

Intro to Basic Pistol Skills

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Anyone who has the desire to become proficient with a pistol must learn the basics. Remember everyone who shoots no matter what their skill level is had to start somewhere. Whether you want to compete in shooting sports or that you just want something to protect your family, you must know how to properly handle a firearm from loading and unloading, to shooting at your target, you are responsible for every aspect of that firearm and with proper training and skills you develop you will get the knowledge needed to safely handle any firearm.

So let's get started, we will jump right in to the safety rules. Safety rules are important; they are the foundation that everyone uses to handle a firearm in a safe manner. They are simple and easy but you need to know them and you must follow them every time you handle a firearm to ensure you are doing it in a safe manner.

Firearm safety is no accident, Every time you hear about a firearm accident, one or more of the Firearm safety rules have broken or not completely followed.

Firearm Safety rules

Treat all firearms as if they are loaded
Never point a firearm at anything you are not willing to destroy
Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to fire
Know your target and what is behind it

Let's go over what they mean to us;

1, Treat all firearms as if they are loaded.

This is important so we remember to always point the firearm in a safe direction. You never want to look down the barrel to check if it is loaded, you never want to point the firearm at anyone.

2, Never point a firearm at anything you are not willing to destroy

This goes with rule number 1, always point the firearm in a safe direction and never at anything you're not prepared to destroy or shoot at. This can include the TV, the dog, or other people.

3, Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to fire

Again this just adds to the above rules, you will not have a negligent discharge if you always keep your finger off the trigger

4, Know your target and what is behind it

This is very important, we are shooting a projectile at anywhere from 800 to 1200 feet per sec, and if you miss your target you will impact whatever is behind it, so you must be mindful of people walking around, objects behind your target that you do not wish to destroy. Only fire at your target if it is clear from obstructions beyond your target, because you never know if the bullet will go through or if you miss.

Basic Pistol parts descriptions

Parts of a Handgun

Handguns (revolvers and pistols) are short-barreled firearms sometimes used for hunting. Handguns consist of three major parts: frame, barrel, and action. Below are the parts of a double-action revolver and a semi-automatic pistol.



Grip

Now that we are pretty familiar with the parts of the handgun, let's talk about how we need to grip the pistol.

First there are some terms you will need to be familiar with.

Strong Hand

The hand one primarily grasps the handgun with; the dominant hand.

Weak Hand

The hand other than the strong hand; the non-dominant hand.

Dominant Eye

The stronger of the two eyes, usually the same side as the dominant hand, but not always.

Non-Dominant Eye

The weaker of the two eyes, usually opposite the dominant hand, but not always.

Cross Dominant

When a shooter has a dominant right hand and a dominant left eye, or vice-versa.

So when you start to grip the pistol, forget everything you have seen or heard in the movies.

There are 2 ways to grip the pistol, one may be better for you and your handgun.

The types of ways to grip the pistol are the "Thumb over Thumb" and the "Thumbs Forward".

We will start with the Thumb over Thumb grip. For our examples our strong hand will be our right hand.

Take your strong hand and grip the pistol, with the thumb of your strong hand touching your middle finger, see the picture below.

***Please not that you should always have your finger off the trigger when practicing your grip, you never want to have your finger on the trigger until you are ready to shoot.*



Then take your support hand (in this example your support hand will be your left hand) grip the pistol. What you will want to do is fill the empty space of the grip (between your finger tips and your palm of your strong hand) with the palm of your support hand.

Then place the thumb of your support hand over the thumb of your strong hand.

See the below picture.



The next grip we will talk about is the Thumbs Forward grip.

This grip is the most popular with semi auto pistols and for competition shooters and some law enforcement. It puts more of your hand on the frame of the pistol to help give the pistol more support when aligning the sites and when firing.

You will start out the way you did with your strong hand gripping the pistol, but instead of your thumb touching your middle finger you need to place your thumb on the top of the frame, just below the slide.

Then place the palm of your support hand in the grip in the space between your finger tips and the palm of your strong hand.

Place the thumb of your support hand along the frame of the pistol above the trigger section, and then rest the thumb of your strong hand on top of your support hand.

See the below picture.



