

Study Guide



Firearms Certificate Program

Private Security, Private
Investigator, and Bail Bond
Recovery Agent

These materials are intended to assist private security guards, bail recovery agents, and private investigators in preparing for the firearms certificate program. They are provided by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission pursuant to RCW [18.165](#), [18.170](#), [18.185](#), [43.101](#), [9.41](#), and WAC [139-30](#), [139-33](#), [139-35](#), [139-37](#).

While this study guide addresses the use of force, deadly force, and firearms, it should not be considered legal advice. An attorney has reviewed the explanations contained in this guide and has stated them as clearly as possible. Unfortunately, the law and its interpretation by the courts are not always so clear-cut. Also, statutes and rules based on court decisions may change over time.

- For Washington State laws about firearms, including prohibited firearms transfers and concealed carry, review [Chapter 9.41 RCW](#)
- For federal firearms laws, visit [Department of Justice | Homepage | United States Department of Justice](#). In the search field, use “Federal Firearms Statutes” and search for the current summary document.

While periodic revisions to this study guide will be made as statutes and decision-based rules change, users must take care to learn of revisions to applicable law. You should consult with your attorney to obtain legal advice. It is recommended that employers have this study guide reviewed by their legal counsel.

Questions regarding any of these materials can be sent to cjtcpspi@cjtc.wa.gov.

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Introduction

In 1991, the Washington State Legislature, with the support of the private security industry, enacted several bills requiring the licensing of private security guards and private investigators. **Licensed guards and investigators who carry firearms in their jobs must also have a firearms certificate from the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission and recertify each year.**

This firearms certificate qualifies you for a special armed private security guard, armed private investigator license, or armed bail recovery agent license.

This firearms certificate program in which you are participating is an eight-hour program, and the renewal program is a four-hour program. **According to law, you may not carry a firearm in the performance of your duties until you have been issued an armed private security or armed private investigator license.** There is no temporary provision in the law; even successfully completing this certificate program does not allow you to perform your duties armed. You must possess an armed private security guard, armed private investigator, or armed bail bond recovery agent license before carrying a firearm while working.

This certificate program is a combination of instruction and testing. It is not intended to be a basic firearm or marksmanship course - you or your employer should have provided weapon handling and marksmanship training before this certificate program.

Since the study materials have been sent to you before the training, you will be able to study and master the written material, which will be presented and tested, as well as the skills and shooting abilities required.

Here are the program requirements:

- You must be certified with the type of firearm(s) you will carry or use.
- All written questions must be answered correctly - that is, 100% is required to pass (You are allowed to use your notes and discuss your answers with the instructor).
- You must successfully demonstrate all required firearm-handling skills. This is a pass/fail test, and failure to demonstrate proficiency will result in failure of the certificate program.
- You must successfully complete the firing qualification.
- Your employer must initiate the firearms certificate program and application, but the firearms certificate is issued in the name of the individual guard, investigator, or recovery agent.
- Any safety violation you commit during the certificate program training may result in failure.

The instructor will provide you with clear rules and instructions as you proceed through this certificate program. To maintain safety both in the classroom and on the range, the instructor has absolute authority over how you handle any firearm.

Failure to comply with the instructor's commands may result in dismissal from the certificate program. If you witness unsafe range practices by the certifying instructor, you should immediately advise the instructor of your concerns. If the instructor does not provide an acceptable explanation or response, remove yourself from the range and notify the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission as quickly as possible.

If you fail this certificate program, your employer may enroll you in future certificate programs. There is no limit to the number of attempts at the certificate program. It is the responsibility of the employer to provide whatever training is necessary to accomplish this firearm certificate program successfully.

Review of Test Questions

- You may not perform the duties of an armed private security guard, armed private investigator, or armed bail bond recovery agent while waiting for your armed license to be issued by the Department of Licensing.
- You must be certified with each firearm that you will use on the job. A change in the type of firearm you use requires qualification on that firearm and submission of update to WSCJTC.
- The instructor has absolute authority over the handling of firearms during this certificate program.

Choosing to Carry a Gun

Choosing to carry a gun as a security guard, investigator, or recovery agent is a personal choice that you must make. Your employer does not make this decision for you.

You must decide if:

- You are willing to shoot and possibly kill someone who threatens your life or the life of another person who is with you;
- You are capable of making the on-the-spot decision to use deadly force;
- You thoroughly understand the law on the use of deadly force.
- You can live with your decision after injuring or killing someone.

If you have doubts about any of these issues, then you are not prepared to carry a gun in the performance of your job. You must resolve any questions you have about your willingness and ability to use deadly force before you carry a gun. If you fail to make these important decisions now, you will jeopardize your own life and the lives of others with whom you work. You cannot view the gun as just a threat that you will not actually use. You must be willing to take another's life if the situation requires this action.

Review of Test Questions

- The decision to carry or use a gun is a personal choice that is made by you.
- Before carrying a gun, you must thoroughly understand the law on the use of deadly force.

Use of Less than Deadly Force

by a Security Guard, Bail Bond Recovery Agent, or Investigator

This certificate program deals primarily with the use of firearms and, thus, deadly force. The use of deadly force by a guard, investigator, or recovery agent is likely to occur during the confrontation or apprehension of a suspect or in defense against an attack. In such situations, the law allows the use of necessary force, but it is important to note that deadly force is not permitted except as a last resort.

In order to understand when deadly force can be used, it is necessary first to understand when less-than-deadly physical force or restraint is permitted.

Here is the statute that addresses the use of less-than-deadly physical force:

[RCW 9A.16.020](#): “Use of Force - When Lawful”

“The use, attempt, or offer to use force upon or toward the person of another is not unlawful in the following cases:

- (1) Whenever necessarily used by a public officer in the performance of a legal duty, or a person assisting the officer and acting under the officer’s direction;
- (2) Whenever necessarily used by a person arresting one who has committed a felony and delivering him or her to a public officer competent to receive him or her into custody;
- (3) Whenever used by a party about to be injured, or by another lawfully aiding him or her, in preventing or attempting to prevent an offense against his or her person, or a malicious trespass, or other malicious interference with real or personal property lawfully in his or her possession, in case the force is not more than is necessary;
- (4) Whenever reasonably used by a person to detain someone who enters or remains unlawfully in a building or on real property lawfully in the possession of such person, so long as such detention is reasonable in duration and manner to investigate the reason for the detained person’s presence on the premises, and so long as the premises in question did not reasonably appear to be intended to be open to members of the public;
- (5) Whenever used by a carrier of passengers or the carrier’s authorized agent or servant, or other person assisting them at their request in expelling from a carriage, railway car, vessel, or other vehicle, a passenger who refuses to obey a lawful and reasonable regulation prescribed for the conduct of passengers, if such vehicle has first been stopped and the force used is not more than is necessary to expel the offender with reasonable regard to the offender’s personal safety;
- (6) Whenever used by any person to prevent a mentally ill, mentally incompetent, or mentally disabled person from committing an act dangerous to any person, or in enforcing necessary restraint for the protection or restoration to health of the person during such period only as is necessary to obtain legal authority for the restraint or custody of the person.”

In addition to the above lawful uses of force, [RCW 9A.16.080](#) specifically allows a peace officer, merchant, or his authorized employee or agent to detain a suspect "...in a reasonable manner and for not more than a reasonable time to permit such investigation or questioning..." if there exists, "...reasonable grounds to believe that the person so detained was committing or attempting to commit theft or shoplifting..."

This lawful use of force is limited to the premises or immediate vicinity where the suspected theft occurred. The law allows for the detention of suspected shoplifters, no matter what the value of the merchandise is. Thus, shoplifting is one situation where you are allowed to detain a suspect for a misdemeanor crime.

While these statutes address many specific situations, the basic rule is that a citizen may use only that minimum level of force necessary to:

1. Arrest a person you know has committed a felony;
2. Protect yourself or another from assault or injury;
3. Prevent theft or property damage;
4. Detain a trespasser for the purpose of investigation or
5. Detain a suspected shoplifter.

Since this is not a course in what constitutes "reasonable cause," you should request additional training and clarification from your employer if you have doubts or questions about when you can confront, question, detain, or arrest a suspect.

Review of Test Questions

You may use only reasonable and necessary force to protect property or lawfully detain a suspected criminal.

Use of Deadly Force

As explained above, the law allows a private individual to use necessary and reasonable force to arrest a felon, detain a shoplifter or trespasser, and protect life or property. The law does not generally allow an individual to use deadly force for these purposes.

Washington law allows the use of deadly force by a peace officer, under the provisions of [RCW 9A.16.040](#). Private security guards, private investigators, and bail bond recovery agents are not peace officers and the situations in which they may use deadly force are set forth in **RCW 9A.16.050**:

[RCW 9A.16.050](#) *Homicide - By Other Person - When Justifiable*

Homicide is also justifiable when committed either:

- (1) In the lawful defense of the slayer, or his or her husband, wife, parent, child, brother, or sister, or of any other person in his presence or company, when there is reasonable ground to apprehend a design on the part of the person slain to commit a felony or to do some great personal injury to the slayer or to any such person, and there is imminent danger of such design being accomplished; or
- (2) In the actual resistance of an attempt to commit a felony upon the slayer, in his presence, or upon or in a dwelling, or other place of abode, in which he or she is.

An argument can be made that **RCW 9A.16.040**, “*Use of Deadly Force by Public Officer*” applies to private citizens under some circumstances (see Section 3, chapter 209, Laws of 1986). However, the authors of this guide believe that the safest legal approach is to limit the use of deadly force in those situations in RCW 9A.16.050.

In summary, although the law appears to allow some latitude in the use of deadly force, it is recommended that deadly force be used by a private security guard/investigator only:

1. In defense of his/her own life (to prevent someone from seriously injuring or killing him or herself.).
2. In the defense of another’s life (to prevent someone from seriously injuring or killing another person in his/her presence.).

Review of Test Questions

- The law does not usually allow you to use deadly force to prevent a property crime.
- The law allows you to use deadly force to defend your life.
- The law allows you to use deadly force to defend another person’s life.

Escalation of Force Continuum

While your employers' policies may only permit personnel who have the proper training with a defensive weapon(s) to carry that weapon(s) and only on assignments that authorize the use of defensive weapons, you still have the legal right to defend yourself with that level of force which is reasonable and necessary to protect your life or the life of another from harm, great personal injury or death.

As a guard, investigator, or recovery agent (or any person for that matter), you may legally do whatever is reasonable and necessary to protect your life or the life of another. While you may be issued and carry primary self-defense weapons such as firearms and chemical sprays, you may improvise and use any object at your disposal to protect yourself or another in a manner that is reasonable and necessary if you do not have a defensive weapon, such as when working on unarmed sites, or you do not have access to your primary weapons or your primary weapons are inoperative.

In any situation that arises, you will be expected to act in good faith, use good judgment, and take an appropriate and reasonable course of action.

The circumstances that may lead to the use of force or deadly force by a private security guard or private investigator cannot be predicted. Still, they will probably arise out of the job situation. Some examples are A guard happens upon a crime in progress, a guard is protecting property that is the target of a robbery or burglary, a guard confronting a trespasser or intruder, and an investigator being assaulted during an investigation. Clearly, the law does not permit using deadly force to protect property. However, the law does not require that you allow a criminal to complete his crime successfully without interference. You may use reasonable and necessary force to prevent a crime and to detain a shoplifter, arrest a felon, or protect yourself from an assault.

The key concept is that you may use only as much force as is required to prevent the escape of the suspect or the continuation of the assault. To use an exaggerated example, a store security guard cannot shoot a shoplifter who chooses to run. In this case, a reasonable application of force would begin with verbal (voice) commands such as "stop!" and continue with hands-on attempts at control.

If the shoplifter were to draw a pistol or other deadly weapon after being stopped and threaten the guard with the pistol, then the guard is justified in using deadly force in self-defense. Note that the guard is not permitted to use deadly force to stop the shoplifter or detain the suspect - the guard is only allowed to use deadly force when they or someone else in their presence is threatened with death or great personal injury. The level of force used must correspond to the amount of force used in the attempt to escape or assault, plus whatever additional force is required to overcome the escape or assault.

As a security officer, your primary goal in a confrontation or an attack is to defend yourself or others from the assailant and/or control the situation. It is imperative that control/defense not be a 50/50 balance. You should have a better than 50/50 chance of winning and not just 50 percent of the time. You must generally use greater force than your attacker, but not deadly force.

In real life, the difficulty lies in making the split-second decision to apply the correct, reasonable, necessary, and effective level of force. Remember that an incident may start at a higher level or escalate quickly. Thus, you may need to start at or go to a higher level of force to gain control of the

situation and/or defend yourself or others.

The concept is that an officer may use the necessary and reasonable amount of force to stop the assault and control the situation. The officer must also then justify and articulate the need for the amount of force and the force options used.

Totality of Circumstances

When faced with a situation, you must assess the totality of the situation so that you may respond with the appropriate level of force. Circumstances to consider may include, but are not limited to:

- **Age:** The age of the attacker versus the age of the security officer. One or the other may be younger and more physically fit. A teenager has twice the stamina of a person of about 40.
- **Physical Size:** A person may have superior size and/or strength and may not be able to be controlled or moved by a smaller person.
- **Fitness:** A person's fitness level in regular activity may give them an advantage over a less fit person.
- **Skill Level:** A highly trained individual may have a distinct advantage over a person with a lesser skill level. This is true in self-defense, just like it is in sports. Does the attacker have military, boxing, wrestling, or martial arts skills or training that may give them an advantage over you?
- **Numbers:** Security officers need to consider the number of attackers versus the number of defenders. There really is power in numbers.
- **Weapons:** Whether or not the attacker has a weapon or access to a weapon is a serious concern. Also, how dangerous is the weapon the attacker(s) has access to? Are there common everyday items within reach that may be used as a weapon?
- **Injury/Exhaustion:** Are you or the attacker injured or exhausted? How much longer can you continue your defense before succumbing to exhaustion?
- **Position of Advantage:** Who has the position of advantage? Are there obstacles between you and the attacker(s)? Who has the best ground position? Is there available cover? Do you and/or others have a clear path to retreat?
- **Special Knowledge:** Do you or the attacker have any special knowledge that will give one of you an advantage? Do you have any special knowledge of the particular attacker, for instance, that he regularly carries a knife or that he has attacked and injured people in the past?
- **The Seriousness of the Offense:** Does the seriousness of the offense warrant the level of force to be applied?
- **The Aggressiveness of the Attacker(s):** A determined or angry attacker is much harder to defend against than an attacker whose heart is not in it. Emotions play a large part in a person's behavior. Due to their mental state, they may not be thinking clearly.

- **Intoxication or Use of Drugs:** Alcohol alters a person's judgment. Drugs may also alter a person's judgment and/or perception. Some drugs may also give a person added strength.
- **The Propensity for Violence:** The person may have a known propensity for violence. A history of violence in a person's past is a good indicator that the person will continue violent behavior. People with mental disabilities may not be able to reason.
- **Innocent People in the Area:** Are there innocent people nearby who are in danger from the individual(s) if a violent encounter occurs or cannot be controlled quickly?
- **Security Guard's Ability to Summon Aid or Assistance:** Will the guard or investigator have an opportunity to summon aid or assistance if suddenly attacked? How far away and how long will it take for basic law enforcement personnel to arrive?
- **Degree of Harm Which Failure to Control the Subject May Create:** If the security guard or investigator is not able to control or stop the subject, what property may be destroyed or stolen, and/or who may be at risk of attack next?
- **Other Prevailing Environmental and Tactical Conditions:** It is impossible to list every possible factor. What unforeseen conditions exist?

It is reasonable that a discrepancy in the age, gender, physical size, fitness, or skill level of individuals involved in the confrontation may dictate that an officer use more or less force to control a situation or defend against an attacker(s). It may also be reasonable for a single security officer to use more force in controlling or defending against multiple attackers.

Review of Test Questions

Any use of force by you must be no more than that which is reasonable and necessary to overcome resistance to order.

Duty to Act

A law enforcement officer has a duty to act when confronted with illegal behavior or resistance to a lawful command. The citizen, private security guard, bail recovery agent, or investigator may often choose to observe and report criminal behavior rather than attempt to overcome the resistance or forcibly detain.

Unless faced with a deadly threat from which it is impossible to escape, the guard, bail recovery agent, or investigator would be well advised to withdraw or retreat to a position of safety while calling for police assistance. While the law may allow you to use a certain level of force to make an arrest or detention, it may be prudent to withdraw from a situation that you believe may escalate.

You are never required by law to use force or deadly force.

Review of Test Questions

A private citizen has no duty or requirement to use deadly force in any situation.

The responsibility of most guards is to observe, deter, and report, and a guard's presence does not guarantee that an incident will not occur. In an emergency involving your client, your first priority should be for your safety. Next, you may have a contractual responsibility to take appropriate action within your ability to do so to protect your client from harm. You always have discretionary ability and are never required to use force. Your employer may have procedures and/or guidelines for you to follow in the event of an emergency.

Depending upon the circumstances, appropriate action to take may include rendering first aid, summoning police, fire, or medical aid, escorting the client to a position of safety, directing emergency personnel to the scene, attempting to deter/interrupt an attack by your presence and verbal intervention and/or attempting to fend off the attack. A security officer or private investigator who stands by and does nothing may leave themselves and their employer subject to civil suit by the client they are expected to protect.

Verbal De-Escalation

Verbal de-escalation is a technique that prevents a situation from escalating into a conflict or violence through calm and controlled communication. It is often employed in various settings, including healthcare, security, law enforcement, education, and customer service, to manage potentially volatile situations. Here's a detailed look at what verbal de-escalation is and how it's practiced:

Key Principles of Verbal De-escalation

1. **Stay Calm and Composed:** Maintaining a calm demeanor helps to prevent the situation from escalating further. Your tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions should all convey calmness and control.

2. **Active Listening:** Show that you genuinely listen to the other person by nodding, maintaining eye contact, and using verbal affirmations like "I understand" or "I see."
3. **Empathy and Validation:** Acknowledge the other person's feelings and perspectives. Phrases like "I can see why you're upset" or "That sounds frustrating" can help to validate their emotions.
4. **Non-Threatening Body Language:** Keep your body language open and non-threatening. Avoid crossing your arms, clenching your fists, or making sudden movements.
5. **Clear and Simple Communication:** Use clear, concise, and simple language. Avoid jargon or complex terms that might confuse or frustrate the other person.
6. **Setting Boundaries:** Politely but firmly set boundaries if the other person is aggressive or unreasonable. For example, "I want to help you, but I need you to lower your voice so we can talk."
7. **Offer Choices and Solutions:** Providing options can help the other person feel more in control of the situation. For example, "Would you prefer to discuss this here or in a quieter place?"
8. **Avoiding Power Struggles:** Do not engage in arguments or power struggles. Focus on finding a resolution rather than proving a point.

