FRONT SIGHT

FIREARMS TRAINING INSTITUTE



Dry Practice Guide

Defensive Handgun

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Disclaimer

This Dry Practice Guide is not intended as a substitute for the safe and professional instruction provided in Front Sight's Defensive Handgun Course.

THIS IS NOT A TRAINING MANUAL. FRONT SIGHT STRONGLY ADVISES YOU AGAINST PRACTICING THE TECHNIQUES IN THIS DRY PRACTICE GUIDE UNLESS YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE FOUR DAY DEFENSIVE HANDGUN COURSE AT FRONT SIGHT.

Front Sight assumes no liability for any damages or negligence that may occur through the use of this Dry Practice Guide.

Students wishing to pursue training should contact Front Sight at (800) 987-7719 or www.frontsight.com.

Front Sight recommends that all procedures and techniques mentioned in this guide be performed at a proper firing range under carefully controlled conditions. By using this guide, the reader accepts the responsibility for any and all accidents, damage or injuries that might occur.

PART ONE

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The Purpose of This Dry Practice Guide

At Front Sight, our goal is to make you as good as we possibly can during the time you spend with us. That, however, is only part of the process to gaining lasting skills in gun-handling, marksmanship, and tactics, and establishing a combat mindset. When you leave Front Sight, it becomes your responsibility to practice the techniques you learned during your course at Front Sight.

To assist you in your continued practice, we have created this guide. It reviews many of the techniques taught in the 4-Day Defensive Handgun Course. This guide is more than just a "dry practice" review. Many of the described techniques, such as malfunctions and reloads, involve a loaded weapon. Such techniques cannot be practiced safely during dry practice and must be practiced only at a proper firing range under carefully controlled "live-fire" conditions.

Practice diligently; practice often; and by all means — practice CORRECTLY!

The Four Universal Firearms Safety Rules

Rule 1: Treat every weapon as if it were loaded.

Dry practice means practicing with an unloaded weapon to polish the skills and techniques learned on the range. Even during dry practice, treat the weapon with the same respect as a loaded weapon. That respect, or mindset, generally prevents any negligent discharge that might otherwise occur. A negligent discharge means firing a round that you didn't anticipate firing.

Rule 2: Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.

Usually, if you violate Rule 2 what you end up covering is yourself. You end up covering your hand, your leg, or some other body part. You need to be what we call "muzzle conscious." Know where that muzzle is pointing all the time and never let it cover anything you are not willing to destroy.

Rule 3: Keep your finger off the trigger and outside of the trigger guard until you're ready to shoot.

When you are pointed in at your target and have made the decision to shoot, ONLY THEN is your finger on the trigger. Any other time the trigger finger is straight and outside the trigger guard and resting on the reference point.

Rule 4: Be sure of your target and what's inline with your target.

On the shooting range your target is generally a flat sheet of paper. No one is in the foreground because everyone is on the same firing line. There is nothing behind the target except a large berm to absorb the impact of the rounds. On

the street, Rule 4 is significantly more complicated. Several questions need to be answered. First, are you about to shoot the correct individual? If the answer is yes, then is someone going to step in front of your sights? And finally, if you press the trigger and that round over penetrates right through your adversary and continues downrange, what's it going to strike downrange? It goes without saying that once you have fired that shot you cannot alter it's course and you certainly can't get it back. You need to be absolutely certain of Rule 4 before you press the trigger.

The Five Levels of Competence

I don't know who originated the following stratification. I have observed its profound application to many subjects with no credit given to an author. Listed below are the five levels of competence that I have applied to firearms training.

Intentionally Incompetent: Believe it or not, there are those who own and carry firearms that clearly know of their incompetence, but lack even the slightest bit of courage or motivation to improve their skills. The **II** avoids training out of laziness and fear of further exposing his incompetence to others. Graveyards are filled with the **II**. Sadly, the **II** often take those who count on them most — partners, family, and team members — to the grave with him. Unfortunately, the **II** cannot be helped to any substantial degree due to his lack of motivation to retain any training. Time wasted by coddling the **II** is better spent on the student who wants to improve. Fortunately, we rarely see the **II** at Front Sight.

Unconsciously Incompetent: The **UI** does not know that he does not know. The **UI** represents approximately 95% of all gun owners and includes people, for example in the police and military, who carry a gun for a living. The **UI** is incompetent but does not know he is incompetent because he has had no training or poor training, and has not yet experienced a tactical situation, which would clearly demonstrate his inadequacies. Examples of the **UI** can be found everywhere. The police officer who boasts that he has never had to draw his pistol in 10 years of duty is a lucky **UI**. The officer who only practices shooting his weapon a few times per year in order to pass the mandatory range qualifications is **UI**. The gun owner who buys a gun and box of ammo, fires a few shots at the range and then places the gun in his closet, confident he can use it effectively to protect himself is **UI**. The hunter who only shoots once a year to sight-in his rifle before going hunting is **UI**. Military personnel who receive basic rifle training, but have not

handled a weapon **with live ammunition** in over six months are **UI**. Unfortunately, the **UI** often learns of his ineptitude for the first time under the most extreme stress situations. When the flag flies, the **UI's** first lesson may be his last.

Consciously Incompetent: If the **UI** survives his first lesson, and is smart enough to place the blame on the man in the mirror, the **UI** automatically graduates to the level of **CI.** The **CI** now knows he does not know and seeks help in acquiring the proper skills in the use of his weapon. The **CI** is a motivated student of weaponscraft. Although the **CI** is still operating at a level of incompetence, the **CI** recognizes his faults and in doing so can focus his efforts toward reaching a level of competency.

Consciously Competent: With proper training and practice, the **CI** develops into the **CC**. The length of time needed to develop from **CI** to **CC** is directly related to the quality of the training and the motivation of the student. The **CC** is able to manipulate his weapon and clear malfunctions in a safe and efficient manner. The **CC** understands the principles of marksmanship, shot placement and ammunition management. Quick assumption of field positions and the use of cover are familiar concepts to the **CC**. The **CC** has adopted the combat mind set as his own. As the level indicates, the **CC** is very quick and competent, but must constantly think about what he is doing. Every decision and action occurs as a result of an intricate thought process and has not yet reached a reflex response level. The **CC** will respond effectively to most stress situations that do not require split second decisions or actions.

