

# WHAT TO BRING TO YOUR CWP CLASS

## WHAT TO BRING TO CWP PERMIT CLASS

The following is dictated by our dual concern for your success and for your safety—and for our safety and everyone else's too. Firearms safety is our foremost concern and is never negotiable. Our web site is recognized for its major section about gun safety. We hope you'll benefit from it even if you never take one of our classes and even if you're not a gun owner. We're all in this world together. Although other instructors have their own preferences and we won't speak for anyone else, we wouldn't be surprised if you found that our core recommendations will help you in classes held by the best instructors everywhere.

So what follows is intended to ensure your success and your comfort consistent with our own concern for gun safety. We want you to succeed and to enjoy your experiences with us. We know you're likely to practice what you enjoy. Very smart people have been using firearms for purposes including both recreation and self-defense long before there were people who tried to tell others it was wrong to do so.

Of course everyone needs to be safe around any potentially-dangerous mechanical device like a firearm, which is why we focus on gun safety throughout our classes and in explaining what to bring to them.

First, you need to know that students may not bring firearms or ammunition into a classroom. Student firearms brought to our range must be safe, unloaded, and either cased or in a bag or other appropriate container. Bring only safe, unmodified, perfectly functioning guns that you yourself can shoot. If you aren't sure that you can shoot your own gun it would be a good idea to arrange for Personal Training with us before you take a CWP class with other people who need attention too.

Second, you must recognize that we're not gunsmiths and can't check every gun, nor can we repair your gun if it does not function properly, but we will not allow one that seems unsafe to us. It's your responsibility to make sure that a gun you bring to class actually works as it should.

Third, keep in mind that the following covers general matters. When there are specific requirements or suggestions for a particular class we tell you and/or email them to you before the class.

### **Handguns.**

If you already own a handgun you intend to carry concealed we'd like you to use it in class so you get as much as possible from that class. Either a double-action revolver or a semi-automatic pistol in a self-defense caliber is good.

No single action revolvers, derringers, target, plinking, or novelty guns, and no .25 or .50 caliber guns. No .22 caliber semi-automatic pistols: they tend to be fussy about ammunition, jam during shooting qualification tests, and require everyone else to wait while their shooters constantly fiddle with them or require assistance to get the gun running.

A .22 caliber double-action revolver is a useful practice tool but it's not ideal for self-defense and rarely makes sense in this kind of class except, possibly, for some people with handicaps that prevent their use of other handguns.

No Hi-Point, no Lorcin, no Standard Arms, no Jennings, no Bryco, no Jimenez Arms, no Charter Arms, no Rohm, no AMT .380 Backup. No junk. No exceptions.

If ever you are tempted to buy cheap because you don't yet know enough to assess real value for yourself, keep in mind the following known as the Common Law of Business Balance. It is especially appropriate to firearms and to firearms training too: "There is hardly anything in the world that someone cannot make a little worse and sell a little cheaper, and the people who consider price alone are that person's lawful prey. It's unwise to pay too much, but it's worse to pay too little. When you pay too much, you lose a little money — that is all. When you pay too little, you sometimes lose everything, because the thing you bought was incapable of doing the thing it was bought to do. The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot — it can't be done. If you deal with the lowest bidder, it is well to add something for the risk you run, and if you do that you will have enough to pay for something better."

If you don't already own a suitable handgun we can lend you one of ours if you arrange the loan with us in advance and pay us for the ammunition in class before you use it. If you use our gun you must use ammunition we provide for it. (Of course you pay us for the ammunition.) It's a safety issue. We want our guns used with ammunition we ourselves would use. If we lend you a handgun we'll lend you a belt holster for it too but you must wear your own 1-1/2" wide sturdy belt to use with it. (1-1/2" is not 1" or 1-3/4".)

It's just like real life: you can't win if you're unprepared. So right from the start we teach you to be prepared and avoid unnecessary risks. We go far beyond telling you the usual "be prepared." We help you learn how to be prepared. Don't try to game this system. Your life is at stake.

### **Ear and Eye Protection.**

Bring good hearing protection and good vision protection, and always wear them when anyone is shooting on the range.

Anyone shooting a firearm must have and must employ good eye and ear protection. Use them or suffer permanent physical damage. Consult your own health care professionals for what you need to protect your health. We're not vision or hearing specialists.

