



Tips on Choosing the Right Firearm Instructor

As any responsible gun owner knows, it is essential to train with one's firearm. Just as one doesn't jump into a Beechcraft or Cessna with the intentions of taking winged flight without first learning the proper way to operate the aircraft legally, safely, and financially so it is with firearms. In California, there's a requirement to study for, take an exam and pass the test with 70% or better just to purchase a firearm or ammunition. A concealed weapons license (or CCW) is the only means by which ordinary citizens may legally carry firearms in public in California. Absent a CCW, it is a crime to carry either a loaded or an unloaded firearm in public. A good firearms instructor, one that is licensed and certified, can make your training efficient and more worthwhile.

Importance of Having a Good Instructor

Finding the right firearms instructor is important. As every person is different. Each will have his or her own ideas and goals when it comes to training. It is wise to find an instructor that can meet those needs and help you to attain your goals. When choosing the instructor that is right for you, do your research and shop around. Possibly even ask if you can sit in on a class as an observer. The following factors, while they may or may not be deal-breakers for everybody, should all be considered when choosing a firearms instructor.

1. Safety

Firearms safety is paramount. When choosing an instructor, the first thing that should be looked at is safety. Do they teach the fundamentals of safety-first and always? Do they constantly stress and follow safety procedures on the range? You should also inquire about their emergency protocols if someone has an accident. Are they prepared with a First Aid Trauma kit and able to deal with a gunshot wound? Do they start their students out with totally safe **Laser Training Pistols** (aka: dry fire)? If the answer to these questions is no, then move along to another instructor, quickly.

2. Reviews by Former Students

Search online NRA & USCCA for reviews on a prospective instructor. See if there are any reviews by former students and what they had to say about their experience. You can also check on the NRA & USCCA websites to discover if any students have any experience with a particular instructor.

3. Shooting Experience

If you are looking for someone to teach you how to shoot, obviously, they must have experience shooting and diagnosing real shooter's problems. Did the instructor just wake up one morning and suddenly decide to become a firearms instructor? While it may not be necessary for the instructor to have fired millions of rounds downrange, they should be a seasoned shooter. The longer an instructor has been shooting, the more wisdom they have gained that can be imparted on you. If you're considering a firearms self-defense course such as defensive shooting or a CCW course does the instructor have "street survival" experience or have they ever been involved in a use of force incident? Have they perfected their situational awareness skills to recognize that a use of force situation was developing?



FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR



4. Real-World Experience

You should make a note of what kind of real-world and practical experience your instructor has. If they teach about combat shooting, CQB (close quarter battle) and tactical techniques, do they have a strong background in the military or law enforcement that would testify to the credibility of their tactical advice or experience? Or do they just teach theory? If they teach about concealed carry, do they carry concealed every day, when not on the range?

5. Who Taught Your Instructor?

Who were the instructors that taught your specific firearms instructor? Where did he or she learn safe handling and develop the skills necessary to explain, educate and convey that crucial information and skills to you, the student. Did they learn to shoot in the desert plinking at beer cans and bottles. Avid hunters sometimes are the best shots, and very often they must break bad shooting habits. If taught properly by an experienced instructor a novice shooter new to guns does not have an opportunity to pick up bad habits. If a shooter builds up too many bad habits, it's likely they'll have to unlearn all those bad habits and that is expensive and takes considerable time. If your firearms instructor was

in the military, he was issued an M-16A4 Rifle, M-4 Carbine, M249 "SAW" squad automatic weapon, M240B medium machine gun, M2010 enhanced sniper rifle or M590 shotgun. Most infantrymen only carried one assigned weapon and that was a "shoulder fired" rifle. If your instructor was in law enforcement, he or she learned how to use a handgun, as their primary weapon. After that the police recruit learned shotgun, AR-15 Carbine, Beanbag shotgun and Taser. Plus, the tactical knowledge to use them. This training started around 6-weeks into the police academy. Revolver & semi-auto handguns, semi-auto & pump shotgun, and police semi-auto AR-15 carbine, etc.

6. Teaching Experience

Everyone likes to have an experienced instructor, someone who has been teaching for quite some time. New instructors shouldn't necessarily be avoided, even though, all teachers must start somewhere. A new teacher can make up for their lack of experience in other ways. When judging an instructor's teaching experience, look at how many years they've been teaching, have they taught people like YOU? Have they taught the young, the elderly, men, women the handicapped? Where have they taught? How recently have they been certified or re-certified?

7. Teaching Style

All instructors have their own style of teaching. Some may be gruff while others are soft-spoken. Some may quickly rattle through a ton of information, while others may go slow and repeat crucial points and ask for questions. A student's personal preference and learning style are a factor here.



