

THE PREPARED CITIZEN

MASTERING HANDGUN CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

FOR RELIABLE FUNCTION AFTER EVERY USE



THE
CARRY GUY®

ARE YOU READY?™

The Carry Guy Complete Manual: Handgun Cleaning and Maintenance

Safety First

Always keep the firearm pointed in a safe direction. Keep your finger off the trigger and outside the trigger guard. Treat every firearm as loaded until you have personally verified it is unloaded. Remove the magazine, lock the slide or cylinder open, and visually and physically confirm the chamber is empty. Separate all ammunition from the cleaning area. Wear eye protection. Work in a well-ventilated space. Wear nitrile or similar gloves if solvents are used. This material summarizes standard published cleaning and lubrication practices from NRA American Rifleman, manufacturer guidance, and related firearms maintenance resources. It is not a substitute for the specific owner's manual of your handgun, professional gunsmith service, or compliance with local laws.

Who This Is For

Every handgun owner. Defensive carriers who need reliable function. Range shooters who want consistent performance. Anyone storing a handgun that sees little use. New owners learning proper maintenance.

What Cleaning Achieves

Removes powder residue, carbon, lead, and copper fouling that can affect reliability and accuracy. Allows inspection for wear, cracks, or loose parts. Applies the correct amount of lubricant to moving surfaces. Protects metal from corrosion. Published NRA sources note that cleaning after use and periodic checks of stored or carried guns maintain function and extend service life.

When to Clean

After every range session for defensive or regularly used handguns (field strip, bore clean, wipe, re-lubricate). Periodically (monthly is cited in multiple NRA carry-maintenance articles) even if the handgun has not been fired, especially if carried, because holster lint, body moisture, and dust accumulate. After exposure to rain, dust, or extreme conditions. Before long-term storage. At manufacturer-recommended round counts for more detailed disassembly if specified.

Differing viewpoints exist on exact frequency. Some sources state modern non-corrosive ammunition and finishes allow longer intervals between full cleanings for lightly used guns; others, particularly for defensive handguns, recommend cleaning after every firing session and regular inspection of carried guns. Both positions appear in published NRA materials.

Where Cleaning Occurs

A stable, well-lit work surface with a cleaning mat. All ammunition removed from the area. Muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times.

Supplies Needed

- Caliber-specific bore brush (bronze or nylon) and cleaning rod or pull-through cable
- Cleaning patches and patch holder
- Nylon utility brush or old toothbrush
- Cotton swabs
- Firearm-specific solvent or CLP
- Firearm lubricant (light oil or grease as recommended by the manufacturer)
- Lint-free cloths or microfiber
- Owner's manual for the specific model
- Eye protection and optional nitrile gloves

How: Complete Instruction

Before You Begin

1. Remove the magazine.
2. Lock the slide open or open the cylinder.
3. Visually and physically inspect the chamber and magazine well.
4. Confirm the firearm is unloaded.
5. Move all ammunition out of the room.
6. Put on eye protection.

Field Strip

Follow the exact procedure in the owner's manual for your model. Typical semi-automatic field strip separates the slide, barrel, and recoil spring/guide from the frame. Do not force parts. If the manual is missing, download the current version from the manufacturer's website or consult a qualified gunsmith.

Cleaning the Bore

Run solvent-wetted patches through the bore from the chamber end when possible. Scrub with a caliber-correct brush. Follow with dry patches until they come out clean. Wipe the exterior of the barrel. Residue in the chamber can affect feeding; residue in the bore can affect accuracy.

Cleaning the Slide and Frame

Wipe major residue. Use a nylon brush and solvent on the breech face, extractor, rails, and other accessible surfaces. Avoid forcing solvent into the firing-pin channel or striker channel on most designs; keep those areas dry unless the manufacturer specifically directs otherwise. Wipe all surfaces dry.

Magazines

Wipe exterior surfaces. Inspect feed lips and follower. Do not lubricate the interior of magazines. Replace worn magazines as needed.

Lubrication

Apply a light coating only to manufacturer-specified contact surfaces (commonly the slide rails, barrel hood or locking surfaces, and barrel-to-slide interface). Use the type and amount directed by the owner's manual. Excess oil attracts dirt, carbon, and lint and can cause malfunctions. Do not oil the bore, chamber, firing-pin channel, or magazine interior unless the manual specifically requires it. Wipe excess from grip surfaces and the exterior of the slide.

Reassembly and Function Check

Reassemble according to the manual. Perform a function check with the firearm still unloaded: cycle the slide, test the trigger and safety, and confirm controls operate. Wipe exterior metal surfaces with a light protective film if desired. Confirm the firearm is still unloaded before storing or holstering.

Stored or Dusty Handguns

Even unused handguns collect dust, lint, and moisture. Periodic wipe-down, inspection, and light re-lubrication of contact surfaces prevent corrosion and keep the action free. NRA carry-maintenance articles specifically recommend checking carried guns regularly regardless of firing.

Where to Get Model-Specific Instructions

The owner's manual supplied with the handgun is the primary source. Current manuals are available on the manufacturer's official website. Qualified gunsmiths and certified instructors can demonstrate the procedure. Never force disassembly beyond the field-strip level described in the manual.

Common Errors

- Assuming the gun is unloaded without verification.
- Over-lubricating.
- Putting oil in the bore or firing-pin channel.
- Using metal brushes on finished surfaces.
- Skipping the function check after reassembly.
- Storing a carried gun without periodic inspection.

Conclusion

Regular cleaning after use, periodic maintenance of stored or carried handguns, correct light lubrication on specified surfaces, and adherence to the manufacturer's instructions keep a handgun reliable and ready. Follow the owner's manual for your specific model.

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

Sources

NRA American Rifleman "How To Clean A Handgun," "CCW Gun Maintenance," and "Defensive Handgun Maintenance Tips"; NRA Family and related NRA cleaning guidance; manufacturer owner's manuals (Springfield Armory example and general practice of directing users to model-specific instructions). Differing viewpoints exist on cleaning frequency; both "after every session" for defensive guns and longer intervals for lightly used guns appear in published NRA materials.



