



HOW TO CHOOSE A HANDGUN:

**An e-course on how to make
the right decision.**

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DISCLAIMER

Choosing to bring a handgun or any firearm into your home for that matter is a very personal decision that should be weighed very carefully and not taken lightly and without deliberative thought.

Because of the fact that I cannot give complete, individual and hands-on instruction to the reader, I will not accept any responsibility whatsoever for any use or misuse of the text, pictures or any information contained on www.SaveTheGuns.com or contained within this e-course.

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HOW TO CHOOSE A HANDGUN

An e-course on how to make the right decision

Thank you very much for choosing to purchase my e-course on the subject of how to choose a handgun to purchase. You've made the right choice in purchasing this e-course. Now let's make the right choice in buying that handgun that you've always wanted.

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The bottom line is that this is through the *Honor System*. If you've benefited by my work, I trust you.

My name is Marc Richardson. I'm the owner, webmaster and sole employee of www.SaveTheGuns.com. I draw my experience from many years as an NRA Certified Basic Firearm Education Instructor, NRA Membership Recruiter, more than thirty years of recreational shooting and through my many years of running www.SaveTheGuns.com.

In this e-course I hope to teach you the three basic gun handling rules, all the remaining gun safety rules that I've come up with while operating a firearm safety and education Web site for more than seven years and give you the information and logical steps you need to make a smart handgun purchase, especially when buying your very first one.

All of us who own handguns have had to make the decision on which gun to buy first. Some of these decisions were great, some okay and others regrettably were bad decisions. I hope to give you the tools you need to make great handgun purchase decisions.

A smart handgun purchase can save you quite a bit of hassle and expense later on when you either have to get it repaired or you try to sell it and transfer it to somebody else. If it wasn't a smart purchase to begin with, the chances are that you'll have lost quite a bit of your hard-earned money fixing it.

Many millions of people have purchased their first handgun or first firearm and after handling it and shooting it for the first time, have discovered to their dismay that they've made a bad decision.

Sometimes this bad decision is because the gun was too powerful, too heavy, the barrel was too long or they found out that the money they saved by buying a much less expensive gun, was just not worth it. Don't buy the least expensive handgun in any category and expect superior performance from it. Like with anything else, you'll get what you pay for.

My thirty-plus years of shooting and teaching gun safety and education tell me that the least expensive handguns in any category are not worth your time and money. Even if you saved hundreds of dollars over a quality handgun in the same category, the least expensive ones are simply not reliable and worthy of your trust.

I hope you pay close attention to the steps I've outlined in this e-course on how to make a smart and well thought out decision when buying a handgun.

These steps to help you determine which handgun to purchase are tried and true. In my opinion, if you choose to follow these guidelines carefully, you can't go very wrong.

The decision concerning the purchase of a new handgun or a first handgun I like to envision as climbing a small set of stairs. By the time you get to the top step of this staircase, you'll have a pretty good idea which handgun should accompany you, in life's many travels.

Most modern handguns are very well made. There have been many advances in firearm manufacturing in the past hundred years and they keep getting better. A quality handgun purchased today, may well be performing perfectly for your great grandchildren in a hundred years or more as long as they're still legal that is...

There are seven steps to purchasing a handgun that I have outlined in this complete e-course. I think you'll find these seven steps that I have here are well documented and accepted by people who know what they're talking about when it comes to firearms. You won't find many experts that disagree with me on this.

Let me briefly tell you how each step will be designated. The first step may be entitled **WHY DO YOU WANT A HANDGUN?** This step will challenge you to analyze the reason for your intended purchase. The reason that you are making this purchase is the single most important factor in deciding which model to go with.

The second step is called **FIREARM RELIABILITY CONCERNS.** Firearm reliability is an essential aspect to consider. Your new handgun should reliably feed and discharge at least five hundred rounds of ammunition with no problems at all, at a minimum. Thousands upon thousands of rounds would be better, but five hundred reliable rounds is a minimum threshold.

The third step on our staircase is entitled **CHOOSING AN ACTION.** The action of a firearm is described as all the moving parts that allow the loading, firing and unloading of the gun. Should you go with the easier to learn, use and clean action of a revolver or the increased firepower, complexity and enjoyment of a semi-automatic pistol?

The fourth step on our journey toward that first handgun purchase should be titled **CALIBER SELECTION.** Selecting the wrong caliber for your purposes is a very common error that many new gun owners make. I hope to help you make the right caliber choice.

The fifth step I have entitled **CHOOSING A BARREL LENGTH.** The right barrel length for your particular handgun may be more important than you might think.

The sixth and I think the second most important step can be described as **THE TEST FIRING PHASE.** Test firing a firearm before whipping out the credit card has thwarted many a bad decision. Test firing guns that are similar to the one you're leaning towards can be the most highly influential factor in choosing the right make and model of handgun.

The seventh and final step on our journey toward selecting the perfect handgun is a step examining the various manufacturer warranties, repair policies, prices, and different finishes available. Essentially in this last step you're going to determine which specific model you're willing to spend your hard earned dollar on. Let's call this last step **THE FINAL**

DECISION.

So let me recap the seven steps for you.

1. Why do you want a handgun?
2. Firearm reliability concerns
3. Choosing an action
4. Caliber selection
5. Choosing a barrel length
6. The test firing phase
7. The final decision

I plan on describing each step in complete detail. I believe this e-course is one of the most complete treatises on the subject of how to go about the process of choosing a handgun.

If you're satisfied that this e-course has helped you out and it's worth the price you paid, please don't send it onto a friend, but rather encourage them to purchase it just as you did. (See my copyright and disclaimer statement above.) I trust you that you've taken the time to send me \$5.00 for downloading this e-book.

I've worked hard to bring you the tools you need to make a smart handgun purchase. Please do me the favor of not simply e-mailing this e-course onto others, but rather point them to a place where they can easily purchase it for themselves.

Maybe I'm a bit too trusting of people. Maybe I'm a bit naïve thinking that most people will do the honorable thing and send me a \$5.00 contribution for my work here. Am I too trusting of people? Have I done the right thing by not selling this e-book through an online retailer? You be the judge and jury. I trust you to do the right thing.

LET'S BEGIN OUR JOURNEY. IT'S ONLY SEVEN STEPS AWAY.

Okay here we go, let's take the first step. I'll be right here with you, so there's no need to worry. I'm always available to anyone who purchased this e-course. Just e-mail me at info@savetheguns.com. Be sure to tell me that you've purchased my e-course entitled *How to choose a handgun.*

WHY DO YOU WANT A HANDGUN?

Okay, are you ready for the first step? Let's go! Get that foot poised above the first step and let's move. We've got a lot of ground to cover

today.

The decision to bring any firearm into your home should be carefully weighed against the pros and cons of owning a firearm.

In the United States we have the freedom to own the firearm of our choice. There are big responsibilities that go along with firearm ownership. None of these responsibilities should be taken lightly.

In my opinion, we have the freedom to own the firearm of our choice mainly because of the actions of the National Rifle Association since 1871. If you're not a member of the NRA yet, I encourage you to join right away. To learn more about joining the NRA, go here:
http://www.savetheguns.com/nra_membership.htm

Not only am I a Certified Firearm Instructor through the National Rifle Association, but I'm also an NRA Membership Recruiter. Join or rejoin today right here:

<http://membership.nrahq.org/default.asp?campaignid=XR017807>

I've been shooting since I was a mere child. I know what guns can do and what they cannot do. A gun is merely a device that stores, helps aim and discharges an ammunition cartridge.

No firearm will keep you safe in and of itself. A firearm won't defend your home for you. Through the use of an ammunition cartridge, your gun merely helps launch a small piece of metal at very high speed, in a specific direction that's controlled by you, the shooter.

This small piece of metal is of course called a bullet. It's usually made up of a combination of lead and copper. Bullets come in many different configurations. Some are specifically for target shooting, while others are for recreational plinking and still others are made specifically for effective self defense.

A firearm can indeed play a role in an overall home defense plan. This plan can include a combination of alarms, dog(s), deadbolts, cell phones, window locks, proper lighting, trimmed shrubbery, safes for valuables and even a nosy neighbor or two isn't a bad idea either.

There are many things to consider before bringing a handgun into the home. How will I store it? How will I teach my children or grandchildren about it? Will I consider a gun safe with quick access features?

Could I actually shoot at someone who is attacking me or a member of my

family and could I make the decision to take the life of an unlawful intruder if it ever became necessary? This is an important question that you should carefully consider. If your purpose is to buy a gun for home defense, could you actually use it to stop a violent attack against another human being?

