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## HANDGUN HANDLING TECHNIQUES

### CONTENTS:

<b>A. General Overview</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>B. The Draw</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>C. Holstering</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>D. The Ready Position</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>E. Loading &amp; Unloading Procedures For Semi-Automatic Pistols</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>F. Loading &amp; Unloading The Revolver</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>G. Malfunction Procedures For Semi-Automatic Pistol</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>H. Malfunction Procedures For Revolvers</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>I. One-Handed Incapacitation Training</b>	<b>31</b>

## **A. GENERAL OVERVIEW**

### **1. Gun Handling Techniques:**

We present a strong base of handgun handling techniques that include loading, reloading, drawing, holstering, clearing stoppages, and incapacitation techniques.

All your training must suit the needs of your students. Techniques that suit one officer may not be ideal for another. A test of a good instructor is: “How many words do you know to DO and SAY something?”

We are going to present a number of different techniques and ways of presenting those techniques. Your job is to choose the techniques and methods of presentation that will work best for YOUR officers.

### **2. Student Requirements:**

Students must be able to safely and effectively handle their handguns in the many situations they may face and build reflexive sets of handling skills for the Safe, Effective and Timely Use of Firearms.

### **3. Firearm Instructor Requirements:**

The Firearm Instructor is the key to training and must be able to effectively demonstrate these gun-handling techniques to both right-handed and left-handed students. You must “train-in” the techniques as precisely as possible and practice your firearm handling skills until they become automatic. When you say “Let me show you,” students will watch everything you do and copy how the techniques are demonstrated.

### **4. Teach Officers How to Survive a Lethal Encounter:**

This is the ultimate test of your students’ ability. It is your responsibility to give them the skills and techniques that will allow them to survive a lethal encounter and go home safely. Always remember that this is the goal of training.

### **5. As They Practice - They Will Perform:**

The way officers practice on the range is how they will perform on the street. Repetitive actions practiced on the range will show up on the street. This can be a good thing, such as always using an aggressive shooting stance, or a bad thing, such as feet always “nailed” to the ground. Watch students carefully with a critical eye toward the way they perform and constantly ask yourself, “Will what they are doing, and how they are doing it, serve them well in a lethal encounter?”

## **B. THE DRAW**

### **1. The Four-Step Draw**

#### **Step 1: GRIP**

The shooting hand establishes a shooting grip as the retention device is released. The Trigger Finger is placed straight on the outside of the holster. The Support Hand lies on the ribcage just above the belt line in preparation for the two handed grip. The wrist of the support hand is approximately at the center line of the body.



#### **Step 2: DRAW**

The Shooting Hand DRAWS the handgun just high enough for the muzzle to clear the holster. As the elbow drops, the handgun is rotated towards the threat and the wrist locks straight, above the holster and slightly in front of it, with the muzzle parallel to the ground.

If a threat is at contact distance, the handgun can be fired one handed at this step since the muzzle is parallel to the ground and forward of the body. This technique eliminates teaching an additional method of close quarter shooting, such as speed rock or high tuck, which simplifies training and saves time.



On firearms that have a manual safety, the shooter performs a Safety Sweep during this step. This should be done even if the handgun is carried with the safety off, just in case the safety was inadvertently pushed on.

#### **Step 3: TWO-HANDS**

The Shooting Hand pushes the handgun forward and when the muzzle is well in front of the body, the Support Hand moves over to assume a TWO-HANDED grip.

By assuming a two-handed grip close to the body, there is more time to adjust or secure it as the handgun is being locked out.



## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

### **Step 4: LOCKED**

The Handgun is LOCKED into a Ready Position or Firing Position depending on the situation. The trigger finger is outside of the trigger guard and held straight along the frame.



### **2. Other Drawing Considerations**

New officers sometimes have difficulty clearing the holster in Step 1 of the draw and catch the handgun on the holster as they drop the elbow, sometimes dropping the handgun. Dividing Step 1 into a two-part step can help these shooters:

- The Shooting Hand breaks the handgun free and **CLEAR**S the holster with the wrist still bent, and then,
- The Shooting Hand rocks the handgun forward toward the threat and **LOCK**S the wrist straight.

Once students understand the components of the draw, they should move on to a smooth continuous draw without the appearance of “steps.”

#### **a. Common Drawing Mistakes:**

- 1) Muzzle Covering Body:** Shooters sometimes allow the handgun to swing to the inside or outside of their body or cross their Support Hand, which allows the muzzle to be directed at themselves or others. The muzzle must never cover any part of the shooter's body or point at another person. A good illustration to use with students about how dangerous it is to point the muzzle of a firearm at someone is to tell them to think of the barrel as a high-powered laser. As with a high-powered laser, which will destroy anything in its line of sight, pointing a muzzle at someone is extremely dangerous and may be lethal.
- 2) Bowling:** This occurs when the shooter dips the handgun below the holster after drawing and then up. From the shooter's side it looks as though the shooter were swinging a bowling ball prior to release.
- 3) Anti-Aircraft or Fly Fishing:** This is when the shooter draws the pistol and raises his hand and arm up and above his shoulder and then brings it down to his line of sight. From the shooter's side it looks as though he is casting a fishing rod or has his weapon pointed up in the air as if using it as an anti-aircraft gun.

## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

4) **Excessive Body Movement:** Eliminate excessive moving of either the upper or lower body during the draw such as squatting, posturing, head dropping, or bowing. Economy of motion should be kept in mind when drawing.

