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Firearms Pocket Guide



*Surviving Lethal Encounters Through
Training, Marksmanship, and Mind-Set*

Firearms stand next in importance to the Constitution itself. They are the American people's liberty teeth and the keystone under independence . . . The rifle and pistol are equally indispensable . . . The very atmosphere of firearms anywhere and everywhere restrains evil interference - they deserve a place of honor with all that is good.

- George Washington

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The Four Universal Firearms Safety Rules

Carrying a firearm is an enormous responsibility, and one which must be taken seriously. An armed person literally has the power of life and death over every person he comes in contact with, and the ability to take life on the spot, without appeal. With this kind of power comes responsibility and accountability.

Accountability seems to be a foreign concept to many modern people, who are accustomed to decisions made by committee, and to shifting the blame to someone else for any misfortune that befalls them. In backward, primitive, Third World countries, poor, ignorant, uneducated people think that evil spirits live in rocks and trees. We make fun of them and call them animists. In this country, poor, ignorant, uneducated people think that evil spirits live in firearms. We call them Liberals. It's the same thing. Your firearm is an inanimate chunk of metal, wood, and plastics. It has no will and no soul. It is neither good nor bad. It is absolutely morally neutral, and will serve a good man or an evil man equally. There is not a single case in all of recorded history of a firearm getting up and shooting someone. Human intervention is required to make anything happen with any firearm.

It is incumbent on you, as the firearm's operator to obtain proper training in its use, learn the rules, and abide by them. Remember that your firearm was built to endanger lives. Political correctness aside, that is what a defensive weapon is for! If you do endanger someone's life with your firearm, it should be a conscious, willful decision on your part, not a careless, negligent act.

Let's get this straight. There are almost no "accidental discharges". An "accident" is the result of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events. Almost nothing that can happen with a firearm is unforeseeable or uncontrollable. What we have are "negligent discharges," and that is another matter entirely. To negligently shoot someone, you must be careless, inattentive, sloppy, or cavalier with your weapon and that is inexcusable and you should be punished. You should be able to immediately recognize a professional gunman by simply observing his gunhandling and safety skills. The professional respects his weapons and treats them responsibly. Sloppy or careless gunhandling is the mark of a doofus.

There are four firearms safety rules that you must learn, internalize, and make part of your character. If you religiously obey these four simple rules you will never have a problem with your firearm. This is a zero tolerance business, so follow these rules every time you handle your weapon. These four basic rules apply to all firearms. They apply all of the time - on the range, in your home, business, or on the street.

Rule 1: Treat every weapon as if it were loaded.

Don't pay lip service to this rule, be serious about it. If it's a firearm, it's loaded, treat it that way. If you want to shoot it, shoot it. If you want to tinker with it, clean it, show it to your buddy, or anything else other than firing it, clear it first. When you clear a firearm, you open it, remove the ammunition, and leave the firearm empty and inoperable while you administratively handle it. To clear a revolver, open the cylinder, eject the rounds, double check the chambers, and leave the cylinder open. In that condition the revolver is physically incapable of firing. To clear an autopistol, first remove the magazine, then pull the slide to the rear, ejecting the round from the chamber, whether you think one is there or not. Then lock the slide open with the slide latch. Visually inspect the chamber to be certain the firearm is really empty. Only then it is clear and can be safely handled.

Rule 2: Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.

This is incredibly simple, yet it is violated all of the time. The sole function of a firearm is to launch bullets. The sole function of bullets is to make holes. Don't point a firearm at anything you don't want a hole in. A handgun is so short that it becomes an extension of your fist, so you really have to pay attention to this rule, or you will wind up waving your firearm around, endangering others or yourself. The best way to prevent this is simply leave the firearm in its holster unless you really need it in your hands. Most of the time, if you shoot someone negligently from being startled, struck, or tripped, it was because you had a firearm in your hand when it should have been in your holster. Most of the time if your firearm is taken away and used on you, it was in your hands when it should not have been.

Rule 3: Keep your finger off the trigger and outside of the trigger guard until you are ready to shoot.

A modern, properly functioning handgun will not fire unless you put pressure on the trigger. It will fire, however, any time pressure is applied to the trigger. If your sights are on the target and you have decided to shoot it, only then is there any reason to have your finger in contact with the trigger. Any other time the trigger finger is straight and outside the trigger guard and resting on the reference point. If you wander around with your finger on the trigger, you will eventually have a negligent discharge, which may cost someone dearly.

Rule 4: Be sure of your target and what's in line with your target.

You must know for certain what you are shooting at, and why. Never shoot at sounds, shadows, or anything else you cannot positively identify. Make your decision before you press the trigger. It goes without saying that once you have fired that shot, you cannot alter its course and you certainly can't get it back.