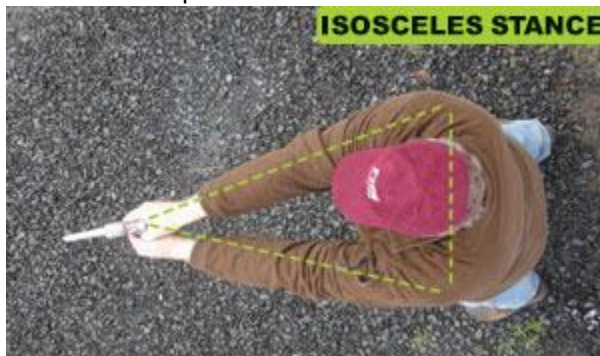
Shooting Stance

There are two different ways to stand while holding your pistol, they are The Weaver and the Isosceles.

For the purposes of this into class we are going to focus on the Isosceles stance.

The Isosceles Stance is where you will grasp the gun with two hands, extending your arms out toward the target and your shoulders squared up to the target. What you will have is a isosceles triangle where your gun is the tip of the triangle and your shoulders are the straight bottom of the triangle

See the below picture.



For your feet, you will need to have strong stance place your feet in a “classic boxer style” with your feet about shoulder with apart and on foot slightly back. Think of it like you were going to throw a ball or a punch, you want a solid supported stance.

Site Alignment

Once you get a handle on how you are going to grip the pistol, the next thing you will need to do it get your sites aligned.

Your sites are important that they are what will line up the barrel of the gun to your target and fire the bullet where you want it. You will notice that the sites are on top of the handgun, the front site (closest to the muzzle) is a post style site and the rear site (closest to your eye) is a notch style.

What you will want to do is look through the notch in the rear site and place your front site in the middle of that notch. The top of the front site should line up with the top of the rear site and the dot on the front site should be centered left to right with in the notch.

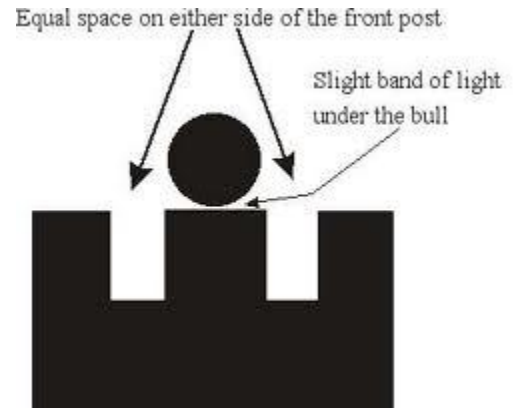
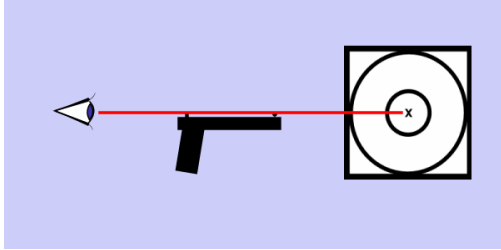
Then once you have you front and rear site lined up, you will want to put the top of the front site on the bottom of your target.

So if you are aiming for the red circle in the center of the target you will put the top of the front site at the bottom, or 6 o'clock position on the circle, and then make sure your rear site is lined up with the front.

The important thing to remember at this point is you need to focus on the front site. So once you have your sites lined up with your target, bring the front site in to focus, this will make the target and the rear site a bit fussy.

See the below pictures

Sample of how to line the sites to the target



Remember to focus on your front site, your target and rear site will be fussy



Trigger Control

OK, you are almost there, now that you understand the parts of the pistol, you have a solid stance and your grip is right, your sites are aligned and on target the next thing to do is the Trigger Control.

When you have the target and your site lined up, and you have determined that there is nothing behind your target and you made the decision to shoot you then can move your trigger finger from the side of the frame of the pistol down to the trigger.

You will need to be conscience of where you place your finger on the trigger for a incorrect placement will affect the accuracy of you shooting.

The below picture illustrates the correct placement of your finger on the trigger



The right picture illustrates having too much finger



This picture illustrates having too little finger on the trigger

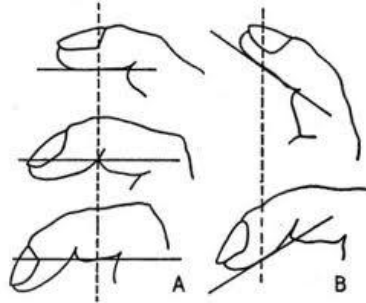


Once you have the correct placement of your finger on the trigger now you are ready to squeeze, or to be more accurate you want to push the trigger rearward. You will want to apply steady pressure to the trigger so it moves rearward until the gun shoots, when the gun shoots it should surprise you every time, if it doesn't you will jerk the pistol down in anticipation of the shot and will cause your bullets to impact the target low, and to the right (for right handers, left for lefty's)

The below picture has two illustrations,

A, shows the natural arc your finger will take and will cause the gun to move left or right.