Unconsciously Competent: As the fifth and ultimate level of competence implies, the **UC** has programmed his mind and body after thousands of repetitions to react in a fraction of a second with consistent responses that require no perceivable thought process. The **UC** functions flawlessly even under stressful situations because the **UC's** extensive training overrides his conscious thought process. As you can imagine, the **UC** is not common in today's society. This sad

fact is due more to lack of proper training than to lack of motivation. Here are a few examples of the **UC in action.** In the heat of a gun battle, a pistolero hears a "click" as his hammer falls on a defective round. He reflexively taps the magazine, rack-flips the action and delivers two rounds into his adversary's chest without consciously recognizing that his gun had malfunctioned. Upon sighting a trophy, a hunter slings up as he drops into a steady sitting position. He fires, manipulates the bolt on recoil--without the rifle leaving his shoulder or his eyes leaving the game--producing a one-shot kill and he does it all in less time than it takes to read this sentence. The combat shotgunner, confronted with a rapidly deteriorating hostage situation at 10 yards, immediately aims his front sight at the outside ear of the gunman, then confidently delivers half of the shotgun's pattern to the gunman's head.

At Front Sight we take motivated people, conscious of their inadequacies or not, and develop their minds and bodies to a level of competence that transcends 95% of the people who carry firearms for a living. For those who are already competent, Front Sight will challenge your abilities and elevate your competence to the unconscious plane.

Defensive Handgun Discussion

Much is written about handgun cartridge *stopping power*. It seems that gun magazines are quick to feature each month the "newest and hottest" combat loads (complete with photos of ballistic gelatin penetration and exploding watermelons) touted as having the greatest stopping power. Although these articles are interesting to read, they are not practical and lead the majority of the readers (see previous page under **UI**) to assume that one-shot stops can be accomplished if you shoot the latest, hottest, jacketed hollow point, titanium core, *wünderound*.

The truth is that any handgun cartridge is capable of providing a one-shot stop with proper shot placement and any handgun cartridge will be woefully ineffective with poor shot placement. Although not at all practical as a defense weapon, the .22 caliber rim-fire will drop a 250 pound madman if you shoot him through the eye into the brain vault. The same man may not even flinch when shot through the arm by a .44 Magnum. Therefore, **shot placement is most crucial** when considering the factors involved in the immediate termination of a hostile threat. From a practical sense, shot placement should initially be **center of mass.**

Another misconception spawned by "one-shot stopping power" magazine articles is that one should expect or strive for a one-shot stop when using a handgun against an armed adversary. This erroneous thinking will get one killed! Even the most powerful combat handgun cartridge shot at close range will not guarantee an instantaneous stop. The handgun cartridge is severely under powered when compared to a rifle cartridge or buckshot. **The standard response with a handgun is two shots delivered as quickly as possible.** Shoot twice at center of mass, then rapidly assess the situation to determine if the threat still exists. If the threat is not terminated, move up to the head and carefully deliver one round to the brain vault. By training to shoot twice every

time one engages a target, a reflexive standard response develops that triggers the quick and accurate delivery of two center of mass hits when shooting to defend one's life.

When choosing a cartridge, volumes have been written comparing calibers, projectile characteristics, weights, velocities, etc. Again, these articles provide for good discussion at the gun club, but fail to point out that the extra 300 feet per second or increased bullet weight is the least appreciable factor in deciding the outcome of a gunfight. Those who know will tell you that it wasn't the cartridge that saved their life. From a practical standpoint **choose a cartridge that has as large a cross sectional bullet diameter and bullet weight as possible, loaded as hot as you can effectively control it.** The cross sectional diameter of the bullet (caliber) affects the amount of tissue displacement. The weight and velocity of the bullet affects penetration. Therefore, the larger the caliber, heavier the bullet, and faster the velocity--the greater the tissue damage.

There are those who feel that fully-loaded, large-caliber, pistol cartridges -- such as the .45 ACP are too difficult to control. Lack of recoil control when shooting a handgun chambered for the .45 ACP is due to poor gun handling -- not due to cartridge power. A proper grip and stable Weaver stance will allow even the frail to effectively control the muzzle. If you doubt it, spend a weekend with us at **Front Sight** and your doubts will vanish as your gun handling improves.

So the next time you read about the latest and greatest handgun cartridges, remember the practical rule of thumb -- shoot the **heaviest bullet in the largest caliber** that is loaded as hot as you can **effectively control it** to deliver **two well placed shots** in the **quickest possible time.**

Also remember -- it is the man and not the gun (or cartridge) that does the shooting. A UC with a .22 rim fire is a great deal deadlier than a UI with a .44 Magnum.

Any Gun Will Do...
As Front Sight's motto indicates, your handgun is just a tool. However, some tools are better than others and it is comforting to have good equipment. For several reasons related to gun handling, speed, cartridge power, accuracy, and safety, the 1911 .45 ACP is the handgun of choice of many a pistolero. I am often asked by the prospective student if any modifications should be made to the 1911 to enhance its function. I am quick to point out that in terms of modification, less is better. A practical (as in one carries the gun on the street) handgun does not need a compensator, ambidextrous safety, or all the extra hardware that adorns the IPSC competition guns.

The following list of modifications are all one needs on an out-of-the-box 1911 to enhance functional reliability and ease of use.

I caution against allowing anyone other than an experienced, competent gunsmith to work on a gun one carries for defense. There is no room for error in an instrument for which one stakes his life.

- Fixed sights set at 25 yards. Sights should be large and black for rapid alignment.
- Aluminum trigger tuned (no creep) to 4 lbs. Use a short trigger if your hands are small.
- Barrel throated and polished to allow chambering of all .45 ACP ammunition varieties.
- Feed ramp contoured and polished for ease of ammunition feeding.
- Extractor tuned and polished for positive extraction and spring tension.
- Extended thumb safety for ease of operation and proper thumb placement with firing grip.
- Solid barrel bushing for added strength.