Steps to Practice Verbal De-escalation

1. **Assess the Situation:** Quickly evaluate the situation to understand the level of threat and the best approach to take.
2. **Approach Calmly:** Approach the person in a calm and non-threatening manner. Ensure you are at a safe distance.
3. **Introduce Yourself:** If appropriate, introduce yourself and explain your role; this can help establish a connection and build trust.
4. **Listen Actively:** Allow the person to express their concerns without interrupting. Show that you are listening through your body language and verbal affirmations.
5. **Acknowledge and Validate:** Acknowledge their feelings and validate their emotions; this can help reduce their anger or frustration.
6. **Communicate Clearly:** Use simple and clear language to communicate your message. Avoid using a condescending or patronizing tone.
7. **Set Boundaries:** If necessary, set clear and respectful boundaries to ensure your safety and the safety of others.
8. **Offer Solutions:** Provide options or solutions to address their concerns; this can help empower the person and reduce agitation.

9. **Follow Up:** After de-escalating the situation, follow up to ensure that the person's concerns have been addressed and to prevent future incidents.

Review of Test Questions

Verbal de-escalation is a technique that prevents a situation from escalating into a conflict or violence through calm and controlled communication.

Responsibilities After Using Force

If you have used force of any kind, including deadly force, and if your assailant is no longer a threat, then you should administer first aid within your ability to do so and summon medical assistance. This may mean that you stop bleeding and are treated for shock. You should be trained in a Red Cross or equivalent First Aid, Bloodborne Pathogens, and CPR course to do this safely. Additionally, it is advisable to handcuff the wounded individual so that they cannot attack or disarm you as you administer first aid.

Call the police as soon as possible if you used/drew your weapon. If the threat has been contained and it is safe to do so, holster your gun. Since the police will be responding to a "shots fired" call, they may approach the scene with caution and with guns drawn. It is critical that you identify yourself clearly and do not point your gun at the responding officers. Have your identification in your hand and keep your hands clearly away from your gun. Follow orders given by the officers. ***If you are not uniform, these steps are even more important since it will be impossible for the officers to know you are a security officer or investigator.***

You are not required to talk to the police after shooting someone. You may wish to speak to an attorney before giving a statement. If you refuse to provide information to the police, you may be detained or arrested based on the information known to the officers at that time. Before you begin carrying a gun as part of your job, you may want to talk with your employer about what kind of legal assistance will be provided.

Review of Test Questions

- You are not required to talk to the police before you have a chance to get legal advice.
- You should administer first aid to someone you have injured when it is safe to do so.
- You must call for medical and police assistance as soon as possible.
- You should identify yourself clearly and pose no threat to the police in order to reduce the chance that you will be mistaken for a criminal.

Criminal Penalties for Unlawful Use of Force

Use of force or deadly force when the law does not allow it may result in your arrest for assault or homicide.

Criminal charges for an assault with a firearm do not necessarily require that the gun be fired; for example, someone who threatens another without legal justification by pointing a gun at them has committed an assault. An assault with a firearm is usually considered to be a first or second-degree assault (both are felonies). Conviction of such a crime may carry a sentence from 10 to 20 years.

Should your use of force result in the unlawful death of another person, you may be charged with either manslaughter if your recklessness caused the death or murder if you intended to kill the person. Penalties for manslaughter may be up to ten years in prison. Murder carries a sentence of up to life in prison unless certain aggravating circumstances exist, in which case the court may impose the death penalty.

It is your responsibility as the person carrying or using a weapon to use it responsibly and within the law. Neither your employer nor any other person is criminally responsible for your acts with a firearm. Under criminal law, you alone are responsible for any firearm display or firing. If you have any doubt about your ability to make crucial life-and-death decisions regarding the use of deadly force, then you should not carry a firearm.

Review of Test Questions

- Your employer is not criminally responsible for your actions with a firearm.
- Pointing a firearm at another person, without a legitimate reason to do so, is an assault.
- Recklessness by you that results in the death of another is manslaughter.
- Intentional and unlawful killing of another person is murder.

Civil Liability for Use of Force

Should you use force or deadly force that causes harm or injury to someone, you may be sued in civil court for damages. Generally, the person suing must show that they have been damaged, that your actions caused the damage, or that you acted recklessly and without legal justification. (These facts must be demonstrated with a preponderance of the evidence, which means that the weight of the facts supports the claim against you.)

Usually, your defense will be that the injured party, by his own acts, brought about the injury and that your actions were within the law and in defense of yourself or another. A judge or jury decides each case based on the facts presented.

Review of Test Questions

- If you have injured another individual, the individual may sue you for monetary damages if you have used force recklessly or illegally.
- Your best defense against a civil suit is knowledge of the law, good judgment, and adequate training with your weapon and on use of force.

Shooting Decisions

The decision to draw or point your gun or to shoot or not shoot someone must be made instantly and correctly. Only practiced thought and good judgment will allow you to make good shooting decisions.

Verbal Identification and Commands

In some cases, you may have the opportunity to control a potentially deadly situation by giving clear verbal commands. In all situations, you should identify yourself if possible. It is not reasonable to expect that someone will follow your orders if you are not in uniform or if they cannot see who you are unless you have clearly identified yourself. The proper form of self-identification is a matter of your employer's policy, but here are some choices:

- “security officer,”
- “security,”
- “private security,”
- “armed security,”
- “private investigator,”
- “Armed private investigator,”
- “Bail Recovery Agent.”

If someone is moving, escaping, or making a threatening movement, the proper commands include:

- “Stop,”
- “Don’t move,”
- “Raise your hands,”
- “Let me see your hands.”

If someone is making a threatening movement that you feel is a deadly threat, then before shooting (time permitting), you should use a command like:

- “Stop, or I’ll shoot.”
- “Drop the gun/knife/weapon or I’ll shoot.”

Although we cannot give you commands for every situation you may be in, whatever command you give ***must be loud, clear, and repeated*** until the subject complies. Do not use slang (like “freeze”), which might be misinterpreted.

You are not required to give verbal commands before using deadly force if you are in the process of defending yourself and could not reasonably be expected to do so. You should practice verbal commands on your own and on the range during practice.

Review of Test Questions

- When confronting someone or giving commands, you should identify yourself.
- You should give a command like, “Stop or I will shoot” before using deadly force, if time allows you to do so.

Verbal Challenge

Consideration must be given to instruction pertaining to the verbal challenge. Many commonly used phrases are not only unprofessional and inappropriate but are ineffective or don't accurately convey to the suspect (or the public within earshot) the actual intent of the officer. While the argument can be made that there is value in the standardization of a verbal command, the need for flexibility to suit the situation must also be addressed. For example, more than one tactical officer accustomed to serving high-risk search warrants has found that the habitually shouted “get down, get down” when applied to the wrong circumstances and environment has only resulted in placing the compliant suspect out of view behind the furniture or vehicle. The “challenge” serves several purposes:

- Control: A loud, clear verbal introduction announces the officer or agent's presence on the scene and establishes control.
- Identification: The challenge should immediately inform all present (bystanders, suspect(s)) and any other officer or agent on the scene that the person giving the commands is a lawful officer or agent.
- State purpose or intent: The challenge should provide understandable instructions to all present in as brief and concise a manner as possible. Standardizing the challenge helps eliminate the confusion when one officer yells, “Put your hands up,” and another yells, “Get down, get down.”
- Compliance: The challenge should be given to persuade its listeners to comply. *If* the decision has already been made to shoot, officers should *not* slow down their own response time by taking time to talk.

Examples which accomplish each of these purposes and instruct the subjects to cease their activity are as follows:

- “Armed Officer (Agent, Investigator, etc.), Stop” or
- “Armed Officer (Agent, Investigator, etc.) Don't Move”

These challenges would then be followed with situation-specific instructions.

Decision Making

Continual practice will improve your ability to make quick, accurate shoot/don't shoot decisions. This practice may be mental (creating "what if" situations in your head and solving them), done on the range with a coach and shoot/don't shoot targets, or simulated (through the use of films or other visual simulations).

Three conditions must exist to justify the use of deadly force:

1. The ABILITY exists for another person to do you great personal injury or cause your death.
2. The OPPORTUNITY exists for another person to do you great personal injury or cause your death.
3. Your life is in JEOPARDY because of the actions of this person.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Does this person have the ABILITY to do me great physical harm or to kill me? This usually means that this person has a weapon. The weapon could be a gun, a knife, a club, a piece of pipe, or a wood 2x4. Some people have the strength or ABILITY to seriously damage or kill you with just their hands. Multiple attackers may also be able to seriously harm or kill you, even though they are unarmed.
- Does this person have the OPPORTUNITY to do me great physical harm or to kill me? This means the person is in a location or distance that will permit them to harm you. A man with a knife is not a threat to you when he is 100 yards away, but he will be able to kill you within two seconds when he is only seven yards from you. Thus, at 100 yards, he does not have the OPPORTUNITY to harm you, but at seven yards, he does have the OPPORTUNITY. A man with a high-power rifle is a deadly threat when he is 1000 yards away. Obviously, the OPPORTUNITY can change very quickly. Things that might affect this include distance, the type of weapon involved, and the kind of protection or cover that you have.
- Does this person put you or another person in JEOPARDY by their actions? This means that the person's actions are directed at someone in such a way that they may cause a person great physical harm or kill them. For example, a man walking toward you carrying a shotgun has a weapon (ABILITY), is within 20 yards, and can see you (OPPORTUNITY). Still, unless they point the shotgun at you and unless you believe that they intend to do you harm, JEOPARDY does not exist.

Your situation will help you determine whether or not JEOPARDY exists. For instance, an employee at the plant you are guarding who removes a shotgun from his trunk may be merely transferring it to another employee's trunk for a trip to the shooting range, or he may be heading into the plant in order to seek revenge for losing his job. You must evaluate all of the circumstances and actions and the person's response to your questions or orders; these things will help you determine whether this person intends to jeopardize your life.

**All Three Requirements Must Exist Before You May
Use Deadly Force To Protect Yourself Or Another.**

Review of Test Questions

You may use deadly force in self-defense of another person has:

- the ability to greatly harm or kill you,
- the opportunity to greatly harm or kill you, and
- by his/her actions indicates intent to put your life in jeopardy.

Four Stages of Awareness

Col. Jeff Cooper has written an excellent essay on the subject, titled “Mental Conditioning for Combat,” which normally accompanies this handout. However, one of the most important lessons to be learned from the reading is found in a simple “Color Codes” system outlining four levels of awareness. He believes that being aware is more important than being prepared.

No matter how well prepared or armed an officer is, they cannot defend themselves if they are unaware they are in danger.

The four-color codes and their meaning are:

- **White-** A non-combative state of mind, which means you are UNALERT and UNAWARE of what is going on around you. If attacked in CONDITION WHITE, you would be completely surprised and would most likely die unless your assailant was inept, which they frequently are. We would all like to live in this state of mind, and the majority of the population does. The fact is, however, that the world is not a friendly place. A COP should never be in this state of mind, ever.
- **Yellow-** A state of RELAXED or GENERAL ALERTNESS. You are looking around and AWARE of all that is going on around you. Everyone should be in Condition Yellow for their own peace of mind. Certainly, every Police Officer who is on duty and anyone who is armed should be in condition YELLOW. We can maintain this state of awareness comfortably and indefinitely without undue nervous strain. This is not a state of paranoia.
- **Orange-** A state of alarm, SPECIFIC ALERT. Something or someone has aroused your suspicion; you have a specific tactical situation in mind and are thinking combatively. You cannot remain in Condition Orange indefinitely, but certainly for several hours if necessary. It has been said that it is comforting to be armed at such times, but it is not always possible.
- **Red-** This is your FIGHTING mode, that of defensive combat. You are engaged in battle but not necessarily using force. If you are holding someone at gunpoint (at GUARD), you had better be in CONDITION RED. You are in full control of all your assets and faculties.

Note: Being AWARE can often avoid the need to use force to resolve a conflict.

Review of Test Questions

The Four Stages of Awareness are White, Yellow, Orange, and Red.

Shooting Decision Scenarios

The following scenarios may be typical of those you encounter in real life. Put yourself into each scenario and write a description of the correct response or action you would take in the space allowed. In each scenario, make the decision to shoot or not to shoot.

Scenario #1: You are a lone-armed guard patrolling a warehouse on the night shift. The warehouse is located in an industrial area, and it contains electronic equipment, including televisions and stereos. It is 3:00 a.m. when you hear noises in an area of the warehouse and move to investigate. You cautiously approach the area and observe two men stacking cartons near a door. The door appears to have been forced open. Both men hear you approach and turn toward you - their hands are empty, and they do not move in your direction.

Your Response:

Scenario #2: You are an armed plainclothes security guard in a department store. You have followed a suspicious woman in the store for about ten minutes and, during that time, observed her place several unpaid-for items in her purse. She passes the check stand without paying and quickly heads for the parking lot. Just outside the store, you identify yourself and ask her to accompany you back into the store. She refuses and continues to walk away. You identify yourself again and indicate that you are detaining her for shoplifting and that she must await the arrival of the police. She ignores you, and you place a hand on her arm to detain her. At this point, the shoplifting suspect attacks you with her hands, striking and scratching you in the face. Then you feel your handgun, which is concealed under your coat, being pulled from the holster. You are able to grasp the gun, but she has both hands on it and is about to pull it from you.

Your Response:

Scenario #3: You are an armed private investigator trying to locate a teenage girl who has run away from home. You have information that indicates that she may be staying with several other people in an apartment. You have arrived at this apartment, and you hear shouting inside, but you knock on the door. The woman who answers the door is drunk and belligerent. You identify yourself and begin to ask her some questions when she turns away, leaving the door open, and begins to shout at a man who is standing in the living room. You have apparently interrupted a fight in progress. Suddenly, the man pulls a large hunting knife from his belt and lunges at the woman, stabbing her. She is screaming for help and bleeding.

Your Response:

Scenario #4: You are an armed security guard on your way home from work. You are still in uniform and have your duty gun belt on (this may violate company policy). It is 1:00 AM, but you decide to stop at the all-night market for a deli sandwich. As you step out of your car, two masked men back out of the store with guns in their hands. The store is lit, and you can see the clerk behind the counter, still holding her hands high in the air. You do not have a radio with which to call for help. The gunmen see you and begin to turn and point their guns toward you.

Your Response:

Scenario #5: You are an armored truck guard delivering cash to a store. As you step out of the truck, a man runs by and knocks you to the ground - he grabs the cash bag away from you and runs away.

Your Response:

Scenario #6: You are an armored truck guard delivering cash to a store in a busy shopping mall during business hours. A man steps out of a store as you walk by and pulls a baseball bat from under his coat; he hits your partner in the head, knocking him to the ground. You are carrying the cash bag, and the man now turns toward you, ready to swing the bat.

Your Response:

Scenario #7: You have been assigned a bank lobby as an area to guard. Although you are armed, your instructions are to trip the alarm if possible but not engage armed robbers. You notice that one of the tellers is glancing toward you and that she looks scared. A customer is standing at her window. As you move toward the teller to find out what is wrong, the customer turns, and you see him begin to draw a gun from under his jacket. At this point, you are standing only five feet from the man with the gun.

Your Response:

Scenario #8: You are the armed gate guard at a storage facility. Your job is to identify people and vehicles going in and out of the gate and to deny access to unauthorized people. A car has pulled up to the gate, and the driver has been unable to show the proper identification or give you any good reason to allow entry. You have refused entry and have not opened the gate. The driver has been ordered to leave and begins to back away; suddenly, he shifts into low gear and rams the gate, partially knocking it open. You draw your weapon to the low-ready position, and the driver sees you do this. He backs the car and turns the wheel to aim the car at you. Your only protection is a sheet-metal guard hut.

Your Response:

Scenario #9: You are an armed and uniformed guard patrolling a private residential area at night. Dispatch notifies you that there is an audible burglary alarm at one of the homes - the dispatcher says that the resident of this home is on vacation and will not be returning for at least another week. You respond and leave your patrol car to investigate the outside of the home. As you walk around the house checking doors and windows, you come to the back door, which you find to be open.

As you look inside through the door, a man steps into view from another room. He is holding something in his hand that you believe to be a gun.

Your Response:

Scenario #10: You are an armed private investigator hired to protect a local business that has been the target of harassment by local youth. In the past, considerable damage and vandalism have been done. You have stepped outside the business to get some fresh air, and, as you round the corner of the building, you see fresh graffiti painted on the wall. These are two young men standing by the wall - they turn toward you, and you see a glint of metal in the hand of one subject.

Your Response:

Scenario #11: You are a licensed bail enforcement agent working in a three-person team. You have a valid contract to locate and apprehend a male subject for failing to appear for sentencing on a DUI case. The bond is \$20,000 and has to be paid in seven days. The defendant's house was empty at the time you started searching for him. His indemnitor was his mother, who lives out of state. She has not seen or heard of him since the bond was posted. You have been able to locate his girlfriend's address and are arriving at that residence now. You have notified the local police, and they have noted your address.

You send one agent to the back and approach the front door with two agents. As you approach, you see three male subjects in the living room. Two of them leave the living room and go to another part of the house while another answers the door. One of the subjects who left the living room appears to be the defendant, but you are not positive. The person who comes to the door is argumentative, challenges your authority to be there, and says he does not know who the other individuals are. He is totally uncooperative and very nervous.

Your agent in the rear sees a person who appears to be holding a shotgun through a crack in the blinds. He reports this to you by radio.

Your Response:

Scenario #12: You are a licensed Bail Enforcement Agent working in a two-person team. You have a valid contract to locate and apprehend an individual for failing to appear in court on a case involving a no-contact order violation. It is a \$1,000 bond. Your investigation reveals that the defendant has several warrants for other cases, most involving violence.

When you contact the victim's residence for information on the defendant, you discover that he is there and they are having a heated argument. She lets you and your partner into the living room, where the defendant is. He is very agitated and challenging. When you tell them why you are there, he turns away, puts his right hand in his pocket, and tries to move from the room.

Your Response:

Scenario #13: You are a licensed bail enforcement agent working with a two-person team. You and your partner have stopped for coffee at 7-11 and are about to get into your car. You are both armed and wearing equipment vests with your gun and holster visible.

As you get in your patrol vehicle, a subject in a ski mask walks from behind the store and along the side toward the front. As soon as he sees you and your partner, he turns and runs. You notice that he has a shiny object in his right hand as he goes around the corner behind the store, away from you.

Your Response:

Correct Responses to Shooting Scenarios

Scenario #1: At this point, this is a no-shoot situation. You have not been threatened, and you are controlling the situation.

Scenario #2: If you are able to shoot to defend yourself, you are justified. The situation should make you fear for your life.

Scenario #3: You are not legally required to shoot. You are justified in shooting to protect the woman.

Scenario #4: You are justified in shooting to defend yourself. You should use verbal commands if time allows. You should seek cover.