Will my own children be trustworthy around firearms? Do I have a child that's out of control or with behavior problems? Do I have a child with special needs that might not be able to treat a firearm appropriately? Will I consider purchasing a gun safe? Trigger locks? Locked pistol boxes? Will I make an effort to find the time to practice often with this gun, or will it simply sit in my home gathering dust. Et cetera et cetera...

These decisions are not easy ones to make. They should be carefully weighed before you plunk down some hard-earned cash on a handgun that could likely approach \$350 to \$2000 or more.

About three or four children ages 0 to 19 are killed each and every week because they mishandled a loaded firearm, usually without supervision. Gun safety for children is a primary concern for me and it should be tops on your list as well. If you visit me online at www.SaveTheGuns.com, I can help you out with much more information on the subject than I can possibly print here.

Okay, let's get to the meat and potatoes of the very first step. Are you purchasing the handgun for defending your home in case of a hot burglary or unwanted overnight intruder? If so, you're going to want to make sure you get the handgun in a caliber that's suitable to stop a violent and determined human being. I'll address caliber selection in a later section.

You'll also want a handgun that's easy to use and reliable. A firearm chosen specifically for self defense is the most weighty and serious of choices. I heartily recommend a book written by Massad Ayoob called *In The Gravest Extreme: The Role of the Firearm in Personal Protection*. It's available through my "Books and Videos" page at www.SaveTheGuns.com/books_and_videos.htm

Remember that if you ever are forced to fire upon another human being, you're doing so only to bring a halt to a violent attack. You're not necessarily trying to kill. Although a lawyer that specializes in firearm and self defense law once told me that an injured man can sue for considerably more money than the estate of a dead man.

The lawyer said so without actually advocating death for the person attempting to do you harm. Likewise, I will tell you same thing. I will however say to keep shooting until they stop their attack and reconsider

their harmful intentions.

As far as self defense shooting goes, you must only shoot at someone to stop an attack that is likely to cause death or serious bodily injury and your options are extremely limited in scope. Remember that you're only shooting to stop the attack. If the assailant dies as a result of you stopping the attack, that's their problem, not yours.

I will also give you fair warning that self defense law can vary greatly from state to state and even from town to town. I encourage you to thoroughly investigate self defense and firearm related law for your state and community. Ignorance of the law is not an excuse before a judge and jury.

If you're going to use the handgun for concealed carry in a public place, there are considerations of barrel length, gun weight, caliber and action that should affect your decision making.

If you're just using the handgun for recreational target shooting, then a less expensive gun and much more economical caliber can be selected.

In short, the purpose for which you are purchasing a handgun will be the most important aspect in helping you choose the just the right handgun for you and your family. If you're not sure why you want a handgun, then this e-course may help you determine the main reason.

If you want a handgun, but cannot come up with a specific reason, you should either reconsider a handgun purchase at this time, or continue reading this e-course and perhaps a good reason will strike you.

Generally prospective handgun buyers have specific reasons for wanting one. The most common reasons are recreational target shooting, competitive target shooting, home defense, and business related protections, concealed carry in public, hunting and for a firearm collection hobby.

Once you're able to clearly define your reason for wanting to purchase a handgun, you'll have completed the first step.

FIREARM RELIABILITY CONCERNS.

Are you ready to take the second step yet? Great, let's begin.

Okay, here's a scenario for you. It's 2:30AM; you hear scratching and clawing noises downstairs. You grab your newly acquired handgun that you saved a lot of money on. It was made by a South American firearm

manufacturer called Cut-rate Rifle and Pistol Corporation, or C.R.A.P. for short.

You arrive downstairs as a punk with a screwdriver comes into your kitchen. You've positively identified him as a threat to your life as he advances on you quickly with a raised hand and a dangerous weapon.

You raise your inexpensive new handgun and fire. The first bullet plunges into the breakfast bar beside him. You try to pull the trigger for a second try and the gun doesn't work. **NOTHING.**

Your face goes cold as you realize that the handgun that you saved over two hundred dollars on is hopelessly jammed. Now what, you ask yourself. Luckily, the punk panics and he does not realize that your gun is not working and clumsily crashes back out the way he came in, not wanting to be shot at again.

The police arrive and then you realize that your new handgun is still jammed and inoperable sitting on the counter and you stare at it, mad at yourself for not listening to the guy at the gun shop.

My advice has always been to go with a well-known and very reliable manufacturer when buying a handgun. The money you save by going with a gun maker you've never heard of might be a big mistake.

I know someone who purchased a revolver because it was a more reliable choice than a semi-automatic pistol. He didn't want the chance of a misfeed or a jam during any kind of emergency situation.

He saved some money by going with an inexpensive revolver made by a company from South America. In order to save money, the manufacturer used some metal alloys that were too soft to be used in a handgun.

As a result, the revolver worked for only a few years and then the revolver's cylinder would not turn anymore because of the softness of the metal used during the forging process.

I have always taught that firearm reliability should be the top concern when purchasing a handgun or really any firearm at all for that matter.

You should be able to fire *at least 500 rounds* through a handgun before relying on that gun for any type of self defense purpose. So if you can fire ten boxes of fifty rounds through a handgun without a single malfunction of any type whatsoever, I would go out on a limb and call that a reliable handgun.

Let me restate that you should probably consider only the most well-known and well-respected firearms, from the top-of-the-line gun makers. This is especially true for handguns intended for self defense purposes.

Gun makers such as Sturm-Ruger sometimes just known as Ruger, Smith & Wesson, Beretta, Glock, Para-Ordnance, Sig-Arms, Kimber, Taurus and Springfield Armory are just a few that I can heartily recommend. There are many fine gun makers out there that can suit you just fine.

I encourage you to ask others for their opinions as well. Consult as many experienced gun owners as you can and ask them what they think the most reliable handgun makers are. I'll be willing to bet that my short list of gun makers will be on their list as well.

Professional law enforcement and military personnel are good at choosing reliable, quality handguns. Many military police, sheriff and federal agencies choose Sig-Arms, Glocks Berettas and others for good reasons.

If you would like a much larger list of gunmakers, I have a pretty good sized list of firearm manufacturers listed for you at my "Buying a Gun" page: http://www.SaveTheGuns.com/buying_a_gun.htm On this page, I currently have more than one hundred sixty (160) firearm manufacturers listed and even then, it's still not a complete list.

It's no fun being out recreationally shooting at the local sand pit with your friends and relatives, to have your handgun malfunction. It can be embarrassing to have that happen. It could be a serious and perhaps deadly mistake to have a handgun malfunction if you ever need it to protect your family.

Firearm reliability is an important consideration when looking at buying a particular handgun. Having a reliable handgun that will provide consistent performance and trustworthy operation is an essential aspect of a good handgun purchase.

Remember that you should have five hundred reliable cartridge discharges as a minimum, but five thousand is better to be able to call a handgun reliable.

To see some real reliability, go to <http://www.Google.com> and put in the term "Glock torture tests" (without the quotes) and see what comes up. You'll be impressed by Glock reliability I'm sure.

Another very important aspect of firearm reliability is regular firearm maintenance. Keeping your handgun clean, well-oiled and properly

maintained is an essential ingredient towards increasing firearm reliability.

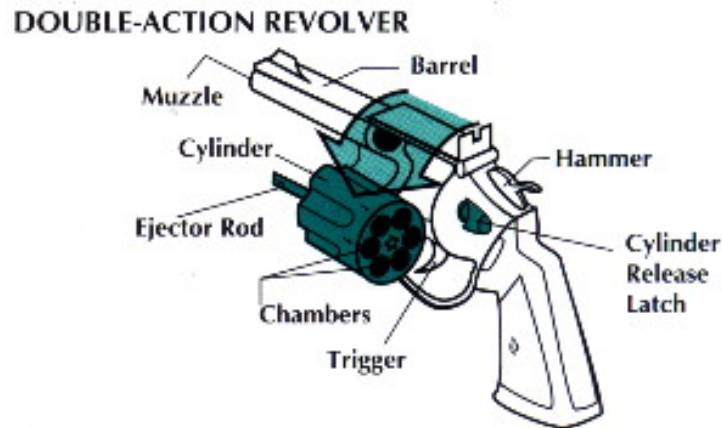
A dirty action, a fouled barrel or a handgun that should have had an appointment with a gunsmith, can seriously compromise your ability to use it during an emergency.

I'll mention it again in a minute or two, but regular maintenance and cleaning is more important with a semi-automatic to maintain reliability. Now let's help you choose between a revolver and a semi-automatic.

CHOOSING AN ACTION.