- Hammer bobbed to prevent snagging on clothes when carrying concealed and to prevent pinching or irritation of flesh when shooting or practicing gun handling techniques.
- Firing pin stop press fitted for added protection against failure.
- Heavy recoil spring kit to prevent excessive frame and slide wear when shooting full loads.
- Thin stocks to reduce frame size.
- Entire gun, including sights, dehorned (all sharp edges smoothed) to prevent snagging on clothes when carrying concealed and to prevent blisters and cuts on hands when shooting or practicing gun handling techniques.
- Two high-quality magazines. The magazine carried in the gun does not require a bumper on the base as it adds unnecessary bulk to the gun. The spare magazine should have a bumper for ease in proper seating of the magazine when loading.
- Considered an option, tritium (glow in the dark) night sights for low-light shooting conditions.
- Considered an option, (only attempted by a competent, experienced gunsmith) slimming and thinning of the frame to create a smaller frame for those shooters with extremely small hands.
- For left handed shooters only, ambidextrous thumb safety.

Choosing the finish on a handgun is much like choosing the color on a sports car. The choice is up to the owner, but some standards do apply. Just as one would not paint a Ferrari lime green with purple pinstripes, one would not finish a practical handgun in bright polished stainless steel, nickel, or gold.

Choose a matte finish. Even blued steel will reflect light, if highly polished and create undesirable attention and target indication.

Upon completion of the modifications listed above by a competent gunsmith, you will have the exactly what is needed in a combat sidearm.

Another option is to just buy a Glock chambered in .40 S&W. It's good to go right out of the box. That's what I carry.

Dry Practice Procedures

Strictly adhering to the procedures here will allow you to safely practice with your weapon when you leave the range.

A few definitions are needed for clarity:

Dry Practice:
Describes a practice session or exercise not involving ammunition. The weapon is completely unloaded. Note that we do not use the term "dry fire" as you cannot fire an unloaded weapon and when calling out a range command we do not want any confusion between dry practice and firing the weapon.

Live Fire:
Describes a practice session or exercise using ammunition. **The weapon is loaded.**

Negligent Discharge:
The act of firing the weapon unintentionally.

Notice that the words "accident" and "accidental discharge" have been purposely avoided because they imply a sense of chance or lack of control. A weapons fires only when the handler presses the trigger -- there is no element of chance involved. In our many years associated with weapons, we have never seen a gun of any kind fire by itself. The handler may not intend to fire a round, but he is responsible for it regardless of his intentions. The term "negligent discharge" more accurately places the responsibility where it belongs.

We are well advised to practice the skills we learned on the range. You cannot significantly improve your shooting skills through additional shooting and often the more you shoot, the worse you shoot. Your skill with firearms is maintained and improved through **CORRECT DRY PRACTICE.** The importance of dry practice cannot be overstated.

Homes, apartments, and hotels are clearly poor places for a bullet to unintentionally escape from the muzzle, yet because of convenience, these are the places we most commonly dry practice. The following system will allow you to safely conduct dry practice anywhere.

The three main elements of safe dry practice are:

- Proper mind-set
- Control of your environment, and
- Separation from ammunition

Proper Mind Set: Because safety lies between the ears and not with mechanical devices, proper mindset is crucial to safe dry practice. Realize that handling weapons can be disastrous if the handler's attention is elsewhere. Dry practice must be conducted in a structured, serious fashion. Often as familiarity increases, so does complacency. This gives rise to many seasoned shooters having negligent discharges. Some people believe that if you handle weapons long enough you will eventually have a negligent discharge. We strongly disagree. There is no reason, other than negligence, that you will unintentionally fire a round. If you treat dry practice with the respect it demands, you will never feel the helpless agony associated with tracing the path of the round that you did not want to fire or have to utter the hollow excuse, "I didn't mean to shoot."

Control of Your Environment: For safe dry practice you must have control of your immediate environment so you can eliminate all possible distractions. If you don't have control of your environment, don't dry practice until you do.

In preparation for dry practice:

- Turn off the television and stereo
- Take the telephone off the hook
- Close the drapes
- Send the family on an errand

This distraction-free environment will help result in a safe and productive practice. Part of your practice environment is obviously the target.

- Construct a target specifically for dry practice. The target should be used for dry practice only and should be removed immediately when you have finished practicing. Don't use part of the building (doors, mirrors, or light switches) or its furnishings (televisions, pictures, computers) because these items may tempt you to practice your presentation "just one more time" after you have quit your dry practice session and have holstered the weapon. This sounds unbelievable, but is the most common reason for negligent discharges.

- Select a simple target, such as a piece of white paper cut to a desired size. If you want to simulate shooting at longer distances within the confines of your home, reduce the size of the target. For added precaution, tape your target to something capable of stopping, or at least slowing, a bullet. A brick or cinder block wall is ideal.

- At the conclusion of the practice session, remove the target to avoid the "just one more time" syndrome described above. Some people advocate dry practicing in conjunction with watching television as the characters in the program serve as targets and the scene change is your start signal. This is bad business (except for the television repair man) because the person practicing tends to shift his attention to the television, thereby diluting his concentration and losing control of his immediate environment. The television also remains as a tempting target after the dry practice session is over. Many televisions have been destroyed in this process. Besides, the thin veneers of glass and plastic that comprise a television do not make a good bullet stop.

Separation from Ammunition: Physical separation from your ammunition supply is mandatory to ensure a safe dry practice session. Unload your weapon AND yourself. This includes

- The chamber
- All magazines and speed loaders
- Ammunition carrying devices such as butt cuffs on long guns
- Your pockets

Place all the ammunition in a container such as an ammo can or range bag and put it in another room, away from where you will be dry practicing. You will remain in one room only while dry practicing, so you will effectively be separated from your ammunition supply.

Questions:

1. What about keeping ammunition in the magazines so the have the proper weight, feel, and function for reloading or malfunction clearing practice?

   ABSOLUTELY NOT. At some point you will end up with a round in the chamber. The muscle memory you program through dry practice with an empty magazine will be no different than using a full magazine.

2. What about using snap caps or similar devices to protect the weapon from the hammer falling on an empty chamber repeatedly?

   This too is a poor idea because the habit of placing something in the chamber prior to dry practice will eventually lead to a negligent discharge. It is also likely that your snap caps can find their way into your live ammunition and result in a *click* when you wanted a *bang*! This can be hazardous to your health as well. In terms of damage to your weapon, with the exception of rim-fire handguns and rifles, dry practice is not detrimental to a modern weapon.