5) **Equipment Placement:** Officers and instructors must ensure that other equipment on the duty belt does not interfere with the release of holster retention devices and the draw.



Baton placed too close to the holster may prevent the officer from drawing.



A keeper is placed between the baton and the holster to prevent the baton from interfering with the draw.

**January 10, 2005**

**Officer Molly Bowden, Columbia, MO PD, made a traffic stop. The driver handed over his license and then fired a shot at Bowden, missing her. Bowden moved to the rear of the vehicle for cover.**

**It was reported that Bowden was unable to draw her firearm due to the fact that her baton had moved forward on her belt and was wedged between her belt and the rear snap of her triple retention holster. Suspect got out of the vehicle and shot Bowden, killing her.**

### **b. Drawing Speed**

- 1) **Build a Safe, Correct and Smooth Draw First:** You must train how to draw correctly by repetition. Keep in mind that students must be closely observed to ensure they are performing their draws correctly.
  - a) The Trigger Finger must be kept outside the trigger guard and held straight on the frame to build a safe draw.
  - b) Students should practice their draws correctly in a slow and deliberate fashion and build the draw into a smooth and fast reflexive motion.
  - c) Students should not be looking at their holsters or handguns. Students should be looking downrange for threats.
- 2) **Draw at Full Speed Every Time:** After initial training, students must draw at full speed every time.
- 3) **Continued Practice:** Students must practice continually to refine and maintain their "reflexive set" of skills.

## C. HOLSTERING

### 1. Always Done Reluctantly

- a. **Once Out -- Keep It Out:** Once the handgun is out, keep it out until you are absolutely sure that no threat remains.
  - b. **No Speed Requirement:** There is no speed requirement to holster; it must be deliberate and controlled. Shooters must be able to holster their handgun without looking at their holster and should be able to holster with one hand. Holsters that require two hands to holster should be avoided.
2. **Down & Scan:** If the officer had to fire, he should track the threat after firing and stay sighted on target until he answers the following questions:

“Did I Hit?”

“Do I need more hits?”

“Are there any other threats?”

It is a good idea to train officers to do a silent three count prior to bringing the handgun off the target.

- a. **Down:** Once the handgun is brought off target, the trigger finger is immediately removed from the trigger and placed along the slide or frame and the handgun is brought to the ready position.

Depending upon the weapon system, the following also occurs:

- 1) If handgun has a decocking lever, it is activated as soon as the handgun is lowered off the target. If the decocking lever also serves as a manual safety, the safety is taken back off in case the officer has to engage another threat. Once ready to holster, the manual safety is placed on or off based on agency policy.
- 2) If the handgun is single action, the manual safety is activated as the handgun is lowered off of target and the primary hand thumb moved back into position to sweep it off if necessary to fire again.

The shooting hand should perform manipulation of the decocking levers and safeties.



This officer scans from the kneeling position after firing, and will scan again once he rises.

There may be threats he can't see from the kneeling position that will become visible when he stands.

## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

- b. Scan:** With the handgun in the ready position, the officer scans left and right several target frames, scans again fully to the left and right 180 degrees and then scans a full 360 degrees. In many cases there is more than one adversary and officers must be in the mindset of looking for the next threat methodically and deliberately. The Scanning Process also helps break “tunnel vision” and “auditory exclusion” that frequently occur during a shooting incident.

The handgun is dropped to the Ready Position and pointed in the direction of the original threat, (in case he becomes a threat again) and the head and eyes move independently of the weapon. If a new threat is identified, the weapon is directed to the new threat.

- 3. Think:** Officers must be thinking during the entire process. Is there a need to reload? Have I had a malfunction? Each officer should take a quick glance at his handgun to confirm it is in a ready condition. He should also visually check that the pistol is in the correct carry condition, such as decocked, single-action manual safety on, hammer down, etc.

#### **4. Holster:**

- 1) From the Ready Position:** The handgun is brought back as the two hands separate at the place they initially came together, with the Support Hand going back to lie on the ribcage while the Shooting Hand holsters the handgun. The Shooter’s eyes remain looking at the threat area.
- 2) Maintain the Two Safety Checks:** The Trigger Finger is always out of the trigger guard and along the frame and the muzzle is always in the safest direction while holstering.
- 3) Holster With One-Hand:** This includes activating the holster's retention devices.

- a) Rock in from the Rear:** This technique insures the holster retention strap will not be pressed down in to the holster.

The handgun is brought to the rear of the holster and the muzzle is inserted into the holster. As the muzzle enters, the slide will push away the retention strap.





## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

- b) **If Two Hands are Required:** If two-hands are absolutely required to holster, the Support Hand comes across the body only after the muzzle of the handgun is inside the holster. If two-hands are required, consider buying another type of holster.
- 4) For semi-automatic handguns, place thumb on the back of the slide as the handgun is pushed into the holster to prevent the slide from going out of battery while holstering.

### **D. THE READY POSITION**

The Ready Position is used when the officer has determined he may need to use his handgun, but there is no immediate discernible threat.

The Ready Position is also used after an immediate threat is over or you're relatively sure it is over.

1. **Assumed After the Draw or After Firing:** The Ready Position is used to keep the handgun ready to instantly lock out or fire.