Scenario #5: This is a felony robbery, and you are justified in resisting it with deadly force. However, once the crime has happened, you are not justified in using deadly force merely to prevent the escape of the robber. Legally, you may pursue and attempt to apprehend the criminal.

Scenario #6: You are justified in shooting if the assailant is close enough to hit you. Use verbal commands if time allows. Check the area around and beyond your target. You may resort to other measures if there is a danger to others, such as bystanders nearby who may be struck if you miss your target.

Scenario #7: You are justified in pointing your gun at the man with the gun and giving verbal commands. If the man draws his gun and you feel your life is in danger, you are legally justified in shooting.

Scenario #8: You are justified in shooting to protect yourself. You may need to dodge out of the way of the vehicle. Shots from you that stop the driver may not stop the vehicle.

Scenario #9: You do not know who the other man is and are not justified in shooting. You should take cover or retreat and identify yourself, commanding the man to drop his gun.

Scenario #10: Identify yourself and command them to stop so that you can question them. If you believe that these men are armed, you may be justified in drawing your gun; this is a no-shoot situation until you know that one or both of these men are armed and they show that they intend to assault you.

Scenario #11: Have your agents back away from the house but keep it under observation. Call the police and ask for an officer to meet the lead agent in the general area where he can describe the circumstances that occurred. Any further action will depend on the response by the police.

Scenario #12: You may use appropriate verbal commands and reasonable and necessary force, such as your hands, a Taser, or chemical agents, to apprehend and control the defendant should he continue to refuse to cooperate. You are justified in drawing your firearm and giving verbal commands for the defendant to submit. If he draws a firearm or knife from his pocket and turns toward you, you may use deadly force.

Scenario #13: Try to determine where he goes, whether he gets into a vehicle, its description, and the direction of travel. Contact the clerk in the store and call the police. Stay with the clerk until the police arrive and report what you have seen.

Safe Gun Handling

Basic Safety Rules

The four basic firearm safety rules are the foundation of good gun handling. These four rules apply to ALL situations: the firing range, at home, while on the job, everywhere, and at all times.

1. ALWAYS TREAT ALL GUNS AS LOADED

Handling a firearm *casually* when it is “unloaded” (i.e., during dry practice and cleaning) and *carefully* when “loaded” is a sure recipe for disaster. Intelligence and memory are subject to the human frailties described above.

For example, as firearms instructors, it is not uncommon for us to have both inert and live weapons in our hands in the course of a training day. If we are thoughtless in our handling of inert weapons in demonstrations, that attitude will inevitably carry over to our handling of live weapons. Don’t take that chance. Treat all weapons the same. The frequent response that “I didn’t know it was loaded” is of no comfort to those affected by the consequences.

2. NEVER LET THE MUZZLE COVER ANYTHING YOU ARE NOT WILLING TO DESTROY

The muzzle end of a gun - the end the bullet comes out of - is the dangerous end of the gun. It is impossible to keep a firearm from being pointed somewhere, so unless you have a target to fire at, always keep your firearm pointed in a “safe direction.” A safe direction is one in which, if an accidental discharge occurs, there will be no human injury or death and, at most, minor property damage.

People who have been around guns a lot in a casual or uncontrolled environment often become careless about where the gun is pointing. You may hear them say, “Don’t worry about it; it isn’t loaded.” Of course, this violates Rule #1. If a gun is under your control (that is, in your hands), then you must always be aware of where the muzzle is pointed.

This rule is not just a shooting rule but a handling one. You are responsible for muzzle control while cleaning the gun, loading and unloading the gun, and whenever you are carrying or holding the gun. This rule applies even while “indexing” during searching or challenging.

3. KEEP YOUR TRIGGER FINGER INDEXED ABOVE THE TRIGGER GUARD UNTIL YOUR SIGHTS ARE ON TARGET AND YOU HAVE DECIDED TO FIRE

This is one of the most commonly violated of all the safety rules. When violated along with Rule #2, it frequently leads to disaster.

When the human being is startled, loses balance, or performs certain physically demanding tasks, there is an unavoidable physical response. If, at that time, the finger is in a position where it can get to the trigger, the weapon will fire. To minimize this risk, when not firing the weapon, the shooter **must** “index” the trigger finger above the trigger guard alongside the receiver. The trigger finger must be off the trigger until you are “on target” and ready to fire.

If you train on the range with this technique, then this will not be any slower than leaving your finger on the trigger. Your trigger finger stays off the trigger as the gun comes on target and goes on the trigger when you decide to fire. After firing, the trigger finger comes off the trigger and stays off as you lower the gun to the low-ready position.

The finger is not on the trigger during the following operations: when drawing the gun from the holster or removing a long gun like a shotgun or rifle from its rack; when searching with the gun in your hand; when running or moving with the gun in your hand; while reloading the gun; while clearing a malfunction of the gun; when holstering the gun or placing a long gun in its case or rack.

The purpose of this rule is to prevent the firing of the gun until you truly intend to fire it. This rule will prevent the vast majority of unintentional discharges. The fingers of the hand will all clench when you are startled, under extreme stress, about to lose your gun in a struggle, or when falling. Unless you have trained yourself to keep your finger off the trigger, you may fire the gun without intending to do so.

People under stress undergo physiological changes that include loss of the ability to perform precise movements with the hands and fingers. At the same time, muscle strength and tension increase. Even in a training environment, it is possible to see this unconscious response to stress. Individuals carrying revolvers, who are improperly trained to keep their finger on the trigger, will often exert enough pressure on the trigger to pull the hammer halfway back without being aware that they are doing this.

For these reasons, no matter what kind of gun is being used, the rule remains the same: keep your finger off the trigger until your gun is on target. The proper position for the trigger finger (when not on the trigger) is on the gun's frame outside the trigger guard.

4. **BE SURE OF THE TARGET, AS WELL AS THE SURROUNDINGS AND BEYOND**

You must identify the target and know what is behind and beyond it. If you intend to fire your weapon, you must ensure you have properly identified your target. Even during the stress of a real gun battle, shooting at movement or muzzle flashes or any other unidentified target is a serious error since you do not know at what you are shooting. Fellow officers who have not bothered to identify the target shoot many police officers each year. Those officers who work in plain, civilian clothes are at the greatest risk of being shot if they display a weapon. The same is true of private security officers and investigators.

Just because a person is armed does not automatically make them a threat and does not sufficiently identify that person as someone you can shoot. In darkness, you should use your flashlight to identify the potential threat. Verbal challenges may also serve to help identify a questionable person.

Be aware of the area behind your intended target. Even in a situation where you are justified in shooting, there may be innocent bystanders behind and beyond the intended target; the presence of these people may cause you to hold your fire.

Modern handgun ammunition will penetrate several interior sheetrock walls, and some bullets

will pass through exterior walls and retain enough energy to kill or wound someone on the other side. If you must shoot inside a building, do not consider sheet metal, sheetrock, plywood, etc. walls as a safe, bullet-stopping background.

Although many consider a firing range to be a safe shooting environment, the responsibility for determining that it is safe to shoot is yours. It is possible for shooters to begin shooting when someone is still downrange behind the targets. Some firing ranges have a fairly low backstop behind the targets, and it is possible to fire bullets over the top of this backstop. A handgun bullet fired at a 30-degree angle may travel over 1/4 mile and retain enough energy to kill or wound.

Since you are pointing the gun and pressing the trigger, you are responsible for where and what the bullet hits.

There are no exceptions to the above basic safety rules. Following these rules, you cannot have a firearms “accident.”

Home Safety

The four basic gun safety rules apply at home, but there are some additional considerations since you may not be the only person who will have access to the gun. Children, spouses, relatives, or visitors may have access to your gun if you keep it in the home. Guns attract the curious, who may have no training in safe handling.

Here are some ideas that may help you maintain a safe home:

- Leave your gun at work with your employer. Many employers will not allow you to take a gun home, while others give you a choice. If you cannot secure the gun at home, consider asking your employer to arrange for safe storage.
- Lock your gun in the vehicle trunk that you use, and control access to the keys.
- Install a deadbolt on a closet door and make a routine of placing your gun in the locked closet as soon as you arrive home.
- Buy a small lockable gun box, which only you have the combination.
- Install a trigger lock or bore lock on the gun when it is not used. These are available in gun stores for a reasonable price.
- Educate your family and children about gun safety to minimize their risk, not only at your home but also if they should encounter a gun while in another’s home.
- Children's Education is practical if they are at an age where they can understand your instructions and the concept of death and can reasonably be expected to be responsible for their actions.
- No one can set the standard for safety in your home - you must decide how your gun is best stored. There are no statutes in this State governing the storage of guns in a private residence, but the courts have found in some civil cases that there is a duty to protect minors from access to firearms.

Safety While Cleaning Your Gun

The four basic safety rules covered above always apply while cleaning your gun. In addition, the gun must be unloaded in a safe place before cleaning or disassembly. Note that some semi-automatic pistols (like the Glock) require that the user pull the trigger in order to disassemble the gun; of course, this means that the user must have a safe place to unload the gun, point the gun, and pull the trigger before disassembling the gun. The safety ritual that must be observed whenever you clean or disassemble your gun is this:

1. You must remove all ammunition from the gun and the immediate area. The gun must be unloaded; the magazines must be empty. The duty belt and speed loaders/extra magazines are removed from sight and reach.

Verify that the gun is empty both by looking and touching. Place your smallest finger in the chamber of a semi-automatic pistol (it is possible for a mechanical defect to cause a cartridge to remain in the chamber).

2. Permit no distractions during the program. If you are interrupted during the unloading or cleaning, you must go back to the beginning of this ritual to verify again that the gun is unloaded. Some interruptions that may lead to an accident include taking phone calls, watching television, and having visitors or children come in. What often happens is that the gun is loaded at some point just before or during the interruption, and the user does not remember that the gun is loaded when he returns to it after the interruption. The user of the gun then treats the gun as if it is unloaded and fires it.
3. Make a conscious switch to practice mode. Tell yourself out loud that the gun is unloaded for the purpose of cleaning.
4. You must have a safe, bullet-stopping aim point if you will snap or dry-fire the gun during the cleaning, disassembly, or assembly process. Never violate the safety rules that require you to treat all guns as if they are loaded and point the gun only at something you are willing to destroy.
5. Once the gun is reassembled, make a conscious switch back to reality. Say out loud, "The gun is loaded and will fire if I pull the trigger." You must impress on yourself that handling the gun is no longer safe.
6. When the gun is reassembled, you should put it away immediately. The gun should be holstered and cased, whether loaded or not, and removed from sight and reach. If the gun is left within sight and reach, there will be a temptation to pick it up and snap the trigger.

There are no shortcuts to gun safety. If you follow the above ritual every time, you will not have a gun accident.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide Prevention and Firearms Use in the Private Security Industry

The private security industry is crucial in maintaining safety and order in various settings. However, the nature of the work, which often involves access to firearms, can pose significant risks,

particularly concerning suicide prevention.

Understanding the Risks

Suicide is a complex and multifaceted issue influenced by various factors, including mental health, stress, and access to lethal means. In the private security industry, the accessibility of firearms can increase the risk of suicide among personnel. Therefore, it is essential to recognize the signs of distress and take proactive measures to mitigate these risks.

Key Strategies for Suicide Prevention

1. **Mental Health Support:** It is vital to provide robust mental health support, including access to counseling services, education, and regular check-ins. Encouraging open conversations about mental health can help reduce stigma and promote seeking help.
2. **Training and Awareness:** Regular training sessions on recognizing the signs of suicidal ideation and understanding the risk factors associated with firearms use are crucial.
3. **Access Control:** Implementing strict protocols for firearm access can help reduce the risk, including secure storage of firearms, regular audits, and ensuring that only authorized personnel have access to them.
4. **Supportive Environment:** Fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment can significantly impact mental well-being. Encouraging teamwork, providing opportunities for social interaction, and promoting a culture of respect and support can help reduce feelings of isolation and stress.
5. **Crisis Intervention:** Establishing clear procedures for crisis intervention is essential. These include having personnel who can respond to emergencies, providing immediate support, and ensuring that individuals in crisis receive the necessary care.
6. **Assessing Risks:** Assessments of personnel's mental health and well-being can help identify those at risk. These assessments should be confidential and conducted by qualified professionals.

Conclusion

Suicide prevention in the context of firearms use within the private security industry requires a multifaceted approach. By prioritizing mental health support, training, access control, fostering a supportive environment, and implementing crisis intervention strategies, private security companies can play a pivotal role in safeguarding the well-being of their personnel.

Review of Test Questions

Suicide prevention in the context of firearms use within the private security industry requires a multifaceted approach, including mental health support, training and awareness, access control, supportive environment, crisis intervention, and assessing risks.

Reduction of Risk Due to Lead Ingestion

Lead is a heavy metal and a toxic substance. The human body uses many metals in daily metabolism, but lead is not one of them.

For our purpose, with firearms use, **exposure to lead comes from the following forms:** combustion of lead azide or lead styphnate in primers, exposure of the projectile base to hot gases, friction of the projectile and barrel, and impact of the bullet with the target and backstop.

The most common way to enter the human body is through inhalation and ingestion. Aside from the inhalation of lead from the air in the range environment, lead may be ingested and spread around other environments (e.g., your home, vehicle, clothing, food, etc.) if hands are not cleaned and hair and clothes are not washed before further contamination occurs.

Due to the toxic nature of lead, overexposure can lead to poisoning. Short-term over-exposure in high doses can lead to brain dysfunction, leading to seizures, coma, and death by cardio-respiratory arrest.

Long-term over-exposure may lead to the damage of blood forming, nervous, digestive, and reproductive systems.

Common symptoms

- Loss of memory and difficulty in concentration fatigue
- Irritability and aggressiveness
- Loss of sexual interest
- Insomnia
- Depression
- Headaches
- Neurological symptoms, such as muscle twitching
- Encephalopathy (major brain and CNS dysfunction)
- Elevated blood pressure
- Digestive difficulties and abdominal pain
- Weight loss
- Joint pain, particularly in long bone joints
- Kidney and/or liver damage
- In women, menstrual irregularity and decreased fertility
- Potential congenital disabilities in an unborn fetus
- Sore or bleeding gums
- Hyperactivity

Prevention

The most significant contributor to high lead levels in shooters is inhalation due to poor ventilation of indoor ranges. When possible, do not shoot indoors. When shooting indoors, you should ensure adequate ventilation (no smoke should hang in the shooting area), avoid going downrange, and wear

a mask or respirator along with other protective gear. If possible, shoot fully encased bullets lead-free bullets, and use lead-free primers.

In any range environment, indoor or outdoor, exposure may be limited if you follow these guidelines:

- Wash hands, forearms, and faces with soap upon leaving the range before eating, smoking, or putting anything in your mouth.
- Wear a hat and glasses while shooting.
- Wash your hair before bed and thoroughly clean your facial hair.
- Don't eat, drink, or smoke in range environments.
- Blow your nose after leaving the range.
- Wash clothing worn on the range before contaminating others.
- Don't put empty cases in your mouth or use your hat as a storage container when picking up brass.

These same range procedures should be followed if a firearm is cleaned after leaving the range.

While we want and expect you to train in the gear you will wear on the street; you should be careful to clean it after use on the range. Shoes worn on the range will carry lead into your home. They should be cleaned or not worn inside. Be sure to shower in your department locker room when you get home or before.

Remember, the people who are especially susceptible to the effects of lead ingestion are pregnant women (and the fetus they are carrying) and small children. Pregnant women should never be allowed in a range and should not be exposed to high levels of lead. If your spouse or friend is pregnant, take every precaution to prevent exposing them to high levels of lead.

We realize that all of this seems like a lot of trouble. However, only the wimps wore hearing protection on the range a generation ago. Due to that attitude, many retired cops are answering phones that aren't ringing. Protect yourself. You're one of the good guys, and we must win the fights. We also want to have a long, enjoyable life.

Review of Test Questions

Identify four methods for preventing lead ingestion.

Ritual Dry Practice

Written by Bill Burris

There is a procedure to follow that will eliminate unintentional discharges when used in conjunction with the four primary weapons safety rules.

These rules are as follows: NOTE: The 4 Safety Rules below are written by the author.

1. ALL GUNS ARE ALWAYS LOADED
2. NEVER LET THE MUZZLE COVER ANYTHING YOU ARE NOT WILLING TO DESTROY.
3. KEEP YOUR FINGER OFF THE TRIGGER UNTIL YOUR SIGHTS ARE ON TARGET AND YOU ARE READY TO FIRE
4. BE SURE OF THE TARGET, AS WELL AS THE SURROUNDINGS AND BEYOND

Note: As this article uses proprietary language, please refer to pages 33 and 36 for the WSCJTC-approved language pertaining to the 4 Safety Rules.

The procedure is called “Ritual Dry Fire Practice” and involves several extra steps whenever you perform practice or maintenance without the intention of actually shooting the gun.

Step One: Select the Proper Time and Place

The proper time is when you are alone. Anyone around you during your practice serves only one purpose: that of an unintended victim should you have a weapon discharged. One exception to the “be alone” rule is if someone is actually involved in the practice with you. There should be no distractions, including no television, telephone, eating, or conversations with people who drop in on you. If you are interrupted during a practice session, practice stops immediately, and when the distraction leaves, you start over from step one.

The proper place is one that affords a safe backstop at which to point your gun. This must be something that will stop your bullet if you fire one. Your backstop might be a wood pile, sandbags, or another object that doesn’t threaten ricochet. Whatever you select or construct for this purpose must be capable of stopping the type of ammunition your gun fires.

Step Two: Remove All Live Ammunition from Your Training Area

This means all live ammunition, including that in your gun, on your person, and in your vicinity. If you are in a room, remove the ammunition from that room. If you are outdoors, remove the ammunition far enough away that it will take conscious effort to retrieve it before you can reload the gun.

Step Three: Go Into “Practice Mode”

This is where the “ritual” occurs. We want to make a positive mental shift to the realization that we are operating in a set of altered circumstances wherein it is permissible to do things we would not normally do, such as squeeze the trigger when we don’t intend to shoot the gun.

We say to ourselves out loud, “This is practice time; I’m going to practice now.” We repeat this statement three times to stay mentally focused on what we are about to do.

Step Four: Perform Practice

At this time, we practice whatever we need. It might be pistol presentation (draw), sight alignment/picture, or compressed surprise breaks (trigger squeeze). Usually, we practice a combination of skills or maintenance procedures.

Step Five: When Practice Is Over, Go Into “Reality Mode”

This is the traditionally dangerous time when the gun is reloaded, and a shot is fired. To avoid this, we conduct a second ritual to shift our mind firmly back to the reality that when the trigger is next squeezed, a bullet will destroy whatever the gun is pointed at. We say to ourselves, out loud, “Practice is over; this is real.” This is repeated three times.

