ACP, but much higher pressure, do not fire in guns marked .38 ACP, 9mm Largo, 9X21
- ◆ 9X23, 9mm Super looks similar to .38 Super, but higher pressure, and rimless
- ◆ .357 SIG, consists of a .40 S&W case necked down to accept a 9mm diameter bullet, resulting in a bottleneck cartridge for use in autos
- ◆ .40 Smith & Wesson, .40 Auto
- ◆ 10mm Auto, 10mm Norma
- ◆ .41 Action Express
- ◆ .44 Auto Mag (rimless version of .44 Magnum, for Auto Mag pistols)
- ◆ .45 Auto, .45ACP, .45 M1911 ball
- ◆ .45 GAP (Glock Auto Pistol)
- ◆ .460 Rowland (looks like .45 Auto, but heavier brass, higher pressure)
- ◆ .50 GI

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Revolver Cartridges:

- ◆ .22 Long Rifle (will also fire Shorts and Longs)
- ◆ .22 Rimfire Magnum, .22 Magnum, .22 WRM (not interchangeable with .22 S,L,LR)
- ◆ .32 S&W Short, .32 New Police
- ◆ .32 Long, .32 S&W Long, .32 Wadcutter
- ◆ .32/20 (old black powder round, not interchangeable with other .32's)
- ◆ .327 Federal Magnum, .327 Ruger Magnum
- ◆ .38 S&W, .38 New Police, .380 Revolver (British) *1
- ◆ .38 Long Colt (obsolete, a bit shorter than .38 Special)
- ◆ .38 Special, .38 S&W Special, .38 Colt Special
- ◆ .357 Magnum, .357 S&W Magnum (can fire .38 Special) *2
- ◆ .38/40 (actually .40 caliber, not interchangeable with anything)
- ◆ .41 Rimfire (used in old Remington derringers)
- ◆ .41 Colt (cannot be fired in .41 Magnum, actually .39 caliber)
- ◆ .41 Magnum
- ◆ .44 Russian (obsolete, a bit shorter than .44 Special)
- ◆ .44/40 (not interchangeable with .44 Special or .44 Magnum)
- ◆ .44 Special
- ◆ .44 Magnum (can fire .44 Special but not vice versa)
- ◆ .45 Auto Rim (for use in .45 ACP revolvers)
- ◆ .45 Colt, .45 Long Colt *3
- ◆ .45 Schofield (can be fired in .45 Colt, but not vice-versa)
- ◆ .455 Webley
- ◆ .460 S&W Magnum
- ◆ .500 S&W Magnum

*1- These short .38 cartridges are actually a bit larger bullet diameter than a .38 Special, and normally will not chamber in a .38 Special revolver.

*2- The .357 Magnum is a .38 Special case lengthened by 1/10th of an inch and loaded to much higher pressures. The case was lengthened to keep it from being chambered in a .38 Special revolver.

*3- The correct designation of the .45 Colt is ".45 Colt". The .45 Schofield is a slightly shorter version for use in the top-break Schofield revolver. It was made slightly shorter to preclude chambering the more powerful .45 Colt loads in the weaker top-break action. So, one can shoot Schofields in a .45 Colt, but not vice-versa. The ".45 Long Colt" name came about because the .45 Colt is longer than the .45 Schofield. Both were in use at the same time in the US Cavalry, and it was important to keep the right loads for the gun at hand when both the Colt Single Action Army (.45 Colt) and the Schofield revolver were being issued.



Student shooting quickly, but accurately. Be aggressive, drive the gun!



Students shooting on the move, Dynamic Marksmanship Course, South Carolina

Good Gunbelts!



Our old friend, Mike Benedict of Talon Tactical makes an excellent gun belt of the very popular “rigger’s belt” format. These belts are very lightweight but strong and rigid. The buckle rings are a type of nylon material and offer a great deal of adjustment.

See <http://www.talontactical.com> for details.

Lynn loves her Talon Tactical belt and has been wearing one for over a year. She recently sent Mike the ornamental metal rings from a department store ladies’ belt and Mike had them sewn into one of his belts. This lets Lynn look fashionable while still wearing a substantial enough belt to support her M&P and two spare magazines. Highly recommended!



