

Choosing a Handgun for Self-Defense

by Matt Schlueter



What handgun should I pick seemed to be a common question I was asked while at the Schlueter Firearms Instruction table at the Dakota Territory gun show in Sioux Falls on February 9th. First let me start off with what works for me may not work for you, and this applies to all types of firearms.

Every citizen who chooses to carry a firearm for self-defense should have the right tools for the job. The concealed carry handgun is no different than choosing the right tool for the right job. When making the decision to purchase that handgun for self defense remember the accessories and training that go along with the handgun will make a complete weapons system which works for you.

When shopping for a handgun, remember the criteria in this section (operational, hand size, preferences, and budget). I recommend a minimum caliber for self-defense of .38 Special and 9mm. Some selection factors would include:

Gun Fit to the hand- Grip size for length and width, trigger to web distance, positioning of components and other ergonomics. Together the shooter should be able to shoot one handed.

Controllable-For precision slow fire and rapid, multiple, aimed shots in short duration. Part of this will be due to stance and training, but part of it has a lot to do with the design of the handgun, especially versus the caliber and load of ammunition being used. The idea is to get on target fast and stay on target. One handed shooting with defensive ammo loads should be done if possible to evaluate how controllable the handgun would be for a situation.

Point Ability-The handgun must point as an extension of the lower arm. With the handgun high and firm in the hand, and with a locked wrist, you should be able to quickly bring the gun up to eye level and be looking at the sights with little or no adjustments. You should be able to do this one handed and two handed.

Accuracy- For a defensive purposes and optimum distance the handgun must provide acceptable accuracy. Choosing a match grade handgun is not necessary. Most major manufacturers produce a wide variety of models, which have high standards of accuracy in their designs of defensive weapons.

Reliability- A defensive handgun should be reliable out of the box; if the weapon proves to be unreliable it would defeat its purpose even if it met all of the criteria needed for a concealed carry handgun. It generally takes years for a manufacturer to get a model design right so keep this in mind when a new model comes out you are interested in.

Size and Weight- You will have to decide between the size and weight for your need for concealment, defensive needs, and mode you would carry the handgun in. Some handguns are just too light or small to be controlled easily with full power defensive ammunition, while others are so large that they either will expose more easily or will cost the owner extra effort and money to achieve the needed concealment. A heavy gun, if not worn correctly or with the wrong type of equipment, will be difficult to conceal and uncomfortable to carry.

Cost- When choosing a defensive handgun you will have a budget in mind. Remember it is easier to take the extra time while shopping and compare all the available models. If possible and you have access to either borrow or rent a similar model

and try shooting it before buying it to see if the weapon fits you and is comfortable to shoot along with meeting the suggested elements for defensive concealed carry. This is no place to cut corners or settle, in the end you do get what you pay for.

For defensive purposes there are some further considerations.

Considering a complete weapons system will include spare magazines or speed loaders, holster(s) with magazine pouch and belt, and other accessories. Your defensive system may increase beyond a handgun to include defensive sprays, tactical flashlight, and other items. Other costs could include prepaid legal self-defense insurance, handgun permits, storage containers, and spare magazines. It is not recommended to buy after market (non-manufacturers) magazines, due to reliability issues. It is possible to spend twice the cost of your defensive handgun in these areas combined.

Remember if you cannot afford to be without proper means of defending yourself, then you cannot afford to have the wrong weapon or be cheap when it comes to acquiring the right tools that may be used to save your life!

Factors on what handguns you may have to choose from may depend on what is legal to own in your state, some states such as CA, MA, NJ, NY, MD, and others may have place restrictions on what you can legally own and poses in a handgun. Some states will have additional safety requirements on the design, and possible limits on magazine capacities. ■

For those wishing to contact me please visit my website at \t " _blank" www.learn2shoot.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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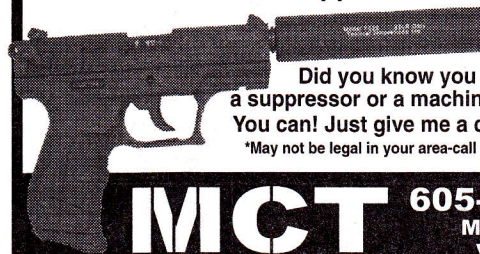
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