Step Six: Place the Gun into the Condition You Normally Keep It (Loaded)

This keeps us in compliance with safety rule one. If you are concerned about loaded firearms around the house, you should be. Guns are inherently dangerous and should not be left unattended. Children are likely to find them and proceed to experiment. Children can load firearms, as well as obtain ammunition from their friends’ homes. They don’t intend to shoot the gun, but often children do. It’s not whether the gun is loaded but whether it is accessible that you should be concerned about. When you are not in direct control of your firearm, it should be secured in such a manner that children cannot get it into a firing mode. Lock the gun in a safe or a gun case or place a locking mechanism on it. It is your responsibility whether or not a child (or irresponsible adult) is invited into your home. Should one of these individuals obtain your unsecured firearm, you may be very unpleasantly surprised at your potential civil liabilities when someone is injured or killed with your gun.

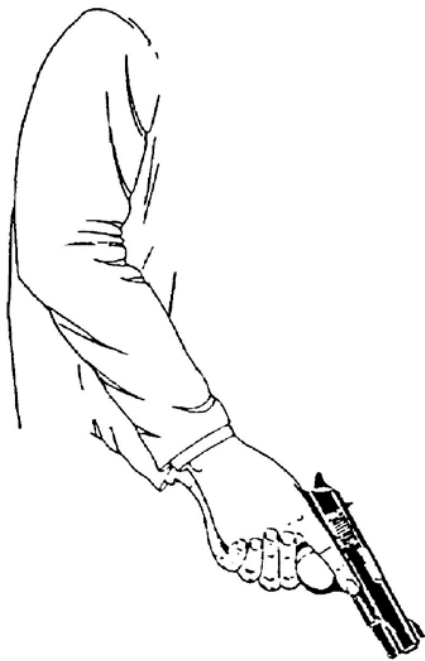
Step Seven: Put the Gun Away Immediately

Place the gun in its storage area or holster if you are going to work. Try not to handle the gun again for at least an hour after Ritual Dry Fire Practice. When you next touch it, you want all vestiges of “Practice Mode” to be gone from your thinking program.

These seven steps will ensure you do not have an accidental or negligent discharge while handling your firearms. They are well worth your time and effort.

The Safe Low Ready Position

With a handgun, you may need to cover someone or move with your gun out of the holster and in your hand. With a long gun such as a shotgun or rifle, you may need to have the gun at your shoulder but not pointed at a target. The position of readiness is referred to as low ready, and with the handgun, it is the position in which you will carry your gun when it is not holstered but when you do not have a target at which you wish to point the gun. When a long gun is not being carried slung on the shoulder or in a safe port-arms position, use this position when you must carry the gun in readiness but when you do not have a target at which you are pointing the gun.



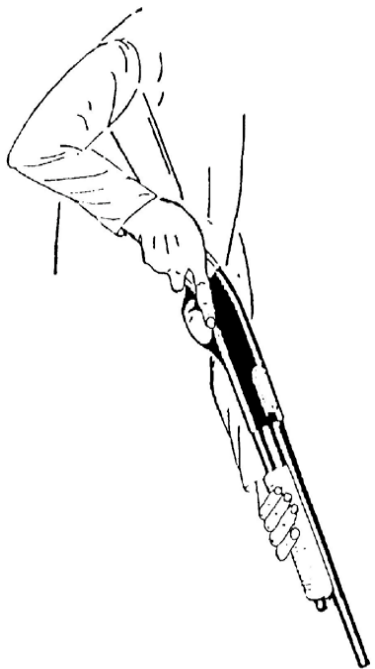
Handgun Low Ready

To summarize, the ready position is the position in which you will carry your gun when it is not in the holster and not on target. The low ready position describes the direction the muzzle should be pointed - that is, the muzzle should be pointed down, at the ground, at about a 45-degree angle. The purpose of the low-ready position is to maintain control of the muzzle of your gun at all times. Experience has shown that pointing the gun with the muzzle up is not as safe as the low-ready position. Problems with the muzzle-up position include:

- You may lean over the muzzle of the gun and risk shooting yourself in the head,
- You may, without realizing it, point the gun at bystanders who are above your position.
- You may discharge the gun in an unsafe direction if you unintentionally pull the trigger.
- You will probably be unaware of exactly where the gun's muzzle is pointed.
- If you stumble or fall, the gun will probably be discharged in an unsafe direction.
- If you need to fire the gun, bringing it down onto the target is slower than bringing it up.
- Your physical control of the gun is lessened by holding it up. If someone grabs the gun, they will probably be able to take it away from you. This is even truer with a long gun than a handgun.

The low-ready position overcomes most of the problems stated above. With the gun's muzzle low and in front of the body, you are always aware of where you are pointing the gun. Unintentional

discharges will be directed at the ground where the chance of hitting a bystander is minimized, and the risk of ricochet is minimized. From the low-ready position, you can quickly bring the gun on target without obstructing your view of the target.



Shotgun Low Ready

The four basic safety rules always apply. The rule that you never point your gun at anything you are unwilling to destroy always applies; this means that if it is not safe to point your muzzle down, then do not. One example would be the situation where you are following another individual down a stairway with your gun in your hand - in this case, it is not safe to point the gun down if it will be pointing at this person. You must use your own good judgment and follow the basic rules of firearms safety, but in most cases, the low-ready position with the muzzle pointed down in front of you is the safest choice.

Review of Test Questions

The four basic rules of firearms safety are:

1. Always treat all guns as loaded.
2. Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.
3. Keep your trigger finger indexed above the trigger guard until your sights are on target and you have decided to fire.
4. Be sure of the target, as well as the surroundings and beyond.

Good Sense Tactics for the Use of Firearms

There is a lot of knowledge relating to how to survive an armed, violent encounter. It is difficult to categorize this information under one subject, but for the purpose of instruction, we are combining a number of different topics under the single category of “tactics.” This information has little to do

with marksmanship, but it definitely relates to the practical use of the firearm.

Cartridge Capability and Hazards

Safe and sensible shoot/don't shoot decisions and good judgment in using a gun are partially based on knowledge of a given cartridge's performance.

- .38 special or 9mm Luger bullets will travel a maximum distance of about 6400 feet - this is over one mile.
- .223 rifle bullets will travel a maximum distance of 11,600 feet - this is over two miles.

So, unless the bullet you fire strikes something capable of stopping it, it can travel well beyond the area you can see and retain enough energy to wound or kill.

Warning Shots

It is not recommended that you fire warning shots into the air. You cannot predict where a bullet you fire into the air will come down; thus, such a shot is random, and you have not aimed it at anything. A random warning shot violates the basic safety rules.

Many law enforcement agencies prohibit warning shots because of the danger to bystanders. The law does not specifically prohibit warning shots; therefore, your good judgment and the physical environment in which you work govern the use of a warning shot. Should you decide to fire a warning shot, you must be prepared to justify your action. You must show that it did not violate any of the four basic safety rules, specifically "Never point the gun at anything you are not willing to destroy," and "Be sure of your target and what is behind and beyond your target." Your employer may have a policy on warning shots.

Nearly all modern handgun bullets will penetrate sheetrock interior walls. Most will penetrate exterior walls made of plywood, cinder block, or sheet metal. It is not unusual for a handgun bullet to penetrate the exterior and interior walls of a typical residence and still be able to kill or wound. Buckshot or slugs fired from a shotgun have a similar ability to penetrate. Any bullet or pellet that strikes a hard surface can ricochet, that is, bounce off. The angle of impact with the surface, the type of surface, and the construction and velocity of the bullet all combine to determine where the ricochet will go and how dangerous it is.

For example, a bullet striking a concrete wall at a shallow or flat angle will continue on with little reduction in velocity or energy, in approximately the same direction it was going before it hit the wall. Projectiles, especially shotgun pellets that strike the ground (even dirt or grass surfaced), will continue on. Clearly, you must be aware of your surroundings, and this awareness will affect your decision to shoot.

Danger to Others

Even if you are legally justified in using deadly force, you may choose not to shoot because of the danger to others. No one is able to make these decisions for you, but here are some things that may help you make such a decision.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I have any other options?
- Do I risk death or serious injury if I don't shoot?
- Is another person at risk of death or serious injury if I do not shoot?
- Are innocent bystanders behind, beyond, or around the attacker?

Shooting at Vehicles

Shooting at vehicles is not usually recommended. It is difficult to stop a vehicle by shooting it or its tires. A handgun bullet will probably not puncture a typical tire, and if it does, then the vehicle will continue to travel some distance. Shooting the driver may result in the vehicle going out of control and causing serious injury to others.

If someone is using a vehicle as a weapon to assault you, you may be justified in defending yourself with deadly force; if this is the case, then the appropriate target is your attacker, not the car. You may also be justified in defending yourself against someone who is shooting at you from a vehicle. Be certain that your decision to shoot is based on your need to defend yourself or another and that this decision is also the best option available to you.

Cover and Concealment

Train yourself to take cover immediately if you are fired upon. If surprised and attacked by someone with a gun, your best immediate option may be to take cover and then defend yourself. Standing in the open and exchanging shots is a risky, poor second choice.

Cover is defined as anything that will stop a bullet for our purposes. It is anything you can hide yourself behind that will not allow bullets to penetrate and hit you. Some examples are a telephone pole, a concrete wall or building, certain parts of an automobile (engine block, axles, wheels), and a heavy steel mailbox. Most wood walls, nearly all interior walls of residences and businesses, and wood or metal doors will not provide cover - they will not stop bullets. Cover, even if it does not protect you completely, is better than no cover at all.

Concealment is defined as anything that hides you but will not stop a bullet. Concealment is obviously not as good as cover, but if your assailant cannot see you, then they may not be able to shoot you. Some examples of concealment are shrubs, sheetrock walls, tall grass, and hollow core wood doors.

Cover and concealment are among the best tactics in any armed confrontation. Selecting a position where cover and concealment are available may allow you to control a situation without getting into a gunfight. Be aware of your surroundings and the potential cover and concealment they offer so that you will be able to take advantage of your environment if you are attacked.

Retreat

If you are able to anticipate that you may be entering an armed confrontation, it may be possible to retreat to a position of safety. You will be the judge as to whether this is possible or not. If the property will be lost because of your retreat, then perhaps this is an acceptable option. A retreat that will cost someone else's life is less acceptable and requires that you make the moral decision to stay or retreat.

There is absolutely nothing that requires you to risk your life unnecessarily. If the situation is clearly not winnable, it would be good judgment to avoid engaging in a deadly fight. For instance, five armed assailants would be more than one person should be expected to detain or confront.

Retreat is an option only if there is a safe place to retreat or if additional help is coming. Each situation is different, and each situation will require that you exercise good judgment.

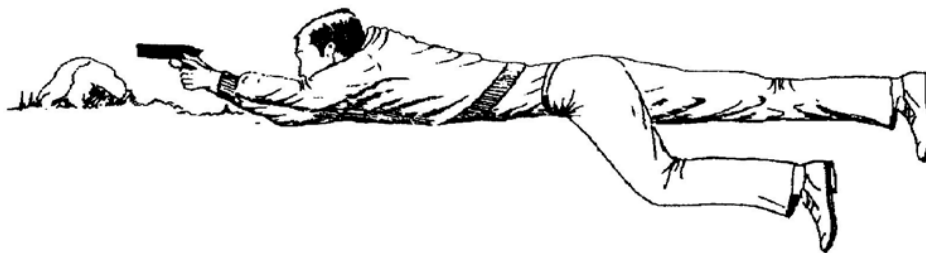
Distance

Distance from your attacker is almost always to your advantage. Maximize it if possible. This may mean moving or retreating, if possible. You are trained and qualified with a firearm, but most criminals will not be. Thus, the increased distance from an assailant reduces the chance that they can shoot at and hit you, but it still allows you to defend yourself. Even well-trained police officers tend to get too close to a threatening person. Police may need to control an individual physically - you do not (usually). Keep your distance until it is safe to approach your assailant.

Corners and doorways are particularly difficult to approach safely, and the principle of maximizing distance is your best tactic. If you are moving toward a corner or doorway, move away from the wall so you are not within grabbing distance. Then, move around the corner in an arc, one step at a time, so that with each step, a new segment of the room or area is within your view. Should you encounter a threat, temporary safety is achieved by quickly stepping back toward the wall.

Shoot from the Steadiest Position Possible

If you must shoot, you will probably be experiencing both physical and emotional stress, which will interfere with your ability to shoot. Physical exertion, excitement, and fear can all conspire to load your system with adrenaline; this is your body's natural reaction, and it will allow you to perform physical exertions normally beyond your ability. Although stress and excitement will increase your physical strength and endurance, they, through the action of adrenaline, will also cause muscle tremors and shaking that will interfere with shooting and reloading. In short, while your strength increases, your ability to do fine, exacting, precision shooting disappears.



One partial solution is to brace yourself. The lower you get to the ground, the more stable your position will be. Standing and shooting are less stable than kneeling, and kneeling is less stable than shooting from a prone position. By training from these positions on the range, you can train yourself to assume a low, steady shooting position, preferably one with adequate cover.

When bracing your shooting position, it is best to support your body, arms, or hands rather than the gun. In other words, try not to rest the gun barrel against a support. Placing the gun directly on a supporting wall will probably reduce your accuracy and, in the case of semi-auto pistols, will probably cause a gun malfunction. Pressing the frame or trigger guard against the support is all right.

Center of Mass

If you must shoot at another human being, it will be in defense of life, and your immediate goal is to stop the attacker from continuing. You will not be able to choose to shoot someone “just a little bit” in order to discourage them.

You must fire immediately and hope that:

1. You hit your intended target, and
2. Your hits stop your attacker.

To do this, you should train to shoot at the center of your attacker’s upper body; this is often called “center of mass” shooting. Under the stress of a deadly attack, this is the safest, most effective way to shoot. It minimizes the chance that you will miss your target, reduces the possibility that you will hit an innocent bystander, and increases the chance of stopping the attack.

If your attacker is not fully exposed, you may not be able to fire at the real center of mass. In this case, you should shoot for the center of available mass. In other words, place your sights in the center of that part of your attacker that is available.

Always try to use your sights - they are the key to hitting your target when under stress.

Target Identification

Night or day, your decision to shoot someone must be based on the legal need to defend yourself (as described elsewhere in this manual). Before you point your gun at someone and pull the trigger, you must correctly identify your target as the threat.

Target identification must be visual. You must see the person who is threatening you and know that you have identified the threat. A fellow security officer, a police officer, an armed homeowner, or an armed citizen may not be a threat to you, even though they have a gun. To avoid shooting an innocent person, you must identify yourself, determine who the threatening person is, and give the verbal commands that are appropriate.

Target identification is very difficult at night and is best done from behind adequate cover, using a flashlight. Police officers and security officers do shoot each other, sometimes resulting in death. This is usually not truly accidental; rather, it is often the result of a failure to identify the threat.

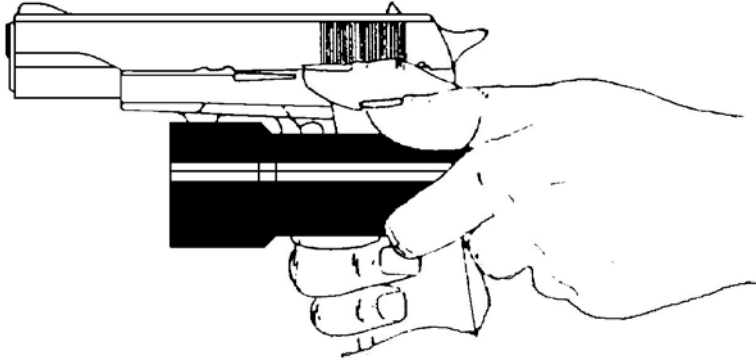
Night and Dim Light Shooting

Many armed guards and investigators work during hours of darkness. Lack of light makes shooting and hitting the target more difficult than in full daylight.

However, the principles of shooting remain the same. You must try to see your sights. In many situations, there will be enough light from streetlights, buildings, or vehicle headlights to allow you to use your sights. If you must fire in near total darkness, you can do so by using a flashlight to both illuminate your sights and the target.

Here are three ways to do this:

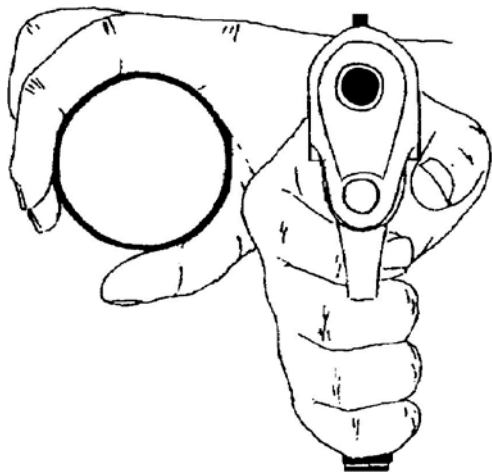
Flashlight Technique #1: Bring the gun and flashlight together in front of your body at eye level. The flashlight is held in the weak hand with the thumb on the button and the palm beneath it. The hands press together for stability and position the flashlight far enough back so that there is some light on the sights. This technique resembles how some people shoot with two hands, like an isosceles or point-shoulder stance. (Massad Ayoob teaches this technique.)



Flashlight Technique #2: The flashlight is held in the weak hand, overhand, and the middle finger is on the button. The elbow of the flashlight arm is held down, and the back of the flashlight-holding hand is held tightly against the back of the gun hand. This technique looks like a Weaver shooting stance. (This technique is called the “Harries.”)



Flashlight Technique #3: The flashlight is overhand in the weak hand, and the middle finger is on the button. The flashlight hand is brought down on top of the forearm holding the gun. The head of the flashlight will be behind and slightly to one side of the gun.



Flashlight Technique #4: The flashlight is held in the weak hand overhand, and the middle finger or thumb is on the button. The flashlight hand is used and pointed independently to the weapon. This position allows the flashlight to be used to search while keeping a weapon pointed in a safe direction.

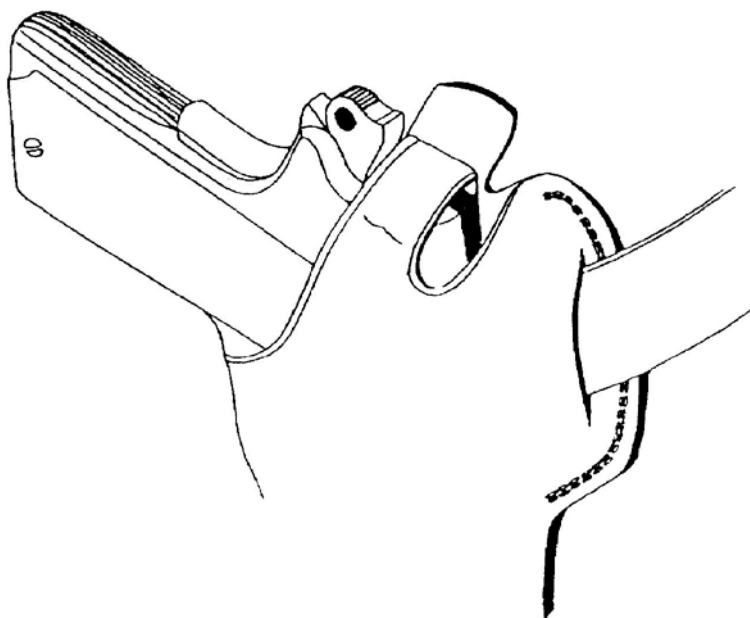


Use of any flashlight position requires that you hold the flashlight so that the moving slide of your semi-auto pistol does not strike it. Do not hold the head of the flashlight behind your semi-auto.