Dry Practice Checklist

- Set a realistic dry practice goal before you start. A long practice session is not necessarily better because quality, not quantity, is the goal.
- Establish the proper mind set for dry practice.
- Establish and maintain control of your dry practice environment to eliminate all possible distractions.
- **UNLOAD THE WEAPON AND YOURSELF** and place the ammunition in another room.
- Chamber check the weapon to verify that it is unloaded and say, "The weapon is unloaded and I am ready for dry practice."
- Select an appropriate sized target and place it on a solid surface capable of stopping a bullet.
- Chamber check the weapon again and then begin dry practice.
- Terminate the dry practice session before significant physical and mental fatigue set in.
- Remove the dry practice target immediately upon finishing the dry practice session.
- Return the weapon to fighting mode — loaded and placed in its usual location such as a holster, fanny pack, briefcase, or nightstand.
- Say aloud, "The weapon is loaded and dry practice is over."

PART TWO

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Reference Point for the Trigger Finger



The trigger finger should be off the trigger and rest along the frame of the weapon. There will be some feature of the weapon (slide stop, screw, etc.) that serves as a reference point for the trigger finger.

Indexing the Magazine



The index finger of the support hand must touch the first round in the magazine.

Chamber Checking for Single-Action Semi-Autos



Present your weapon to the Ready. Do not present to a Chamber Check.



Note placement of fingers and orientation of the muzzle.



If the weapon is too difficult to chamber check with the fingers underneath, the hand can be brought over the top of the slide in front of the ejection port. The firing hand pushes forward against the pressure of the support hand to move the slide just enough to see if the chamber is empty or has a round in it. Note placement of fingers and orientation of the muzzle.



If neither of the above methods are working, the hand can be brought over the top of the slide behind the ejection port. The firing hand pushes forward against the pressure of the support hand to move the slide just enough to see if the chamber is empty or has a round in it. Note placement of fingers and orientation of the muzzle. This is the least preferred method since a round may be ejected or chambered unintentionally if the slide is moved too far to the rear.

Magazine Checking for Semi-Autos



If no magazine is in the weapon, insert a finger into the magazine well to verify.



If a magazine is present, properly index and inspect the magazine.



To reinsert the magazine, the back of the magazine meets the back of the magazine well at about 10 degrees.



Insert magazine about one inch to make certain it is properly aligned in the magazine well.



Open the support side palm and briskly seat the magazine one time.



Finish with the weapon at the Ready.

Chamber Checking for Double Action Semi-Autos



Using the support side thumb, cock the hammer.



After chamber checking, de-cock the hammer using the firing side thumb. Stroke the de-cocking lever up using the firing side thumb if it is not spring loaded.



Most double action only weapons do not have a hammer spur or enough of the hammer exposed to allow you to thumb the hammer back. In this case, in order to overcome the pressure of the hammer spring you may have to grasp the back of the slide between your forefinger and middle finger, and use the pressure of the thumb pushing on the frame to move the slide enough to the rear to check to see whether or not there is a round in the chamber. Note that if the slide is moved too far to the rear, a round may be unintentionally ejected or chambered.

Chamber Checking for Revolvers



Keep weapon oriented with the muzzle down. Trap the cylinder in open position with support hand.





Support side thumb holds the cylinder in place. Inspect each chamber.



Using the support side palm, close the cylinder and return to the Ready.

Low-Light Chamber Check for Semi-Autos



Right Hand: During the chamber check, insert the trigger finger into the chamber to determine its condition. Keep eyes down range.



Left Hand: During the chamber check, insert the index finger of the support hand into the chamber to determine its condition. Keep eyes down range.

Low-Light Magazine Check



Using the support side index finger, depress the ammunition in the magazine to determine roughly the number of rounds.



Revolver: Using the trigger finger, touch each chamber to determine its condition.

Loading for Semi-Autos



Loading begins and ends with a chamber check and magazine check.



Magazine check.



Insert a fully loaded magazine into the weapon.



Grasp the rear of the slide using the heel of the hand and fingertips.



Run the slide briskly to the rear.



The support hand hits the firing side shoulder to prevent riding or "babying" the slide forward and causing a malfunction.



Conclude with a chamber check and magazine check.

Unloading for Semi-Autos



Unloading begins and ends with a chamber check and magazine check.



Remove the magazine from the weapon and place it in a pocket or pouch.



Right Hand: Rotate the weapon 90 degrees to the right. Form a cup around the ejection port with your support hand. Gently run the slide to the rear and catch the round in your hand. If the round does not fall into your hand. DO NOT rack the slide forcefully or repeatedly. Doing so may cause an open-breech detonation if the primer hits a protrusion, such as the ejector, inside the weapon. Instead, reposition your support hand to ensure ample room for the round to fall. Gently run the slide to the rear. If the round still does not fall free, lock the slide to the rear using the slide stop, then inspect and clear the weapon.



Left Hand: Rotate the weapon 90 degrees to the right. Form a cup around the ejection port with your support hand. Gently run the slide to the rear and catch the round in your hand.



Conclude with a chamber check and magazine check.

Loading for Revolvers



Loading begins with a chamber check.



Properly index speed loader in firing hand.



Align speed loader behind cylinder and insert rounds about half way into the chambers. Release the rounds into the chamber and drop the speed loader.



Close fully loaded cylinder with support palm and return to the Ready.

Unloading for Revolvers



Unloading begins with a chamber check.



Trap the cylinder in the open position and rotate muzzle up. With the palm of the firing hand, strike the ejection rod to eject the cartridges from the chambers.



Rotate the weapon muzzle down and chamber check.

Grip



The firing hand is high on the frame of the weapon. The thumb is high and relaxed. The thumb is on top of 1911 safety, or just below the slide-mounted de-cocking lever (as on Smith & Wesson or Beretta). Trigger finger is straight.



The weapon is in line with the forearm.



The support hand overlays the firing hand "fingers on fingers, thumb on thumb." By keeping the thumbs high, they are safely away from the controls of the weapon and the trigger finger has increased dexterity. For double-action semi-autos with slide mounted de-cocking levers, keep the thumbs high and just below the de-cocking lever. This will allow the shooter to push the de-cocking lever up if it was inadvertently knocked down and it will prevent de-cocking of the hammer during firing.

Stance



A bladed stance is achieved by dropping the firing side foot to the rear. The feet, hips, and shoulders are all in one plane.



The firing side arm is kept nearly straight and creates the "Push" in the push-pull isometric tension.