Learning Trigger Control

By Tom Givens

As an aspiring handgun shooter, you will soon learn that one of the hardest things to learn for new shooters, yet one of the most important skills, is trigger control. The shooter must learn to keep the sights on the target while smoothly moving the trigger to the rear until the gun discharges. Even in high speed defensive shooting, this process occurs, although the time it takes to complete the process is compressed. With a handgun, yanking and cranking on the trigger is the root cause of almost all misses, if the gun was even roughly aligned on the target when the decision to fire was made.

Larry Vickers, retired Special Operations soldier, former Delta operator, and world class firearms instructor once said, "Why is the rifle so much easier to shoot than a pistol? Easy. The rifle weighs more than its trigger pull, while the handgun weighs less than the weight of the trigger pull." That is a truly brilliant summation of the whole problem. If you have an eight pound rifle with a two pound trigger, it's easy to shoot it well. Unfortunately, we often have a two pound pistol with an eight pound trigger pull, hence the difficulty. Thus, proper trigger technique becomes vital.

First let's look at the different phases of trigger operation. Manipulation of the

semiautomatic pistol's trigger actually consists of four separate and distinct phases, and each impacts our accuracy. These phases, in sequence, are:

CONTACT: The "pad", or fingerprint, of the shooter's index finger should contact the center of the face of the trigger. The trigger finger should not touch the frame of the gun. Ideally, the only place the trigger finger should contact the pistol is on the face of the trigger. (That's why we call it a trigger finger!)

SLACK: Semi-auto pistols have "slack" or "pre-engagement travel" built into the action. This is a bit of rearward movement in the trigger, prior to the actual trigger pull. The shooter can feel a distinct difference in the amount of finger pressure needed to take up the slack as opposed to that pressure needed to fire the piece. Some designs have significantly more slack than do others. As the gun is brought to bear on the target, the slack is taken up, so that the trigger finger feels the resistance of the trigger pull. As the gun goes on target, the trigger finger contacts the trigger and removes the "slack". When the gun goes on the target, the trigger finger goes on the trigger.

PRESS: Beware of semantics. The words you use form images in your subconscious, and this drives your actions. For instance, if you think "squeeze" the trigger, you will likely squeeze your entire hand while moving the trigger. We call this "milking the trigger". This results in

low misses. As the lower fingers tighten their grip, the barrel is pulled downward as the gun fires. Instead, we want to “press” the trigger, with steady rearward pressure. We hold the gun with our hand; we fire the gun with our trigger finger. The student must learn to use the trigger finger independently, while maintaining a constant, consistent, unchanging grip on the pistol with the rest of the hand. When enough pressure to the trigger is applied to disengage the sear, the gun fires.

It may help to think of the trigger as the pistol’s “gas pedal”. Using the analogy of a car, which all shooters are familiar with, the magazine is the gas tank, the front sight is the green light, and the trigger is the accelerator. When you see the green light, you apply steady, increasing pressure to the accelerator until the bullet takes off smoothly. If you stomp the gas pedal, the car takes off jerkily and under less control. Same with the bullet. It won’t matter if the sights are on the target if you smash the trigger and knock the sights off the target as the gun fires.

RE-SET: Once the gun fires, the shooter must maintain contact with the trigger. Many newbies will have the tendency to take their finger completely off the trigger the instant the gun fires, and this must be corrected. As soon as the shooter sees the front sight begin to lift, that bullet has exited the barrel and is in flight. The shooter

can no longer do anything to affect that shot, so he should forget it and start concentrating on the *next shot!* The first step is to relax the trigger finger’s pressure just enough to let the trigger return forward to its re-set point. That is normally a really short distance, and there is usually an audible and tactile “click” when the trigger re-sets. There is no need to let the trigger go any further forward than that. Once the trigger is re-set, the shooter can begin working on the delivery of the next shot.

Double-action revolver triggers do not have slack in them, otherwise the process is the same. It is important with the revolver to move the trigger all the way to the rear to fire the gun, then let it roll back all the way out before starting on the next trigger pull. The revolver trigger must go all the way forward or you can skip a chamber or even lock up the action, a process called “short stroking”. The double-action trigger should be pressed all the way through in one smooth motion.

All one needs to do to play a concerto on a piano is to hit the right keys, in the right order, at the right time. It’s a simple process, but it takes practice. All one needs to do to hit anything with a pistol is to keep the sights aligned on the intended point of impact while you work the trigger smoothly to the rear. Again, a simple concept, but it takes practice.

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