When night firing, it is important to keep the flashlight off until it is needed to search and identify a target or shoot. The finger operating the flashlight button should turn off the light before you move or change position. If you must use the flashlight to shoot, do not turn it on until you need it, and then turn off the light immediately before you begin to move. Since the flashlight has illuminated you and identified your location, you should move to a new position of safety and cover, if possible.

Holsters

Officers should carry the gun in a holster that adequately retains it. The holster should not be cut away in the area of the trigger guard so that you can place your finger on the trigger as you draw the gun. Carrying the gun on the strong side (the same side as your strong/dominant hand) has several advantages, such as a quicker draw, quicker on-target, and easier retention and defense against a takeaway attempt.



Pictured here is an example of a concealable holster for plain clothes wear

Review of Test Questions

- Typical plywood and sheetrock residential construction will usually not stop a handgun bullet.
- A warning shot fired at random into the air is not a recommended act.
- For the purposes of protection from gunfire, cover is defined as anything that will stop a bullet.
- Distance between you and your assailant are almost always in your favor. Kneeling and prone positions are steadier to shoot from than a standing position. Shooting for “center of mass” when defending yourself is recommended.
- Shooting at a person you have not identified is not permissible.
- When using a flashlight to aid in target identification and shooting, you should turn the light off before you move or change position.
- A holster that allows you to place your finger on the trigger while the gun is in the holster is a safety hazard.

The Modern Technique

Gun Fighting, Not Target Shooting

Anyone who has been involved in a law enforcement or self-defense gunfight will tell you that it didn't last very long, usually only a matter of seconds. Everything being taught during this course is geared toward giving you the tools necessary to beat a lethal adversary.

When mastered, the "Modern Technique" of Pistol craft will give you a great deal of confidence in your ability to prevail in a lethal "short-term, interpersonal confrontation." We are the "Good Guys"; we have to WIN-- because it's really bad when we don't.

There are five components to the "Modern Technique" of Pistol Craft. They are listed below with a brief synopsis and explained in greater detail in the following pages.

1. **Modern Isosceles Stance-** Chest facing directly at threat, weight on balls of feet, elbows locked out, feet in "fighting stance," also known as the "Universal Shooting Stance." This stance is effective for any weapon platform, provides consistency, and maximizes the effectiveness of body armor.
2. **Weapon Retention Presentation**—This is a 3-step method for quickly and smoothly getting the pistol from the holster to pointed-in on target, culminating in a proper stance. This method allows fast, controlled shooting in an arm's length confrontation.
3. **Compressed Surprise Break-** Finger placement and trigger manipulation. The trigger is pressed smoothly and quickly straight back until the trigger "breaks" and the pistol fires. The instant of "ignition" is a complete "surprise" to the shooter. All this occurs quickly, compressing the time to fire the pistol. Hence the "Compressed Surprise Break."
4. **Flash Sight Picture-** Aim the pistol with your body. Confirm correct sight alignment with a quick look ("flash") at the front sight immediately before pressing the trigger.
5. **Heavy Duty Handgun-** Shoot as powerful a handgun as YOU can (within policy constraints).

The Modern Isosceles and Weaver Stance

It can be successfully argued that any shooting stance will become the first casualty of the deadly force confrontation. Circumstances may dictate that the fight is waged from a seated position in a car, lying on the ground, behind, moving to cover, etc. Yet, even then, the overriding principles established and reinforced in training the body and mind on the range allow the shooter to adapt and compensate for the disadvantages of the situation.

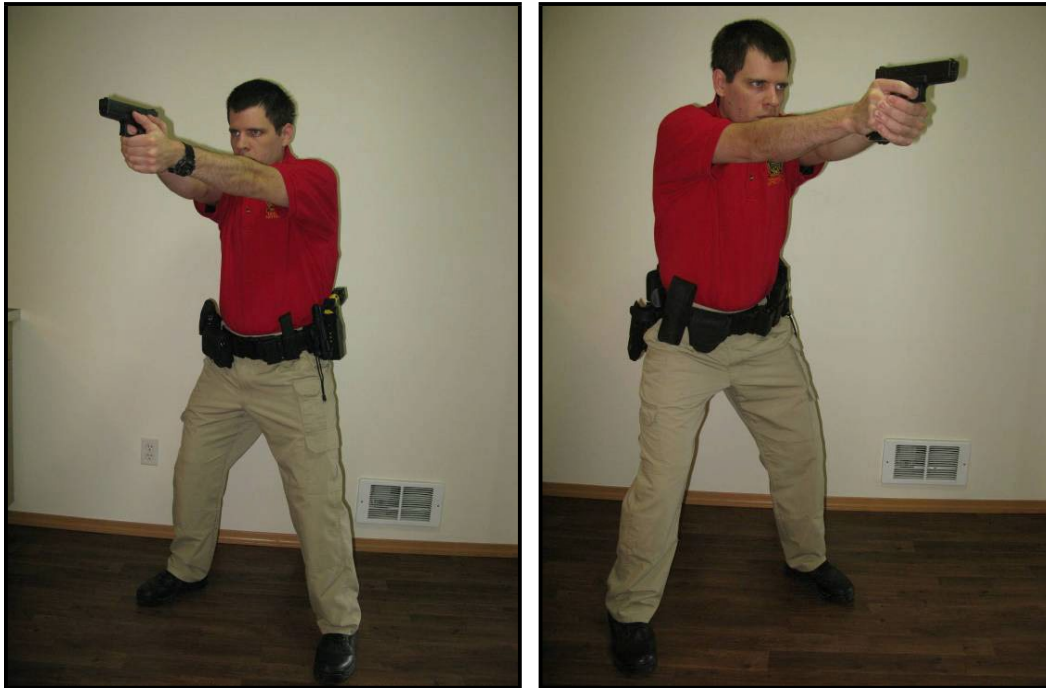
In learning or teaching a shooting stance, one must consider that it is designed to accomplish several important results under ideal circumstances:

- Consistent, accurate placement of shot(s)
- Recoil control for quick follow-up shots and the ability to keep the semi-automatic pistol from malfunctioning
- A solid platform that provides balance and mobility.

Several stances are widely accepted as effective in achieving these goals, considering the mechanics of the human body. It is understood that slight modifications must be made when the shooter's physical idiosyncrasies are considered. Obviously, the fewer modifications are made, the more the platform's strength is maintained.

The Isosceles Stance

- The feet are a comfortable shoulder-width apart, with the dominant leg farther back from the intended target. This “interview stance” places the holstered weapon in a position that is less accessible to confronted suspects.
- The knees are slightly bent, with the center of gravity shifted forward over the balls of the feet.
- The upper body is angled slightly forward to assist in recoil control. Shooter size, strength, and caliber/recoil of the weapon will determine the angle, although 1 – 2 inches forward of center is usually sufficient.
- The weapon is held in a two-handed grip with both arms fully extended and shoulders relaxed.
- The handgun is centered on the midline of the body.



Note: The weapon is pointed “in,”...So the finger is on the trigger

Advantages

- **Simplicity.** This stance is easy to learn, and there is no need to concern oneself with elbow and shoulder angles.
- The front panel of the soft body armor is **squared off** to the threat.
- **Recoil** is absorbed by the weight of the upper torso leaning on the weapon through the rigid structure of the extended arms.
- **Toes** are pointed forward, allowing for better mobility when required.

Disadvantages

- **Fatigue.** The weight of the weapon is being held up at the end of the extended arms by

the shoulder muscles. As the muscles become fatigued, the shooters tend to lean backward to compensate, thereby losing recoil control.

The Weaver Stance

- The feet are a comfortable shoulder-width apart, with the dominant leg farther back from the intended target. This “interview stance” places the holstered weapon in a less accessible position to confront suspects.
- The upper body is bladed at an angle to the threat, with the shoulders pointing in the same direction as the hips and feet.
- The weapon is held in a two-handed grip in isometric tension. Isometric tension is achieved by the dominant hand pushing the pistol away while the support hand applies equal pressure by pulling back toward the dominant shoulder.
- The dominant arm may be held straight or slightly bent.
- The support arm is bent with the elbow pointed downward. Failure to point the elbow down results in the shooter using arm muscles rather than skeletal structure to support the weapon.
- The dominant wrist is locked to control the muzzle flip.



Advantages

- Positioning the support arm under the weapon provides both skeletal and muscular support.
- Recoil control is provided by isometric tension. Therefore, this stance does not require the upper torso to lean forward as much as the Isosceles Stance. However, leaning forward is more natural than standing straight and erect in a fight, especially when movement is added. Note: Some proponents of the Weaver stance find that it can be enhanced by moving the center of gravity forward and bringing the arms closer to the centerline of the body.

Disadvantages

- The bladed body exposes the armpit and smaller side panels of the soft body armor to the threat.
- Allowing the support elbow to elevate while applying isometric tension redirects the pressure to one side, adversely affecting accuracy.
- Maintaining the same consistent isometric tension between the dominant and support hands and arms is difficult as the situation becomes more stressful.

Turning 90 Degrees to the Target

During a shooting situation, you may find yourself in a position where you have to deal with multiple assailants or find yourself being flanked by an attacker. Either way, you would have to turn 90 degrees right or left from your basic stance to engage your adversary. To accomplish this, you must perform the following;

- **Turning 90 Degrees Right** from the Modern Isosceles position, pivot on the ball of your right foot, picking up your left and swinging fully around to face the new direction. **Caution:** *Your sidearm is not removed from the holster until you face the new direction and are stable.*
- **Turning 90 Degrees Left** from the Modern Isosceles position, pivot on the ball of your left foot, picking up your right and swinging fully around to face the new direction. **Caution:** *Your sidearm is not removed from the holster until you face the new direction and are stable.*

Handgun Presentation and Recovery

An important distinction must be drawn between what Law Enforcement can do as opposed to the laws governing Private Security:

- **Law Enforcement** is given far more latitude in the eyes of the court to preemptively draw their sidearm in the face of a pending use of force situation.
- **Private Security**, like all private citizens, is given very little latitude if faced with the same situation. In essence, for a security officer to draw their firearm is to commit to the situation they face. Once the personal decision to draw a firearm in public is acted upon, a private citizen (including Private security officers) must either be justified in using deadly force or they are committing a crime such as ‘unlawful display of a weapon’ or ‘brandishing.’ There is no legally recognized middle ground. **Nothing** in this section implies that a security guard or investigator **MUST** shoot someone when their weapon is drawn. It only suggests that the individual understands the legal ramifications that come with such an act as drawing a firearm in public.

Presentation to a “Ready” Position addresses the situation in which the student perceives the need to have the weapon in hand but not the need to fire a shot (search, challenge, “Ready,” etc.)

This presentation is made up of the following three steps:

1. Grip
2. Clear
3. Join (“Challenge”)

Presentation to the Shot (sighted fire) addresses the situation in which the opponent’s aggressive action has resulted in the decision to shoot being already established, and the distance to the threat requires employing “flash sight picture” rather than precise sight alignment. This distance issue considers that the time between deciding to shoot and firing the shot is too short for the opponent to realistically alter their actions in time to influence the officer’s course of action.

When the confrontation (and range training) takes place at distances requiring the *longer time frames* necessary for precise sight alignment, it may be argued that opponents might have the time to alter their actions to those of compliance, thereby allowing the officers time to adjust their responses accordingly. As addressed earlier, live-fire exercises at longer distances with shoot/no-shoot (decision-making) targets must be formulated to address this issue. This presentation adds 2 steps to the 3 already listed above:

1. Grip
2. Clear
3. Join
4. Sights
5. Fire

Presentation to the Shot (COB) (“Weapon retention” or close-quarters, unsighted fire) addresses the situation where the decision has been made to fire a shot(s) at close quarters where the opponent is in such proximity to the officer that if the weapon is extended towards him, the opponent would have opportunity to take it, deflect it or interfere with its operation. This presentation removes step 3 and 4 from the above-listed five steps:

1. Grip
2. Clear
5. Fire

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE

Initially, train each step by verbal command to ensure that students can demonstrate the reference points of each step; this should progress to omitting the verbal commands of each step to allow students to complete the sequence at their own speed. A simple “Go,” “Fire,” “Up,” or “Challenge” command, whistle, or turning target may be used. As speed progresses, the instructor must monitor to ensure that the student retains all reference points.

Occasionally, reverting to verbal commands may become necessary, as students frequently tend to sacrifice the precision of the movement in an attempt to increase speed.



Interview Position

To focus on isolating and learning the precision of the essential steps of the skill, when initially introduced to the Handgun Presentation, students should start from an “interview position.”

The “interview position” should be adaptable as a passive, defensive tactics stance. Appropriate foot position is described in Sec. 4 under “Stance.” Hands should be together and relaxed at the center line of the body at about diaphragm level in a position consistent with notetaking.

The “interview position” is an *ideal* starting point only. after the basic steps of the draw are learned and consistently demonstrated from this static position, variables representing real-life situations should be introduced. These variables include starting with the hands in alternative positions to simulate occupation with other activities, including holding objects and drawing the weapon while moving, sitting, etc.

Instruction on the presentation of the weapon while moving must include when, where, and how to move, along with the advantages and disadvantages of moving (based on the environment and circumstances of the confrontation).

Instructional Steps for Presentation to the “Ready” Position

Should the opponent be at such a distance so as to not be a threat to the control or possession of the handgun (beyond arm’s reach), and the officer perceives the need to have the weapon in hand but **not the need to shoot** (search, challenge, etc.), the following steps are applicable:

1. “Grip”

- Both hands move *simultaneously*.
- The *support hand* moves to the body's centerline in the diaphragm area with the open palm towards the torso.
 - This places it in the *ideal* position to join with the dominant hand (step #3) for a two-handed grip.
- The *dominant hand* moves to the weapon, defeating all retention devices and obtaining the *proper* grip in the holster.
 - Taking the time to obtain the proper grip on the weapon during this step ensures that, if needed, the sights and the body are aligned once the weapon is drawn.

2. “Clear”

- The *support hand* remains in the same position.
- The *dominant hand* draws the weapon from the holster. When the muzzle clears the holster opening, briskly elevate it so that it points at the ground, approximately 45° to the front of the student.

3. “Join” (or “Challenge”)

- Student preference, training, the environment, and the situation will determine which of the “Ready” positions described in Sec 1 is appropriate.

If the “Guard” position is the objective, the *dominant hand* moves the weapon forward and down to a position where the muzzle points below the threat, and the hands (and weapon) do not block the student’s field of view. Simultaneously, the previously positioned *support hand* moves outboard so that its extended fingers cross over and wrap around the fingers of the dominant hand to obtain the proper two-handed grip. Care must be taken so that *the support hand does not pass in front of the weapon's muzzle at any time*. The two-handed grip is refined as the weapon moves forward.

- The trigger finger remains indexed above the trigger guard alongside the receiver. A verbal challenge may be appropriate.



From the “Clear” to the “Guard”

- **The support hand is already positioned if the “SUL” position is the objective.** The *dominant hand* moves the weapon forward and towards the body's centerline, and the *support hand* as it rotates the muzzle down to the point between the student's feet. The thumb of the *dominant hand* is extended away from the grip of the weapon to make contact with the tip of the *support hand thumb*. The barrel or slide of the weapon rests against the back of the extended *support hand* fingers.
- The trigger finger remains indexed above the trigger guard alongside the receiver. A verbal challenge may be appropriate.
- The environment, situational changes, and student preference will determine the movement between the Guard and the SUL position.



From the “Clear” to the “SUL”

Instructional Steps for the Presentation to the Shot(s)

1. “Grip”

- Both hands move *simultaneously*.
- The *support hand* moves to the body's centerline in the diaphragm area with the open palm towards the torso.
 - This places it in the *ideal* position to join with the dominant hand (step #3) for a two-handed grip.
- The *dominant hand* moves to the weapon, defeating all retention devices, and obtains the *proper grip* in the holster.
 - Taking the time to obtain the proper grip on the weapon in the holster so that it, the sights, and the body are aligned is much more efficient than a hurried, sloppy grip resulting in misalignment, which then results in inaccuracy and poor recoil control.



Full-firing grip



Holster retention device(s) released

2. “Clear”

- The *support hand* remains in the same position.
- The *dominant hand* draws the weapon from the holster. As soon as the handgun clears the holster opening, briskly elevate the muzzle to a horizontal position pointed at the threat, with the shooter's elbow anchored to their side. If it must be fired at this point, the movement of the slide will not impact the student's clothing or body. If the student obtained the proper grip of the weapon initially, the front sight, rear sight, wrist, and elbow will now be aligned.
- For agencies using pistols so equipped, this presentation step should be supplemented by a reflexive thumb sweep to ensure that the dual-function decocking lever (Sec. 2) is in the up (fire) position.

- Thumb safeties on single-action semi-automatic pistols **must not be disengaged** until this step is completed. Agency policy may address any further restrictions regarding when the safety may be disengaged.
- *After* the muzzle of the handgun is pointed at the threat and all conditions of the General Safety Rules #2, 3, and 4 (Sec. 1) have been met, the trigger finger should make contact with the trigger and begin taking up any slack (“prepping the trigger”)



Clear

3. “Join”

- The *dominant hand* starts moving the weapon in a straight line, pushing the muzzle directly towards the threat. Simultaneously, the previously positioned *support hand* moves outboard so that its extended fingers cross over and wrap around the fingers of the dominant hand to obtain the proper two-handed grip. Joining the two hands close to the body allows the proper two-handed grip of the weapon to be established by the time the arms are extended to the firing position. Care must be taken so that *the support hand does not pass in front of the muzzle of the weapon at any time*.
- The handgun continues in a straight line until the front sight intersects the line of sight between the student and the threat, as the support hand continues to refine the two-handed grip.
- *While* the weapon moves forward, the trigger finger continues to take up any slack. This puts the finger in position to *finish* the trigger press once the desired sight picture has been achieved. This eliminates the abrupt collision that occurs when the finger “attacks” the trigger from the “indexed” position after the arm is fully extended and the weapon is stationary.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE

1. As each weapon's trigger varies in weight and length of travel, considerable *dry repetition* must occur before making this a live-fire exercise.
2. Follow-up training must be added to address confrontations at longer distances, thus requiring time for prioritizing precise sight alignment over speed.