8. Teaching Specialty

Some instructors tend to specialize in certain aspects of firearms training. While the instructor may be an expert in their preferred field, their knowledge may be lacking in other important areas. If you are looking for close quarters combat training or concealed carry techniques, you may not want to use an instructor that focuses more on hunting, long-range target shooting or competitive shooting.



9. General Knowledge

A good instructor should have a broad base of expert knowledge about firearms and applicable gun laws in your area. They should be able to instruct you on several various aspects of firearms training. Like instructors who only teach a specialty, some only possess knowledge in specialized areas. An instructor should be able to assist you with any problems with your firearm, regardless of type, model, or caliber. They should also be able to answer any questions a student may have on a wide variety of topics.



10. Comfort with Instructor

A student's comfort level with their instructor is vitally important. An instructor who places his students at ease will earn respect and will create a good learning environment. A student that is uncomfortable with their instructor will have a hard time learning or retaining knowledge. If the instructor is intimidating, rude, or doesn't earn respect, students may be afraid to ask questions or choose to ignore the instructor, creating an unsafe environment.

11. Class Size

Proper firearms training usually requires some one-on-one time between an instructor and student. A large class size means too many students are competing for an instructor's limited time and attention. In situations like this, quiet students or those who are struggling may not get the personal instruction necessary for them to keep up with the class or fully grasp a principle or technique.

12. Instructor Location

It is a dream of most gun owners to train at one of the few premier firearms training academies around the country. However, probably 99% of gun owners live nowhere near one of these schools. Since time is a valuable commodity for most people, and few can waste it commuting to far-off locations, it is wise to find an instructor located in the nearby vicinity. There are resources online that can locate instructors in your area, such as the USA Carry Firearm Instructor Directory.

13. Cost

While it is hard to put a price on proper firearms training, the cost is a factor that you must consider. If you are like most people in today's economy, money for extra things above and beyond normal household budgetary needs is hard to come by. It is completely normal and rational to comparison shop class prices between instructors, with all else being equal. There is nothing wrong with seeking the best value for your money, and good instructors will offer reasonable and competitive prices.

14. Avoid Gimmicky Instructors

A good firearms instructor is one who will adequately cover all the fundamentals and is willing and able to work with you and your equipment to make you a better-trained shooter. You want to avoid instructors that rely on gimmicks or trends, or who demand that you use a certain gun or holster, or a specific grip or stance. Obviously, an instructor will prefer equipment or techniques and will try to teach you those methods. But the instructor must be flexible enough to adapt their preferred methods and techniques to accommodate a student's ability, especially if a student is having trouble understanding or performing or elderly or handicapped. **PATIENCE PLEASE!**

Choosing the firearms training instructor that is right for you should be a thoughtful decision. Hopefully, you will consider some or all the factors in this list when making your decision. There may also be other factors not on this list that you think are crucial. If so, let us know (714) 680-5500 or KC.5150.HEAT@gmail.com. Each gun owner is an individual, with different tastes, preferences, learning styles, and needs. What is important to one shooter may not be as important to another. Now get busy training, have fun, and stay safe!

Instructor: I am a retired Police Officer, (**Buena Park Police Department and Brea Police Department, which also served the City of Yorba Linda**). I served more than 30-years of honorable service to the citizens of California. My experience extends to virtually every aspect of the law enforcement profession. In addition, to patrol duties I served as a Police Firearms Tactical Instructor & Range Master tasked with training & qualifying thousands of men & women police officers and police academy recruits. Since retirement, as a civilian I have continued training responsible men & women citizens interested in enhancing their personal, family, home protection and CCW. I have developed an extensive and varied background in teaching the art & science of firearms safety, situational awareness, defensive shooting, CQC (close-quarters combat) tactical concepts, actual hands-on experience in **“Street Survival”** with real **OJT in Use of Deadly Force** defensive skills. I take personal satisfaction in sharing my tactical know-how and knowledge with good people in need of helpful tutoring in firearms safety and self-defense.

Certifications: California P.O.S.T Certified Law Enforcement Officer • NRA Certified Police Firearms Instructor • UCLA Post-Secondary Education College Instructor Professor • U.S. Coast Guard Instructor • Sacramento County Sheriff’s Department Certified Firearms Tactical Instructor & Range Master • Police Academy Senior Tactical Officer & Instructor • NLT S.I.R.T. Laser Training Pistol Instructor.

Plus, USCCA (United States Concealed Carry Association) Certified Instructor for: Basic Firearms Fundamentals & Self-Defense, Women’s Defensive Handgun & Self-Defense Fundamentals, Combat Emergency First-Aid Fundamentals, Home Defense Fundamentals, Tactical Shotgun, Defensive Shooting, and OCSD CCW (Conceal Carry Weapon) Authorized Training Provider.



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