The arms can be anywhere from slightly down, off the target, to an angle that points the muzzle directly down at the ground in front of the shooter. As a general rule, a 45-degree angle is the basic position. The hands are in a solid two-hand grip as when first assuming Step 3 of the draw.

From the Ready Position the Shooter can instantly lock the handgun back on target and fire.

*Note: The Ready Position may also be used one handed. This may be necessary while an officer is using a police radio, checking on a downed officer, opening a door, moving a blocking object, maneuvering a flashlight, etc.*

2. **Two Safety Checks in Place:** The Trigger Finger is out of the trigger guard and maintained straight along the frame. The muzzle is pointed in the safest direction.
3. **Creates a Strong Proactive Response Position:** The handgun is already out and you are prepared to instantly respond to a threat.





## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

- 4. With the Muzzle Lowered, Target View Increases:** Since the muzzle is lowered out of the line-of-sight, the shooter has a full view of the original threat, can see the area around the original threat, and can scan more effectively.
- 5. Challenge Position:** The handgun is held in the ready position (muzzle lowered) when challenging suspects or giving other instructions. This allows full view of the suspect(s), their hands and the immediate area around them. Scientific studies have shown that it takes no longer to fire a round by snapping up on target from a lowered muzzle position than if the handgun is kept on target.
- 6. Safety During Movement:** The Ready Position is also used during movement to ensure that safe muzzle direction is maintained. It is also frequently used when officers are grouped together, such as when an entry team is preparing for entry or moving down a hallway. In these cases the muzzle may also be pointed slightly off center and down so that the officer in front of the shooter is not “lasered” by the shooter’s muzzle.



Two methods of using a “safety circle” ready position.  
Front and side views.

## **E. LOADING & UNLOADING PROCEDURES FOR SEMI-AUTOMATIC PISTOLS**

### **1. Standard Recommendations**

- a. Non-Stress Techniques:** Initial loading and unloading are non-stress techniques done smoothly to make sure the pistol is loaded and in correct condition 100% of the time.
- b. Build Reloading Habits:** Perform all loading and reloading functions in the same manner, even though there is no time pressure.
- c. Dry Practice Every 3 Days:** Practice loading and unloading with dummy rounds every three days. Follow all dry firing practice safety recommendations, the most important of which is to keep ALL live ammunition out of the area where you practice and use commercially produced dummy rounds.
- d. Reemphasize All Safety Rules:** Safety must be the First Consideration.
  - 1) Two Safety Checks:** Always handle any firearm in a professional manner and use the Two Safety Checks -Trigger Finger and Muzzle Discipline.
  - 2) The Firearm Instructor's Example is Critical:** Show and do all demonstrations safely, even with Dummy Handguns and Ammunition, making sure that the Two Safety Checks are always practiced.

### **2. Semi-Automatic Loading**

Loading **always** begins with an unloaded handgun. Make sure your students verify, both Visually and Physically, that the chamber and magazine well are empty. Check it - Look Away - Check it Again.

**Step 1: Apply the Two Safety Checks & Engage Safeties.** Grip the pistol properly, use the Two Safety Checks, Trigger Finger and Muzzle Discipline, and activate any decocking devices and safeties if required.

**Step 2: Insert the Magazine.** Insert a **FULLY** loaded magazine into the magazine well and tap it in place.

**Step 3: Chamber a Cartridge.** Pull the slide completely to the rear and fully release it to chamber the first cartridge from the magazine. Do not ride the slide forward.

Apply safety or depress the decocking lever to safely lower the hammer (if required by the pistol's particular action type).

**Step 4 : Holster the Pistol.** Use one-hand to holster and secure the holster's security devices.

## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

### 3. Semi-Automatic Unloading

**Step 1: Apply the Two Safety Checks & Engage Safeties.** Grip the pistol properly, use the Two Safety Checks, Trigger Finger and Muzzle Discipline, and activate any decocking devices and safeties if required.

**Step 2: Remove the Magazine.** Remove the magazine and secure it in a pocket. Do not place it in your magazine carrier until you can ensure it is fully loaded.

**Step 3: Lock the Slide Open & Remove the Chambered Round.** Holding the pistol in a canted position, with the ejection port towards the ground, the Support Hand grasps the serrations at the rear of the slide and pulls the slide fully to the rear. This should cause the chambered round to extract and eject. Rack the slide several times and then lock the slide open.

#### **DO NOT attempt to catch the ejected round!**

Doing so has caused numerous injuries. When attempting to catch ejected ammunition, shooters have had the cartridge ignite with the gun out of battery. Because the shooter is attempting to grip the gun, rack the slide, AND catch the ammo, the slide slips and the ejector strikes the primer while the gun is out of battery. One officer reported standing next to a shooter attempting to catch his ejected round: the ejector struck the primer and the bullet ricocheted down the magazine well, and struck him in the thigh.



This shooter had his hand over the ejection port while clearing a malfunction – the ejector hit the primer and the round fired with the gun out of battery.

**Step 4: Verify Unloaded Status.** Visually and Physically check the Chamber and Magazine Well and ensure that no rounds are present.

#### **Check it – Look Away – Check it Again**

**Step 5: Secure & Store.** Secure the unloaded pistol in your holster or store it in a proper device or location. **DO NOT** lay it down somewhere, or otherwise leave it unattended.