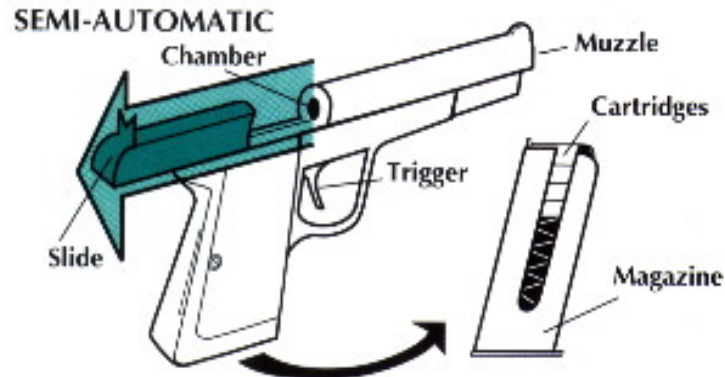
Choosing an action type is very important. The action is what we call all the moving parts of the handgun that allow for the loading, firing, extraction and unloading procedures.

Generally for handguns, there are two major types of actions to choose from. The revolver and the semi-automatic handgun are the two major action groups that you will have available to choose from.



(Image courtesy of the [National Rifle Association of America](#))

The revolver uses a rotating cylinder to store the ammunition. As it turns, it aligns a fresh cartridge with the barrel and the hammer. The first revolver was a flintlock revolver used by the British military. It was made by Elisha Collier in 1814. Samuel Colt patented the first revolver in Europe in 1835. The empty cases are extracted using the ejector rod on the front of the cylinder.



(Image courtesy of the [National Rifle Association of America](#))

The semi-automatic pistol uses a spring-loaded magazine to feed ammunition into the chamber at the rear of the barrel. The “hammer” on a semi-automatic is found in the same place as on a revolver. Many semi-automatic handguns do not have a “cockable” hammer. There is an ejector on the slide as well that yanks the empty fired case from inside the chamber.

Basically the main difference between a semi-automatic and a revolver is how the ammunition is stored and moved into position to be fired as well as the different methods of extracting the fired empty cases.

Choosing between a revolver and a semi-automatic pistol is largely an issue of personal preference.

However, personal preference may be dictated by specific factors. For instance, if you’re a slightly built person who is approaching or past retirement age, you might want to go with the revolver rather than a semi-automatic.

If you have arthritis in your hands or wrists or have weak hands for some other reason, you may find that grasping and retracting the spring-loaded slide of a semi-automatic pistol quite difficult. These factors can be easily discovered in my sixth step called *The Test Firing Phase*.

The average total shots fired in a shootout between felons and law enforcement is about three and a half (3.5). On average, in a shootout each side fires less than two times each.

Even though there are less than four total rounds on average fired in a shootout, many shooters still prefer the larger ammunition capacity of a semi-automatic handgun. Semi-auto handguns can have ammunition capacities that can run up to as many as fifteen to even nineteen rounds.

Most revolvers of sufficient caliber for self defense are limited to five or six rounds. This means that reloading a revolver is going to be much slower than reloading a semi-automatic, unless you're well practiced with a speed-loader made especially for your particular revolver.

A "round" is just another name for one cartridge. Oh yeah, and I recommend calling it either a "cartridge" or a "round". The term bullet is sometimes used by people who aren't familiar with the proper terminology. A bullet is one of the four components of a cartridge. If you call a complete cartridge a "bullet", you'll probably be corrected by someone who knows what they're talking about and that could be embarrassing.

There are four components to a handgun cartridge. They are the case, gun powder, primer and bullet.

Traditionally revolvers are more reliable. They're easier to understand, easier to see if they're loaded or not, easier to operate under the tremendous stress of mortal combat and they're also easier to keep clean as well.

Well made quality semi-automatics can be very reliable. Some have been known to go through thousands and thousands of rounds of ammunition before any type of ammunition feeding malfunction.

It's important for you to realize that regular maintenance and cleaning is more important to maintain reliability with a semi-automatic than it is with a revolver. A semi-automatic handgun is more susceptible to malfunctioning if it hasn't been cared for very well. Although I hope that you'll keep all of your firearms clean and well-maintained!!!

If you're comfortable with the action of a semi-automatic and you have decided to dedicate the time to practice with it often, that's fine, go with it. If you really feel that you want the extra ammunition capacity and are comfortable with the reliability of a well-made semi-automatic pistol, that's fine as well.

If you'd rather have the simpler, easier to use, easier to unload and more reliable revolver, then that's your decision and yours alone. I can't make that decision for you. The best way to arrive upon this decision is the step I'll discuss later called the *Test Firing Phase*. If during test firing both types of actions, you feel equally comfortable with both of them, then it will be solely up to your personal preference.

However, one more thing that you must be aware of is that most revolver cartridges and most semi-automatic cartridges are not the same. Most

often, the decision between a revolver and a semi-automatic can be made simply by caliber choice.

Generally there are different ammunition calibers for both the revolver and the semi-automatic pistol. Yes, there are a few handguns where a traditional revolver cartridge like the .357 magnum, can be fired with a semi-automatic pistol. The Desert Eagle semi-automatic pistols are one example. These are made by a company called Magnum Research which is a subsidiary of Israeli Military Industries and they are not your normal semi-auto pistols.

Now let's get into another area where the term "action" is used. I've discussed the difference between a revolver and a semi-automatic, but we've still got to discuss the relationship between the trigger and the hammer/firing pin.

The difference between the following terms and what they mean can be quite confusing to many people. I've known long-time shooters who still get these terms confused.

In the old-time westerns on television, you'd see the hero, usually the sheriff, with his colt single action revolver. If you were to take notice of it, the shooter has to cock back the hammer before he pulls the trigger.

When cocking back the hammer, the revolver's cylinder will turn, placing a new cartridge under the hammer. When the hammer has to be manually pulled back to fire the gun, it is called "single action".

The term *single action* describes the operation of the trigger. In other words, the trigger in a single action revolver performs only one job. In a single action handgun, the trigger simply drops the hammer on the cartridge. Because it only does one thing, we call it *single action*.

In a single action revolver, the hammer must be manually cocked back for each shot. Furthermore, it is loaded through a trap door in the back of the cylinder. For most single action revolvers the cylinder does not swing out for easy access. For these reasons, I do not recommend the single action revolver for self defense, but it's better than just a phone call and a loud voice.

The term *double action* again refers to the operation of the trigger as well. In a double action revolver the trigger not only revolves the cylinder, but it pulls back the hammer at the same time and then at the end of the trigger pull, drops the hammer on the cartridge.

Because the trigger on a double action revolver both pulls back the

hammer and drops it, we call it *double action*.

Most double action revolvers can also be used in *single action mode*, by simply pulling the hammer back manually with your thumb. This single action mode is mostly used for purposes of target practice, recreational shooting and most forms of competitive shooting.

However, if you ever have the unhappy circumstance of ever having to fire in self defense, you should always fire in *double action mode*. Therefore, practicing your shooting in double action mode, using only the trigger to shoot is important.

Now, I hope I'm remaining clear and concise on these concepts, because they're important for you to grasp.

Now let's move on to the hammerless revolver. Yes, it's true, there are revolvers available that have no hammer spur for you to cock back with your thumb.

For the ease of explaining this concept, I will call it *double action only*. It is called double action only because you do not have the option of pulling back the hammer first. Therefore to help you understand it better, you can think of a hammerless revolver as *double action only*.

Now, that you've got the concepts of single action, double action and double action only, let us now move on to another and perhaps a bit more confusing concept. Let's discuss single action, double action and double action only in a semi-automatic handgun.

When referring to action types in a semi-automatic handgun, we're generally talking about the first shot. That's because generally the recoiling slide (see image of semi-auto handgun above) will cock back the hammer when it moves to the rear after firing the cartridge.

On a single action semi-automatic, the hammer must be pulled back first before the trigger can be pulled, just as in a revolver. After the first shot, the slide will recoil, cock back the hammer automatically, then take a new cartridge from the magazine and continue forward until it's ready to fire once again.

On a double action semi-automatic handgun, you only need to pull the trigger once a cartridge is in the chamber. Pulling the trigger on the first shot will cock back the hammer, just as in the double action revolver. However, after this first shot, it generally works the same as the single action semi-automatic and the recoiling slide will cock back the hammer.

On a double-action-only semi-automatic handgun, the trigger both cocks the hammer and releases it as well. The recoiling slide will not cock the hammer, but will only grab a fresh cartridge from the magazine and chamber it for the next shot.

A good article explaining these concepts can be found here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semi-automatic_handgun

So, in conclusion, the revolver is easier to use and ammunition capacity is usually limited to five or six cartridges. The semi-automatic is a bit more complex to understand and use under stress and requires more practice. It has more ammunition capacity and fires different calibers of ammunition than a revolver does.