The support side elbow is bent straight down to the ground and creates the "Pull" in the isometric tension.



Feet are shoulder width apart and the body has a slight lean forward, over the feet.



The head is erect and the weapon comes up to eye level.

Ready



In the Ready, the weapon is at arms length and down at 45 degrees.



The trigger finger is straight. The eyes are down range looking for trouble. The isometric tension of the stance also exists in the Ready.

After-Action Drills





When your opponent disappears from your sight picture, drop the weapon down to the Ready, trigger finger straight as you begin to move to gain distance or to move to cover.



Quick Check to locate an adversary near you who you have not yet seen.



Check both left and right, as if preparing to cross the street.



Final Check is looking at your adversary to make certain he is down and out of the fight.



Check your weapon and scan like the turret on a tank to find any other threats in your entire environment. If you feel there is no immediate threat in your vicinity you can re-engage the safety or de-cock your pistol, if so equipped.

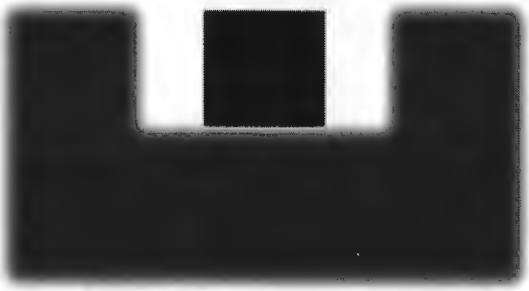


To avoid covering people with the muzzle while scanning 360-degrees, the 'Sul' or 'South' position can be used while checking for other potential threats. The slide is resting on the back of the support hand to angle the muzzle out slightly so you do not cover your feet.

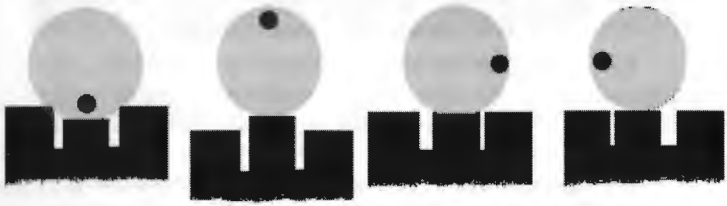


Three Secrets

Sight Alignment

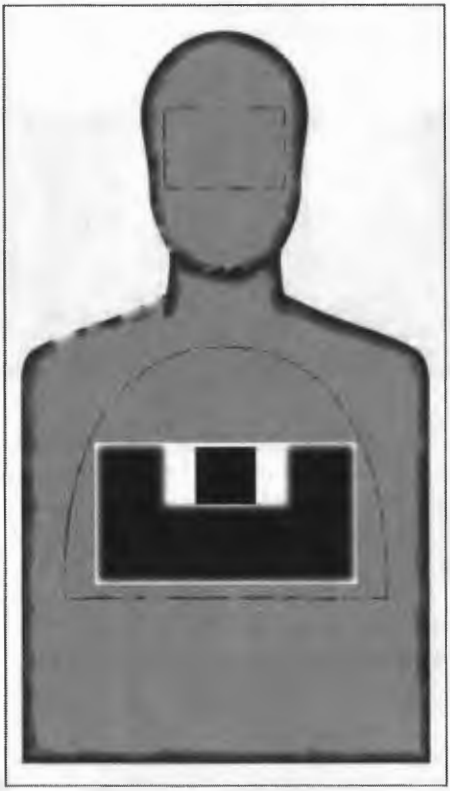


Sight alignment is the relationship between the firing side eye, rear sight and front sight. Correct sight alignment is where the top or tip of the front sight is even with the top of the rear sight, and there is equal spacing on the left and right of the front sight post in the rear sight notch. The front sight should be clear and sharp, with the rear sight notch being out of focus, but still seen in relation to the front sight.



Misalignment of the sights will cause the impact of your round to deviate in the direction of the error. The greater the distance between the shooter and target, the more effect the error in alignment will have on the impact of the round.

Sight Picture



Sight picture consists of placing your correct sight alignment against the target. The focus of the firing side eye should remain on the tip of the front sight in order to determine its relationship to the out of focus rear sight and out of focus target. The amount of focus devoted to the front sight is related to how far away the target is from the shooter. The further away the target, the more attention needs to be devoted to focusing on the front sight.

Trigger Control



On a single action weapon, the proper placement of the trigger finger on the trigger is across the center of the pad.



On a double action weapon, the proper placement of the trigger finger on the trigger may be anywhere from the center of the pad to across the first bend.

Proper placement of the trigger finger on the trigger allows you to take any slack out and smoothly press the trigger straight to the rear without disturbing your sight alignment and sight picture as the shot is fired. Once the shot is fired, the trigger finger is relaxed just enough for the trigger to reset. This allows another smooth press without re-taking out the slack. You are attempting to achieve a surprise break (pressing the trigger until the pistol fires rather than making the pistol fire). When the target is closer to you, you are working for a compressed surprise break.

Reloading

Tactical Reload



When there is a lull in the action, check to see if you have a magazine in your belt pouch, then remove the magazine in the weapon and place it in a pocket.



Get the magazine from the belt pouch and insert it into the weapon. If you only have one magazine pouch, and you have time, remove the partially full magazine from your pocket and place it into the magazine pouch.

Emergency Reload



On pressing the trigger, nothing happens (no shot fired).



Trigger finger goes straight and tip the muzzle up to look in the ejection port while moving towards cover.



You will see nothing in the ejection port.



Keep the weapon high and secure a fresh magazine from your belt. Do not drop the empty magazine yet.



The fresh magazine and empty magazine pass in mid air.



Insert the fresh magazine.



Release the slide to chamber a round. Using your firing side thumb or support side thumb is preferable.



Grasping the slide and pulling back is sometimes necessary (especially for left handed shooters) but is slower.



Finish with the weapon pointed at your target, finger on the trigger, and ready to shoot. You must make the intellectual decision whether a shot is necessary.

Malfunction Clearances

A **malfunction** is loosely defined as an interruption in the cycle of operation of the gun that can be cleared in the field quickly without the use of tools. In contrast, a **jam** is a stoppage that will require tools, disassembly, or even an armorer's services to clear it. If we experience a jammed gun mid-fight our options are retreat or transition to another weapon. If our weapon malfunctions we first try to deal with it on a symptom specific basis, i.e. look at or feel the weapon to see what's wrong and then fix that specific problem. With practice, the physical clearance procedures should be ingrained to the point of being nearly reflexive.