#### **4. Tactical Reloading**

- a. When to Reload:** The goal is to Reload when you want to and not when you have to. A Tactical Reload is an option when there is a lull in the action, the officer is preferably behind cover, and there is no immediate threat (incoming rounds).
- b. Tactical Reloading Provides Options:** A fully loaded handgun gives the officer options to continue the encounter, defend from cover, or exit the area. An empty handgun greatly reduces the options.
- c. The Tactical Reload:** This reload is done prior to expending all ammunition from the weapon's magazine and allows the officer to reload while having a round in the chamber. Unless the handgun is equipped with a magazine disconnect safety, the officer can fire the handgun even in the middle of the Tactical Reload.

It is important that shooters practice Tactical Reloading often. It should be done as one fluid movement.

##### **Step 1: Pistol Lowered**

The Two Safety Checks are applied, Trigger Finger and Muzzle Discipline.

The pistol is lowered slightly out of the line-of-sight, brought closer into the body, and canted so the magazine well is pointed toward the source of ammunition on the belt, as the Support Hand simultaneously moves to the magazine carrier and draws a new magazine.

##### **Step 2: Instant Magazine Exchange**

With the new magazine in hand, the Support Hand is positioned below the magazine well.

The shooter then presses the magazine release with the Shooting Hand thumb (right-handed) or Trigger Finger (left-handed); the Support Hand catches the released magazine (for some pistols the magazine may have to be pulled from the magazine well), the Support Hand is then rotated to insert the new magazine into the pistol and lock it in place.

## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

### **Note:**

- ❑ *The magazine exchange is done **instantly** in order to have the shortest down time possible.*
- ❑ *If the removed magazine is dropped, leave it on the ground. If the shooter drops the new magazine, another magazine should be removed from the magazine carrier.*

### **Step 3: Partially Depleted Magazine Secured**

The magazine removed from the pistol is secured in a support side pocket, inside the waistband or other secure and accessible location. If necessary, it can also be held with the Support Hand in a hasty two-handed firing grip.

**Step 4: Reassume a Tactical Position.** As soon as the reload is completed move back into the Ready Position or into the Locked firing position.

### **Note:**

- ❑ *When reloading, the pistol is lowered slightly out of the line-of-sight, canted to the outside of the body and the arms are bent at the elbows. This increases the shooter's field of view while at the same time brings the arms into a stronger position from which to control the reloading function.*
- ❑ *Shooters should never reload the pistol at belt level, as this causes the officer to drop his head and lose sight of the threat.*

**d. Retention Reload:** Some officers cannot manipulate two magazines simultaneously with one hand, and many instructors will argue that no one should attempt to do so under stress. A retention reload involves the following:

- 1) Removing the depleted magazine and storing it.
- 2) Placing a fresh magazine in the gun.

The advantage is that an officer does not have to possibly fumble two magazines. The disadvantage is that the gun is a one-shot gun a little longer than if the magazines were exchanged at the gun (in cases of pistols with a magazine disconnect, it is a no-shot gun).

**Tactical Reload: Side-by-Side Method**



Prior to pressing the magazine release, draw a full magazine and bring it to position beneath the magazine well.



The index finger slides down the thumb-side of the magazine.



Press the magazine release and drop the magazine into the “V” created by the thumb and index finger.

If necessary, the thumb and index finger can pull the magazine out.



Shift the support hand to align the full magazine underneath the magazine well.



Insert the full magazine.

Ensure that the magazine is fully seated by pressing firmly with the palm of the support hand.



Based on the situation, return to a firing or ready stance.

If necessary, a round could have been fired at any point during the tactical reload (except for handguns with a magazine disconnect).

**Tactical Reload: “L” Method**



Prior to pressing the magazine release, draw a full magazine and bring it to position beneath the magazine well.



Rotate the wrist to turn the magazine parallel to the barrel.



Press the magazine release, allowing the magazine to fall.



Release the partially depleted magazine into the palm of the support hand.



Rotate the wrist to align the new magazine with the magazine well.



Ensure that the magazine is fully seated by pressing firmly with the support hand.



## 5. Speed Reloading an Empty Pistol

In this situation, either the shooter was forced to fire until the pistol was completely empty, or allowed it go empty. The shooter must perform a Speed Reload as fast as possible. Shooters should seek a covered position if not already there.

### **STEP 1: Pistol Lowered -- New Magazine Drawn -- Empty Magazine Released**

The pistol is lowered out of the line-of-sight and brought in closer to the body where it is ergonomically comfortable (elbows will be bent at an approximately 90 degree angle) while the shooting hand thumb (right-handed) or trigger finger (left-handed) presses the magazine release.

Simultaneously, the support hand draws the fresh magazine.

If the empty magazine did not fall free, the Support Hand, while holding the new magazine, pulls the old magazine free.

### **STEP 2: Insert the New Magazine**

With the pistol's magazine well canted toward the incoming magazine, the Support Hand inserts the new magazine and locks it in place.



### **STEP 3: Release the Slide**

The Support Hand then grips the slide and pulls it to the rear and releases it to chamber the first round.

The manual slide lock or catch should not be used.

There are two ways to rack or release the slide.

Whichever you use, make sure that the Support Hand is always to the rear of the ejection port. The slide is gripped, briskly pulled to the rear, and instantly released.



In the **Overhand** method, the Support Hand's four fingers wrap over the top of the slide with the ejection port facing away from the body. This method has three advantages:

1. It provides maximum hand surface to slide surface using gross motor skills, rather than fine motor skills, which are diminished under stress.

## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

2. It points the ejection port away from the face and the body of the officer, preventing injury if a round were to be fired out of battery. (Ejectors have been known to impact primers during cycling and cause an out of battery discharge.)
3. It allows gravity to assist in clearing malfunctions because the ejection port is pointed down, and not up.

In the **Sling-Shot** method the Support Hand's thumb and curled index finger grip the slide. The slide is then pulled back and released.

No matter what method is used to rack or release the slide, shooters must be sure that if their handgun has a manual or automatic manual safety mounted on the slide that the safety is in the off position after the slide goes forward. The sling-shot method is generally the best slide release method for these types of handguns, as the thumb can be placed underneath the safety lever to prevent it from being swept on accidentally.



**STEP 4: Reassume a Tactical Position.** Obtain a shooting grip and THEN move the pistol back into a firing or ready position.

**Note: Kneeling During Reloads or Malfunctions:** Some officers believe that they are a “smaller” target by dropping to a kneeling position; however, they are in fact only a “lower” one. Most agencies have found that by the time the officer kneels, he has already reloaded or cleared the malfunction.

Dropping to a knee makes the officer a stationary target and reduces his ability to move quickly, reduces his ability to see the threat area, takes valuable time away from what the officer needs to be doing, and may drop the officer out of view of fellow officers. Unfortunately, officers have been shot by other officers as they stood back up from kneeling after finishing a reload or malfunction clearance.

**Speed Reload – Right Handed**



A speed reload is performed when the slide locks to the rear, indicating the gun is empty.



**Simultaneously:** Drop the gun slightly out of your line of sight.

Press the magazine release button.

Cant the magazine well towards the source of ammunition on your belt.

Draw the new magazine and align it with the magazine well.



Place the index finger of the support hand on the leading edge of the magazine to “point” the magazine into the magazine well.



Fully seat the magazine.

**Releasing the Slide**



The “**overhand**” method uses gross motor skills (most desirable) and places the most hand surface on the slide for better contact.

DO NOT cover the ejection port with the support hand while pulling the slide to the rear.

When used with pistols with slide mounted safeties, the safety can be inadvertently placed “on.”



The “**slingshot**” method uses the thumb and index finger to pinch the rear of the slide and release it.



The slide catch or slide lock may also be depressed to release the slide.

This method involves the use of fine motor skills and is **not recommended**.



Based on the situation, return to a firing or ready stance.

**Left Hand Techniques**



**MAGAZINE RELEASE**

Use the index finger, or alternatively, the middle finger, to depress the magazine release.

**LOCKING THE SLIDE OPEN**



Line right thumb with locking notch on slide



Pull slide to rear & use right thumb to lift slide lock



The trigger finger may also be used to lock the slide open.

## **F. LOADING & UNLOADING PROCEDURES FOR REVOLVERS**

### **1. Standard Recommendations**

- a. Non-Stress Techniques:** Initial loading and unloading are non-stress techniques done smoothly to make sure the revolver is loaded and in correct condition 100% of the time.
- b. Helps Build Reloading Habits:** Perform all the loading and reloading functions in the same manner, even though there is no time pressure.
- c. The Hands Have Specific Jobs:** Each hand has a specific job when handling a revolver. The Shooting Hand releases the cylinder catch and maintains "initial" control of the revolver until it is switched to the Support Hand. During loading or unloading the Shooting Hand handles the ammunition, speed loaders, speed strips or other reloading devices. The Support Hand helps open the cylinder and then holds the revolver when the Shooting Hand is loading or unloading it.
- d. Dry Practice Every 3 Days:** Practice loading and unloading with Dummy Rounds every three days. Follow all dry firing practice safety recommendations, the most important of which is to keep ALL live ammunition out of the area where you practice and use commercially produced dummy rounds.
- e. Reemphasize All Safety Rules:** Safety must be the First Consideration.
  - 1) Two Safety Checks:** Always handle any firearm in a professional manner and use the Two Safety Checks (Trigger Finger and Muzzle Discipline).
  - 2. The Firearm Instructor's Example is Critical:** Show and do all demonstrations safely, even with Dummy Handguns and Ammunition, making sure that the Two Safety Checks are always practiced.



## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

### **2. Revolver Loading - Right Handed Shooters**

Loading **always** begins with an unloaded revolver. Ensure your students verify, both Visually and Physically, that the revolver cylinder chambers are empty. Check it twice.

**Step 1: Two Safety Checks.** The Right Hand grips the revolver using the Two Safety Checks, Trigger Finger and Muzzle Discipline. The revolver is held at waist level, close to the body (for greater control), in front of the body and slightly to the Shooting Hand Side.



**Step 2: Open and Switch.** The Right Hand thumb pushes (or pulls, depending on the firearm) the cylinder release as the Left Hand's middle and ring fingers push the cylinder open and continue through, while the index finger and little finger curl over the frame's top and the thumb helps control the cylinder, the revolver is then transferred to the Left Hand. The muzzle is angled down with the cylinder's chamber openings facing up for gravity to facilitate loading.

**Step 3: Draw Speedloader** (or other loading device). As soon as the left hand has the revolver, the right hand draws a speed loader from its pouch with the thumb, index and middle fingers securing the speed loader's body. NOTE: The speed loader pouch should be located just forward of the holster on the shooting hand side of the body.





## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

**Step 4: Load.** Line up and insert two bullet noses with two chambers and the rest will follow. Insert fully, actuate the cartridge release, and LET GO of the speed loader.



**Step 5: Close, Switch, and Look.**  
The Right Hand re-grips the revolver's grip as the Left Hand closes the cylinder, giving it a small turn to lock it in place. A final visual inspection is made to verify the revolver's loaded condition.



**5-shot Speedstrip**



**Step 6: Holster the Revolver.** Use one-hand to holster and secure the holster's security devices.

### 3. Revolver Loading – Left-Handed Shooters

**Step 1: Two Safety Checks.** The Left Hand grips the revolver, using the Two Safety Checks (Trigger Finger and Muzzle Discipline). The revolver is held at waist level in front of your body and slightly to the Shooting Hand Side.



**Step 2: Open and Switch.** The Left Hand's grip loosens as the index finger pushes (or pulls) the cylinder release while the Right Hand is positioned at the cylinder. The Right Hand's thumb pushes out the cylinder and continues through, the other fingers curl under the frame to hold the revolver, while the thumb controls the cylinder. The revolver's muzzle is angled down with the cylinder's chamber openings facing up for gravity to facilitate loading.

**Step 3: Draw Speedloader -** The Left Hand draws a speed loader from its pouch with the thumb, index and second fingers securing the speedloader's body.

**Step 4: Load.** Line up and insert two bullet noses with two chambers and the rest will follow. Insert fully, actuate the cartridge release (pressing it in or turning a knob) and LET GO of the speedloader.



**Step 5: Close, Switch and Look.** The Left Hand re-grips the revolver as the Right Hand closes the cylinder, giving it a small turn to lock it in place. A final visual inspection is made to verify the revolver's loaded condition.

**Step 6: Holster the Pistol.** Use one-hand to holster and secure the holster's security devices.

**Note:**

- *There are some Left Handed Shooters who prefer to use Right Handed Loading procedures. There is nothing wrong with this as long as the shooter demonstrates proficiency and has his ammunition carriers positioned appropriately on his belt (on the right side of the body).*

## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

### 4. Revolver Unloading:

**Step 1: Two Safety Checks.** The Shooting Hand grips the revolver using the Two Safety Checks (Trigger Finger and Muzzle Discipline). The revolver is held at waist level in front of the body and slightly to the Shooting Hand Side.

**Step 2: Open & Switch.** Open the cylinder and switch the revolver from the Shooting Hand to the Support Hand (see previous methods).

**Step 3: Dump & Look.** Rotate the muzzle up and dump the cartridges into the Shooting Hand (the cartridges should fall free; if not, use the Support Hand's thumb to push the ejector rod). Rotate the muzzle down to look for cartridges left in a chamber, count the cartridges, and secure them.

**Step 5: Secure & Store.** Secure the unloaded revolver in your holster or store it in a proper device or location. Do not lay it down somewhere, or otherwise leave it unattended.



Left-Handed Shooter  
Ejection

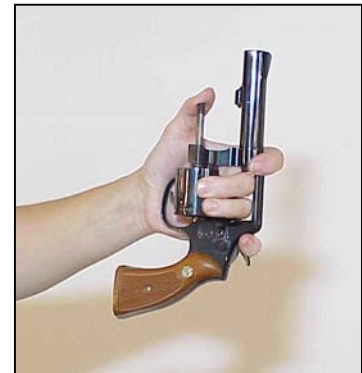
### 5. Speed Reloading the Revolver

**Step 1: Open & Switch.** The revolver is brought in close to the body, the cylinder is opened, and the revolver is transferred to the Support Hand.

**Step 2: Muzzle Up & Strike.** The barrel is turned muzzle UP as the support hand thumb (right handed shooter) or support hand index finger (left handed shooter) strikes the end of the ejector rod smartly to eject the empty brass. You can also use the Shooting hand to push the ejector rod and eject the empty brass.

**Step 3: Muzzle Down & Draw Speedloader.** The revolver is instantly inverted muzzle DOWN as the Shooting Hand draws a Speedloader, or other loading device, from its pouch and brings it to the cylinder's chamber openings.

**Step 4: Load.** Line up and insert two cartridges with two chambers and the rest will follow. Insert fully, actuate the cartridge release and let go of the speedloader.



Right-Handed Shooter  
Ejection

## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

**Step 5: Close, Switch & Lock-Out.** The Shooting Hand re-grips the revolver as the Support Hand closes the cylinder, giving it a small turn to lock in place, assume a two-handed grip and the revolver is locked out into a Ready or Firing Position.

### **6. Tactical Reloading of the Revolver - Either Handed Shooter**

**Step 1: Open & Switch.** The revolver is brought in close to the body with the muzzle DOWN, the cylinder is open and the revolver is transferred to the Support Hand.

**Step 2: Push Up, Release & Pick Out.** With the muzzle DOWN the Support Hand's thumb (right-handed) or index finger (left-handed) pushes up halfway on the ejector rod and releases it. Because of the expanded mouth of the empty brass, spent cases will stay up as the unfired cartridges fall back into the cylinder's chambers. The Shooting Hand picks out the empty cases. If instant firing is required, the cylinder is closed and the partially loaded revolver brought up for firing. The officer must ensure that he closes the cylinder so that a pull of the trigger will rotate the live ammunition the correct way. (See note below on cylinder rotation.)