Test firing both revolvers and semi-automatics will help you determine which type of handgun action is best for you. Test firing is an important stage, especially if you don't have much experience using both a revolver and a semi-automatic.

CALIBER SELECTION.

Making the decision on which caliber to get your handgun in is an essential step that must be very carefully considered. Here is where many people make their biggest mistakes when buying a handgun.

Buying a new handgun and then discovering to your dismay that you bought it in a caliber that's not suited for your purpose, is a common error that people make when buying their first handgun. Let's spend some time sorting it out shall we?

What does the term caliber mean anyway?

Caliber is a measurement of diameter. It is the distance across the base or bottom of the bullet. The term caliber is also described as the diameter of the inside of the barrel.

Caliber is measured in either inches or millimeters. When measuring in inches, it is either in hundredths of an inch or thousandths of an inch.

For example, a .22 Long Rifle bullet and a .222 Winchester bullet are pretty close to the same diameter, not exactly of course, but fairly close. Likewise a .50 caliber and a .500 caliber are the same diameter. A .380 ACP pistol cartridge and a 9mm bullet are also very close in diameter.

Often, you can find suffixes or prefixes attached to the caliber as well. It

can be confusing to some people. I encourage you to investigate further or simply send me an e-mail to info@savetheguns.com.

When answering the question in step one, what did you arrive upon as a reason for choosing to purchase a handgun? The reason that you arrived upon in answering that first question will determine generally the caliber to go with.

It's important to remember that a gun is simply a mechanical device that stores, helps to aim and discharges an ammunition cartridge.

An ammunition cartridge is simply a metal case with gunpowder in it, with a primer seated in the bottom to ignite the gunpowder and it has a metal bullet seated in the mouth of the case.

You will need to choose a caliber that completely meets your needs. This is why your reasons for owning a handgun are so important. It's good to refer back to your core reasons for owning a handgun.

You will need to choose a caliber of ammunition, where the diameter, velocity, bullet weight and bullet design meets your needs.

For example, a good caliber for recreational target practice is called the .22 LR. Twenty-Two is the caliber measured in hundredths of an inch. The suffix LR means Long Rifle. The .22 cartridge comes in many forms. .22 Short, .22 Long and .22 Long Rifle are the most common.

The .22 Long Rifle cartridge is the most popular firearm cartridge available. Nearly every serious gun owner has at least one of them. It's inexpensive, fun to shoot and has fairly low recoil. I personally own a .22LR pistol and two .22LR rifles as well.

There is a very good description of the term caliber on Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliber>

Now, let's get down to business.

You've decided to purchase a handgun, but you're not sure what caliber to get it in. Let me help you decide.

Here's a list of most of the known handgun calibers. Please note that you won't find most of these calibers of ammunition at your local sporting goods retailer. For the calibers that you're likely to readily find ammunition for, I'll place a double asterisk ** in front of them.

Unless you or a family member makes your own ammunition, you'll want to

choose a caliber that your sporting goods retailer will be likely to carry (**).

2 mm Kolibri - At 2.7 mm, the smallest commercially available centerfire cartridge ever made.

3 mm Kolibri

4 mm Practice Cartridge GECO

4 mm Practice Cartridge M. 20

4.25 mm Lilliput

.17 Mach 2

.17 Hornady Magnum Rimfire

4.6 mm x 30 mm

.22 BB

** .22 CB

** .22 Short

** .22 Long

** .22 Long Rifle

** .22 WMR (.22 Magnum)

** .22 WRF

.22 Reed Express

.22 Remington Jet (.22 Jet, .22 Centerfire Magnum)

.221 Remington Fireball

5.7x28 mm

** .25 ACP (6.35 mm Browning)

25 NAA

.256 Winchester Magnum

.30 Carbine

7.62 mm Tokarev (7.62 x 25 mm TT, .30 Tokarev)

7.62 mm Nagant (7.62 x 38R, 7.62 x 38mm Nagant)

7.63 mm Mauser (7.63 x 25 mm Mauser, .30 Mauser)

7.65 mm Borchardt (7.65 x 25 mm)

7.65 mm Luger (7.65 x 23 mm Luger, 7.65 mm Parabellum, .30 Luger)

7.65 mm Longue (7.65 mm MAS, 7.65 mm Long)

7.65 mm Mannlicher (7.63 mm Mannlicher in Austria, 7.65 mm Mannlicher in Germany, and 7.65 x 21 mm in the United States)

.30 Pedersen (.30 M1918)

** .32 ACP (7.65 mm Browning)

32 NAA

** .32 S&W

** .32 S&W Long (.32 Colt New Police)

** .32 H & R Magnum

.32-20 Winchester (.32 WCF, .32-20 Marlin, .32 Colt Lightning)

8 mm French Ordnance (8 mm Lebel Revolver)

** .38 S&W (.38 Colt New Police, .38 Super Police)

.380 Revolver

** .38 Special (9 x 29R)

**** .357 Magnum (9 x 31R)**
**** .357 Remington Maximum**
**** 9 mm Makarov (9 x 18 mm)**
9 mm Police (9 x 18 mm Police, 9 mm Ultra)
9 mm Browning Long (9 x 20 mm SR)
9 mm Glisenti
**** 9 mm Luger (9 x 19 mm Parabellum, 9 x 19 mm NATO)**
9 mm IMI (9 x 21 mm)
9 mm Steyr (9 x 23 mm Steyr)
9 mm Largo (9 mm Bergmann-Bayard, 9 x 23 mm Largo)
**** .380 ACP (9 x 17 mm, 9 mm Browning Short, 9 mm Kurz)**
.38 Auto (.38 ACP)
.38 Super Auto
**** .357 SIG**
9.8 mm Auto Colt
**** .38-40 Winchester (.38 WCF)**
**** .40 Smith & Wesson (10.0 x 21 mm)**
**** 10 mm Auto**
.41 Action Express
**** .41 Remington Magnum**
**** .44-40 Winchester (.44 WCF)**
**** .44 Special**
**** .44 Remington Magnum**
**** .44 Auto Mag**
.44 Webley (.442 RIC)
11 mm French Ordnance
.45 Schofield (.45 S&W Schofield, .45 S&W)
**** .45 Long Colt (.45 Colt)**
.450 Revolver (.450 Adams)
.45 Webley
.455 Webley (.455 Webley Mk I, .455 Revolver, .455 Colt, .455 Colt Mk I)
.455 Webley Mk II (.455 Revolver Mk II, .455 Colt Mk II, .455 Eley)
.455 Webley Automatic
.45 GAP
**** .45 ACP (.45 Auto)**
**** .45 Winchester Magnum**
**** .454 Casull**
460 XVR (Smith and Wesson "Extreme Velocity Revolver")
**** .475 Linebaugh**
**** .480 Ruger**
.476 Eley (.476 Enfield Mk3)
**** .50 Action Express**
**** .500 S&W**
.50 Remington (M71 Army)
.50 GI
.500 Linebaugh

**13 mm Gyrojet
.55 Boxer**

For my advice on choosing the caliber, I would advise the following. I will list each recommended cartridge and its proper uses.

If you're only going to use the handgun for recreational target practice, I would go with the .22 Long Rifle in either a revolver or semi-automatic pistol. .22 LR cartridges will work in either a revolver or semi-automatic made for the .22 LR cartridge.

About the smallest and least powerful cartridge I can recommend for use in self defense shooting is the .380 ACP. Anything smaller than the .380 ACP, such as the .22LR or the .25 ACP simply does not have enough power in my opinion to use against a violent assailant who is trying to do you or your family grievous bodily harm.

If your purpose in purchasing a handgun is at least partially to defend yourself and your family from harm, you'll definitely want to make sure that the caliber you choose has a sufficient diameter, velocity, bullet weight and bullet design for self defense purposes.

If you're still not sure about which caliber to get your handgun in after getting through this entire e-course, just e-mail me at info@savetheguns.com and I'll try to help you make a decision as my free time permits me to do so.

The .38 Special is a revolver cartridge and is currently the most popular handgun caliber for self defense. It is sufficient for self defense and is good for target practice as well. Because the .38 Special is for a revolver, it is normally limited to five or six rounds before reloading the cylinder is necessary.

Years ago, the .38 Special was the standard cartridge for most police departments. Nowadays, to the dismay of some people, the 9mm has taken over as the cartridge of choice for both law enforcement and the military sidearm as well. Generally the 9mm is slightly less powerful than the .38 Special.

Next is the 9mm. It is almost the same size bullet as the .38 Special, but usually has a little less gunpowder, because the case is shorter and therefore less power. It normally is made specifically for semi-automatic pistols. Therefore, you can fire more rounds before you have to reload. The range of magazine size falls generally between seven and seventeen rounds.