Conditions of Pistol Readiness

Condition One

The correct way to carry the single-action pistol: chambered cartridge; hammer cocked; thumb safety engaged; and a full magazine seated in place. The thumb safety neutralizes the weapon when engaged, yet can be disengaged in far less time than that necessary to bring the weapon to bear on a target. Condition One carry is fast, and it is safe.

Condition Two

Condition Two differs from Condition One in that the hammer is carried fully down (not to be confused with half-cock). Condition Two is the normal carry mode for double-action pistols. If your pistol has a single action override, such as that of the Cz-75 and AT-84 pistols, we recommend Condition One carry. A weapon equipped with a slide mounted, non-self-canceling hammer dropper should be carried in the “off” position. (If you are told it is unsafe to carry such pistols with the hammer-dropper disengaged, ask why revolvers don’t have safeties.)

Condition Three

Condition Three has often been touted as a “safe” way to carry the pistol. However, safety is a matter of practical gunhandling procedures and presence of mind. That aside, Condition Three is effected thus: hammer down fully on an empty chamber and a full magazine seated. The slide must be cycled to chamber a cartridge. This can be accomplished during the presentation. It slows things only slightly, but it is not an efficient mode of carry.

The major flaw with Condition Three has nothing to do with the weapon, but with the mind. Having an empty chamber suggests that the pistol is “safe.” Weapons are not designed to be safe, they are designed to be dangerous - that is why they are weapons! The user must be safe. As soon as one begins to feel that the weapon is safe of its own accord, an increased probability of a negligent discharge exists.

Condition Four

There are not many situations which require Condition Four. In Condition Four the hammer is down fully on an empty chamber and the loaded magazine is separated from the weapon. It may be a viable option in an environment where there are children at an age resistant to instilling a proper respect for firearms. This is, of course, something you will need to evaluate on an individual basis.

Bringing the pistol to a fight-ready condition requires insertion of a loaded magazine, coupled with manipulation of the slide to chamber a cartridge. It is not especially time consuming if you are not in a hurry. It can, however, take more time than you have.

Color Code of Mental Awareness

You may be the quickest and most accurate shooter, but if you do not have the mental awareness to know what is occurring in your immediate environment, a common street punk will have your wallet, your gun, and possibly your life before you recognize the threat. Having a weapon and knowing how to use it well is important, but more important is the ability see the fight coming and prepare mentally to defend yourself.

Once the fight is on, you must control your mind. You must have a combat mind set that pushes out all other thoughts, except those required to operate your weapon - Front Sight, Prrrrssss.

So how do you acquire the levels of mental awareness and combat mind set? It starts with adopting the Color Code as your own, and using it in your everyday life.

Condition White: In a perfect world, this is the condition we would all enjoy living in. Unaware and unprepared for any type of threat. Examples:

- * You are unaware of any threat in your immediate surroundings.
- * You are focused on creative thoughts or planning your day while driving to work.
- * You are reading the newspaper or engrossed in a good novel on the park bench.
- * You are shuffling along the sidewalk, head in the clouds, hands in pockets, whistling the last song you heard on the radio.

In Condition White you are totally unprepared for attack, You don't see it coming and it takes several seconds to register mentally that you are in danger and then begin to prepare to defend yourself, if at all. When attacked in this state, you are easily defeated. If the attack involves deadly force, you most likely will not survive.

Condition Yellow: This condition is best described as a relaxed alertness. It is the condition that you should be in any time you are not asleep - even at home and especially away from home. You are aware of your immediate environment. Examples:

- * You know that a man is walking behind you.
- * A late model Ford truck with two males in their 20's is in the lane to your right, a late model sedan with a woman and her two kids in the lane to your left.
- * A couple holding hands is approaching from across the street.
- * An empty delivery van is parked two houses down from your home.
- * Someone is sitting in the car next to your car in the parking garage.
- * You are walking along the side walk, head up, eyes observing what is around you, hands at your sides.

In Condition Yellow you are relaxed, aware, and alert. This is not a state of paranoia. You are simply aware of everything going on around you. You are not prepared for any specific threat and have not been alerted to any specific threat. However, in the event of a specific alert, you are ready to immediately move to a higher level of readiness to defend yourself. You are less likely to be attacked when in Condition Yellow because predators look for easy prey. When in Yellow, you are very difficult to attack, because you can see the attack coming and defend yourself within seconds.