**Step 3: Load.** Single cartridges are loaded into the cylinder's empty chambers. Cartridge loops or loose rounds must be used.

**Step 4: Close, Switch & Lock-Out.** The Shooting Hand re-grips the revolver as the Support Hand closes the cylinder. A two-handed grip is obtained and the revolver is locked-out into a Ready or Firing Position, depending on the situation.

#### **Note:**

- ❑ *The Shooter's reloading goal should be a two to three-second reload.*
- ❑ *Shooters must know in which direction the cylinder of their revolver will rotate when the trigger is pressed. Smith & Wesson and Ruger revolvers rotate counter clockwise. Colt revolvers rotate clockwise.*

## **G. MALFUNCTION PROCEDURES FOR SEMI-AUTOMATIC PISTOLS**

### **1. Malfunction Overview**

- a. Stoppage Types:** Failures to fire, feed, extract, eject, and go into battery. Double feeds can be caused by one of two conditions: failure to extract and the true double feed from the magazine. The most common stoppage is an empty chamber.
- b. Pistol Positioning & Two Safety Checks:** Whenever any Immediate Action or Feedway Clearance Procedure is performed, a shooting grip is maintained and the Two Safety Checks (Trigger Finger and Muzzle Discipline) are in place.
- c. Be Careful of Terminology:** Use Tap, Rack, "Ready," or "Assess," or "Go," but NOT "Bang." DO NOT train officers to shoot immediately after clearing a stoppage.
- d. Canting the Slide Ejection Port Down:** Allows spent brass and cartridges to fall freely with the help of gravity from the ejection port. This also protects the shooter's face from problems in the ejection port. Cartridges have been known to fire with the ejection port open during unloading and malfunction clearing drills (ejectors impact the primer when the slide is pulled to the rear).
- e. Reloading as a Clearance Procedure:** Some consider that "reloading" should be the only clearance procedure, as it is a trained reflexive set of skills that could also clear stoppages by removing the magazine, inserting a new magazine and chambering the first cartridge. Others consider this too simplistic, as working the slide to clear the chamber area is sometimes required. Performing the basic Immediate Action Procedure can be accomplished very quickly, and will usually clear most stoppages faster than a reload.

### **2. Immediate Action for Semi-Automatic Pistols**

**Step 1: TAP the Magazine.** Use the palm of the Support Hand to tap the bottom of the magazine firmly to ensure that the magazine is fully seated.



**Step 2: RACK the Slide.** To extract and eject anything in the chamber and load a new cartridge from the magazine. This also solves the empty chamber problem.

## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

### **Step 3: READY to Fire if Necessary.**

#### *Notes:*

- ❑ *TAP - RACK - READY must be performed instantly and without thought by the shooter should a malfunction occur.*
- ❑ *The most common reason for a failure to fire is that the shooter failed to load a round in the chamber or left a manual safety ON.*
- ❑ *If the Immediate Action Procedure fails, find cover, if not already there, switch to another handgun, alert another officer, communicate for assistance, exit area and perform the Feedway Clearance procedure.*
- ❑ *If in close quarters and under immediate threat, your only course of action may be to go on the offensive and attack the threat with everything you have available.*

### **3. Feedway Clearance Procedure for Semi-Automatic Pistols**

If “Immediate Action” fails to clear the weapon, additional steps are necessary.

The photo at right shows an example malfunction from a “double feed.”



**Step 1: LOCK Open the Canted Slide.** Pull the slide to the rear and push up on the slide catch to LOCK it open. This releases spring tension on the incoming round.

**Step 2: RIP Out the Magazine.** Push in the magazine release and **RIP** the magazine from the pistol.

## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

- Step 3: WORK the Canted Slide and Look.** WORK the slide vigorously three or four times to clear anything from the chamber or magazine well. As you work the slide, LOOK into the ejection port to check the chamber and magazine well for obstructions.
- Step 4: TAP in a New Magazine.** Insert a fresh magazine and TAP the base of the magazine to make sure it is fully seated.
- Step 5: RACK the Canted Slide.** RACK the slide to chamber a round by pulling it to the rear and releasing it to chamber the first cartridge from the magazine.
- Step 6: READY to Fire if Necessary.** Bring the pistol back on target, READY to fire if necessary.

### **NOTES:**

- ❑ *Feedway clearance is more extensive and time consuming than the Tap – Rack – Ready procedure since it completely unloads and clears the pistol and then reloads it with a fresh magazine.*
- ❑ *When teaching the Clearance Procedure, break the process into two steps, Clearing and Reloading. Students will usually understand and remember the process easier.*
  - ***Clear** – “ LOCK, RIP, WORK and LOOK” clears the pistol and prepares it for reloading.*
  - ***Reload** - TAP, RACK and READY reloads the pistol.*
- ❑ *Some Firearm Instructors believe that Step 1, Locking the Slide to the rear or Looking at the condition of the pistol may not be necessary depending on the type of pistol used and that racking the slide 3 or 4 times will clear almost any malfunction and that looking at the condition of the pistol wastes time. Other Instructors say it must be a complete procedure to make sure everything is covered and adds minimum time while helping to ensure clearance.*



## **H. MALFUNCTION PROCEDURES FOR REVOLVERS**

### **1. Revolver Malfunction Types:**

- a. Failure to Fire:** Empty cylinder or defective ammunition.
- b. High Primer:** Difficult or impossible to rotate cylinder. Officers should always closely inspect their ammunition prior to loading. Look for high primers, improperly seated bullets, corrosion, and bullet deformities.
- c. Dirt & Debris Under the Extractor Star:** Difficult or impossible to rotate cylinder.
- d. Loose Ejector Rod:** Difficult or impossible to open cylinder.
- e. Empty Case Under the Extractor Star:** An empty case has lodged under the extractor star.
- f. Broken Firing Pin:** Check the firing pin (usually attached to the hammer). This is a very infrequent occurrence.