Once the malfunction is cleared, however, the decision to fire or not must be a **conscious decision**. Take care in your malfunction clearance practice not to ingrain a trigger press as the unthinking, reflexive finale of the clearance process.

A serious malfunction or an empty gun may take you out of the fight for several seconds. Standing in place with your gun inoperative makes you an easy target. Since aggressive movement is seldom allowed during range practice, it is all too easy to ingrain the habit of standing still while managing your gun. Fight this trend by incorporating functional movement into your dry practice, or clearing the weapon from a supported position.

Transitioning to a backup weapon is a great option, if you have a backup weapon. Clubbing your adversary with the inoperative pistol may be necessary at close quarters.

If you have cleared a malfunction and not fired, **check the gun** to ensure that the malfunction was cleared.

Malfunctions

Type 1 Malfunction: Failure to Fire



On pressing the trigger, the hammer falls but no shot is fired. You get a click instead of a bang.



Keep the weapon high and the trigger finger goes straight. The support hand taps the bottom of the magazine to ensure it is properly seated.



The support hand grasps the serrations at the back of the slide.



In one motion, rack and flip the weapon 90-degrees to the right.



Finish with the weapon pointed at your target, finger on the trigger, and ready to shoot. You must make the intellectual decision whether a shot is necessary.

Type 2 Malfunction: Failure to Eject



On pressing the trigger, nothing happens (no shot fired).



Keep the weapon high and the trigger finger goes straight. Tip the muzzle up to look in the ejection port while moving to cover.



You will see brass high in the ejection port.



The support hand taps the bottom of the magazine to ensure it is properly seated.



The support hand grasps the serrations at the back of the slide.



In one motion, rack and flip the weapon 90 degrees to the right.



Finish with the weapon pointed at your target, finger on the trigger, and ready to shoot. You must make the intellectual decision whether a shot is necessary.

Type 3 Malfunction: Feedway Stoppage



On pressing the trigger, nothing happens (no shot fired).



Keep the weapon high and the trigger finger goes straight. Tip the muzzle up to look in the ejection port while moving towards cover. Check to see if you have a magazine to replace the one in the weapon. If you do not, then you know you must retain the magazine that is n the gun.



You will see brass low in the ejection port.



The support hand grasps the serrations at the back of the slide. The firing side thumb pushes up on the slide stop to lock the slide to the rear.



Strip the magazine out and let it fall unless this is your only magazine, in which case you would retain it as you clear the weapon.



Rack the slide three times to eject any ammunition or empty cases.



Maintain a firm hold on the slide as you rack.



Insert a fully loaded magazine into the weapon.



Rack the slide to chamber a round.



Finish with the weapon pointed at your target, finger on the trigger and ready to shoot. You must make the intellectual decision whether a shot is necessary.

Presentation from the Holster (Open Carry)



Count 1. Firing hand secures a firing grip on the weapon while the support hand moves to the mid-section.



Count 2. The weapon is lifted straight up until it just clears the top of the holster. The trigger finger is straight. 1911 safety is on.



Count 3. The firing side elbow drops and the muzzle points directly toward the target. Finger straight, safety on.



Count 4. The weapon starts toward the target and the support hand establishes the proper grip. 1911 safety is disengaged. Begin to remove the slack from the trigger as the weapon moves towards the target.



Count 5. Bring the weapon to eye level while building isometric pressure on the frame. Slack is out of the trigger.

Holstering (Open Carry)



Bring the weapon back to Close Contact (Count 3). Avoid covering the support side arm with the muzzle. If your weapon has one, ensure the safety is engaged or the pistol is de-cocked at this point.



Gently, carefully, holster the weapon. The trigger finger stays straight.

Presentation from Concealed Holster (Open Front)



Count 1. Firing hand cups around the open front of the jacket or shirt. The support hand is at the mid-section.



Count 1 (continued)**.** Flip the garment well to the rear exposing the weapon for a full firing grip.



Count 2. The weapon is lifted straight up until it just clears the top of the holster. The trigger finger is straight. 1911 safety is on.



Count 3. The firing side elbow drops and the muzzle points directly toward the target. Finger straight, safety on.



Count 4. The weapon starts toward the target and the support hand establishes the proper grip. 1911 safety is disengaged. Begin to remove the slack from the trigger as the weapon moves towards the target.



Count 5. Bring the weapon to eye level while building isometric pressure on the frame. Slack is out of the trigger.

Holstering (Open Front)



With the weapon at the Ready, grab the garment just above the holster with the support hand.



Push the garment to the rear fully exposing the holster. Hold the garment there.



The firing side arm controls the garment by trapping it against the body. Pause at Close Contact. Avoid covering the support side arm with the muzzle. If equipped, engage the safety or de-cock.



Gently, carefully, holster the weapon. Trigger finger remains straight.



To acquire a magazine or flashlight from the support side, the support hand cups around the front of the garment and moves it aside to allow access to the pouch.

Presentation from Concealed Holster (Closed Front)



Count 1. Both hands grasp the hem of the garment on the firing side and begin to move it away from the body.





Count 1 (continued). Lift the hem of the garment up and away from the body exposing the weapon.



Count 1 (continued). The support hand holds the garment near the armpit while the firing hand secures a firing grip.



Count 2. The weapon is lifted straight up until it just clears the top of the holster. The trigger finger is straight. 1911 safety is on. The support hand continues to hold the hem of the garment.



Count 3. The firing side elbow drops and the muzzle points directly toward the target. Finger straight, safety on. The support hand continues to hold the hem of the garment.



Count 4. The weapon starts toward the target and the support hand establishes the proper grip. 1911 safety is disengaged. Begin to remove the slack from the trigger as the weapon moves towards the target.



Count 5. Bring the weapon to eye level while building isometric pressure on the frame. Slack is out of the trigger.

Holstering (Closed Front)



With the weapon at the Ready, grab the garment at the hem with the support hand. Lift the garment clear of the holster and hold it there.



Pause at Close Contact. Avoid covering the support side arm with the muzzle. Ensure the safety is on or the weapon is de-cocked at this point.



