THE PREPARED CITIZEN

MASTERING HOLSTER SELECTION AND CARRY

FOR SECURE AND ACCESSIBLE DEFENSE

THE CARRY GUY®

ARE YOU READY?™

The Carry Guy Complete Manual: Proper Holster Selection, Wear, Retention, and Carry Positions

Safety First

Always keep the firearm pointed in a safe direction. Keep your finger off the trigger and outside the trigger guard until your sights are on the target and you have decided to shoot. Treat every firearm as loaded. Be sure of your target and what is beyond it. This material summarizes standard descriptions of holster types, retention, and carry positions from manufacturer documentation (including Safariland retention systems), NRA Women materials, and published training literature. It is not a substitute for in-person professional training, manufacturer instructions, or compliance with local laws. Holster fit, retention settings, and carry positions must be verified with the specific firearm and holster. Reholstering requires deliberate, slow technique with the muzzle clear of the body.

Who This Is For

New carriers choosing a first holster. Experienced carriers whose current setup prints, shifts, or feels slow to access. Anyone who wants a clear understanding of retention, carry positions, and the trade-offs involved.

What a Proper Holster Does

A holster holds the firearm securely in a consistent position, covers the trigger guard, allows a reliable draw, and permits safe reholstering. It must be made for the specific firearm model. Universal or poorly fitted holsters can allow the gun to shift or the trigger to be accessible.

When to Use It

Whenever the firearm is carried for defensive or range use. During daily carry, range practice, and any situation requiring the gun to remain secured until intentionally drawn.

Where to Carry

On the body in documented positions (strong-side, appendix, outside the waistband, etc.) that match the holster design and the carrier's build, clothing, and activity. Off-body carry (bags, purses) is outside the primary scope of belt/waistband holsters and carries different access and security considerations.

How: Complete Instruction

Retention: Passive vs. Active

Passive retention relies on friction from a molded fit (Kydex or leather) and gravity. The gun is held by the shape of the holster pressing against it. With no active device, a person who grips the

gun and pulls in the draw direction can remove it. Loose nylon or poorly adjusted holsters may rely almost entirely on gravity and belt tension.

Active retention adds one or more mechanical devices (thumb break, rotating hood, internal lock, button, etc.) that must be deliberately released before the gun can be drawn.

Commercial "levels" are not fully standardized. Common usage:

- Level I: Passive friction only (or one simple device).
- Level II: Passive plus one active device.
- Level III: Passive plus two active devices.

Safariland's duty system counts distinct hand motions to clear its mechanisms (ALS, SLS, etc.) and does not count pure friction as a level. Documented guidance from NRA Women and training sources notes that most concealed-carry holsters use passive (Level I style) retention because concealment itself limits access. Open-carry or duty use more often employs active retention.

A common test for passive retention: with the gun seated, invert the holster and shake firmly; the gun should remain in place. Retention screws (when present) allow adjustment of friction.

Gravity and Non-Retention

In a holster with no meaningful friction or active device, gravity is the primary force keeping the gun seated when the muzzle is downward. Movement, inversion, or a grab can dislodge it. This is why quality holsters use molded friction even when labeled as passive.

Carry Positions – Pros and Cons (right-handed descriptions; reverse for left-handed)

- Strong-side IWB (approx. 3–5 o'clock): Classic position. Good concealment under a shirt, accessible with the strong hand. Can require more torso rotation. Comfort varies with body type and holster height/cant.
- Appendix IWB (approx. 12–1 o'clock): Fast access, gun remains in front of the hands for protection in close contact. Excellent concealment with proper claw/wedge. Requires careful reholstering because the muzzle points toward the body; can be uncomfortable when sitting for some carriers.
- Outside the waistband (OWB): Fast draw, comfortable for range or open carry. Requires a cover garment for concealment. More visible if clothing shifts.
- Other positions (4–5 o'clock behind the hip, ankle, pocket, shoulder): Trade concealment, speed, or comfort. Ankle is slower and less accessible when seated or on the ground. Pocket holsters must fully cover the trigger and stay oriented correctly.

Documented sources note that no single position is optimal for every body type, clothing style, or activity. Individual testing is required.

Preventing Gun Grabs

A determined person who knows or feels a firearm is present can attempt a grab. Active retention (especially Level II and higher) requires the attacker to defeat a mechanical device, buying time. Concealment reduces the chance of an opportunistic grab.

Documented training points:

- Situational awareness and distance management.
- Body positioning that keeps the holster protected.
- Retention skills (both hands, movement, and control of the attacker's grip).
- Training with the specific holster so the release is automatic.

No holster is absolute protection. Higher retention increases security against a grab but can slow the legitimate draw if not trained. Fine motor skills degrade under stress, so complex releases require deliberate practice.

Choosing and Wearing a Holster

- Match the holster exactly to the firearm model (and any light/optic if equipped).
- Confirm trigger guard is fully covered.
- Test retention and draw with the clothing you will wear.
- Use a sturdy belt designed for the holster.
- Adjust cant and ride height for comfort and concealment.
- Practice drawing and reholstering slowly and deliberately until the motion is consistent.

Common Errors

- Using a universal or poorly fitted holster.
- Insufficient retention that allows the gun to shift or fall.
- Carrying in a position that is inaccessible when seated or moving.
- Reholstering quickly without clearing the muzzle path.
- Choosing high active retention without practicing the release under time pressure.

Special Considerations

Body type, clothing, activity level, and local laws affect suitable positions. Open carry generally benefits from active retention. Concealed carry most often uses passive retention. Differing manufacturer definitions of "levels" exist; focus on whether the holster uses friction only or requires deliberate release of a device. Professional instruction is required to develop safe draw, reholster, and retention skills with any specific setup.

Conclusion

A proper holster matches the firearm, provides appropriate retention for the carry method, and places the gun in a position that is secure, accessible, and concealable for the individual. Understand passive versus active retention, test carry positions, and train the draw and reholster until they are consistent.

For hands-on training go to www.thecarryguy.com.

BEST IWB CARRY POSITIONS FOR COMFORT & CONCEALMENT

Appendix Carry