The 9mm is very popular and its popularity seems to be growing. There are many different bullet weights and styles in this caliber that have improved its use as a good self defense cartridge.

The official sidearm of the United States Military the M9, is a 9mm handgun. The civilian version of this military sidearm is the Beretta Model # 92F.

Next I'll address the .357 Magnum. This is the caliber that I have chosen for myself and it's made primarily for revolvers. It is also the choice of my wife by the way as well. The .38 Special cartridges can be fired in a revolver made in .357 Magnum, which makes it very versatile. The .38 Special can be used until the shooter gets used to the extra power and "kick" of the more powerful .357 Magnum. The .357 Magnum is the caliber with the highest percentage of "one shot stops" in self defense situations.

The term "one shot stop" is a term that you'll sometimes hear when speaking on the issue of self defense. It simply means the percentage of incidents in which a single shot to the assailant completely stopped the attack.

The .357 Magnum is a surprisingly powerful handgun to shoot for the beginner. Although, I would highly recommend it as a great caliber for purposes of self defense. Lots of practice with the .357 Magnum is needed to be able to follow up quickly with second or third shots and place them on target reliably.

If you're going to settle on a revolver, it's very likely that you'll get your revolver in either .38 Special caliber or in .357 Magnum. If you keep in mind that the .357 Magnum revolver can also shoot .38 Special cartridges, it's a good and sound decision to buy a .357 Magnum.

The .40 S&W is a semi-automatic pistol caliber. It is ballistically similar to the .357 Magnum. If I was to choose a semi-automatic pistol instead of a revolver, I would probably go with this cartridge as a first choice. In fact, if I had the extra money available to me, I would buy the Sig-Arms SIG-PRO SP2340 in .40 S&W caliber as my handgun of choice. But that's my personal preference.

Ahhh, the venerable and well respected .45 ACP. Invented in 1905, the .45 ACP is a favorite caliber of millions of serious shooters. The .45 ACP was one of the primary calibers that helped us win World War II.

It is again primarily made for the semi-automatic pistol. The magazine capacity can vary somewhat, but normally it is seven to ten cartridges before reloading or changing the magazine is necessary.

Most of the professional tactical trainers in the country who really know their stuff choose the .45 ACP as their personal handgun of choice. It's a great caliber for self defense. The cartridge's ability to stop a violent aggressor in his tracks is the stuff of legend. Although the "one-shot stop" ratio is a bit behind the .357 Magnum, most guys and gals who really know their stuff swear by this caliber.

Now, we will move onto the larger and more powerful calibers. These calibers have much more than enough power for self defense, many experts will tell you that they have too much power for their own good.

After firing one of these behemoths, it is difficult, even with practice to follow-up quickly with a second or third shot in a situation that involves mortal combat. When you're fighting for your life, you don't want or need handgun calibers that will pick up and throw your assailant after they get hit.

These are calibers that will certainly impress your friends and family if that's what you're intention is. In my opinion, the "Dirty Harry" hand cannons often seen in the movies are indeed the most powerful currently available, but perhaps they're too much for the average Joe.

Many new handgun buyers who choose the biggest and most impressive handguns and who emulate Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry movie character, find they've made a mistake after taking the handgun out shooting a few times.

I constantly see .44 Magnum handguns for sale that have only been used a few times. Many shooters, especially new shooters, find they've made a mistake after coming home with one of these hand cannons. Although, you'll still hear many people swear by this caliber as well.

In my opinion, it's a bit too powerful and expensive to shoot and practice often with. Furthermore, its ability to be used for purposes of self defense is not far above that of the .38 special in terms of one-shot-stops in actual self defense situations.

This class of the mightiest and most potent of handgun calibers includes the .41 Magnum, .44 Special, .44 Magnum, .454 Casull and the relative newcomers, the .480 Ruger and the .500 S&W.

For most shooters, these calibers are an intense shooting experience that's difficult and perhaps too painful to do for a long period of time. In addition to that, they are more expensive to shoot on a regular basis as well.

Many times, you'll find that indoor pistol ranges forbid calibers of this size because of the damage they'll do to the range itself.

To quickly recap:

For most shooters, you'll want to stay with something between the power of the .380 ACP and the .357 Magnum or .45 ACP. Most calibers recommended for self defense by the pros fall between these two power extremes. Again, if you're buying a handgun for recreational target practice with friends and family, I recommend the .22 Long Rifle. The Ruger Mark II and Mark III semi-auto .22LR pistols are a good choice.

The .38 Special and the 9MM are very common middle of the road caliber choices that are good enough for self defense purposes, but remain viable as good handguns for target shooting.

As for a pure self defense related caliber, the best three are the .357 Magnum, the .40 S&W and the .45 ACP.

If I had to choose only one caliber, it would be the .357 Magnum. It's great for self defense, has plenty of power, comes in a variety of barrel lengths, is a good choice for concealed carry and you can also fire .38 Special cartridges from it as well.

Let's move on to choosing a length of barrel...

CHOOSING A BARREL LENGTH

Had you given any thought to how long you want your barrel to be? The decision on barrel length is more important than you might initially think.

Many if not most models of handguns come with a variety of barrel lengths. Have you ever wondered why the same basic model of handgun comes in so many barrel lengths?

For example, the Ruger GP100 in .357 Magnum comes in barrel lengths of 3", 4" and 6". Likewise, its cousin the smaller framed SP101 comes in three different barrel lengths as well. The Ruger SP101 comes in 2 1/4", 3 1/16th and 4" models.

Basically the difference in barrel length has to do with the purpose of the handgun. The shorter the barrel is, the more concealable it is. Some of the barrel length issue also has to do with your personal preference. But there are other reasons to choose the right barrel length for your specific

situation and purpose.

A handgun with a ten inch (10") barrel would not be appropriate for a slightly built older woman to put in her pocketbook or fanny pack and take out shopping with her for the day.

On the other side of the spectrum, a barrel with a length of under two inches, is way too short and gives up too much of the bullet's speed and power.

Now, you may be asking yourself, how does barrel length affect the bullet's speed and energy? I'm so glad you asked... That's why you bought this e-course in the first place isn't it?

There is really an ideal barrel length for each caliber. I won't take the time to go into it here however; the discussion could be long, boring and very involved.

Have you ever seen a short barreled handgun in a very powerful caliber shot at night-time? If you have, you'd immediately know what I'm about to say.

A short barreled but very powerful handgun shot after dark would light up the area with a three foot flame shot out the end of the barrel and would look something like a fire-breathing dragon.

This happens because the gunpowder in the cartridge case isn't done burning when the bullet leaves the barrel. The dragon's breath-like flame that you'd see is gunpowder that is continuing to burn outside the confines of the chamber and barrel.

When this occurs, the burning gunpowder is not being used to propel the bullet, but it is rather being used to light up the night sky instead. We call this phenomenon "muzzle flash".

Therefore, the shorter the barrel is, the slower the bullet is moving when it leaves the barrel, relatively speaking. So, using an example of a .357 Magnum in a six to eight inch barrel, the gunpowder from the cartridge is mostly completely burned by the time the bullet leaves the barrel and the bullet's velocity is thereby close to maximum speed.

Shooting the .357 Magnum bullet from a six to eight inch barrel, would result in a relatively small flash of flame coming from the business end of the revolver.

Using the very same ammunition but firing it from a barrel that's only two

inches long, wastes quite a bit of the gunpowder, thereby resulting in a slower moving bullet and a fireworks display issuing from the muzzle like an angry dragon.

So, to a degree, there's a trade-off between the ability to conceal a handgun for public carry and the power that you get out of the bullet.

If you're not going to be carrying the handgun concealed in public, I would advise you to go with a bit longer barrel to maximize the caliber's power, perhaps five to as much as eight inches or more is fine. A longer barrel makes a heavier handgun as well, which can reduce the recoil that you would feel and make it a more comfortable handgun to shoot for a longer period of time.

In conclusion, I would not advise concealed carry of a handgun where the barrel is much longer than five and a half to six inches in length, mainly because of the fact that you don't want to make it obvious that you're carrying a handgun in public.

In addition, I would not advise carrying a handgun that had a barrel that was less than two inches, mostly because you give up about eighty foot-pounds of bullet energy in a barrel this short.

Normally for concealed carry in public, handgun barrels are between three and six inches is fine. As a note on my personal preference, I would prefer the Sigarms Sig-Pro SP2340 in .40 S&W caliber. It has a barrel length of 3.9". My wife's .357 Magnum revolver has a barrel length of 3 1/16th inches.

Now, how do you make the decision on how heavy the gun should be, how much recoil you can handle and how comfortable you are with a certain action-caliber-barrel length-handgun weight combination?