Condition Orange: This is a condition of specific, potential threat. You are alerted to a specific potential threat. You continue to observe the situation and evaluate to determine if the potential threat is developing into a real threat. Examples:

- * The couple holding hands and approaching you from across the street, suddenly break contact from each other and approach you from opposite directions.
- * The person sitting in their car next to yours begins to exit his vehicle as you approach your car.
- * The late model Ford truck pulls up behind you and follows you through three consecutive right turns.
- * The apparently empty delivery van two houses down, now has a driver who is watching you.
- * You are walking down the side walk, but now change direction to avoid the potential threat while keeping your eyes on the threat and unbuttoning your jacket.

In Condition Orange you have identified a specific, potential threat. You possibly made an evasive maneuver to minimize your exposure and gain a tactical advantage and you are formulating a plan to deal with the threat should it fully develop. You have not produced a weapon yet because the specific potential threat may be a harmless set of coincidences or may be a predator who, upon seeing your actions decides it is in his best interest to hunt elsewhere. From this condition of readiness you are prepared to defend yourself in the time it takes to present your weapon from your concealed holster.

Condition Red: This is a condition of a specific, real threat. There is no doubt in your mind that the threat is real. Examples:

* The couple approaching you from opposite directions, again shift their direction and follow you as you quickly dart across the street. The female places her hand in her purse and keeps it there as they converge on your flanks. You plan to run to a brick building for cover, draw your weapon to ready and shout "Stop!" If they don't stop or the woman's hand produces a weapon you will shoot her first.

* The person exiting his vehicle as you change direction in your approach to your car, motions to another vehicle and two more men exit a vehicle parked a few cars away. As you turn and head back to the shopping center, they pursue, but then give up the chase as other shoppers enter the parking garage.

* The late model Ford truck that has followed you through three consecutive right turns, rear ends you at the next stop light. The driver and passenger quickly exit their vehicles, one has a gun. You anticipated this problem and left plenty of distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. A quick turn of the wheel to the right and you accelerate around the corner.

* The delivery van driver pulls the van up to you and asks for directions. At a distance you give the directions but hear the rear doors open. Quickly gaining distance from the van you see two males with contact weapons quickly moving toward you. You draw your weapon and shoot the closest man holding the knife. The van screeches away as the second man drops his knife and runs away.

In Condition Red, your observations and evaluation of the actions of the specific potential threat, leave no doubt in your mind that the threat is real and dangerous. You have already attempted to avoid the threat when it first appeared to you. You have formulated a plan of defense, and are now carrying it out, and have set a mental trigger that will tell you when to deliver your defensive response. Your mental trigger is a "line in the sand." If the threat crosses the "line" your response is already determined. There is no hesitation as your response is instantaneous.

Condition Black: The "line in the sand" is crossed by your assailant(s) and you are engaged in combat and delivering lethal force. At this point, your survival depends on the level of training you have received and your ability to control your mind. This is where the Combat Mind Set ensures your success.

Simply stated, The Combat Mind Set is the state of mind that replaces your astonishment or fear of a lethal confrontation with the knowledge and confidence that you have trained for this; you expected it to happen at some time; and you are ready, willing, and able to handle it. In lethal confrontations that you recognize from a Condition Yellow and follow through to Condition Black, you most likely will not experience astonishment or fear. This is due to your awareness, anticipation, concentration, controlled decision making, and actions not leaving any room for fear to enter your mind. You cannot think about (or fear) the possibility of being killed if you are concentrating to obtain a crystal clear focus on your front sight while you smoothly press the trigger for a surprise trigger break.

Should fear enter your mind, the results can be debilitating because you will not be focusing on the task at hand. The answer is to turn the fear off by focusing and concentrating on what you know will get you through -- and it will. In a gun fight... Front Sight! Along with adopting the Color Code of Mental Awareness as your own and using it every day, you further develop the Combat Mind Set by advance mental preparation of lethal force scenarios. The more scenarios you visualize and develop plans to handle, the better you will perform in similar real life encounters. Live fire, tactical training scenarios will further validate and reinforce your Combat Mind Set.

The Combat Mind-Set

By Jeff Cooper

Man fights with his mind. His hands and his weapons are simply extensions of his will, and one of the fallacies of our era is the notion that equipment is the equivalent of force.

For over twenty years I have been teaching weaponcraft - which may be defined as the aggregate of dexterity, marksmanship and tactical understanding - and perhaps fifty of my graduates have now had occasion to use these skills in mortal confrontations. (I say "perhaps" because I must assume that not every client sends me a report.) Of the thirty-odd who have reported, not one has said that his life was saved by his dexterity nor by his marksmanship, but rather by his "mind-set." What, then, is the "combat mind-set?"

It is that state of mind which ensures victory in a gunfight. It is composed of awareness, anticipation, concentration and coolness. Above all, its essence is self-control. Dexterity and marksmanship are prerequisite to confidence, and confidence is prerequisite to self-control.

