

Choosing a Holster

by Matt Schlueter



With Christmas passing, most of us sportsmen will inevitably have gift certificates, and gift cards we received waiting to be spent. While there are many different accessories you may want for your shooting and hunting activities, those of us who are pistol shooters should consider purchasing a holster for our pistol(s). The holster is to the pistol as a sling is to a rifle. Consider this when thinking of your pistol when combined with a holster it is now part of a system. This system will protect your pistol when holstered providing a safe way to carry it with you along with a solid platform when drawing to shoot.

When choosing a holster for your pistol, selecting the best holster possible is easy to do when keeping the following criteria in mind. A pistol and holster are a system used together. This will allow the user to safely carry the pistol on their person while moving about keeping their hands free to do other activities. What most people don't realize is a quality holster provides a stable platform allowing the user to secure a proper grip on their pistol prior to drawing. This proper grip will later aid the shooter in being able to accurately hit the target.

When looking at quality holsters they range in designs from custom special ordered holsters to mass produced holsters available right off the shelf for your specific make and model of pistol. The materials for holsters range from traditional leather, ballistic nylon, to polymer holsters. The prices of each of these styles of holsters may vary, but do not let this make you think it is going to cost you an arm and a leg to get one.

Regardless of the intended use, hunting, shooting range, competition, self-defense, law enforcement the criteria to select the proper holsters are all the same.

Criteria for Selecting a Quality Holster:

Workmanship and Materials: You will see the most differences when looking at the quality of workmanship and type of materials used. It is in this area you will see differences between manufactures and prices.

Exact Fit and Maintains its Form: Selecting a holster formed for your pistol that maintains its shape. These qualities will have positive effects on ease of retention, drawing your handgun when shooting, and re-holstering.

Covered trigger guard & Safety: A perspective holster should cover the trigger guard. Make sure none of the holster material protrudes into the trigger guard. The material should be rigid enough to ensure any object the holster may come into contact with can't depress the trigger.

Does the holster design disengage the safeties on the pistol? If the design you are considering disengages the safeties or allows the pistols trigger to be depressed while in the holster either of these could cause the pistol to fire while in the holster and possibly inflict serious injuries or death upon yourself and or others around you. Holsters that allow this to happen should not be considered. They pose a significant safety risk, and in my opinion you should consider another holster design.

Drawing: You should be able to draw your pistol with ease from your holster. The holster should lend itself to allowing you to gain a complete grip on your handgun and allow you to release any retention devices. The draw stroke should be a fairly straight-line draw. For some holsters this may vary if they are carried in cross draw or appendix positions.

Re-Holstering/Re-Enforced Throat: One quality to look for

is the mouth of the holster should remain open and rigid when the gun is removed. A quality holster should allow one-handed drawing and unassisted re-holstering. This is important when re-holstering the pistol, holsters that collapse after the pistol is drawn will present safety concerns during the re-holstering process.

Retention: When selecting a holster, you will want a holster that will properly retain your pistol during any activities you think you may be taking part in while wearing your pistol/holster system.

To ensure your holster will retain your pistol we must look at fit and retention devices.

Holsters that lack a proper fit with no retention device may not retain the weapon properly under strenuous activity. A poorly fitting holster may allow your pistol to dislodge from the holster and fall out.

Retention devices will vary by design, from simple thumb breaks or internal devices, to combination systems incorporating multiple systems.

Below is a list of retention levels for holsters:

Level I have a single retention device, such as a strap and thumb break.

Level II consists of two retention devices, such as a strap and internal retention device.

Level III consists of three retention devices, they are intended for Law Enforcement or Security use.

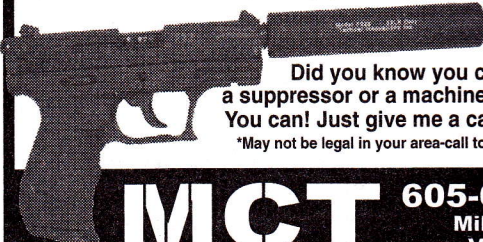
The final area of consideration will depend on the individual who carries the pistol, and where they position the holster. When drawing the pistol, does the position of the holster endanger the owner during the draw stroke. We need to remember anything the pistol is pointed at while it is loaded could be destroyed.

Some of the holster manufactures whose holsters I have had good success with are Bianchi, Black Hawk, DeSantis, Galco, and Safariland. ■

BIO: Matt Schlueter is a retired Deputy Sheriff from the Lake County Sheriffs Office, located in South Dakota with over 19 years of combined experience in corrections and law enforcement, and held the position of Firearms Instructor and DARE officer with the Lake County Sheriffs Office till his retirement. He is also a NRA Certified Pistol Instructor, and owner/chief instructor of Schlueter Firearms Instruction. Matt's goal is to provide the best information possible for those who share his interest in shooting firearms. Matt's goals also include providing the best training courses possible for students who attended courses he is offering. For those wishing to contact me please visit my website at \t "_blank" www.learn2wshoot.com, or you can join me on Facebook at \t "_blank" www.facebook.com/SchlueterFirearmsInstruction. I enjoy readers who contacting me with comments, questions, or suggestions.

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