We know from experience that ear plugs (hearing protectors you push into your ears) block useful sounds and prevent you from hearing instructors and commands. That's not good on a shooting range or in a class. If you can't hear us you can't know what we're saying.

**Earmuffs**—even inexpensive industrial earmuffs you can buy at stores such as Wal-Mart, Lowe's, or Home Depot—are better and more useful than ear plugs because you can lift them briefly when you know the instructors are giving commands. Like ear plugs that kind of earmuff tends to prevent you from hearing unexpected instructions and other sudden information too.

Neither form of "passive hearing protection" is as useful as "active hearing protection" such as electronic earmuffs. Electronic earmuffs are most useful because they reduce the intensity of gunshots while allowing nearby voices.

The relative costs are about \$1 for ear plugs, about \$9 for non-electronic earmuffs, and about \$60-\$70 for basic electronic earmuffs. When we talk about "earmuffs" in the context of shooting we're talking about hearing protection, not earwarmers.

We show you useful directions but it's up to you to take responsibility for your own protection. The student in the accompanying illustration is holding a basic pair of protective earmuffs and eye protection (as well as a useful combination of belt and belt holster).

### **Food and Drink.**

Proper hydration is essential in our Southern climate, even during fall and winter. You should bring water to our classes and drink frequently, but of course we can't parent you and must rely on your own good sense. Bring lunch to CWP classes and other classes that span lunchtime: there's no nearby place to purchase lunch and no time to do it. (Tip: Feel free to bring other snacks, especially health bars, but not chocolates or other sweets. You don't want a sugar rush.)

Of course we do not allow beer, wine, or other alcoholic beverages or intoxicants in our classes, or on the shooting range, or in any connection that might possibly affect a participant's behavior. You won't find us inviting you to "bring your own bottle."

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## **Clothing.**

Dress appropriately for the weather and for a sandy environment in the Columbia, SC area. Men and women both should wear long pants with pockets for spare ammunition, a shirt with sleeves that can roll up, socks and sneakers or boots or rough shoes, and a baseball type cap as additional protection. (Tip: When you join or renew NRA membership through us in our class we give you an NRA baseball cap that is perfect when shooting.) The cap protects against trapping hot cartridges behind your eye protection and shields your eyes from glaring sun. In this climate we suggest that you dress in layers including a T-shirt so you can adjust according to temperature and humidity.

Our shooting bays are outdoors. An outdoor shooting environment is superb when you know how to adjust for conditions—better than an indoor shooting range for serious defensive training and much better ventilated too. That's important when lead particles are in the air. We shoot in all but the most extreme weather conditions. Check your email the morning of a class: if you don't get an email from us that morning calling a class off, assume that the class is on. Sweatshirts, pullovers, jackets, or anything else that can catch a gun, dangle inside its trigger guard, or get in your way are unsafe for classes. If a cover garment can't tuck into your pants it must unzip, unbutton, or unfasten so it is completely open while you're wearing a gun and never conceals or hides or obscures or covers your gun.

We must be able to see your gun when it's on your person or in your hands. No threatening or offensive slogans on anything please. Do wear socks and don't wear sandals: your feet must be protected from hot shells. There are good reasons why experienced people who shoot dress as they do. Personal safety is foremost among those reasons.

## **Holster and Belt.**

These are safety issues, not fashion preferences. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. You don't want to walk around dangling an unholstered and potentially loaded handgun. You most certainly don't want to be around other people who behave that way. It's not cool for anyone to mishandle a gun and we're not meanies for insisting on proper gun handling in our classes. We're alive and uninjured and we have plans to continue that way for many years to come.

We practice personal protection and we teach you to do the same—starting right now. Don't hurt yourself. You do want to learn and develop skill in how to draw from a holster and shoot in the event that it's necessary for you to stop a deadly force attacker. In our CWP and Basic Pistol classes we require a belt holster (also known as an "outside the waistband holster") because those holsters tend to be safest for people in basic classes.

We teach that your equipment should work for you. It must not endanger you, other students, or us. You also want a belt holster so that later you can practice marksmanship and other basic skills without getting tangled in more complex holsters used for concealment. You absolutely need a belt holster if you're taking the required training class for a South Carolina CWP because SLED's shooting qualification test for certification requires you to shoot a substantial number of rounds after drawing from a holster. You can't draw from a holster unless you're wearing the holster from which you will draw.