Well, that very nicely brings us onto the sixth step. Get ready. If there are no more questions, let's pick up that leg and place our forward foot on the most important and most overlooked step of all, test firing.

THE TESTING FIRING PHASE

I think the test firing phase is the most important, but perhaps the most neglected step of all.

When you shop for a brand new business suit at your favorite department store, do you buy it just because it looks good and you think it might fit

okay? Of course you wouldn't! You would try it on, see how it fits, get an opinion from your best friend or your spouse and you would then probably even have to have it altered somewhat, before you plunk down three hundred dollars on it. Why should a handgun purchase be significantly different?

Wouldn't it be unwise to order a new handgun from a photograph and a description, only to unpack it from the box at home and find out that it's too heavy for you? Or to bring it home from the shooting range on the first day and break the news to your spouse that you made a mistake and you have to sell it and get another one?

Wouldn't it be unwise to bring your brand new purchase to the indoor firing range at your local gun club only to find that you can't handle the recoil? Or maybe it's just too painful on your hands or wrist to practice with?

The answer is the most obvious but most overlooked solution. You should try out handguns that are similar to ones you are interested in before you spend your hard earned money.

Would you be able to determine that the .357 Magnum revolver you have your heart set on, is the right gun for you, if you've never shot a .357 Magnum revolver before?

How would you know if you can handle the recoil of a .357 Magnum in a Smith & Wesson Airlite that weighs only twelve ounces? The only way to know these things is to test fire them before you bring them home or at least test fire something very similar in weight, caliber and barrel length first.

Don't waste your time spending money on a firearm that will only sit at home and gather dust, because you didn't take the time to go through a test firing stage first.

I'm pretty sure that there must be someone you know who is willing to take you out shooting. Someone who owns a gun very similar to one you're interested in buying would probably jump at the chance to help you decide which type of handgun is best for you.

If you don't have any friends, family members or co-workers that are willing to let you test fire a few models of handguns to make sure you're making a wise purchase, just call your local gun club.

I'm nearly certain that somebody at your local gun club would be more than willing to help you out with making a smart handgun purchase. Most

of the club officers at your local firing range would have some kind of access to just about any caliber, make, barrel length and weight handgun.

Most gun clubs have members who are certified by the National Rifle Association of America to teach basic firearm education courses. These instructors, (of which, I am one) really know their stuff. Many of them have been shooting for most of their lives and can give you very valuable insight into making a smart handgun purchase.

In fact, in many states, a Basic Firearm Education Course taught by an NRA Certified Firearm Instructor or police officer is required before you make a purchase anyway. I advise every new shooter to go ahead and take one of these comprehensive courses. Most often they're available through your local gun clubs.

If you would rather find an NRA Certified Firearm Instructor through the National Rifle Association itself, you can do that too.

<http://www.nrahq.org/education/training/find.asp>

At this course, you should let the instructor know that you would like to shoot some different calibers and actions to help you determine what type of handgun you want to focus upon.

It's a very wise handgun shopper who would seek out advice from someone who really knows their stuff before they spend their hard earned money on a new handgun.

It's even smarter to seek out someone you trust who has a handgun available that's similar to one that meets your needs. I encourage you not to skip this absolutely essential step in making a smart handgun purchase.

If this impending handgun purchase is your very first one, it's even more important that you take the time to fully investigate the handgun that you're thinking about buying.

Speaking about fully investigating a gun that happens to be a major aspect of the last step on our journey, let's move on. The last step in making a smart handgun purchase is what I've called the final decision.

Before you get out your credit card and place it on the counter at your local gun dealer, make sure you read the step I've labeled the final decision.

THE FINAL DECISION

You've made it to the top of our staircase of good decision making on handgun selection.

You've been smart all along the way. You've determined what you want the gun to be used for and have nailed down the purpose for your new handgun.

You have closely considered reliability concerns for your new handgun; you've chosen the type of action that you're comfortable with and the ideal barrel length for your purposes. You're aware of the different choices in caliber and you've determined which caliber suits your needs as well.

You've spent some time with family, friends and co-workers at a gun club or outdoor shooting area, firing a various number of different handguns to see which one you like best.

You've taken the time to seek out a Basic Firearm Education Course taught by a police officer or NRA Certified Firearm Instructor. You're doing great!!

Now you find that you are really close to being able to purchase that new handgun you've always wanted. In fact, you have probably settled on a firearm manufacturer and a specific model of handgun by now haven't you? But is it really the right one?

There are still some considerations left. There are still choices to be made that you've possibly not even considered up to this point at all.

Will the finish on your handgun be a traditional "blued" finish, or will it be brushed satin stainless steel or perhaps a polymer finish like a Glock?

Will you clean, store and care for the handgun diligently? Are you comfortable with the less expensive "blued" finish? Or should you spend the extra money and get your new handgun in a very durable and great looking stainless steel or polymer finish?

It's important that you realize that fingerprints that are left for a while on a "blued" finish may become more or less permanent. The acids normally found on your fingertips may stain a blued finish with fingerprints. Stainless steel finishes are generally not as susceptible to this type of staining.

How about firearm manufacturer warranties? What if the cylinder on that revolver you're considering stubbornly refuses to rotate after three or

four years of use? Will the gunmaker be willing to take it back and fix it for free? Or will there be charges for repairing it?

Taurus firearms are covered by an unlimited lifetime repair policy; most gunmakers have nothing this comprehensive. Check out the terms here: <http://www.taurususa.com/main/repair-policy.cfm>.

Ruger firearms on the other hand have chosen not to provide a written warranty; however, I own many Ruger firearms myself and have never needed any type of service on any of them. Read Ruger's statement here: <http://www.ruger-firearms.com/Firearms/SE-Warranty.html>

Just to look at the warranty information from a third respected firearm manufacturer for comparison, BerettaUSA has a one year full warranty, but after the one year, a handling or service charge may apply. See their warranty policy here: http://www.berettausa.com/warranty/service_warranty_basic.cfm

You should thoroughly investigate the warranty policies of the gun manufacturer before you take out your credit card to make the purchase. Sometime down the road, you might be very happy that you made the decision to check out warranty and repair policies before you bought a new handgun.

Now that you've considered everything else, let's consider the price tag. To a few of you, price is not a consideration. But, if you're like me and you have to pay close attention to food and gas prices, the cost of a new handgun could play a very large role in which one you finally settle upon.

A handgun is a device that stores, helps aim and discharges ammunition. If an inexpensive gun of \$225 does a fine job at this and meets all of your requirements and expectations, why would you consider plunking down \$925 dollars for another manufacturer's masterpiece?

As long as the less expensive handgun is fully reliable, you like the action, barrel length, caliber, weight, feel, aesthetics and warranty, you need not go with the same model handgun that the nation's top S.W.A.T. teams and D.E.A. and F.B.I. use. But then again, looking at what the professionals prefer might be a good idea...

Another consideration that you might want to consider is the safety factor. Gun manufacturers are concerned about gun safety, there's no doubt about that. On just about every shipped handgun that I can think of, there's a pamphlet or a brochure in the box that has a fairly good list of gun safety rules.

But that's not where you should stop learning about gun safety. What about the safety aspects of the gun itself? Does it have a loaded chamber indicator on it? Are you comfortable with having to check the handgun to find out whether or not it's loaded (you should do this anyway).

What about the other safety devices? Does it have a decocker switch that allows the handgun's hammer to be lower at full speed without firing the cartridge? Or are you comfortable with having to lower a cocked hammer on a loaded chamber by yourself?

What about the other safety devices on the handgun? Does it have a grip safety? Trigger mounted safety? Transfer bar mechanism? Muzzle safety? Are you comfortable with a revolver that has no safety switches at all?

Mechanical safeties should not be fully relied upon at all times. Most of them work just as they have been intended. However, mechanical safety devices have been known to fail. If you're not observing all the gun safety rules, mechanical safeties won't help you.

Mechanical safety devices built into a handgun are designed to lessen the possibility of an accidental discharge. Gun manufacturers have come a long way since the early 1900's in this regard. Guns are always dangerous to people if they are mishandled.

To bring this comprehensive e-course to a close, I have listed below all the gun safety rules and tips that I have accumulated over three decades of shooting and two decades of being an NRA Certified Firearm Instructor.

I hope you have enjoyed this full and complete e-course on the subject of how to choose the right handgun. My aim in writing this e-course is to give you the knowledge and wisdom you need to make a smart choice and to give you all the gun safety information that is currently available anywhere in the world.

