

The Defensive Shotgun

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When considering options for firearm as part of your personal safety plan in the home, how many have considered using a shotgun. Now most of us in South Dakota have grown up learning how to use one while hunting for pheasants, ducks, and geese. The game getter shotgun is not always the best option because it is so long. Some shotguns will only need the replacement of the barrel to make it suitable for home defense just by adding a smooth bore slug barrel with open sights will be a good starting point.

Characteristics to look for:

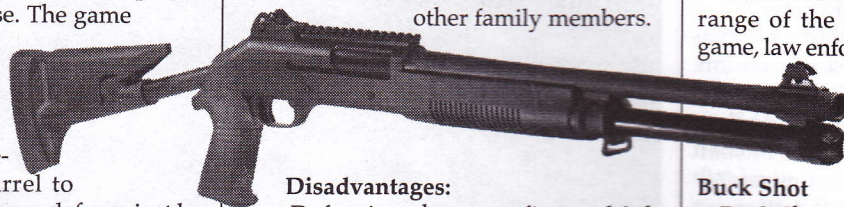
- A barrel between 18 1/2 inches and 21 inches with an improved cylinder choke.
- A bead front sight found on most shotguns will work
- You may also consider rifle sights found on slug barrels commonly used for deer hunting.
- Be capable of holding a minimum of three rounds of ammunition.
- Have a sling so you can sling the firearm.

Some of the manufacturer's that make models all ready in configuration for home defense are: Harrington & Richardson, Mossberg, Remington, Winchester just to name a few. Prior to writing this article, I did a brief search of the stores in Sioux Falls, SD and found two different models available for less than \$250.00. Harrington & Richardson - Pardner Pump Protector & Mossberg's Maverick 88 Special Purpose.

Advantages:

- Home owners who have received proper training in the use of a defensive shotgun will have more confidence in their abilities if ever faced with an armed assailant attacking them in their home.
- The defensive shotguns power and profile, the standard 20 gauge or 12 gauge shotguns using premium defensive ammunition in a defensive shotgun could cause a devastating wound(s) on a potential assailant at defensive pistol ranges of 0 - 10 yards.
- Defensive shotguns start at prices much lower than a typical defensive handgun.
- They will provide lifelong service if maintained properly.

- Shotguns are symbols of power and authority which gives it value as a deterrent. Assailant facing a homeowner defending themselves with a shotgun, may lose their confidence and disengage their attack on the home owner and other family members.



Disadvantages:

- Defensive shotguns fire multiple projectiles when using a self-defensive load of buckshot. If the shotgun has not been properly patterned at the range it is possible, and the gun is used in a defensive shooting some of the pellets could miss the target and cause a potential danger to others and/or damage property.
- The typical self-defense load for a defensive shotgun consists of buckshot or slugs, both have potential to over penetrate their intended target and endanger others. In the event of a miss these loads could pass through multiple walls in your home possibly even exiting the house.
- Size, weight, makes the shotgun heavy and awkward, this size prevents to carrying for extended periods of time. All defensive shotguns should be equipped with slings.
- Function of the shotgun is easily learned, but like any other skill, must be practiced to be maintained.
- Retention of the shotgun may be difficult without the use of a proper sling.

Ammunition:

Regardless of gauge selected for your defensive shotgun the most common defensive rounds consist of Buck Shot and or Rifled Slugs.

Slugs

Rifled Slugs are lead projectiles that have rifling on them which makes them capable of hitting targets from 0-100 yards. A 12 gauge rifled slug is a .72 caliber projectile and the 20 gauge rifled slug is a .61 caliber projectile. They are capable of hitting a 10 inch circle at 75 yards with open sights. Two of the more common rifled slug loads available are:

- *12 gauge - Federals Vital-Shok® TruBall® Rifled Slug PB127RS or

LEB127RS consisting of a 1 oz. rifled slug.

- *20 gauge - Federals Vital-Shok® TruBall® Rifled Slug PB203RS consisting of a 3/4 of an ounce rifled slug.

While the rifled slug may extend the range of the shotgun for hunting big-game, law enforcement, and military uses.

I would discourage their use for home defense due to the possibility of over penetration.

Buck Shot

Buck Shot is a load consisting of large pellets used for self-defense. Three of the more common buckshot loads for self-defense are:

- 12 gauge - Federals Premium® Personal Defense® PD132 or LE132 #00 Buckshot consisting of 9/.33 caliber pellets.
- 12 gauge - Federals Premium® Personal Defense® PD156 #4 Buckshot consisting of 34/.24 caliber pellets.
- 20 gauge - Federals Premium® Personal Defense® PD256 #4 Buckshot consisting of 24/.24 caliber pellets

Defensive accuracy by NRA standards in their Personal Protection in the Home class is being able to maintain a grouping of 5 rounds into a 9 inch circle. The rule of thumb is a buckshot pattern will increase in diameter by 1 inch for every yard of travel after being fired. This should make a defensive shotgun have a maximum effective range of 9-10 yards. At this range it should ensure your defensive shotgun may place all the pellets into 9 inch circle within its range.

Remember this is a rule of thumb and does not take into account any "flyers" outside the pattern you may experience with your particular shotgun. Individual shotguns do pattern differently even among the same make, models, and loads. For this reason it is highly recommended a home owner including a defensive shotgun in their home safety plan, take their shotgun to the range and be pattern it on a large paper target to determine the size of your pattern and most common defensive ranges.

In closing remember only hits count, and if you're searching for a low cost home defense firearm a shotgun may be just what you're looking for. Check back next month for more information on defensive shotguns. ❦