Any state of mind is entirely subjective, varying infinitely among individuals. We do not feel the same about our experiences, and anyone who tells you how you will feel in a fight has not studied the matter thoroughly. On the other hand, we can talk to many who have "seen the elephant," and we can add to this our own experiences, and thus explore the subject - in a tentative way.

In such exploration we should bear in mind that while times change quickly, people change slowly. Abraham would be astonished at electricity, but not at Gorbachev. Lifestyles in Elizabethan England were very different from ours, but Shakespeare's characters viewed life just as we do. We may dismiss the notion that a twentieth century man reacts differently to violence from the way his grandfather did. He may be told that he will - for specious reasons - but when he looks into the lion's mouth his response will be the same. Sometimes it will be good and sometimes bad, but this will depend upon his character rather than the popularly held mood of the moment.

Combat is an unusual experience for most of us, but then emergencies of any kind always are. However, combat does occur, and any fully educated person knows this and prepares for it. Despite what we may hear, combat is not characteristic of any particular occupation or situation. It may come to a policeman, but it may just as probably come to a barber, a broker or a biologist. Accepting this is the first step in physical security. No one can solve any problem of which he is not aware.

In what follows we will consider the combat mind-set in three aspects - before, during and after action. I can tell you how I have felt, but that is by no means my principle research tool. On the contrary I will draw on scores of individual, informal interviews with men who were speaking with complete frankness and with no concern whatever about what their supervisors, their attorneys, their wives or the press might think. I cannot tell you how you will feel when the red flag flies, but I can indeed tell you how a great many others have felt.

The pistol is a conceptually defensive arm, intended to stop lethal aggression. Thus when used as intended it will be required with almost no warning. The man who shoots to save his life, or that of his wife or child, will rarely have any time in which to consider the situation, steel himself, say a prayer, sing a war song or go into a dance. His mental reaction will probably be astonishment rather than fear, for fear takes time to build up. Since he cannot anticipate specifically he must anticipate generally. Anyone who carries a pistol on his person is presumably aware that he may have to use it, but there is a large difference between the hypothetical possibility and the actual event.

To anticipate generally the shooter must train himself into a state of mind in which the sudden awareness of peril does not surprise him. It is essential for the man who wears a gun to react to a sudden threat with the knowledge and confidence that he can handle it. His response should not be "Oh my God, I'm in a fight!" but rather "I thought this might happen and I know what to do about it." Instead of feeling that the situation is unheard-of, he must feel that the situation is distinctly heard-of, and that he is in charge of it rather than his aggressor. He must regard the quick and precise use of his sidearm as "Plan B," and be fully ready to implement it when confronted with a deadly human adversary. In this situation there can be no build-up of emotion and the shooter's exercise will be entirely intellectual. He will not have time to get excited until after the fight is over.

Sometimes, however, there will be warning, and on these occasions emotion will indeed bear upon action. When another human being manifests both the intention and capacity of killing you personally, and there is time enough between his declaration of intent and the actual engagement, your response will probably be one of intense alarm. (I do not like to use the word "fear" but you

are at liberty to do so if you wish.) When you suddenly realize that those men, right there, are armed and prepared to kill you, there will probably be a sudden sinking sensation in the pit of the stomach. The antidote for this hollow feeling is anger. The emotions of fear and anger are very similar biologically and it is not very difficult for a subject to convert one into the other. I have experienced this personally several times and I have talked to a great many people about it. It occurs in military situations, in police situations, and in totally "civil" situations. When a man demonstrates, in effect, that he is ready and willing to kill you, your response should not be fearful but wrathful. I remember one episode involving a car pursuit in moderately heavy traffic and, after the initial understanding that this was indeed a life-and-death encounter, the principal emotional state of the subject was one of cold, concentrated rage. And it worked. The eye remained clear and the hand steady.

We may conclude that while there will usually be no time for fear to develop, on those occasions when there is time that fear should be deliberately overcome by anger in order to maintain control for the action to come.

A pistol action is usually commenced by firing on the part of the aggressor. On other occasions it can be initiated by an unmistakable movement on the part of the aggressor which indicates that he is about to fire. This triggers the combat response of the properly conditioned defender, and that response should be one of completely business-like attention to detail. Once you have decided that you must shoot, it is necessary for you to employ techniques which will enable you to shoot well. Defensive gunfights do not usually require a high degree of marksmanship, but proper technique must still be used if disaster is to be forestalled. We have known several cases in which a highly qualified marksman fired a series of atrocious short-range misses, not because he couldn't shoot but because he did not pay attention to his shooting. In these cases he seems to have been thinking about the wrong things - such as the danger in which his life was placed, the anticipation of shock, concern about official policy or other irrelevancies. When you are being shot at there is only one proper thing for you to think about, and that is your own shooting. All other thoughts must be blanked out. In bold red letters across your "heads-up-display" should appear "Front sight. Press. Front sight. Press." If you concentrate on a clear, sharp picture of your front sight, and concentrate upon a smooth, steady, surprise break, you will almost certainly survive the encounter. If you forget these things, you very probably will not.