Most gun safety brochures, pamphlets and Web sites stop at ten or twelve rules of gun safety. I have included fifty (50) of them in this version of the e-course entitled *HOW TO CHOOSE A HANDGUN: An e-course on how to make the right decision.*

Contact information for me is included at the bottom of this e-course for your convenience. Because you've taken the important step of purchasing this e-course, I want to make myself available to you to answer your specific questions as time allows me to do so. If you do choose to make contact with me, be sure to mention that you purchased this comprehensive e-course on how to choose a handgun.

Now let's move on to my comprehensive list of gun safety rules. Immediately after my gun safety section, I'll put in a short list of recommended handguns for specific purposes.

SAFE GUN HANDLING AND GUN SAFETY RULES

I have been a firearm safety instructor for many years. I don't personally know anyone who has been involved in firearm safety more than me.

Gun safety is not simply comprised of the set of rules I'm about to teach you. Gun safety is a mindset all by itself. Gun safety is an attitude that you should make a part of your character.

Before you bring home your first handgun, you should have a plan for storing it. Obviously you're not going to bring it home, open the box and leave it on the living room coffee table for storage.

There are many different storage options for you to consider. A security cabinet or quality gun safe that is lag-bolted to both the floor and the wall studs is the option that I've elected for myself.

Firearm storage is an individual and very personal decision. What is right for one family may not be right for the next family at all.

In my humble opinion, firearms should not be left fully loaded and ready to fire and left where anyone in the home can access them. The drawback to keeping firearms either unloaded or inaccessible or both is that they will not be readily available for purposes of self defense.

There are storage methods that can limit firearm availability to children and unauthorized adults, while still having them accessible quickly enough for emergencies. However, with all of these storage methods, quick firearm accessibility needs to be practiced to be efficient.

Some of these methods are cable locks, single handgun safes under key, combination, keypad or even biometric locks that read fingerprints. There are even wall safes that you can have built right into one of your walls!

Firearm storage procedures should be carefully considered before you pull out the credit card to buy your first handgun, rifle or shotgun.

SAFE GUN HANDLING

There are only two causes of the accidental discharge of a firearm. A lack of knowledge and carelessness are the only two causes of an accidental

firearm discharge. Now that you are reading one of the most comprehensive and all encompassing list of gun safety rules and tips currently found anywhere in the world, a lack of knowledge is not an excuse.

After reading, absorbing and obeying these rules and tips, the only way you'll ever have a tragic accidental firearm discharge that hurts someone, would be through your own carelessness.

There are three rules of safe gun handling. Learn them right here. Repeat them as many times as you wish, I'll sit here and wait for you.... :-)

- **ALWAYS** point the barrel of the gun in a safe direction. A safe direction is defined as a direction where if the gun discharged, nobody would get hurt. The best direction to point a gun is generally at the ground and to the side.

This is known as the Golden Rule of Gun Safety.

If everyone followed this one rule, it would bring an end to accidental firearm related deaths.

Be aware that the "safe direction" may change as you change your location.

- **ALWAYS** keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to fire. There is a natural tendency to place the index finger inside the trigger guard. This **MUST** be avoided. Condition yourself to place your shooting hand index finger along the side of the frame.

There is no reason whatsoever that your finger should be on the trigger unless you have safely and appropriately acquired your target and your sight picture and are ready for the trigger squeeze.

- **ALWAYS** Keep the action open and the gun unloaded until you are ready to use it. The action is the moving parts of the gun that allow loading, unloading, firing and extraction of the empty case or shell. If you are not ready to use it, keep the action open and unloaded.

With an open and unloaded action, the only injury that might occur,

is if you drop the firearm on your foot.

47 GUN SAFETY RULES

Yes, it's true. Most Web sites and books stop at ten gun safety rules. However, I've gone a bit farther than almost anyone else in the world on this important subject. Isn't this e-book worth the price? Won't you take time to tell a friend where you bought it?

To make them a bit easier to read and comprehend, I've taken the time to categorize them into five sections.

- 1 AT ALL TIMES**
- 2 AT HOME**
- 3 WHILE HUNTING**
- 4 AT THE SHOOTING RANGE**
- 5 WHILE RELOADING AMMUNITION**

GUN SAFETY AT ALL TIMES

ALWAYS treat every gun as if it is loaded and ready to fire. An excuse often heard following an accidental death is that "...I thought it was unloaded." ALWAYS handle the gun as if it is loaded, even if you know it is empty.

Never target shoot or hunt with a firearm, when you are too tired or fatigued to continue to pay attention and operate a firearm safely. After getting a brand new gun or your first firearm, you may have a tendency to stay out too long. Call it a day before you get too tired to pay attention.

NEVER point a gun at something or someone that you don't intend to shoot at. As Jeff Cooper would say "Don't point a gun at anything you are not prepared to destroy."

Check the action of the firearm every time you pick it up. Condition yourself to do this. Check that action again, even if you just checked it.

Wear eye and ear protection as appropriate. Inviting a hot piece of metal or powder in your eye is not a very good idea, in fact it hurts like hell.

ALWAYS wear those silly looking glasses or you may be sorry. If you want to be able to hear your grandchildren, you should have ear plugs or ear protection muffs and use them according to the instructions.

NEVER TAKE A GUN AWAY FROM SOMEONE BY PULLING ON THE BARREL. If they have their finger on the trigger, pulling on the barrel could discharge the gun and injure you. This is the most common type of accident among young people.

NEVER use drugs or alcohol before or during shooting. Alcohol or drugs can impair judgment. Mistakes are more likely to happen under the influence of alcohol. Be vigilant about safety, don't drink alcohol or use some prescription drugs while handling a gun. Alcohol use before or during the handling and/or firing of a gun, can drastically increase the incidence of a scientific phenomenon known as the Stupidity Factor. Ok, I made up the "Stupidity Factor", but my point remains. This rule applies especially when reloading ammunition.

NEVER shoot into water and avoid ricochets. Bullets can skip off the surface of water and then change direction too!!!! Don't shoot into the water. Don't shoot at heavy metal objects such as junked cars, old propane tanks and abandoned refrigerators. Ricochets have been deadly in this type of situation.

NEVER rely solely on the safety device on the gun. Mechanical safeties have been known to fail. If you know Murphy's Law, then you would know that if a safety lever or button is going to fail, it will fail at the worst possible moment. Mechanical safeties can wear out or malfunction over time.

NEVER allow horseplay with a firearm even if you are certain it is unloaded. Horseplay with an unloaded gun is never a good idea. It can condition a child to respect a firearm less, and regard gun safety as less important. **NO HORSEPLAY. NEVER!**

ALWAYS AVOID THE NATURAL TENDENCY TO PLACE A FINGER INSIDE THE TRIGGER GUARD WHEN HANDLING A GUN. I know I already said this one, but it is worth repeating. Most accidental discharges occur

because of a misplaced finger on the trigger.

Carry guns in cases whenever practical. In some States, this is the law. Get to know your State firearm laws. Ignorance of the law is not a valid excuse before a judge. It is the gun owner's responsibility to be familiar with their own state's gun laws.

Do not allow a holster, sling or clothing that might interfere with the safe operation of the gun. Choose firearm accessories carefully. Use only the slings, holsters, mounts or aiming devices made specifically for your gun.

Never lean a rifle or shotgun against a wall or vehicle. They can easily slip off the surface and hit the floor or ground. It is very unlikely that it will discharge, however, a ding or scratch in the firearm will not make you a very happy camper. It could permanently damage a scope too.

GUN SAFETY AT HOME

You should always store guns and ammunition so it is not accessible to unauthorized people. NEVER be satisfied with just hiding a loaded gun. If you are simply hiding a loaded gun in your home, KNOCK IT OFF. You are sending out an invitation to tragedy if you simply hide a loaded gun in your home. There are easily affordable devices available so you don't need to simply hide a gun. Quick access however, should be practiced and practiced often. You don't want to be fumbling around for a defensive firearm while you're being attacked.

Never hide a firearm under a pillow or mattress. This is not a very smart thing to do. Someday it WILL BE FOUND by someone. It can get damp or musty under there too! Whoever finds it, may not be someone you want handling an unsupervised firearm. Not to mention that if you are attacked while still in bed, you can't get under the mattress anyway. Your weight and the weight of a spouse and /or intruder will prevent access to the gun anyway.

You should store firearms and ammunition separately. Store ammunition so it does not get too moist or in an area that gets excessively hot, like an attic, cellar or closet. Ammunition primers can corrode and become

unreliable if they are stored in a damp area.

Read and fully understand the manual that came with the gun. The gun manufacturers are concerned about gun safety. Don't take the gun apart too far!!! Learn all there is to know about your firearm. Know it inside and out. Taking the gun apart too far is how gunsmiths make a lot of their money. Not that I'm against gunsmiths making money, but I would rather spend my money on something other than having a professional reassemble a gun that I took apart too far.