Join

4. “Sights”

- When the decision has been made to shoot, and the weapon's sights intersect the line of sight between the student and the point of aim on the threat, the student needs to make a conscious effort to focus on the front sight to obtain a *flash sight picture* (Sec. 4) for short distance shots (or more *precise sight alignment* (Sec. 4) for longer distance or precision shots, as addressed above).

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE

As the students become more familiar with the steps of the presentation and their desire to prioritize speed emerges, they will tend to sacrifice their focus on the front sight. Emphasizing this step in the training program increases the likelihood that it will become a reflexive aspect of the Draw.



5. “Fire”

- At this point, the decision has already been made to fire, the slack has been taken out of the trigger, and the student’s focus has verified the appropriate sight alignment. As soon as the weapon stops moving, the student simply continues (or finishes) the trigger press to achieve the surprise break of the shot(s). With repetition, students should be taught to *work towards* the point when the shot breaks immediately after the weapon becomes stationary *and* their eyes have found the front sight.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE

Too long a pause between the weapon being on target with the finger on the trigger and the shot actually being fired (the time between steps #4 and 5) could be interpreted by the student as indicating that it is okay to use this as a “ready” position. This tendency must be overcome by devoting enough time (especially during initial training) for the details of each step to be understood by the student.

As students demonstrate an understanding of the reference points of each step, the time between commands #4 and #5 should be shortened to the point at which one step immediately follows the other. In short, we must impress upon the students that if the weapon is pointing at the threat, they should be shooting. The weapon should be in a “ready” position if they are not shooting.

Instructional Steps for Presentation to the Shot(s) at “Close-Quarters”

Students must be given the tools to deal with as many realistic situations as possible. Drawing a handgun in a deadly force encounter, which takes place at a common interview or “handshaking” distances back to two or three yards, may result in a physical struggle for possession of the handgun. Therefore, a presentation of the weapon that considers the weapon’s security along with accurate firing must be addressed in training.

1. “Grip”

- Both hands move *simultaneously*.
- The *support hand* is raised up to block any incoming blows or strikes to the head or face by the opponent.
- The *dominant hand* moves to the weapon, defeating all retention devices and obtaining the *proper* grip in the holster. Taking the time to obtain the proper grip on the weapon in the holster so that it, the sights, and the body are aligned is much more efficient than a hurried, sloppy grip resulting in misalignment, which then results in inaccuracy and poor recoil control.

2. “Clear”

- The *support hand* remains in the same position to block any incoming blows or strikes from the opponent.
- The *dominant hand* draws the weapon from the holster. As soon as the muzzle clears the holster opening, briskly elevate the muzzle to a horizontal position and cant the weapon outboard so that when it is fired, the movement of the slide will not impact the clothing or

body of the student.



“Fire”

- After the muzzle has cleared the holster and is pointed at the threat, the trigger finger is placed on the trigger, the slack is removed, and the shots are fired. (Minimum standard response: Sec. 12)
 - If the student has obtained the proper grip of the weapon in the holster, the front sight, rear sight, wrist, and elbow will be aligned, allowing accurate stance-directed, unsighted fire.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

- Initial training of this technique should be done as a dry fire exercise with each of the steps performed on command in slow, controlled motion. Instructors must ensure that the support hand and arm are consistently well clear of the muzzle blast area before allowing the students to live fire.
- Variations on this technique may include a strike towards the opponent's face, head, or body with the support hand/arm while performing Step #1, “Grip,” and THEN continuing the support hand/arm to the blocking position while performing Step 2, “Clear.”
- Once the students appear to have mastered these three steps during both dry and live fire training, the following options may be added to their skills:

3. “Step”

- The student takes a long step backward with their dominant side foot to gain distance from their adversary. This step should not be straight back but rather at an angle from the suspect, requiring them to change direction if they were to pursue. As the student moves backward, the distance gained allows the student to extend the dominant arm and bring

the handgun up to eye level. At the same time, the student's support hand **joins** the dominant hand in a two-handed grip on the pistol, being careful not to pass it in front of the muzzle of the weapon. This puts the weapon in position so the shooter can acquire a flash-sight picture.



4. “Assess” or “Shoot”

- After gaining some distance from the opponent, the student can assess the situation and determine if it requires more shots to be fired, a challenge given, or if it is safe to evaluate, scan, and holster the weapon.
- The lesson plan, course objectives, range configuration, and instructor discretion determine the appropriate action in the training situation.
- Once students demonstrate their competency in performing this movement safely and efficiently, instructors may add another long step (again, diagonally, this time perhaps in the opposite direction from the first step) to allow the student to continue to take advantage of mobility. In contrast, they take appropriate action to neutralize the threat.

NOTE: ALL non-firing manipulations of the pistol will begin and end in the GUARD position. That is the last place the pistol should be before returning it to the holster. That is your “Insurance” that you and the pistol are ready for the next encounter. Be sure a round is in the chamber, a full magazine is in the pistol, all other ammunition you have on your person is stored appropriately, and you have assessed the situation and are in complete control of the area within your immediate field of view.

Instructional Steps for Recovery to the Holster

It is vitally important that emphasis is placed upon holstering the weapon *only* when it is safe to do so and not merely because the shooting appears to be over. Whether the weapon presentation has resulted in shots being fired, a verbal challenge, or a building search, the officer should always be hesitant to return the weapon to its holster.

1. “Evaluate”

- If shots have been fired and the immediate threat(s) appear to be incapacitated, students should bring the weapon down to a “ready” position (a Guard or SUL) to open up their field of view. Students must be taught that just because an opponent is “down,” they are not necessarily incapacitated. Inflicted injuries, which may at first appear disabling, may only temporarily put the opponent out of action.
- *Immediately*, the trigger finger is indexed above the trigger guard alongside the receiver.
- When the “evaluation” reveals that the suspect is no longer an immediate threat, Double/Single pistols (DA/SA), such as the Sig P226 or P220, should be de-cocked at this point.
- When the “evaluation” reveals that the suspect is no longer an immediate threat, single-action pistols should have the safety “ON” and the dominant hand thumb replaced back on top of the safety so that the safety may be immediately deactivated if the threat were to return.



Evaluate from the Guard position and the SUL position.

2. “Scan”

Once evaluation has determined that the immediate, obvious threat(s) have been incapacitated, the students must train themselves to account for multiple suspects, tunnel vision, and other distractions. This requires the observation of 360°. Whether students turn their entire bodies or only their heads away from the initial threat will be dictated by circumstances and their environment. Regardless, they are responsible for controlling the muzzles of their weapons.

Under some circumstances, the “Guard” position may be sufficient to accomplish this task. A drawback to this position, especially in crowded environments, is that if students turn their entire bodies by pivoting at the hips or moving their feet, keeping the weapon's muzzle from moving laterally is much more difficult. An advantage may be that it keeps the weapon pointing in the general direction of their original, and perhaps potential, renewed threat, thus facilitating quicker follow-up shots if required.

Otherwise, the situation may be better suited to using the SUL position, which provides better muzzle control, especially in crowded situations. The student's feet must move when scanning 360° in the SUL position. Simply pivoting at the waist will cause the weapon's muzzle to point at the feet and legs instead of the ground between them. To avoid this, as students turn to look behind them, they should step back with the left foot when turning to the left and with the right foot when turning to the right, keeping the muzzle pointing between the feet. Students' evaluation of the circumstances will determine if turning their backs on the initial threat area is advantageous.

In the meantime, training students in each technique familiarizes them with options that they can employ as they determine their applicability to each situation. A first-aid scan should also be added to the list of tasks to be performed now. Check your partner and yourself for injuries you may not have noticed before.

- The trigger finger remains indexed throughout the scan.
- Instruction must emphasize that students need to actually *see* what they are looking at rather than simply going through the motions of the scan.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE

Another reflexive skill should be addressed at this point. If the presentation of the weapon has resulted in shots being fired, the student should make it a habit to *reload* before holstering. The type of reload, as well as whether to reload and then scan *or* scan and then reload, is situational. Students should be reminded that scanning and reloading should be performed simultaneously since the eyes are not essential to the reloading program.

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Scanning from the Guard Position



Scanning from the Sul Position

3. “Holster”

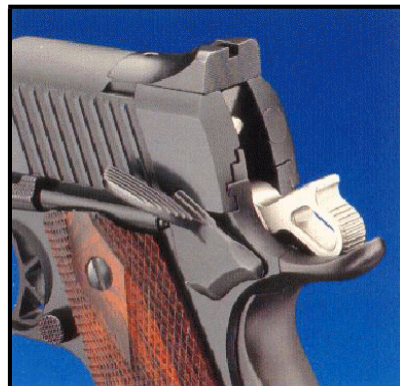
The pistol should return to the holster by reversing the motion and steps of the presentation. Should a threat reappear while holstering, the weapon should always be in position for the student to respond efficiently. Using *only* the dominant hand to holster the weapon frees the support hand for other tasks (holding flashlights, opening/closing doors, grabbing handcuffs, etc.) It also prevents students from pointing the weapon's muzzle at the support hand, which is likely to occur if they reach across the body to push retention straps out of the way. The student must be trained to holster without looking down. Keeping an eye on the threat area throughout the program must be emphasized. Applicable weapons must be decocked before holstering if not already performed during evaluation or scanning steps, per agency policy or training preference.

Reengaging manual thumb safeties on applicable single-action pistols must occur before holstering if not already performed during the evaluation or scanning steps. Immediately upon holstering, fasten all retention devices.

Students should be instructed to place their thumb on the back of the semi-automatic pistol once the weapon is pushed back into the holster; this will ensure that the weapon is firmly seated in the holster, prevent the slide from coming out of the battery, and, for weapons with a de-cocker, confirm that the weapon has been decocked.



The thumb stays off the back until the pistol is inserted into the holster.



Note: for a 1911-style pistol, the thumb on the top of the safety will confirm that the weapon is cocked and locked.

Pistol Manipulations

Non-Firing Manipulations of the Firearm: ALL pistol manipulations will be done from the GUARD position (on the firing line) or with the pistol secured in the holster.

Three (3) constants generally apply to all non-firing manipulations of any firearm. Two are universal; the third only applies to particular firearms (those equipped with a mechanical safety and/or de-cocking lever).

The three constants are:

1. Muzzle pointed in a Safe direction (see Rule #2)
2. Finger OFF the trigger (see Rule #3)
3. Safety On and/or hammer De-Cocked

NOTE: SINGLE-ACTION AUTO PISTOL SHOOTERS (Colt, Springfield, Browning): If the shooter is utilizing a single-action pistol (which has a mechanical safety), the shooter's thumb **MUST** be on top of the safety at all times. The only exception to this rule is when the shooter is actually re-applying the safety on the way to the Guard Position. Once the safety is back on, the shooter's thumb will be placed back on top of the safety and remain there.

Loading and Unloading

Press Check

Maintain a firing grip with the strong hand. With the fingers of your support hand, grasp the slide along the sides from underneath and behind the muzzle. Push the slide far enough out of the battery to look into the chamber and feel it in the chamber through the ejection port with your trigger finger.



Press Check

Double action semi-auto pistols with exposed hammers are more easily press checked if thumb cocked first (using the support hand thumb), as they will usually wind up fully cocked as a result of the press check. The pistol should then be de-cocked using the de-cocking lever.



Press Check

After confirming the chamber's status, the slide is released, allowing the recoil spring to push it back into the battery.

NEVER PRESS CHECK BY PUTTING THE SUPPORT HAND THUMB INTO THE TRIGGER GUARD: Only the trigger finger goes in there, and only when the sights are on the target (see Rule #3)!



To complete the press check, the shooter also confirms the status of the pistol's magazine and any additional ammunition carried. The Press Check should be performed ANYTIME the shooter is uncertain of or wishes to confirm the pistol's status.

Press Check

The Press Check is always done from the GUARD position. After the Press Check is completed, the shooter returns to the GUARD position, running the de-cocking lever or putting the safety ON, if appropriate for that pistol. In all cases, the trigger finger never enters the trigger guard (see Rule #3!).

Loading (Chambering a Round)

'Press check' the pistol to see if loading is necessary. Insert and seat a full magazine. Run the slide vigorously –“rack and circle back”- to charge the chamber. Press check again to confirm the chamber is charged, then de-cock or apply the thumb safety (as appropriate for your pistol).

'Tac load' a full magazine into the pistol or holster, remove the magazine from the pistol, add a round to replace the one that charged the chamber, and then seat the magazine.

Back in the pistol. DO NOT OMIT THIS LAST STEP; you want the pistol fully loaded.



Tactical Loading

A “Tac-Load” (Tactical Load) replenishes the ammunition supply in the pistol while saving the partial magazine for possible later use. This reloading is performed during a lull in a fight, preferably from behind cover or at least concealment, with the pistol at the GUARD position. During the magazine exchange, it is imperative to **KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE TARGET AREA**.

A fresh magazine is acquired from the magazine pouch. The partially empty magazine is removed using the support hand's middle finger and ring finger, and the full magazine is inserted and seated normally.



Partial magazine is removed from weapon and stored in a pocket or waist band. Fresh magazine is obtained and gripped with index finger along front of magazine.



New magazine is inserted into weapon.



Shooter assesses the situation.

The partial magazine is saved and placed somewhere the officer can easily retrieve it, **but not in the magazine pouch** since it is not fully loaded, this will reduce confusion on which magazine is fullest, yet keep possession of all available ammunition for use if the officer must reload again, by speed loading or tac-loading, or if a Type 3 malfunction must be cleared.

If the shooter is carrying only one spare magazine, the partially expended magazine should be placed in the magazine pouch.

Reach for a fresh magazine with your support hand as you turn the pistol in your strong hand. Press the magazine release button only after you have touched the fresh magazine and know you have a replacement. The partial magazine is released, allowed to fall free, and not saved for future use. The

pistol will not be de-cocked or have the thumb safety engaged before this step. The pistol should remain at the level of your collarbone.

Speed loads

The method by which you quickly replenish the ammunition in the pistol. This is necessary when actively shooting; the ammunition status becomes uncertain or empty, and you must reload to continue fighting.

Bring the fresh magazine up to the pistol and place the flat of the back of the magazine to the flat of the back of the magazine well. The support hand's index finger MUST be aligned with the front of the magazine and MUST touch the top cartridge in the magazine.



Briskly seat the magazine using the heel of the support hand, re-acquire the firing grip, the target, and the front sight. **KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE TARGET AREA AT ALL TIMES** during the loading sequence.

Unloading

Remove the magazine and place it under the little finger of the shooting hand. (THIS IS THE ONLY SITUATION WHERE IT IS PERMISSIBLE TO PLACE THE MAGAZINE HERE.) Run the slide vigorously and allow the chambered round to fall to the ground. Re-insert and seat the magazine. Press Check the pistol to confirm the chamber's status (it should be clear, but ... see Rule #1).

CAUTION: DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CATCH THE CHAMBERED ROUND IN YOUR SUPPORT HAND. The cartridge can shift during manual extraction, allowing the primer to strike the ejector and detonate. If this should occur, severe injury to your support hand will very likely occur. This type of unintentional discharge has occurred in other agencies and forced medical retirement of police officers.

Run-Dry Drills

It is to be considered an error to lock the slide to the rear with an empty chamber and magazine during a firing exercise. Should this happen, the remedy is similar to a speed load with one exception. The shooter has the additional task of charging the chamber. The shooter will NOT use the slide lock lever for this task but will manipulate the slide by vigorously running the slide with the support hand.

Slide Manipulation

During its normal cycle of operation when fired, the slide of the auto-pistol cycles very violently. It is expected to do so. Therefore, the slide must be manipulated as vigorously and violently as possible to ensure reliable operation when charging or clearing the chamber. The goal is to duplicate normal operations as closely as possible.

Hold the pistol in a normal firing grip with the strong hand and grasp the top of the slide with the support hand, thumb toward the rear of the pistol. Make sure you do not cover the ejection port with your hand. Briskly and forcefully run the slide to the rear with the support hand, letting the slide slip or “tear away” from your hand as it hits the rear limit of its travel.

Allow your support hand to hit your strong shoulder (or nearly so). This will ensure your hand does not help the slide go forward into battery. Emphasize circling your support hand behind and below the pistol (“rack and circle back”) as you re-acquire a proper two-handed firing grip.

Running the slide gently or “riding” or helping the slide forward into battery often causes malfunctions, may pinch your fingers in the ejection port, and increases the likelihood you will move your support hand in front of the muzzle as you re-acquire a two-handed firing grip (see Rule #2).



Review of Test Questions

Non Firing Pistol Manipulations include Press Check, Loading, Unloading, Tactical Loading, Speed Loading, and Slide Manipulation.

Revolver Reloading

If you reload with your revolver while held in your weak hand, then any speed loader pouch or extra rounds should be carried on the strong side so that your strong hand will find them easily.

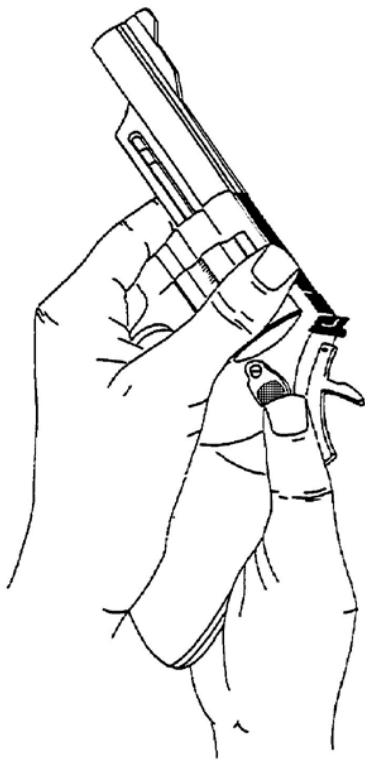
Carry at least one complete reload for your revolver. This reload will not only give you five or six more shots but also permit you to clear malfunctions that bind the revolver's action. Often, completely emptying the gun and reloading it will make the gun operable again.

While many different techniques will allow you to reload your revolver quickly, we will only present one technique here. Whichever technique you choose, the principles are the same:

- Do it the same way every time.
- Maintain control of the gun so the muzzle is always pointed in a safe direction.
- Keep your finger off the trigger.
- Keep the gun close to your body to minimize shaking.
- Use a method that you can do under stress. The following technique is simple and effective:

Step 1

Right-handers use the thumb of the right hand to release the cylinder latch.



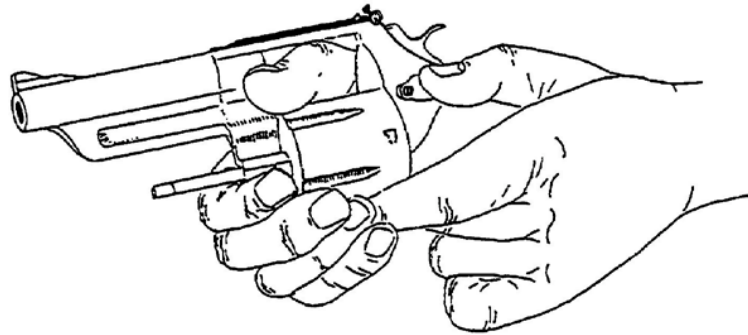
Right-handed shooter releasing cylinder latch.