I have heard it claimed that many police officers interviewed after shootings admitted that they did not see the front sight. Certainly we should not deny this possibility, but neither should we use it as an example of how things ought to be done. In one major police department over the past two years there have been thirty-two pistol engagements involving SWAT members. Twenty-four remembered concentrating on their front sights, and they hit. Eight remembered not seeing their front sights, and they missed. That is a 100% tally. It certainly corroborates my teachings, but I did not make it up. It was given to me by the training officer of that department.

I once asked a very prominent and experienced police marksman what he remembered about his initial lethal contact. He said, loud and clear for all to hear, "I was looking at my front sight so hard that I could see the striations across it." He got three stops for three shots on that occasion.

In my most recent field case study, just last year, the subject told me in his letter that as soon as he saw the muzzle of his adversary's gun swing toward him, he blanked out everything but concentration on his front sight and on a smooth, steady pressure on his trigger. He came out fine.

This would indeed seem to be the formula for success.

The critical point is the creation of a "mental trigger" in the mind which is decided upon in advance of the action. This mental trigger may be any one of a number of things, but it should always be sufficient in the mind of the shooter to justify his taking lethal action. Most usually it will be a shot fired at him, but it can be a weapon pointed at him or a weapon pointed with lethal intent at someone else. In any case, it must be fixed upon in advance so that there is no need to hold a conference with oneself at the moment of truth. It cannot be delayed and it cannot be equivocal. No person who has any moral reservations about the propriety of self-defense should carry a weapon in the first place.

If you accept the fact that you may have to fight to save your life, if you train yourself to use your weapons with skill and rapidity, and if you reserve your fighting stroke for conditions in which it is justified, it is not likely that you will experience any psychological difficulties in defending yourself. At least up to now I have never run across anyone who did.

Now, however, we come to a very curious and very new series of observations about how one is likely to feel after a successful engagement. The popular term is "post operational trauma," or P.O.T. for short. (The acronym seems appropriate.) We are told from all sides that if one wins a lethal encounter he will feel dreadful. It is odd that no one seems to have felt dreadful about this

until very recently. Throughout recorded history the winning of a fight has generally been considered a subject for congratulation. It is only just now that it has become presumably tainted.

In reading our history, from the Pharaohs to the Falklands, one gets the impression that the principle feeling of the victor in mortal combat is satisfaction. Simply stated, the word we get from time immemorial down to the present is "I would not have killed him if it had not been necessary, but it was necessary and I am glad I did." When David slew Goliath no one records that he went into shock; nor did Theseus when he slew the Minotaur; nor did Andy Jackson when he killed Dr. Dickinson in a duel; nor did Teddy Roosevelt when he was set upon in a frontier bar; nor did Eduardo Grijalva when he shot down two assassins in front of his office in San Salvador. Nor, we may assume, did the great majority of those police officers and private citizens who have had to shoot to defend themselves on the streets of the United States in the past few months.

It may be proposed that the military situation is emotionally different from the civilian, and in a sense it may be, but upon reflection it is obvious that any resulting P.O.T. ought to be far more of a problem for the soldier. One can hardly condemn an enemy soldier for answering his country's call to arms - rather to the contrary. The enemy one kills in war may be a splendid fellow; brave, clean, reverent, truthful, and so on. But a predatory felon who victimizes innocent non-combatants on the street is a proven goblin, sentenced by his own initiative. Some men may be upset by killing him, but not anyone I have met.

But there must be something to this matter of P.O.T. It could not be so well described if there had not been a couple of police officers who experienced it. It is my belief, however, that it is primarily a public relations innovation designed to parry various sorts of preposterous litigation which have become common in our courts. Policemen are now instructed by their supervisors that, should they become involved in a fight, their attitude upon its conclusion should be one of shock, dismay, horror and hysteria. This to present a proper picture for the press. In actuality what they usually feel is pleased and proud. I repeat that I do not presume to use my own experience as a guide, but I do remember after action a definite feeling of elation. After looking right up the muzzle of one's opponent's gun there is a tendency to swagger. Jokes seem funnier, sky bluer, beer colder and bed warmer. Not for everyone, perhaps, but for those most characteristic of my investigations.