### **2. Immediate Action:**

- a. Pull the Trigger Again:** When the revolver fails to fire, pull the trigger again. This brings a new round in line with the barrel. If there was no round in the aligned chamber this will bring a loaded chamber into alignment. If the failure to fire was due to a bad round of ammunition, this will solve the problem (unless the entire batch of ammunition is bad).
- b. Still Fails to Fire:** If the weapons fail to fire after two pulls of the trigger, speed reload with new ammunition immediately.

## I. ONE-HANDED INCAPACITATION TRAINING:

### 1. Drawing One-Handed:



Officers must practice drawing with their support hand in case their primary hand or arm is incapacitated. This officer reaches around his waist, releases the retention device, and draws the handgun. Care must be taken not to place any of the fingers inside the trigger guard to prevent inadvertent firing.



Another alternative is for officers to reach behind their back to draw.

The officer can give his gun belt a strong tug to pull the holster towards his support side (either to draw in the front or from the rear).

### **– SAFETY FIRST –**

**ONLY dummy rounds should be used when training officers these incapacitation techniques.**

**All live ammunition must be removed from the training area, including magazines, pockets, including live ammo carried by instructors, etc.**

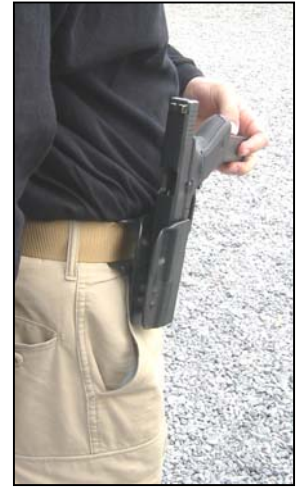
**2. Reloading:** There are several places to safely place the firearm in order to reload it using only one hand.

This revolver shooter, places the revolver between his legs, using one knee to keep the cylinder locked open during his reload.



This officer places his handgun behind his knee to reload a fresh magazine.

## Handgun Handling Techniques



Semi-automatic pistols can be placed under the arm, between the knees, behind the knee, or back in the holster with the magazine well pointing forward to enable reloading.

### 3. Malfunction Clearances One-Handed:



This instructor sets up a malfunction using dummy rounds for the student to practice one-hand malfunction clearing.

- a. **Immediate Action:** Officers should use the same formula for clearing a malfunction with one hand as two:

**Tap**  
**Rack**  
**Ready**

The “**Tap**” can be on the officer’s belt, knee, holster, or other hard object.

The “**Rack**” can be accomplished by hooking the rear sight on the belt, the holster, the pants, or another hard object. Officers must ensure they do not muzzle themselves or others.



## *Handgun Handling Techniques*

### **b. Feedway Clearances One-Handed:**

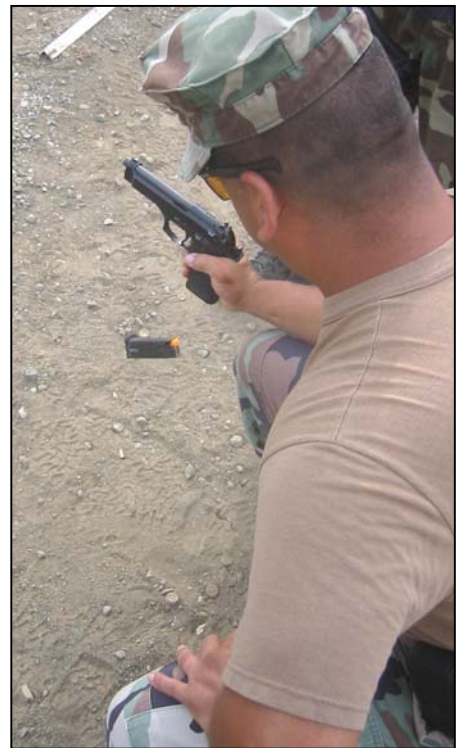
#### **1) Method One:**

- a) Officer locks the slide open with one hand using the belt or other part of the equipment or body
- b) Officer presses on the magazine release button and strips the magazine out of the gun by using some part of his clothing or equipment
- c) Officer racks the gun
- d) Officer reloads

#### **2) Method Two:**

- a) Officer grips the handgun tightly and depresses the magazine release button
- b) Officer strikes his wrist forcefully over his knee
- c) Officer racks the slide to clear obstructions from the chamber
- d) Officer reloads

**This hard strike with the magazine release depressed will release the magazine, and in most cases close the slide, which eliminates the more difficult step of locking the slide open one-handed and ripping the magazine from the gun.**



### **REMEMBER:**

**You Must Do Something:** Make the gun work. Do not become paralyzed by fear -- fight to WIN.

**If all Else Fails, Exit the Area Immediately:** If clearing the Feedway fails to return the pistol to working order, your options are greatly reduced, and you should exit the area immediately if possible.

*\* End of Chapter \**