Gently, carefully, holster the weapon. Trigger finger is straight.



To acquire a magazine or flashlight from the support side, the support hand thumb lifts the garment and moves it up and out of the way to allow access to the pouch.



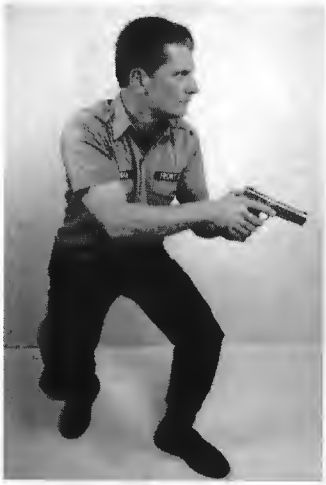
Acquire a magazine or flashlight from the support side, using the thumb to keep the garment out of the way.



Kneeling



Take a small step directly at your target with the support side foot while you obtain a firing grip on the weapon.



Present the weapon as you drop down into kneeling. Tuck your firing side foot under your rear end.



The upper body is in your usual stance. Support side elbow is just forward of the support side knee. The legs form a tripod for stability. The rear end is sitting on the heel.



Maintain the same bladed stance.



Perform After Action Drills while still in kneeling. Scan again after standing up.

Harries Flashlight Technique



Present the weapon to the Ready for a low-light chamber check and magazine check.



Secure the flashlight in the support hand with the lens toward the little finger and the pressure switch near the thumb.



Bring the support hand under the firing hand and lock the backs of the wrists together. Keep the support side elbow down. Maintain the push-pull isometric tension where the wrists touch. This is the Flashlight Ready.



Keep the support side elbow down for greatest recoil control in the Harries Flashlight Position. When searching, the light is on and the trigger finger would be straight.



For malfunctions or reloads, tuck the light under the firing side armpit, lens to the rear. This way both hands are free to manipulate the weapon.





The trigger finger controls the switch on a dedicated light. A dedicated light frees the support hand to manipulate the weapon as needed.





A dedicated light will probably interfere with a normal chamber check where the hand is underneath the slide. In this case, bring the support hand thumb over the top of the slide in front of the ejection port and 'pinch' the slide. While maintaining pressure with the support hand, the firing hand pushes the frame forward enough to open the breech and perform a chamber check.

Training Notes

Remember, *no ammunition is used during Dry Practice*! **Follow the four safety rules and the dry practice procedures.**

Your two main goals to practice during training for a potential gunfight are 1) Get the hit and 2) Keep the gun running.

When practicing techniques, especially new ones, slow is smooth, and smooth is quick. Be smooth, and you will be fast when it counts.

Training on a live-fire range will allow you to:

- Safely practice weapons handling with a 'hot' or loaded weapon.
- Practice your marksmanship skills.

Some of the drawbacks to range training may be:

- You may be limited in how you move, if not required to be completely static.
- You may be on a range that allows you a good field of view, especially of your target, and you are standing on a firing line in the open with no option to seek cover.
- Firing cues are usually commands or the target turning towards you, or some other artificial means of letting you know it is time to fire.
- You will not get any realistic feedback from your target.
- You may be limited in your options on how to respond to the threat.
  - You are told how many rounds you may fire, and how quickly.
  - You cannot disengage, or back away.

When practicing on your own, as much as possible, you should keep the following in mind:

- Realize that you always have three choices when dealing with an adversary you are not able to avoid, depending on the circumstances:
  - You can hold your ground to see what he does.
  - You can retreat if conditions permit.
  - You can choose to engage if you think it is necessary.
- When dealing with one or more opponents, it is ideal to be in a position of advantage; behind cover or at least concealed from view if at all possible.
- Know how much ambient light is available to you in your environment, and plan accordingly.
  - Master switch for the home that turns on at least one light in every room.
  - Flashlights and spares.
  - Knowing how much light is available to you in case you don't have a master switch or flashlight.
- Is there a way to minimize the threat areas you have to control?
- Is there a way to stack, or line up, multiple threats so they are easier to deal with?
- What in your environment can be used as a barrier to your adversary?

Some questions you need to ask yourself:

- Planning to defend your home is a great idea, but is that the only potential location for an attack on you and your family?

- Have you given thought to a potential fight starting in or around a vehicle or vehicles?

- Have you given serious thought to who you might be fighting? Is it going to be a Hollywood

stereotype villain, or are the people you might have to fight going to look like normal, or almost normal, citizens? Are you keeping up with the local news? Who is committing violent crimes in your area, such as armed robbery or home invasions or are involved in carjackings?

- How will you know when to shoot? Have you decided what your 'trigger' or 'line in the sand' is going to be for different situations?

- Once that line is crossed, are you mentally prepared to use deadly force in defense of yourself or others?

- Have you made the decision to be a dedicated opponent? Are you mentally prepared to win, even if you have sustained injuries?

- Have you made decisions on what you should do after the fight?
  - Move to safety.
  - Call for help.
  - Check for and treat any injuries to yourself or family members.
    - Do you have the training?
    - Do you have the equipment?
  - Staying busy with planned routines is a good way to blunt the effects of shock and help you stay alert.

Your dry practice should evolve beyond a static firing line, keeping in mind the questions above that pertain to you and your situation. You should practice as much as possible in an appropriate and realistic environment. For example, practicing reloading or clearing malfunctions in a supported position in low light or darkness, actually moving to real or simulated cover, etc. Red guns and Airsoft™ guns are another way to train realistically, where the potential to cover your body or someone else's with a muzzle is heightened.

Sometimes, all you need is your mind and an active imagination in order to practice, at least mentally, what you would do. For example, if you were attacked at a mall, parking garage, traffic light or any public place you and your family might be, how could you avoid or defend?

Remember, YOU are the weapon, your gun is just a tool.

PART THREE

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Group Well Centered But Huge 111
Group High 112
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Reading Your Target

Almost all of your improvement in gun handling and marksmanship will come through perfect dry practice. However, you must validate that perfect dry practice on occasion with live fire drills. These live fire drills must be conducted at a proper firing range under carefully controlled "live fire" conditions.

After firing several controlled pairs to the thoracic cavity of your target, you will have a group on the target which is full of valuable information. The diagrams and discussions in this section will help you diagnose which techniques you are doing correctly and which ones still need attention. We call this "Reading Your Target". The following information assumes your weapon is correctly sighted in and functioning properly.