It is quite possible, of course, that certain young men have found themselves sorely afflicted with psychological woes as a result of winning a lethal conflict. It seems, however, that these are the exceptions. Throughout our history winning in a just cause has been deemed admirable and losing a disgrace. This sudden notion that there is something disreputable about winning in mortal conflict is peculiar and, I think, aberrant. This whole subject of P.O.T. may be largely an invention of the shrinks.

The combat mind-set, therefore, should be:

A. Before the fact - alert, prepared, and aware. If there is time for fear to build up it should be overcome by a conscious effort toward anger.

B. During action - total concentration upon the technical matter of placing the shot properly.

C. After the conflict - probably relief, gratification, and pride - approximately in that order. If it is advisable for the shooter to display distress, for various ulterior reasons, that is an administrative matter.

There is nothing wrong with winning. There is a great deal wrong with losing. Those who bear arms should keep that in mind.

The Modern Technique of the Pistol The Combat Triad

Whether armed with pistol, shotgun, machine pistol, rifle or machinegun, you place yourself at a grave disadvantage without the proper grounding in mind-set, gunhandling and practical marksmanship fundamentals; the Combat Triad. Being a good marksman is important, but marksmanship does not constitute the essence of the modern technique. For instance, improper manipulation and management of the weapon under stress has got numerous “good shots” killed. Proper gunhandling must be given its rightful place of importance.

MARKSMANSHIP

The Five Elements of the Modern Technique of the Pistol

1. Weaver stance.
2. Flash sight picture
3. Compressed surprise break
4. Presentation
5. Heavy-duty pistol

Principles of Practical Marksmanship

1. Accuracy (Diligentia)
2. Power (Vis)
3. Speed (Celeritas)

Gunhandling

1. Safety
2. Manipulation
3. Malfunction clearances
4. Tactical manipulation

Mind-Set

1. General awareness
2. Principles of Personal Defense
3. Color Code
4. Tactical procedures

Mind-set represents the key to crisis management. Suffice it to say, however, that you must think correctly about personal armed combat and the methods specifically developed for its management if your survival is to lie in competence, rather than chance.

The Principles of Defensive Pistolcraft

Three principles control the defensive shooter's perception: Diligentia - accuracy; Vis - power; Celeritas - speed (though “quickness” is equally appropriate). The proper balancing of “DVC” is central to practical marksmanship. A potentially accurate and powerful blow delivered too late is useless. A quick and accurate blow delivered with an underpowered piece can leave things too much to chance. And a quick, potentially powerful blow which misses its mark is worse than useless - it may injure or kill someone else.

The matter of “power” - wounding potential - is handled the easiest. You should opt for the weapon and cartridge/caliber combination which provides the hardest blow, i.e. the greatest wounding potential. Once established, “V” becomes a constant in the formula for combat marksmanship. The effective balance of speed and accuracy poses the challenge. In theory it is simple; one fires as quickly as one can place a central hit, and no faster. This is the “mental clock” for balancing speed and accuracy. You will gain a feeling for this during your training, but it will require continued effort to master it.

The Five Elements of the Modern Pistol Technique

1. The Weaver stance
2. The “flash” sight-picture
3. The “compressed” surprise break
4. The presentation
5. The heavy-duty pistol

The only element not involving a learned skill is number five, the heavy-duty pistol. Heavy-duty implies, of course, ruggedness and reliability under conditions of severe use. Equally important, however, is a chambering in a heavy-duty caliber. This normally equates to .40 caliber (10 mm) or larger. You can buy this element, so it will prove to be the easiest element to acquire. The remaining four elements are techniques you will be exposed to during training and we hope, you will continue to program into reflex memory.

The Weaver stance provides the firing platform. This body position, along with the isometric tension it provides, controls the pistol during recoil, most noticeably in the dampening of muzzle flip. This control comes from muscle pressure exerted between the push of the firing-side shoulder and the pull of the support-side biceps. The technique's muzzle dampening effect is considerable, thus facilitating quick follow-up shots. The firing-side arm is normally straight, with the support-side arm noticeably bent downwards. The feet are shoulder width apart and even with the firing line, and the head is erect.

Locate the firing grip as high on the backstrap as is possible, with the first knuckle of the thumb and index finger in the same horizontal plane. The three bottom fingers apply moderate pressure on the frame. This pressure should not constitute a squeeze, and it must remain constant during firing. On single-action pistols, center the index finger's first pad on the trigger. The double-action self-loading pistol, when fired in the trigger-cocking mode, requires the trigger finger to wrap slightly further - to the crease behind the knuckle.

The ready position - pistol out and in a standby position - used with the modern technique is termed the "Guard." It is identical to the Weaver stance in everyway but for the depressed arm position. Maintain the Weaver stance's arm position, but depress the barrel - as with a tank barrel - at the shoulders until the back of the support-side arm comes to rest against the ribcage. This gets the pistol out of your face and also reduces the effects of fatigue by providing bone support for the arms and pistol.