Left-handers use the thumb of the left hand to release the cylinder latch.

Step 2

Right-handers reach up with the left hand and use their fingers to push the cylinder open and grasp the gun through and around the frame. The gun is now held in the left hand.

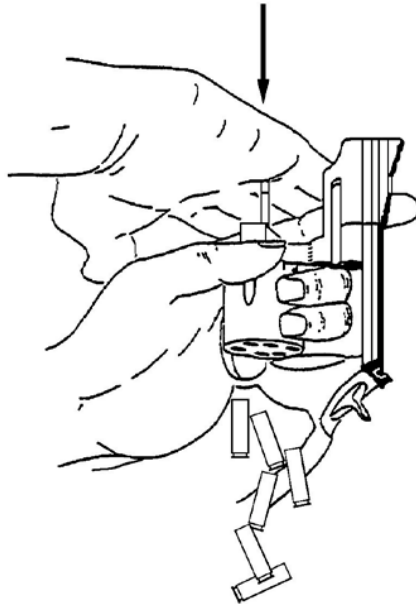
Left-handers reach up with the right hand and use the thumb to push the cylinder open and to grasp the gun through the frame and around the cylinder. The gun is now held in the right hand.



Left-handed shooter opening cylinder (Gun held in right hand)

Step 3

Right-handers: Tilt the gun so the muzzle is straight up - vertical - and slap the ejector rod with the palm of the right hand.



Right-handed shooter ejecting cases

Left-handers: Tilt the gun so the muzzle is straight up - vertical. The gun will have the butt or grips pointed away from your body. Now, slap the ejector rod with the palm of the left hand.



Left-handed shooter ejecting cases

The vertical muzzle and slap of the ejector rod are critical - these steps guarantee that the shells in the gun will all eject.

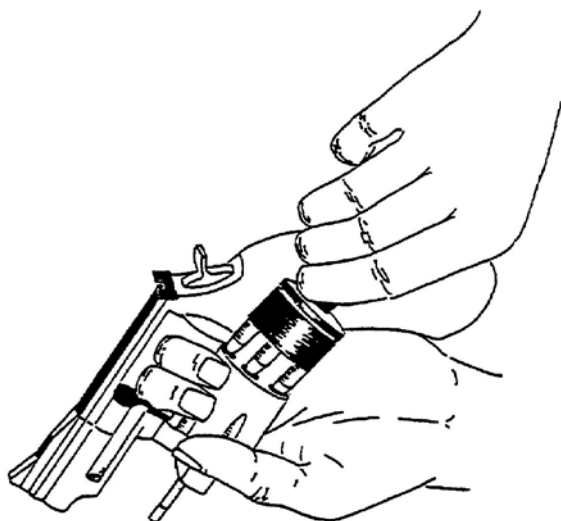
Step 4

Now, rotate the gun so the muzzle is pointed down and the butt or grip of the gun is held against your body (for stability). The gun stays in your weak hand during this entire program.

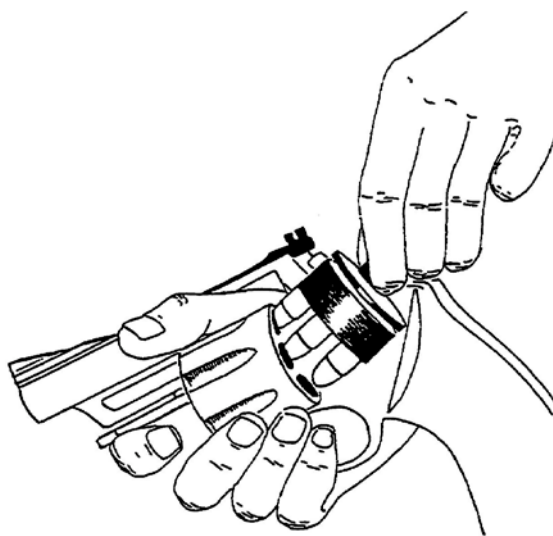
Step 5

The strong hand locates the speed loader on your belt, removes it, and brings it to the gun's cylinder, where you allow the bullets to start into the chamber.

Release the rounds from the speed loader (the action you take varies with the type of speed loader) and allow the speed loader to drop.



Right-hand using speed loader



Left hand using speed loader



Right hand releasing rounds from a speed loader

Step 6

Close and latch the cylinder with the weak hand while establishing a grip on the gun with the strong hand.

The gun is now reloaded. With practice, this technique, which is safe and positive, can be accomplished easily within five seconds.

**There are no written test questions on reloading,
but this skill is part of the range qualification.**

Review – Loading and Unloading

Here are the steps of a safe procedure for loading any revolver:

- Point the gun in a safe direction,
- Keep your finger off the trigger,
- Release the cylinder latch and open the cylinder,
- Load the cartridges into the cylinder,
- Close the cylinder and latch it,
- Note that the hammer should be down during this program and should not be cocked before, during, or after the loading,
- Holster the gun.

Unload the revolver by doing the following:

- Point the gun in a safe direction,
- Keep your finger off the trigger,
- Release the cylinder latch and open the cylinder,
- Empty the cartridges into your hand - use the ejector rod to assist if they stick,
- Visually verify that the cylinder is empty - leave the cylinder open for inspection or maintenance or close it if the weapon will be stored.

Here are the steps for a safe procedure for loading a semiautomatic pistol:

- Point the gun in a safe direction,
- Keep your finger off the trigger,
- Insert a full magazine into the magazine well, seating it sharply,
- With the weak hand, pull back the slide fully and then let it go forward on its own,
- With a single-action pistol, engage the safety,
- With a double-action pistol, use the appropriate lever to decock the hammer, and then verify that the safety is in the position in which you wish it to be,
- With a Glock pistol, no further action is required since there is no manual safety or hammer de-cocking lever,
- You may now holster the pistol or fire.

Unload the semi-auto pistol by doing the following:

- Point the gun in a safe direction. Keep your finger off the trigger,
- Keep the gun in your strong hand,
- Push the magazine release to eject the magazine, and remove the magazine with your weak hand,
- Use your weak hand to pull the slide to the rear while the thumb of your strong hand pushes up on the slide stop—this will lock the slide in an open position,
- Look and feel through the ejection port to verify that the chamber is empty,
- Leave the slide locked open for inspection,
- Pull the slide to the rear and then allow it to go forward, use the appropriate lever to de- cock the hammer,
- Holster or case the pistol.

Load the pump shotgun as follows:

- Point the gun in a safe direction,
- Keep your finger off the trigger,
- Keep the gun in your strong hand,
- Check the chamber to verify that it is empty, and then close the action,
- Pull the trigger to lower the hammer,
- Place the safety on safe,
- Use your weak hand to load cartridges into the magazine tube,
- Place the shotgun into the rack or case.

Unload the pump shotgun as follows:

- Point the gun in a safe direction,
- Keep your finger off the trigger,
- Keep the gun in your strong hand,
- Use the action bar lock release, if necessary, to open the action,
- Draw the forend back to open the action partially - open the action just far enough for a chambered round to eject or to verify that there is no round in the chamber,
- Turn the gun upside down and push the shell carrier toward the chamber,
- Draw the forend fully back - this will eject the next round in the magazine,
- Push the shell latches inside the receiver to release the remaining rounds, one at a time,
- Touch and feel both chamber and magazine to verify that the gun is empty.

Typically, the semi-auto rifle such as a Colt AR-15 or Ruger mini-14 may be loaded as follows:

- Point the gun in a safe direction,
- Keep your finger off the trigger,
- Keep the gun in your strong hand,
- Open the action to verify that the chamber is empty - look and feel,
- Close the action,
- Place the safety in your position of choice,
- Insert a fully loaded magazine.

The semi-auto rifle may be unloaded as follows:

- Point the gun in a safe direction,
- Keep your finger off the trigger,
- The safety should be on safe,
- Keep the gun in your strong hand,
- Remove the magazine,
- Open the action to eject any chambered round,
- Lock the action open,
- Look and feel to verify that the chamber is empty.

There are no written test questions on safe loading and unloading, but this skill must be demonstrated as part of your range test.

Trigger Finger Placement

Several years ago, Dr. Roger Enoka, from the University of Arizona, concluded from studies that three circumstances would cause a person to discharge a firearm if his finger were on the trigger, despite the best efforts of the person not to press the trigger. These events cause a person to flex their muscles as their body moves toward the fetal position, the critical portion being the clinching of the hands.

- **Postural Instability** - If a person loses their balance, slips, or falls, the instinctive reaction is for the hands to grasp and close as they attempt to regain balance.
- **Overflow Effect** - As a person grasps something in one hand and squeezes (with up to 100 pounds of force), the opposite hand will also close and squeeze with as much as 20% of the force of the grasping hand (20 pounds - in burst strength).
- **Startle Response** - If a person is startled by a sudden and unexpected action (noise, movement, etc.), the muscles contract suddenly and briefly. Again, the critical concern is the clinching of the hands.

Review of Test Questions

Dr. Enoka identified Postural Instability, Overflow Effect, and Startle Response as three circumstances which would cause a person to discharge a firearm if his finger were on the trigger.

Malfunction Clearance

A malfunction is an interruption in the cycle of operation of a semi-automatic pistol that can be cleared with an immediate action drill. You have a jam if an armorer's tools or skills are needed to clear the interruption.

Fail to Fire

This type of malfunction occurs because the shooter failed to seat the magazine fully. This results in the slide not stripping a round off the magazine's top and closing on an empty chamber. This can also occur from defective ammunition, a broken firing pin, or the slide not going fully into battery (because the pistol is dirty and/or the shooter ran the slide gently when charging the chamber).

This malfunction identifies itself by producing a loud “CLICK” instead of a significantly louder “BANG!” If that doesn’t clue the shooter in, the lack of recoil should!

ANYTIME THE PISTOL PRODUCES THESE SYMPTOMS, THE SHOOTER SHOULD IMMEDIATELY

- **TAP** - briskly strike the bottom of the magazine with the open palm of the support hand to seat it fully.
- **RACK & CANT** - “rack/cant and circle back” to clear the chamber and chamber a fresh round.
- **ASSESS** – a mental decision to fire/not fire the pistol or otherwise finish the fight or drill.



Tap



Rack & Cant



Assess

S&W's with a slide-mounted de-cocking lever, P-35 BROWNING's, and BERETTA's:

Due to the drawbar disconnects in these pistols, a de-cocking lever in the down position can be misinterpreted as a misfire. Anytime you press the trigger and feel “mush” with these pistols, raise your strong hand thumb high on the pistol, toward the slide, as you TAP- RACK-ASSESS. This will ensure that the de-cocking lever is in the up position.

Failure to Eject

This malfunction commonly results from the shooter “limp wristing” the pistol, in other words, not locking the wrist on the strong side and permitting too much muzzle flip (rise) during recoil. That causes the slide not to complete its full rearward travel during recoil. This results in the spent shell extracting but not to ejecting out of the slide. A dirty pistol, damaged extractor or ejector, or magazine with damaged feed lips can also contribute to this malfunction.

A Failure to Eject malfunction is identified by the spent shell (or occasionally a live round) sticking out of the ejection port, trapped between the barrel hood and the slide's breech face. This will usually block the front sight from view. Occasionally, the spent shell will be trapped horizontally inside the ejection port (“buried stovepipe”) (See Failure to Extract malfunctions below).



To clear the Failure to Eject malfunction, perform the same immediate action drill as for a Failure to Fire malfunction.

- **TAP** - briskly strike the bottom of the magazine with the open palm of the support hand to seat it fully.
- **RACK & CANT** - “rack/cant and circle back” to clear the chamber and chamber a fresh round.
- **ASSESS** – the mental decision to fire/not fire the pistol or otherwise finish the fight or drill.

Failure to Extract

This malfunction occurs when the slide tries to strip a live round from the top of the magazine to chamber it, but there is a spent shell (or live round) still in the chamber. The new round runs into the back of whatever is still in the chamber, and everything comes to a screeching halt. This is commonly caused by chipped or broken extractors, damaged magazines (feed lips not securely holding the rounds in the correct alignment during the firing cycle), and/or dirty pistols. This can also be caused by 'limp wristing' the pistol.

With this malfunction, the pistol will look fairly normal with a casual glance. The front sight will normally be visible, but the slide will be back out of battery by as much as the length of a live round. Brass will be visible in the ejection port.

Four steps must be accomplished to correctly and successfully clear this malfunction: (1) Identify it, (2) clear everything out of the pistol, (3) reload the pistol and charge the chamber, and (4) finish the fight. To clear the Failure to Extract malfunction;

LOOK and **FEEL** to identify the malfunction. Tilt the muzzle upward to **LOOK** into the ejection port and **FEEL** with the trigger finger that the slide is back out of battery. (Normally, if the trigger finger is raised up onto the slide when it is in battery, you should feel the ejection port).



LOCK - the slide to the rear to ease pressure on the top round in the magazine if it is necessary for your pistol.

STRIP (or Rip) the magazine out of the magazine well.



RACK (rack, rack) - the slide vigorously 2 or 3 times to clear the chamber. Be careful not to cover the ejection port with your hand; this is the escape route for brass. Cant the pistol slightly to the right to assist clearance



INSERT (Tap) - and seat a fresh magazine. Properly holding the magazine will greatly facilitate and speed up this step!

RACK (and Circle Back) – operate the slide vigorously to charge the chamber and circle back to re-acquire a proper two-handed firing grip.



ASSESS – the mental decision to fire/not fire the pistol or otherwise finish the fight or drill.



The value of this malfunction clearance drill lies in its ability to clear all three of the above malfunctions. If you are in a situation where the available light will not let you see the pistol, and it will not fire, a complete Failure to Extract malfunction clearance drill will usually clear the malfunction, and the pistol can be put back into the fight.

Review of Test Questions

The three types of malfunctions are described as Failure to Fire, Failure to Eject, and Failure to Extract.

Ammunition Malfunctions

Squib Loads

This is the slang term for a cartridge that fired but had insufficient power to clear the bullet from the barrel. The bullet becomes lodged in the barrel. A subsequent shot may force the “Squib” out with the second round, or it may stack up behind the “Squib.” If this condition goes undetected, the barrel can rupture with subsequent shots. The problem may be recognized by reduced recoil and reduced noise. You may not notice the indicators over other distractions if this occurs in a gunfight. If you do, shooting the “Squib” out might be your only option if you don’t have a second gun. If this occurs on the range in training and you catch it, DO NOT shoot again until the barrel has been cleared (and confirmed by the Range master). “Squibs” frequently will not fully cycle the slide, causing a malfunction.

Fail to Fire

(Failed or Missing Primers) This is uncommon with reputable “Factory New” ammunition manufacturers. Primer failure is one cause of Failure to Fire malfunctions and is cleared as such. A round of ammunition missing a primer loaded in a pistol indicates carelessness and an unconscionable act of negligence.

Barrell Obstructions

Aside from “Squibs,” this condition usually results from dropping the firearm or the barrel getting shoved into the ground, dirt, snow, etc. This is more easily accomplished with long guns but can occur with handguns. If detected, obstructions should be cleared before firing for the same reasons described above.

Inspection Prevention

Most ammunition-related malfunctions can be prevented by not allowing bad ammunition to be loaded into the pistol in the first place.

Pistol Power

Stopping Lethal Assailants with Pistol fire

Pistols are weapons of marginal power by their very nature. Even the most powerful pistol authorized for duty use has only a small fraction of the power of a long gun. If you are going to a known high-threat level situation, you are wise to take a shotgun or carbine. Pistols are carried constantly, as a matter of convenience, instead of a more powerful long gun for defense against an unexpected attack.

Natural Body Armors

The human body has three areas, which are stronger or more heavily “fortified.” These three “Natural Body Armor” protect vital systems: the SKULL protects the brain (computer); the CHEST (ribs and sternum) protects the heart, lungs, and great vessels (boiler room - energy source); and the PELVIS protects the reproductive system and is the pivotal area of mobility (movement - transportation).

Minimum Standard Response

The minimum response is to engage the threat with accurate fire until the threat stops the behavior that created the deadly threat.

Fail to Stop Drill

After hitting a deadly assailant with a pair to the upper chest, you should immediately scan up to the suspect's head. If the head is still there, you can assume that the body shots are not stopping the threat, so you should deliver a single shot to the suspect's head IF YOU HAVE A HIGH PROBABILITY OF HITTING IT. This is Plan "B," or more appropriately referred to as a "Fail-to-Stop" drill. Remember, the head is a difficult target to hit due to its small size and ability to turn rapidly.

The objective here is to disrupt the felon's brain, the body's "computer," with one hit to the eye-nose area of the head. This shot will almost certainly stop the fight immediately IF MADE, but it will only waste time and endanger bystanders IF MISSED. Given these concerns, you should not attempt a headshot beyond about five (5) yards in a lethal confrontation unless you are confident in making the shot presented.

To guarantee good hits, the first two shots to the body should always be as fast as you can go but as slow as you must. The follow-up headshot should also meet the same speed parameters but must be read more carefully due to the smaller target area. The headshot should follow the body shots in the cadence: front sight, press; front sight, press; front sight, C-A-R-E-F-U-L press.

ABC Drill

If the body shots did not stop the suspect, a single headshot was ineffective/missed or not taken (due to distance or circumstances), and the suspect is still a lethal threat, you should then immediately deliver a controlled pair of hits to the subject's pelvis. The objective of hitting and breaking the pelvis is to rob the subject of the ability to move. This is Plan "C."

Even this might not stop a determined adversary's attack. You must be prepared to continue pressing your counterattack by delivering a steady stream of hits to the subject's three "Natural Body Armors" discussed above (heart-lungs/sternum and ribs, brain/skull- ONLY IF POSSIBLE) until the subject stops the lethal attack.

On the range, this sequence is called the 'ABC Drill.'

Review of Test Questions

- Natural Body Armors are described as the Skull, Chest, and Pelvis.
- A Minimum Standard Response is described as the minimum response to a deadly threat is a controlled pair of hits to the upper chest of the assailant.

Concealed Carry

Written by Jeffrey A. Slotnick

Many security officers, bail recovery agents, and private investigators are required to carry a concealed pistol as part of their duty. The competencies in this section will provide you with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry and deploy a pistol from concealed carry successfully.