B, illustrates the correct way to press the trigger, you want to make sure that you press the trigger straight back.



Now as long as your sties were on target and you did not jerk the trigger your bullet will impact the target where you aimed.

Do not get discouraged if you do not get it right away, shooting is a skill and you will need to practice both with live ammunition at a range and "dry fire" at home. Both of these techniques will give you the skills to become a better shooter

Loading and Unloading your Firearm

So now that you understand the basics of how to operate a firearm, now is time to learn how to load and unload your gun.

Revolvers

As we all know a revolver has a cylinder that rotates to put the bullet or cartridge in line with the barrel and hammer to fire.

To load a revolver, you first will need to push the cylinder release, which on most revolvers is on the left side. When you push the button forward it will unlock the cylinder from the frame and it will swing out, normally to the left. You will see all the chambers which can range from 5 to 8 depending on the type of gun. You will load on bullet at a time in to each cylinder and then once you are finished you will push the cylinder back in to the frame till it locks in to place.

Once the cylinder is locked in to place it will be ready to fire.

To unload a revolver, you simply press the cylinder release and wing open the cylinder. Then push the extractor rod that sticks out in front of the cylinder to the rear and that will extract the cases from the cylinder, once you have verified that it is empty you can close the cylinder.

Semi Autos

Loading semi autos are a bit different; first you will need to load the ammunition in the magazine. Then take the magazine and insert it in to the magazine well on the bottom of the grip, push it all the way till it clicks and locks in place.

Then once the magazine is in place you will need to grip the slide with your support hand at the rear where the serrations are located, grip the pistol with your strong hand and move the slide to the rear, once you have it all the way to the rear let go of the slide and let the slide go forward by itself. This will load the chamber. Depending on your gun you may need to take the safeties off to make it ready to fire.

To unload a semi auto pistol, the first thing you must do is remove the magazine, once the magazine is removed from the pistol rack the slide to the rear to eject the bullet from the chamber. At this point you can lock the slide to the rear using the slide stop and you will have a clear view to verify that the chamber is empty.

Clearing a Jam

Jams will typically only occur in semi auto pistols. The common types of jams are

Failure to fire

Failure to fire is when you pull the trigger and the gun goes click but the bullet doesn't fire. There can be a lot of reason why this happens but if it does you need to hold the firearm down range for at least 20-25+ seconds, this is just in case it is a delayed fire and the gun fires. If after 25 seconds it doesn't fire, you need to drop the magazine from the pistol and lock the slide back ejecting the problem bullet, now you can safely put the gun down and examine why it did not fire.

Stove pipe

Stove pipe is when a fired bullet case doesn't eject all the way out of the gun and is sticking up like a stove pipe. What you do is take your support hand and put it flat on top of the slide, making sure you do not put your hand in front of the muzzle, and swipe the empty case out of the ejection port. The empty case will fall and the slide will fully move forward.



Double feed

Double feed is when the fired case isn't extracted from the chamber and the gun tries to load another one from the magazine. To clear this type of jam you first need to lock the slide back using the slide stop lever, then remove the magazine. Once the magazine is removed you can let the slide forward and rack it back again and see if the empty case gets extracted. If it doesn't then may need to use something like a pencil or a squib rod to push the empty case out of the chamber, if you are not comfortable doing this you can always ask for help from a range officer



Range Commands

While you are out on the range you will need to be familiar with what the range officer is telling you, so here are some of the basic range commands

Load and make ready

This command indicated that you can load your gun and get ready to shoot.

Unload show clear

This command is given once you are finished shooting and you need to unload your firearm and indicate it is empty

Range is hot

This command indicate that other people, or you may start firing

Range is cold or safe

This command indicates the range is safe and everyone who was shooting had indicated they are empty

Cease fire

Stop firing at once

Charge you gun

This is another command similar to Load and Make ready, where you can load your gun and get ready to fire

Useful stuff

Links

<http://home.nra.org/#/home>

<http://JohnZSr.com>

<http://zombieshootersassociation.com>

<http://NCSHootingSports.com>

Here is a good reference to help you diagnose your shooting. Note this wheel is for a right hand shooter; just flip the left and right symptoms for a lefty



This document is designed to be used as a reference guide to help you develop your skills of handling your firearm and to be safe while doing it. It is highly recommended that you attend training classes to further explain, demonstrate and assist you in developing your skill in how to safely handle your firearms. Above are some links to other firearms training.

Feel free to contact me at ken@ncshootingports.com with any questions on training or shooting sports