The "flash" sight-picture describes how the sights are used.

The basic principles of sight alignment and sight picture are universal. However, the particular application of these principles to the Modern Pistol Technique is unique. Most pistol confrontations occur at close range and feature reasonably large targets. So what one needs is the ability to strike a dinner plate sized target twice, but in as little time as possible. When properly ingrained through reflex programming, the combination of the Weaver stance and the presentation will put your weapon on target.

There are those who still wonder why one must use the sights. Only through the use of the sights one can program the reflexes necessary for aligning the weapon with the target. Once this programming has been accomplished, one does not discard the "training wheels." Sight use continues since they confirm that alignment does indeed exist. Their use will not slow you down if your goal is - as it should be - to hit consistently. If the sights are ignored, you will soon be "point shooting" and that has proven itself unequal to the task.

Pressing the trigger to release the shot is quite simple - in theory. One applies ever-increasing pressure until the sear and hammer engagement "breaks," resulting in a shot. Precision shooters manipulate the trigger in this way so as to circumvent anticipating the shot. This is termed an "open-ended surprise break". The practical pistol shot preparing for the possibility of shooting for his life, does not have the luxury of waiting an indeterminate time for the shot, yet the shot must still be a surprise if it is to be suitably delivered.

The combination of proper trigger manipulation and a short time interval necessitates the "compressed" surprise break. With this technique one applies increasing pressure as with the open-ended surprise break, but the pressure builds over a much shorter time interval. This interval, in turn, is determined by the distance to the target and the area of the target that is available. The more difficult the shot, the greater care necessary during the trigger press. In this manner one obtains the degree of precision required for the situation without wasting precious time.

The presentation comprises the final element, and it is the action by which one delivers the pistol from a secure holster to alignment with the target. Briefly, it is a natural and efficient progression of movements allowing the pistol to be presented in a consistent and effective manner in about one second, from open carry or from under a coat.

Why the Gun is Civilization.

Human beings only have two ways to deal with one another: reason and force. If you want me to do something for you, you have a choice of either convincing me via argument, or force me to do your bidding under threat of force. Every human interaction falls into one of those two categories, without exception. Reason or force, that's it.

In a truly moral and civilized society, people exclusively interact through persuasion. Force has no place as a valid method of social interaction, and the only thing that removes force from the menu is the personal firearm, as paradoxical as it may sound to some.

When I carry a gun, you cannot deal with me by force. You have to use reason and try to persuade me, because I have a way to negate your threat or employment of force. The gun is the only personal weapon that puts a 100-pound woman on equal footing with a 220-pound mugger, a 75-year old retiree on equal footing with a 19-year old gangbanger, and a single gay guy on equal footing with a carload of drunk guys with baseball bats. The gun removes the disparity in physical strength, size, or numbers between a potential attacker and a defender.

There are plenty of people who consider the gun as the source of bad force equations. These are the people who think that we'd be more civilized if all guns were removed from society, because a firearm makes it easier for a mugger to do his job. That, of course, is only true if the mugger's potential victims are mostly disarmed either by choice or by legislative fiat--it has no validity when most of a mugger's potential marks are armed. People who argue for the banning of arms ask for automatic rule by the young, the strong, and the many, and that's the exact opposite of a civilized society. A mugger, even an armed one, can only make a successful living in a society where the state has granted him a force monopoly.

Then there's the argument that the gun makes confrontations lethal that otherwise would only result in injury. This argument is fallacious in several ways. Without guns involved, confrontations are won by the physically superior party inflicting overwhelming injury on the loser. People who think that fists, bats, sticks, or stones don't constitute lethal force watch too much TV, where people take beatings and come out of it with a bloody lip at worst. The fact that the gun makes lethal force easier works solely in favor of the weaker defender, not the stronger attacker. If both are armed, the field is level. The gun is the only weapon that's as lethal in the hands of an octogenarian as it is in the hands of a weightlifter. It simply wouldn't work as well as a force equalizer if it wasn't both lethal and easily employable.

When I carry a gun, I don't do so because I am looking for a fight, but because I'm looking to be left alone. The gun at my side means that I cannot be forced, only persuaded. I don't carry it because I'm afraid, but because it enables me to be unafraid. It doesn't limit the actions of those who would interact with me through reason, only the actions of those who would do so by force. It removes force from the equation...and that's why carrying a gun is a civilized act.

Gun Confiscation

In 1911, Turkey established gun control. From 1915 to 1917, 1.5 million Armenians, were rounded up and executed.

In 1929, the Soviet Union established gun control. From 1929 to 1953, approximately 20 million dissidents were rounded up and executed.