Competencies Included in this Presentation

- Handgun Selection for Concealed Carry
- Holster Selection
- Environmental Issues and Clothing
- Accessories
- Requirements to Act
- Methods of Drawing and Firing

Handgun Selection and Concealed Carry

Selection Criteria

1. Your concealed carry firearm should be as large and powerful as you can shoot accurately and carry with reasonable comfort and concealment.
2. Your concealed carry firearm should fit your hand perfectly.
3. Your concealed carry firearm should not have any irregular edges that can get hung up on clothing.
4. You should be able to manipulate the controls of your firearm with either hand alone.
5. Your concealed carry firearm should be of sturdy construction and be able to withstand heavy use and rough handling.
6. Your concealed carry firearm should be accurate enough to consistently hit a target the size of a saucer at 10 yards quickly.
7. Select the largest caliber you can shoot well and a caliber for which ammunition is readily available.
8. A good quality holster must be available for the pistol model you intend to carry.

What to Carry

The general rule is this: you should carry the most powerful gun that you can carry comfortably all day, conceal effectively, and shoot fast and straight. There is a tradeoff here: Powerful handguns

tend to be large and heavy, hence difficult to conceal and uncomfortable to carry. Light handguns that fire powerful ammunition have unpleasant recoil and are, therefore, hard to shoot quickly and accurately. Anyone who has a duty to carry concealed must consider this tradeoff in light of duty requirements and expectations.

When considering what firearm to carry, due consideration must be given to the pistol's construction. Specifically, they should be smooth and free of protrusions that can snag on clothing or have sharp areas that can wear through clothing over time. The objective is to minimize the risk of snagging the pistol on clothing during the draw.

The ideal concealed carry gun is compact yet has large enough grips to fill the hand, allowing for controlled yet rapid follow-up shots. It should also be powerful enough to be counted on and totally reliable.

Whatever pistol you choose must be safe against negligent discharges. Many smaller and older pocket pistols trade the lack of safety devices for easy carry and deployment.

Other Considerations

Semi-Auto Vs Revolver

Several external factors influence the type of pistol you choose.

Duty requirements will determine how and where you carry your firearm, as well as the types of clothing you wear.

Another consideration is the threat environment. What is your potential worst-case scenario? Will five rounds suffice for a tactical retreat, or do you need more?

Body configuration and strength also become issues. If you cannot competently operate a semi-automatic pistol to put it in battery, then a revolver is probably your best choice.

The bottom line is these are aspects for your consideration; ultimately, you must decide what you choose to carry.

Caliber

The stopping-power debate is considerable, and you should continue your research beyond this course. The general consensus is that a bigger bullet is a better bullet. Significant advancements have been made in modern defensive ammunition. Modern defensive rounds, especially in popular calibers like 9mm, have seen major improvements in penetration, expansion, and consistency. The Use of novel materials (e.g., polymer tips, bonded bullets) and precision manufacturing techniques have improved consistency and performance.

When considering calibers, a bigger, heavier bullet will create more felt recoil, especially when contained in the light, compact package that will likely be used for concealed carry.

If the gun is so powerful that you cannot provide quick follow-up shots and hit an eight- or even 12-inch square at 10 yards, then select a caliber that allows you to perform well.

This is often related to how you will carry your firearm; it is easier to conceal a small revolver than a large semiautomatic. Another issue we will discuss later is the method of carrying and holstering options. Concealing the firearm too deeply makes quick deployment problematic.

Ergonomics

Does the firearm fit the user? Even outside of concealed carry considerations, the concept of 'one size fits all' is hard to apply. Body configuration, including build, hand size, and strength, is all a factor in firearm selection.

As addressed earlier, the ability to smoothly draw your firearm without snagging or hanging up is critical.

Training

Training for concealed carry brings forth its own training issues that may affect firearms selection, for example, firing from a seated position in a chair or firing while in or exiting a vehicle. When considering how you're going to carry a concealed firearm, keep in mind that you won't always be in a standing position when it comes time to draw the gun.

Concealed Holster Types

Since it is expected the firearm must be drawn quickly and easily, the best concealment location will be somewhere near your shooting hand. Think about where your primary hand is located as you go through your daily routine. Some additional considerations are speed of accessibility, retention, and safety.

A handgun can be held only so close to the torso, and a semiautomatic pistol will be flatter than a revolver, but a quality holster will assist in hiding the gun. For example, a pancake holster will pull the gun in tighter than a pouch holster because inward pressure is applied to the entire body of the holster rather than just the suspension point. The thickness of the holster material will also come into play, as it will add bulk to the package being suspended from the belt.

If a belt holster does not provide the desired level of concealment, an inside-the-waistband holster may be a suitable alternative. This carry style gets the gun underneath the pants and belt, which normally holds the gun out and away from the body when a belt-mounted holster is used.

Inside the Waistband Holsters

The inside-the-waistband (IWB) rig uses the contours of the trousers, wrapping around the body to help conceal the holstered pistol. The advantages of an IWB are better concealment as the holster sits between your body and your pants, making it easier to hide the firearm under a shirt or jacket. There is less printing (visible outline of the gun) compared to outside-the-waistband (OWB) holsters. A secure fit, the snug fit against the body, helps keep the firearm stable and reduces movement during daily activities. There are versatile clothing options with an IWB, as it works well with casual clothing like t-shirts and jeans, especially when paired with a sturdy belt. An IWB offers relatively rapid draw times with practice, especially from the appendix or strong-side carry positions. Lastly, IWBs are available in many materials (leather, Kydex, hybrid) and styles to suit different body types and preferences.

Several disadvantages should be considered when considering an IWB holster. IWB holsters can be uncomfortable, especially when sitting or bending, depending on the holster design and firearm size. They may cause chafing or pressure points if not properly padded or positioned. An IWB holster may require larger pants, and you might need to wear pants one size larger to accommodate the holster and firearm comfortably. Reholstering can be more difficult and potentially unsafe if the holster collapses or shifts inside the waistband.

An IWB holster may not be ideal for all body types; individuals with larger midsections may find it harder to conceal or access the firearm. Some IWB holsters have minimal retention features, so choosing a quality model with adjustable retention is important. Cross-draw carry has its advantages and disadvantages. When considering an IWB holster, all of the above information should be taken into account.

Shoulder Holsters

Drawing from a shoulder holster may violate the four basic safety rules. However, depending on your threat situation and duty, for example, driving a vehicle may cause you to consider one. Some of the disadvantages include reaching across the body to acquire the gun can, carrying the holstered handgun around to the back, retarding the draw and a seatbelt, which may make the draw difficult.

It is all but impossible to draw the gun to a weapon-retention position against the body without a great deal of arm motion--a motion that can also be trapped against the chest by a determined attacker. While the belt-mounted cross draw can also be subject to such a trap, the arm is lower and does not travel as far around the torso, making the draw faster and easier to accomplish.

There have been some changes in shoulder holster design and materials that improve safety. The use of ballistic nylon, vegetable-tanned leather, and hybrid materials increases durability and reduces wear that could compromise safety. Reinforced stitching and non-collapsible holster bodies help maintain consistent draw and reholstering angles.

Many newer models are ambidextrous and feature adjustable harnesses, allowing for a more secure and personalized fit that minimizes shifting or sagging, which could lead to unsafe handling.

Some holsters now offer vertical carry options (as opposed to horizontal), which point the muzzle downward rather than behind the user—reducing the risk of flagging others during the draw.

Hip Holsters

A hip holster, typically worn on the strong side outside the waistband (OWB), is a classic and widely used method for carrying a concealed firearm. Here's a breakdown of the advantages and disadvantages of concealed carry. A fast and natural draw the strong-side hip position enables a quick and intuitive draw, especially under stress. An OWB is ideal for concealed carry when paired with a cover garment, such as a jacket or untucked shirt. They are comfortable for extended periods since the holster sits outside the waistband, allowing for a more secure fit. It doesn't press against the body as much as IWB holsters, making it more comfortable for long periods. An OWB is easier to reholster since the holsters typically have a rigid structure, making it easier and safer to reholster without needing to adjust or look at one's clothing.

An OWB is better suited for carrying full-size or duty-sized handguns, which can be difficult to

conceal or carry comfortably inside the waistband. Lastly, they are stable and secure when paired with a quality belt. Hip holsters offer excellent stability and retention, minimizing movement during physical activity.

Small of Back (SOB)

A small of back (SOB) holster is worn at the center of the lower back, typically around the 5 to 6 o'clock position. While it offers some concealment benefits, it also comes with notable drawbacks—especially regarding safety and comfort.

An SOB offers excellent concealment. The natural curve of the lower back helps hide the firearm, especially under a jacket or untucked shirt. It is less likely to print compared to hip or appendix carry, particularly when standing, and many users find SOB holsters comfortable when upright, as the firearm rests along the spine and doesn't press into the abdomen or hip. Some SOB holsters are designed for cross-draw, allowing for use by both right- and left-handed shooters.

There are many disadvantages to SOB holsters. Falling backward with a firearm in this position can cause serious spinal injuries. Drawing from the SOB position often involves sweeping the muzzle across the body, increasing the risk of accidental discharge. Drawing from the back is less intuitive and slower, especially when seated or in confined spaces, such as a car. An SOB holster requires significant shoulder and arm movement, which can be challenging under stress or with limited mobility. Additionally, sitting with an SOB holster can be very uncomfortable, especially for extended periods or in vehicles.

An SOB holster can be harder to retain as the firearm is less visible and accessible to the wearer, making it more vulnerable to a gun grab in a close-quarters situation. Lastly, it has limited clothing compatibility; an SOB holster works best with longer cover garments.

Ankle Holsters

An ankle holster is a method of concealed carry where the firearm is strapped around the ankle, typically on the inside of the non-dominant leg. While it's not as common as waistband or shoulder carry, it has specific use cases and trade-offs. The advantages of ankle holsters include deep concealment. They are excellent for discreet carry, especially when wearing long pants. It is ideal for environments where other carry methods might print or be exposed. Ankle holsters offer comfort while standing or walking. They are often used for a secondary or backup firearm. Lastly, they are good for seated access as they are easier to access while sitting in a car or at a desk, compared to waistband holsters.

Belly Bands

Belly band holsters are a flexible and versatile option for concealed carry, particularly for individuals who prefer to carry without relying on a traditional belt or waistband. Belly bands can be worn high or low on the torso, allowing for appendix, strong-side, cross-draw, or even small-of-back carry—all with the same holster. They are ideal for athletic wear, dresses, or casual clothing without belt loops. Great for jogging, hiking, or other active situations. Many are made from soft, stretchy materials (like neoprene or elastic). Belly bands conform to the body and can be worn for extended periods. Belly bands can provide excellent concealment, especially under loose or layered clothing. The firearm is held close to the body, reducing printing. Many belly bands include extra pockets for

spare magazines, ID, cash, or even a phone, making them a compact carry solution.

Bags and Fanny Packs

Fanny packs and concealed carry bags have become increasingly popular for discreet firearm carry, particularly among individuals who prioritize comfort, versatility, or non-traditional clothing styles. Bags and fanny packs are excellent concealment devices, as they are designed to look like ordinary accessories and blend in easily in casual or urban environments.

Bags and fanny packs avoid printing or bulging that can occur with waistbands or shoulder holsters. There is no need for a belt or special clothing, making them ideal for athletic wear, travel, or hot weather. They are also comfortable for long periods of wear, especially when walking, hiking, or driving.

Bags and fanny packs are easy to put on or take off, making them ideal for temporary carry situations or when transitioning between environments (e.g., from car to trail). Many models feature dedicated firearm compartments with built-in holsters, as well as additional space for magazines, identification, phones, or medical supplies.

They offer easier access than waistband holsters when sitting in a car, wheelchair, or at a desk. They are ideal for those who find traditional holsters uncomfortable or impractical due to body type, clothing, or medical conditions.

Lastly, they are discreet in sensitive environments where traditional carry might draw attention (e.g., crowded public places, travel hubs).

Considerations for Women Who Must Carry Concealed

Carrying a concealed firearm as a female presents unique challenges and considerations that go beyond simply choosing a holster.

Here are some key issues to consider:

Women's clothing often lacks belt loops, has tighter fits, or uses lighter fabrics, making traditional holsters harder to conceal. Consider belly bands, thigh holsters, bra holsters, or concealed carry leggings for more seamless integration with your wardrobe.

Female body shapes vary widely, and many holsters are designed with male proportions in mind. Look for holsters with adjustable cant, ride height, and retention or those specifically designed for women.

Off-Body Carry Risks

Purses, fanny packs, and bags offer convenience but come with security risks (e.g., theft and separation from the firearm). If you are using off-body carry, choose bags with dedicated, zippered compartments and trigger guard protection.

Training and Practice

Drawing from alternative carry methods (e.g., bra or thigh holsters) requires specific training to

ensure speed and safety. Regular practice is essential to build muscle memory and confidence.

Retention and Safety

Holsters must fully cover the trigger guard and offer secure retention to prevent accidental discharges or unauthorized access. Avoid soft or generic holsters that collapse or shift during movement.

Accessibility in Different Positions

Consider how easily you can access your firearm while sitting, driving, or moving. Some carry positions are less accessible in certain scenarios.

Lifestyle and Activity Level

Active lifestyles (e.g., running, hiking, parenting) may require non-traditional carry methods, such as belly bands, leggings, or concealed carry backpacks.

Legal Considerations

Be aware of Washington state laws regarding concealed carry, especially for off-body carry or when entering restricted areas (e.g., schools, government buildings).

Clothing

Regardless of which holster and concealment location you select, it must be comfortable for long periods and accessible from every likely position. You will not always be in a standing position; you may be sitting or kneeling, so being able to draw from these positions is essential.

Clothing Considerations

Relaxed-fit pants and trousers are ideal for concealing compact handguns. Polo shirts and untucked T-shirts are suitable for hiding firearms at belt level.

For concealed carry, the shirt should be at least one size larger, opaque in color and weave, and straight along the hem at the bottom. V-shaped shirttails can impede the drawing motion. On most males, the fabric will drape down from the shoulder area to provide a convenient hollow behind the hip. Safari and three other shirts, designed to be untucked, are adaptable for gun concealment. The bowling shirt style isn't seen often anymore, but its straight body gives it a loose fit that's ideal for gun concealment and unimpeded drawing.

A Cuban-style guayabera shirt is designed for outerwear, often featuring a couple of extra belly-level pockets and buttons that stop just above the navel. The latter feature gives the hem of the garment more flexibility to clear the holstered gun when you pull it upward.

Hawaiian shirts are great for concealed carry. The straight hang provides good concealment; the opacity of the silk-type material effectively hides dark-colored guns and holsters, and the asymmetrical print patterns break up the outline of large pistols.

Coats and Vests

When considering clothing for concealed carry, there are many manufacturers today who offer shirts

specifically designed for this purpose.

If you select the right size, cut, and material, a conventional suit or sport coat will allow you to conceal a larger gun than you might be able to carry under a shirt. For example, the "classic men's sack suit" popularized by Brooks Brothers is pretty decent for concealed carry. The jacket gives a good drape when the front button is left undone. The straight leg cut of the pants is as friendly to ankle holsters as police uniform trousers, which are cut to a similar pattern. Additionally, if you shop at suit shops such as J.C. Penney's or The Men's Wearhouse, most have tailors that can alter a slightly larger suit to accommodate your concealed firearm.

Inside the waistband, holsters conceal better under a jacket. The hem of the coat can come up to belt level, avoiding the flash of the gun, and the pants break up the bulging outline of the holster.

Belly bands are a reasonable choice to wear at belt level. You can position the gun behind your hip or in a front cross-draw position.

Other options with a tucked-in shirt include concealment T-shirts, which have an upright fabric "holster pouch" under each arm. You draw as from a shoulder holster.

Pants

Ensure your carry belt will fit through the belt loops. If it does, and you carry it inside the waistband, pick up your holstered gun and make sure there's enough room inside the waistband for both of you. With the holstered gun in place, bend over and tie your shoes. Do a couple of deep knee bends. Sit down and stand back up again. Still, sure there's enough room in that waistband?

Blouses and cover garments

Place the holstered gun on your belt and adjust the garment however you intend to wear it. Stand squarely in front of the mirror. Ensure the gun's shadow cannot be seen through the fabric. Does the garment fit loosely enough over the gun area that you'll be able to move naturally? Are there any odd-looking lumps or bumps? Now, reach toward the ceiling like you're stretching. Does the garment ride up naturally? Does the gun stay covered? Relax your arms and let them dangle at your sides. Did the garment come back down naturally without needing to be tugged into position? Do the twist, swinging your arms from side to side. Does the garment need to be fiddled with to conceal the gun? Or does it move with you naturally? Move around a little -- stretch again, scratch your back, and bend to touch your toes. As you straighten back up, watch the mirror for any telltale signs.

Methods of Drawing

The "Hackathorn Rip" taught by Ken Hackathorn is a technique that uses the offhand to “rip” the garment upward and exposes the firearm for a fast conventional draw.

Another technique is thumb sweep, which is suitable for waist or shoulder holster deployment. You start with the thumb of the firing hand pointed at the waist center of the body and sweep towards the holster. The thumb clears away the garments as the hand grasps the pistol and deploys.

Fanny packs, ankle holsters, and bags have deployment styles based on their position and the tactical situation related to relative body position and location.

Review of Test Questions

- Several types of holsters suitable for concealed carry are Shoulder, Hip, Small of Back, Ankle, Belly Bands, and Bags.
- Two methods of drawing from a concealed carry position are the Hackathorn Rip and the Thumb Sweep.

Credits

The illustrations are by Mr. Ted Williams.

The four safety rules are derived from material taught by Mr. Jeff Cooper at his school in Gunsite, Arizona. These rules and additional information are in The Modern Technique of the Pistol by Morrison, 1991. Gunsite Press, Box 401, Paulden, AZ 86334.

Senior Counsel General John Wasberg provided legal review and advice.

The safety procedures for gun cleaning are based on an article, “The Safe Dry Fire Ritual,” by Deputy Bill Burris, Published by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission in its Firearms Instructor Manual.

The “Ayoob” flashlight shooting technique was developed by Massad Ayoob and is described in detail in his book Stressfire, available from the Police Bookshelf, Box 122, Concord, NH 03301.

2003 Update by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission and Washington State Security Council, Inc.

2008 Update by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, Jeffrey A. Slotnick, Setracon Inc., and the Washington State Security Council, Inc.

2014 Update by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, Jeffrey A. Slotnick & Greg Glassock, Lead PS/PI/BRA Firearms Instructors

2017 Update by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, Jeffrey A. Slotnick & Greg Glassock, Lead PS/PI/BRA Firearms Instructors

2025 Updated to comply with the addition of Verbal De-Escalation and Suicide Prevention, as per HB 1163. Updates were made by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, Jeffrey A. Slotnick & Greg Glassock, Chief Firearms Instructors, PS/PI/BBRA

The updated firearms certificate program tests and qualification forms for each type of firearm can be found on the WA State Criminal Justice Training Commission website, specifically on the Private Security and Bail Recovery Agent pages.

The website is www.cjtc.state.wa.us.

Questions regarding any of these materials can be sent to cjtcpspi@cjtc.wa.gov.