Proper Handspan

Ideally your group will be approximately a handspan in size and well centered in the thoracic cavity. This shows you have the correct balance of speed and accuracy. Remember, under the stress of an actual gunfight, that group will approximately double in size but it will still be inside the thoracic cavity.



Group Too Small

As nice as this group looks, it is too small. You are taking too much time do deliver very accurate shots. On the spectrum of speed vs. accuracy, this group represents too much accuracy. Your opponent may take advantage of your slow delivery and hit you first. Speed up a little bit until you achieve the desired handspan.



Group Too Large

This group is too large and means you are sacrificing accuracy for speed. You are going too fast. Under the conditions of a gunfight, some of these hits will be peripherals or misses. Slow down a little bit until you achieve the desired handspan.



Group Well Centered but Huge

This very large group is indicative of not focusing on the front sight. You may be looking over the top of the weapon entirely and focusing on the target or looking through the sights but focusing at the target. In either case, looking at the target cannot guarantee proper sight alignment or sight picture and the hits are poor. Slow down and focus on the front sight.



Group High

This is a proper handspan group but it is high in the thoracic cavity. There are three causes for this. First is incorrect sight alignment. You are simply holding the front sight too high in the rear sight notch. This is very common when using sights with dots or colored inserts. Make certain the front sight is equal in height to the rear sight. Secondly, "heeling" will also cause high hits. Heeling is pushing forward with the heel of the firing hand as the shot breaks. This drives the muzzle skyward and the round high. Heeling is very rare and is easily detected and corrected through dry practice. Lastly, some shooters aim too high in the thoracic cavity. This is usually caused by a misunderstanding of human anatomy or ballistics of their bullet. Hold right in the center of the thoracic cavity. That gives you the best chance at hitting vital tissue and gives you the largest margin for error. Bullet drop is almost never an issue in defensive handgun encounters.



Group Left

Groups which are at the proper height but are off to one side generally reflect incorrect trigger finger placement. If the right-handed shooter is hitting to the left, there is generally not enough trigger finger placed across the face of the trigger. If just the tip of the trigger finger contacts the trigger, the weapon is commonly pushed to the support side as the weapon fires. This error is made even worse if the slack is not removed during the trigger press. When shooting single action weapons, place the center of the pad of the first digit across the face of the trigger. When shooting double action weapons, it may be necessary to use more trigger finger across the face of the trigger to gain the mechanical advantage to overcome the heavy trigger press. In this case, the first bend of the trigger finger should be across the face of the trigger.



Group Right

If the right-handed shooter is hitting to the right, there is generally too much trigger finger placed across the face of the trigger. The weapon is commonly pulled to the right as the weapon fires. Again, this error is made even worse if the slack is not removed during the trigger press.



Group Moderately Low

Groups which are near the bottom edge of the thoracic cavity are typically caused by not taking the slack out of the trigger before attempting to fire the weapon. This "running start" is very common on weapons with lots of slack such as Glocks and the double action semi-autos. Take all the slack out of the trigger before you begin a surprise break.



Group Very Low

Groups which are very low, or very low and to one side, are caused by "mashing". Mashing means squeezing with the whole hand (or hands) just before the shot is fired. This squeezing action causes the muzzle to dip and the shot to be low. Mashing is very easily detected and corrected through dry practice. Mashing is commonly caused by too much shooting and too little dry practice.



Two Distinct Groups One Center, One High

At Front Sight we teach you to shoot controlled pairs. That means one perfect sight picture and one trigger press per shot. Elsewhere in the industry, some teach a "Double tap" or a "Hammer" which is one sight picture and two quick shots. The first shot is usually a good hit because it was supported by a good sight picture. The second shot generally hits high because the shooter fired it before fully recovering from recoil and verifying a proper sight picture. There is only one correct sequence of shooting, and it requires a proper sight picture for each shot. A controlled pair can be done in just about the same time as a double tap or hammer, and you can guarantee your hits.



Two Distinct Groups One Low, One Center

Shooters using double action autos who have not yet mastered the trigger commonly fire two distinct groups, one low and one centered. The first shot of a controlled pair is fired double action and is frequently mashed low because of the heavier trigger weight coupled with lack of practice on the shooters part.. The second shot of a controlled pair is fired single action and is much easier to control, and is therefore usually a good hit. To guarantee a good hit on the first round also, slow down the trigger press to guarantee a surprise break. This may seem painfully slow, but remember only hits count.



PART FOUR

In this section:

4-Day Defensive Handgun Skills Test 121
Skills Test Scoring 122

Skills Test

Shooting

All shooting is from a concealed holster except as specified. All shots are as controlled pairs, except as specified. Total Shots = 25

Description	Range	Time (sec.)	Max. Points
Controlled Pair	3m	1.8	10
From the Ready	5m	1.4	10
Controlled Pair	5m	2.0	10
Controlled Pair	7m	2.1	10
Controlled Pair	10m	2.6	10
Controlled Pair	15m	2.9	10
Failure to Stop, Followed by Untimed Head Shot (x2)	7m	2.1	30
Single Head Shots (x5)	5m	1.9	25
Single Head Shots (x2)	7m	2.3	10

Reloads

Penalty points only; assessed for time or procedure violation. **Each reload performed twice.**

Description	Time (sec.)	Max. Penalty
Emergency Reload	2.4 (7.0 for revolver)	-6
Tactical Reload	4.5 (7.0 for revolver)	-6

Malfunction Clearances

Penalty points only; assessed for time or procedure violation. Each malfunction clearance performed twice.

Description	Time (sec.)	Max. Penalty
Type 1	1.4	-6
Type 2	1.6	-6
Type 3	6.5	-6

Skills Test Scoring

Each shot is worth a possible five (5) points in either the thoracic cavity, or the cranio-ocular cavity, two (2) points are awarded for all other areas inside the target silhouette.

Head shots below the chin line are misses.

Three (3) point penalty for improper procedure or overtime when manipulating weapons.

25 shots total. 125 points possible.

112-125 points (90-100%) qualifies the student as a Distinguished Graduate.

87-111 points (70-89%) qualifies the student as a Graduate.

Less than 87 points qualifies the student for a Certificate of Achievement.



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