



Safe Insight

Online Classroom



Selecting A Handgun

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Introduction

So you have decided to purchase a handgun. You go to your local gun store to check out the selection. The sales person asks what type of handgun you are looking for. Type? You ask the person behind the counter to clarify their question. They proceed to rattle off some choices; semi-automatic, revolver, standard, compact, sub-compact, 9mm, .45, .38, Glock, Ruger, and Smith & Wesson... for starters.

You suddenly feel completely overwhelmed. But you have an epiphany, “This doesn’t have to be so complicated.” You nod in a thoughtful manner, then ask, “What do you recommend?”

The sales person is delighted that you asked. This gives them the chance to proudly show off their latest investment of their paycheck. They begin to tell you about the gun they are carrying and why it is “the best gun out there”.

But is this the best gun for YOU?

Don't make the mistake of purchasing a firearm without first seeing how it feels.

Read on to familiarize yourself with the choices.

Revolver Vs. Semi-Auto



REVOLVER

A revolver, also referred to as a “wheel gun”, gets its name from the cylinder that revolves to place a new round in the shooting position.



Click Image To See How A Revolver Operates

Many people tell new shooters, especially new *women* shooters, that they should get a revolver. Why? Usually you will hear something like, “They are easy to use.”

True, revolvers don’t have as many moving parts as a semi-automatic handgun. This makes them easy to clean and maintain. But does it make them easy to *shoot*?

While the concept of shooting a revolver is fairly simple, putting it into practice is not always so simple, **especially** for a new shooter. This is because revolvers tend to have a long and heavy trigger press. This makes it difficult for those with smaller or weaker hands to operate. Additionally, even if you are able to press the trigger, pressing it smoothly may not be such a simple task.

Why should you care if you can press the trigger smoothly or not? Because a smooth trigger press is the most important factor when it comes to marksmanship. This is even more true if you are shooting a revolver, which is often limited to only 5 or 6 rounds. If you are not accurate with them, you could be in for some problems.

SEMI-AUTO

Semi-Autos get their name from the way the rounds are loaded into the chamber. Each time a shot is fired, a new round is automatically loaded from the magazine into the chamber of the firearm. The gun will perform this operation as rapidly as you can press the trigger. It *will not* continue to fire if you hold the trigger down. This would be considered a full-auto.



Click Image To See How A Semi-Auto Operates

Contrary to popular belief, semi-autos can be quite simple to operate. They also carry more rounds, and have a much easier trigger press. It depends on whether you are willing to take the time to get professional training with one.

A book is great for information. However, if you wanted to learn how to swim, would you read a book and go try it, or would you ask somebody that is good at teaching others to swim to come with you and show you how to do it? There is a difference!

Once you understand how a semi-automatic functions, and you become familiar with operating it, they are quite simple to use. In fact, many find that they are preferable to a revolver for a few reasons:

- 1) They have a convenient trigger press
- 2) They typically hold more rounds
- 3) They are designed a little more ergonomically

But that does not mean that semi-automatics are right for everybody. Some people do not have very much grip strength in their hands. Occasionally, there will be a person that is unable to operate the slide because they do not have the strength. While this is rare, it is certainly a reason to not get a semi-auto.

Not all slides are created equal. If you find that you are having trouble operating the slide on a semi-auto, try another model. Several factors influence how easy or difficult a slide is to operate. But before you decide on purchasing one, make sure you are able to operate it efficiently. You can rack the slide over and over while shopping for guns.

Caliber

Caliber can be thought of as the size of the bullet the gun shoots. You can think of some of the more common calibers in terms of X-Small, Small, Medium, and Large. (See our book *Ammunition Basics*)

REVOLVER		SEMI-AUTO
.22LR	XS	.22LR
.38 Special	S	9mm Luger (9x19)
.357 Magnum	M	.40 S&W
.44 Magnum	L	.45 ACP

Caliber DOES NOT equal amount of recoil

But here is a point of caution. Remember that caliber does not necessarily equate to recoil. In fact, .45 ACP is one of the larger rounds available in semi-automatics, which deters a lot of new shooters from trying it. When they do try it, they find that the recoil is much more smooth than that of a 9mm.

This is because of the velocity at which the round is traveling. The average velocity of a 9mm is about 1100 feet per second (FPS). In contrast, the average .45 caliber round is traveling at approximately 850 FPS.

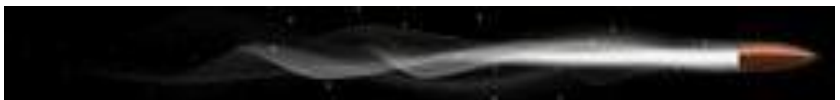
QUESTION: Which caliber is best for self-defense?

ANSWER: The one you have when you need it!

There are a lot of myths in the world of ammunition surrounding “stopping power”. Many people will tell you that a bigger round will stop an attacker with one well-placed shot. **THIS IS NOT A FACT!**

The first thing you need to know is that bullets do not “stop” people like you see in the movies. The energy from a bullet penetrates objects, it does not knock a person off their course of travel. There are plenty of scientific studies and homemade videos out there to prove this.

The second fact is one that most people fail to consider. How motivated is the attacker? There are many factors that will determine what stops an attacker; their mental state, what substances they are currently using, etc.



Click The Image For Statistics By Caliber

Single/Double-Action

What do the terms “single-action” and “double-action” mean? This refers to how many actions the *trigger* is responsible for.

Single-Action

The *trigger* is responsible for one action (single) – dropping the hammer forward to activate the firing pin.

Double-Action

The *trigger* is responsible for two actions (double) –

- 1) Cocking the hammer back
- 2) Dropping the hammer forward



Click Image To See How They Work

Size

Does size really matter? Which size handgun should you get? This can be one of the more confusing aspects of selecting a handgun. So what are the different sizes for?

Typically you will find semi-automatics come in three types of sizes; Standard, Compact, and Sub-Compact.



Three Different Glock 9mms

But you will notice that the same manufacturer will usually make the same gun, shooting the same caliber, in all three sizes. You can simply think of these as small, medium, and large. What are they each used for?

Small: Sometimes referred to as a “sub-compact”, this is great for concealed carry due to its small size.

Medium: Also called a “compact”, this can be a good option for concealed carry. The slightly larger design also allows you to carry a few more rounds.

Large: These are typically the “standard” size. They carry the maximum number of rounds and are typically a good choice for home defense.

But there is one thing that really confuses people when it comes to size. Most people that are new to firearms think that a smaller gun is a good choice, mostly because they do not want a lot of recoil. In fact, the opposite is true.

Large Gun = LESS Recoil

Small Gun = MORE Recoil



SIZE DOES MATTER

Manufacturer

When it comes to selecting a manufacturer, it is really all about preference. Make a list of some of the ones you have heard about from others. Then – go handle them.

NEVER make the mistake of letting somebody tell you what the “best” gun is!

Guns are like shoes. I can tell you what the best shoe in the world is, but all I’m really telling you is how it fits *my foot*. Your foot is probably a different shape and size. So it is important that you see how the different guns feel in *your* hands.

Try handling several different ones at your local gun store. Get comfortable working the slide and pressing the trigger. Once you have narrowed down your selections to a short list of the ones that feel good, go to a local range and rent these firearms. See how they feel when you shoot them.

You can find a list of recommended gun stores and ranges here: [SafeInsightRecommended](#)

If you still want more help choosing the handgun that is right for you, please feel free to contact us!



Safe Insight

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