In 1938, Germany established gun control. From 1939 to 1945, over 13 million Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, mentally ill, union leaders, Catholics and others were rounded up and executed.

In 1935, China established gun control. From 1948 to 1952, over 20 million dissidents were rounded up and executed.

In 1956, Cambodia established gun control. From 1975 to 1977, over one million “educated” people were rounded up and executed.

In 1964, Guatemala established gun control. From 1964 to 1981, over 100,000 Mayan Indians were rounded up and executed.

In 1970, Uganda established gun control. From 1970 to 1979, over 300,000 Christians were rounded up and executed.

Over 56 million people were executed by their governments because of gun control in the 20th century.

Rules For A Gunfight

1. Bring a gun. Preferably, bring at least two guns. Bring all of your friends who have guns.
2. Anything worth shooting is worth shooting twice. Ammo is cheap. Life is expensive.
3. Only hits count. The only thing worse than a miss is a slow miss.
4. If your shooting stance is good, you're probably not moving fast enough or using cover correctly.
5. Move away from your attacker. Distance is your friend. (Lateral and diagonal movements are preferred.)
6. If you can choose what to bring to a gunfight, bring a long gun and a friend with a long gun.
7. In ten years nobody will remember the details of caliber, stance, or tactics. They will only remember who lived.
8. If you are not shooting, you should be communicating, reloading, and running.
9. Accuracy is relative: most combat shooting standards will be more dependent on "pucker factor" than the inherent accuracy of the gun. Use a gun that works EVERY TIME. "All skill is in vain when an Angel pisses in the flintlock of your musket."
10. Someday someone may kill you with your own gun, but they should have to beat you to death with it because it is empty.
11. Always cheat, always win. The only unfair fight is the one you lose.
12. Have a plan.
13. Have a back-up plan, because the first one won't work.
14. Use cover or concealment as much as possible.
15. Flank your adversary when possible. Protect yours.
16. Don't drop your guard.
17. Always tactical load and threat scan 360 degrees.
18. Watch their hands. Hands kill. (In God we trust. Everyone else, keep your hands where I can see them.)
19. Decide to be aggressive ENOUGH, quickly ENOUGH.
20. The faster you finish the fight, the less shot you will get.
21. Be polite. Be professional. But, have a plan to kill everyone you meet.
22. Be courteous to everyone. Friendly to no one.
23. Your number one option for Personal Security is a lifelong commitment to avoidance, deterrence, and de-escalation.
24. Do not attend a gunfight with a handgun, the caliber of which does not start with a "4".
25. The purpose of fighting is to win.
26. There is no possible victory in defense.
27. The sword is more important than the shield and skill is more important than either.
28. The primary weapon is the brain. Everything else is secondary.
29. Carry the same gun in the same place all the time.
30. Getting shot does not mean that you are out of the gunfight. It means that the gunfight is just getting started.
31. Stay in "Condition Yellow". If you are away from the safety of your home in "Condition White," you are a victim looking for a place to happen.
32. The fight will not be the way you want it to be. The fight will be the way it is. You must be flexible enough to adapt.

"People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf." - George Orwell

Quotes

[The Constitution preserves] the advantage of being armed which Americans possess over the people of almost every other nation (where) the governments are afraid to trust the people with arms. - James Madison, Federalist, No. 46.

Are we at last brought to such humiliating and debasing degradation, that we cannot be trusted with arms for our defense? ... If our defense be the real object of having those arms, in whose hands can they be trusted with more propriety, or equal safety to us, as in our own hands? - Patrick Henry

I ask, sir, what is the militia? It is the whole people, except for a few public officials

To disarm the people is the best and most effectual way to enslave them. - George Mason

The right of self-defense is the first law of nature; in most governments it has been the study of rulers to confine this right within the narrowest possible limits. ... and [when] the right of the people to keep and bear arms is, under any color or pretext whatsoever, prohibited, liberty, if not already annihilated, is on the brink of destruction. - St. George Tucker, Judge of the Virginia Supreme Court 1803

Before a standing army can rule, the people must be disarmed; as they are in almost every kingdom of Europe. The supreme power in America cannot enforce unjust laws by the sword; because the whole body of the people are armed, and constitute a force superior to any bands of regular troops that can be, on any pretense, raised in the United States. - Noah Webster, 1888

The most foolish mistake we could possibly make would be to allow the subjected people to carry arms. History shows that all conquerors who have allowed their subjected peoples to carry arms have prepared their own downfall by so doing. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the underdog is a sine qua non [“something essential” lit. “without which not”] for the overthrow of any sovereignty. So let’s not have any native militia or police. - Adolph Hitler, Edict of March 18, 1938