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HOLSTER SELECTION GUIDE

A few things up front:

As far as holsters go there are currently myriad options on the market with various gimmicks or that tout different methods of carry. The holsters I have specifically banned from my classes all suffer from significant safety or reliability shortfalls (regardless of what major DoD entity decided to issue them...). Any large frame or duty pistol is going to be a tough pistol to conceal effectively, especially in the warmer months, due to its physical size (and I've regularly concealed full size 1911s in shorts and a T-shirt). A good fitting holster can be a huge asset when attempting to conceal duty handguns. Also, there is no such animal as the "perfect" holster, one that is great in every situation; you will probably end up like the rest of us with a box full of various holsters for various uses before you know it. My habit got so bad I had to start making my own...

Every carry method and holster type has its advantages and disadvantages, you will have to weigh them out to determine which suits your situation the best. There will always be a trade-off of speed vs. security vs. access vs. concealment, and comfort is also a big factor since; if carrying a weapon for an extended period of time wears on you, the chances of leaving it at home when you should be carrying it increase.

I'm assuming you are fairly new to the CCW game and may not have the answers to all of the following questions just yet but they can help guide your decision making process:

1. How concealed does the weapon have to be for your environment and situation? Are you regularly carrying in a "non-permissive" environment where being discovered would lead to harsh consequences or can you get away with printing a little?
2. What is your physical stature? Are you a big-guy that can easily conceal a large frame handgun or will you have to wear bulky clothing to cover it?
3. Do you prefer inside the waist band (IWB) or outside the waist band (OWB) carry? IWB gives greater concealment at the cost of some speed while OWB will give a slight speed/access advantage at the cost of concealment. If you are just getting into this game I wouldn't recommend going with appendix carry until you become very proficient with the fundamentals of the draw.
4. What is your occupation, or where do you anticipate spending the majority of your time? If you spend a good portion of the day sitting down, a small of the back holster (SOB) is probably not a good option. Likewise, shoulder holsters and cross-draw holsters should be avoided unless you are a designated vehicle driver.
5. Will the holster be used for duty purposes, exposed to people/elements, and does it require a retention mechanism?

I hope you can see from the questions above that there is no one holster out there that can satisfy all possible carry situations but you really can't go very wrong with a quality IWB or slim OWB holster to start with. Either one should cover down on about 80% of what you would normally do with a concealed pistol.

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One other thing that most people tend to overlook is the why and how to carry spare magazines. I always ensure I have at least one spare magazine for whatever pistol I happen to be carrying for a couple of reasons. The first is that pistols are notoriously poor fight-stoppers, regardless of caliber. Don't think one-shot-one-kill, think one-mag-one-kill. The second is the magazine is the most likely component of the firearm to fail so it's a good idea to have a back-up.

I know this isn't the cut and dried absolute answer you were probably looking for but I hope it helps in your decision making process. Feel free to hit me up if you need any further clarification or have additional questions.

-Ken

