



Eastern Iowa Firearms Training

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So you want to buy a gun . . . now what?

You have reached a decision, you want to buy a hand gun. There are many reasons to purchase a gun; target shooting, plinking, hunting, competitive shooting or, perhaps it's for personal defense.

Since personal defense is the focus of my course work; that is where I am going to focus my attention. And, since many of the folks I train are first-time gun owners, that is who I am going to focus on.

So, you are about to purchase your first hand gun and your purpose is for personal defense . . . now what?

How much gun do you need?? The movies have taught us that deadly encounters resulting in gunfights that last for 10s of minutes and require multiple reloads, all while winding through a house or forest or parking garage. Reality is somewhat different. Most gunfights take place within 21 feet. The majority of those follow the "rule of three" – 3 seconds, 3 rounds, 3 feet.

These facts move our selection of a personal defense weapon to something that is easily drawn, reliable, simple to use and with enough stopping power to put your threat down quickly.

The decision lies between a double action revolver and a semi-automatic pistol. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Let's chat about double action revolvers first.

Double Action Revolvers

With a double action revolver, the trigger performs three tasks; rotating the cylinder, cocking the hammer and finally releasing the hammer to discharge your weapon. Most hold six rounds – double the amount required for the "rule of three".

Operation is very simple - point and pull the trigger. If it doesn't go "bang", pull the trigger again. Repeat until the threat is down or your weapon is empty. Time on the range practicing shooting drills will insure the former happens first.

This ease of use is what makes the double action revolver a natural selection for a first-time gun owner. Whether you are a man or woman, the primary concern if you are called upon to use your weapon is to be able to easily get "rounds on target" and a revolver makes this as simple as possible. For women, there is an added advantage that you don't need to work any other parts of your weapon other than the trigger. There is no slide to rack, no magazine to insert, no hammer to pull back – just point and pull the trigger.

My favorite revolver is the [Ruger LCR](#). This family



of Light Compact Revolvers provides a selection of .38 Special and .357 Magnum weapons that are small, light and easily concealed. They also have the added

advantage of an internal hammer to reduce the possibility of the weapon catching on something while you are drawing it. For a first-time shooter, I recommend this double-action revolver over all others on the market today.

Semi-Automatic Pistol (SAP)

Your other choice is the semi-automatic pistol. Weapon selection here revolves much more around size, weight, caliber and capacity. In keeping with the "rule of three", any semi-automatic pistol that provides at least six rounds, is more than capable of filling a personal defensive purpose. However, due to a higher possibility of malfunction with the semi-automatic pistol, a second magazine is a must, allowing you to quickly eject a malfunctioning magazine and replace it with a new one.

The most popular caliber for a semi-automatic pistol is 9 mm. While this may be a bit light, proper ammunition selection (we'll talk about that in a bit) can overcome this caliber's shortcomings in the "knockdown power" area.

The biggest difference in operation between the double-action revolver and the semi-automatic pistol is the use of an ejectable magazine in the

SAP and a more involved clearing process in the event of a malfunction. While you need simply keep pulling the trigger with a double-action revolver, a SAP required the learning and “muscle memorization” of the standard “slap, rack and shoot” clearing process. While not difficult, the time required to perform this process wastes precious time when in a gunfight with your life in the balance.

On the plus side, SAPs have a tendency to be slimmer and more easily concealed. Even .45 caliber SAPs can be fairly petite. My favorite .45 caliber carry SAP is the [Glock 36](#) with a magazine extender. This provides me with 7 rounds in the magazine and an 8th in the chamber. A second magazine gives me an additional 7 rounds “just in case”. While this is my favorite, there are a number of other good choices for a concealed carry .45 caliber carry SAP as well.



There is simply an explosion of sub-compact 9mm SAPs coming out on the market. The latest is the [LC9 from Ruger](#) – small, narrow and yet capable of



shooting a 9mm cartridge and providing 7 rounds in the magazine and an 8th in the chamber. I feel fairly certain this will become my preferred

carry weapon after a suitable amount of range training. Yet, the LC9 has a number of stiff competitors as well. Take your time, look over the field, read the reviews, view the youtube reviews and then make your selection.

Caliber of your Personal Defense Weapon

Finally, there is the selection of the caliber of your weapon. We have talked about weapons that will shoot one of the following caliber rounds: .38 cal, .357 cal, 9mm or .45 cal. Any of these rounds will stop your attacker. By using defensive ammunition such as hollow-points or some of the new types of defensive ammunition, you can increase the “knock down” power of your weapon as well.

I would also encourage you to find a friend or a gun dealer that will let you shoot various pistols so you can actually feel what we have discussed. Then, make an informed decision on the weapon you want to select to protect your life and the lives of your family as well.

Two other guns that are a “must”

There are two other pistols I recommend you purchase to further your training.

The [Ruger 22/45](#) is a great SAP for training on the range. It fires a .22 cal cartridge so cost of practice is greatly reduced. And, it has the weight, touch and feel of a larger semi-automatic pistol. This is a great tool for practicing the whole shooting process; stance, grip, target acquisition, sight alignment, trigger pull, follow-through. I have put thousands of rounds through mine and they just continue to work each and every day.



And, finally a CO2 powered air-soft pistol. My current favorite is the [Ruger SR9](#) replica. The reason I like these pistols are the same reason I like the Ruger 22/45 – it’s a very cheap way to practice the basics. But with an air-soft pistol, I can set up a range in my office (or basement or garage or hallway) without fear of putting holes in walls our severely injuring folks in the house. Yet, it allows me to fully work on the basics of the shooting process. You can shoot thousands of rounds of 6mm BBs, work on the basics and then devote your range time to your primary carry weapon to polish your skills.



So there you have it, the three guns you “must” have; your primary carry weapon, the Ruger 22/45 for range drills and an air-soft to make sure you “pull a trigger” and practice your basics each and every day!