When attaching trigger locking devices, make certain that they are done properly. If you have your firearms under lock and key, be sure to keep the key on YOUR key chain and keep it with you. It does no good to lock up your guns and leave the key out for anyone to find.

Always thoroughly check to make sure a firearm is unloaded before cleaning or disassembly. Also you should strictly follow the user's manual when disassembling the firearm. Remove all live ammunition from the area where you'll be cleaning the gun. There's no reason you should have live ammo around when cleaning a firearm.

GUN SAFETY WHILE HUNTING

Never shoot at movement when hunting. If you miss your intended target, where is the bullet going???? Positively identify the sex of the animal before firing. This will guarantee that you will not kill some lady who is hanging out her laundry while wearing a brown and white fur coat (true story). If you don't know what the male and female species of your quarry looks like, you should not be hunting in the first place.

ALWAYS carry the gun safely and watch that muzzle!! The muzzle is another name for the front end of the barrel.

While hunting, you should be completely aware of where your buddies are and carry your firearm accordingly. When walking together, make certain that the muzzles are looking in a safe direction.

NEVER climb a tree or fence or jump a ditch with a loaded gun. You will have very little control over your firearm during a fall. Unload that firearm before you descend or ascend steep slopes. Your control of your firearm will be compromised during a tumble or slide down a steep slope. Unload it first. I would rather see you lose a chance shot at a game animal, than take a load of buckshot under your chin during a fall. In 2005, a hunter accidentally killed his own son after an uncontrolled slide down a steep slope while hunting. Before you do anything physically challenging, unload the firearm first. Please hear me on this.

GUN SAFETY AT THE SHOOTING RANGE

Never accept a loaded gun from anyone, unless you are a Range Officer or Certified Firearm Instructor or really know what you are doing. When you receive a firearm from someone, it should be unloaded and the action should be open. Keeping the action open when passing a firearm from one person to another is very important. It clearly demonstrates that you are conscientious and that you know what you are doing. It is impossible to have an accidental discharge with the action open.

Be sure the gun is safe to operate. A gun that has been neglected or one that is very old, may not be safe to use. Some guns manufactured in the early 1900's should not use modern ammunition.

Never look down the barrel of a potentially loaded gun. Leave that to an episode of the Three Stooges. There is no way to tell if a gun is loaded by looking down the barrel anyhow. Don't do it, it's not that funny. Checking the barrel for powder, lead and copper deposits while cleaning the gun is ok, as long as the action is open and you're completely certain it is unloaded during the cleaning process.

Be certain that when you are leaving the range or another shooting area, that the firearms you are packing away are completely unloaded, including magazines. I have been shooting for more than thirty years and I mistakenly left a handgun loaded after packing up at the range only once. As a responsible and alert gun owner, you should always know if one of your guns are loaded or not. That is why I have clearly advocated so many redundant safety checks. Please hear me.

If you don't know anything about the gun, seek a knowledgeable person. If you are in a position to use a gun at a range or while recreationally shooting and you are not familiar with the gun, then ask the owner. Almost every model of gun operates a little differently from its cousin.

Know how to use the gun safely. If you don't know what you are doing while out shooting with friends and family, don't pretend to know what you are doing. It is always OK to ask questions. Don't be afraid about looking less than macho. If you make a grievous mistake while handling the gun, then how would you look?

Use ONLY the correct ammunition for the gun. On a rare occasion, a 20 gauge shell has slipped into the barrel of a 12 gauge shotgun. The next shot could destroy the gun and injure you. I know of someone that tried to shoot a .38 special from a 1911 .45 ACP. (A hospital run came soon after.)

Carry only one caliber cartridge or shell at a time. This will reduce the possibility of using the wrong ammunition in your firearm.

Know your target and what is behind and beyond it. Be certain of where your bullet will end up. With some higher powered rifle cartridges, bullets can travel up to five (5) miles under the right conditions. Most rifle bullets will travel between a mile and a half (7,920 feet) and three and half miles (18,480 feet).

Be aware that certain firearms and activities have additional rules and precautions. When attending competitions or other organized activities, make certain that there are no other rules that you might be unaware of.

ALWAYS obey range rules and a Range Safety Officer. A Range Safety Officer has everyone's best interest in mind. Don't feel angry if a Range Safety Officer corrects something you are doing wrong. There are quite a few gun safety rules and they all must be obeyed at the same time. A gun club may have rules posted that you're not aware of. Please treat the Range Safety Officer with respect.

Be sure the barrel is clear of obstructions. An obstruction inside the barrel, such as a patch, bullet or bullet jacket can destroy the usefulness

of the gun and could cause severe injury OR DEATH.

If the discharge of the cartridge seemed a bit different in sound or recoil, the gun should be pointed in a safe direction for at least thirty (30) seconds to two (2) minutes, in case of a hangfire. Then the barrel should be checked for obstruction. A hangfire occurs when the gun does not immediately discharge, but discharges a few moments later.

In some cases, a cartridge may have a primer, but no powder. Upon discharge, the primer would push the bullet into the barrel, where it would get stuck. This is called a "Squib Load". If only the primer fires on a cartridge, point the gun in a safe direction for up to two (2) minutes, possibly more, then check the barrel for any obstruction. If a bullet is stuck in the barrel, don't shoot another bullet at it to get it out. This will more than likely destroy your gun and could injure you and bystanders near you. If you can't get it out, see a gunsmith or other knowledgeable person.

If you do a bunch of your shooting at indoor pistol ranges, you should make sure that the range is fully ventilated and the fans are properly working. There can be a relatively high concentration of lead and harmful compounds in the air if proper ventilation is not observed. In addition to this, make certain that you wash your hands very well after shooting and cleaning your guns. There are many harmful compounds found in gunpowder and ammunition priming compounds. Some of them are listed here:

- diazodinitrophenol
- potassium nitrate
- nitrocellulose
- boron metal
- nitroglycerin
- tetrazene
- lead
- nickel
- copper
- zinc
- lead styphnate
- barium nitrate

While at the outdoor shooting range, keep your muzzle down!!! Don't allow your barrel to point above the dirt berms that are designed to protect the

surrounding community from a wayward bullet.

GUN SAFETY WHILE RELOADING AMMUNITION

Never keep black powder or smokeless gun powder in unmarked containers. Always use the original containers. Don't mix powders unless you know what you're doing and you're specifically attempting a known duplex load.

You should store reloading components in a cool and dry area. Primers, black powder and smokeless powder should always be stored in a cool and dry area. This is more to protect the integrity of the reloading components than anything else. Of course you'll want to store them away from any heat source like a furnace, woodstove or water heater.

Always check metallic cases and shotgun hulls for defects before reloading them. Check cases and hulls for splits or cracks.

Use the utmost in caution when reloading centerfire ammunition. Don't allow yourself to become distracted. Concentrate completely on the task at hand, and most importantly, stay organized and label everything. Follow the ammunition tables exactly, do not experiment unless you are a very experienced or expert reloader.

A cartridge which has: the wrong powder, no powder charge, or too large a powder charge; an inverted primer, mis-seated primer, the wrong type of primer or an inert primer; a mis-seated, inverted, or mis-sized bullet; a collapsed, weakened, improperly sized or mis-crimped case; incorrect overall length or any of a host of other defects may seriously jeopardize your safety, the safety of those around you, and/or the reliability of your firearm in a defensive situation.

Many shooters prepare and safely use reloaded ammunition each day, and it can be an economical way to stretch your ammunition budget, but the safety of that reloaded ammunition directly depends on the care, components, equipment, and practices used in preparing it.

Always use a proper measure when loading Pyrodex or black powder into a muzzle loading firearm. Never simply guess.

Never use modern smokeless gun powder in a muzzle loader and never mix smokeless powder and black powder. There is such a thing as a "duplex" load which uses two different powders, but they should only be used under the most controlled circumstances and according to known recipes.

Never smoke cigars, pipes or cigarettes when using a muzzle loader or when reloading centerfire ammunition. You may lose your beard, mustache, eyebrows and eyelashes, which is very unattractive.

Never put a match to a pile of accidentally spilled black powder. You might end up having to completely shave off all your facial hair until it grows back evenly, right John?

TEST YOURSELF

Here is a true/false test I have made up for you. It is designed as a recap to test you and see if you have been paying attention.

Get a sheet of paper and pen and write down your answer to each of the following ten questions. The answers are at the end of the test. ENJOY.

Write down true or false to each of these questions.

- 1.) One of the ways caliber is measured is in millimeters.
- 2.) If a semi-automatic pistol fires at least twenty shots before a jam, it can be considered reliable.
- 3.) A single action revolver is not the best choice for self defense because it takes more time to fire and reload.
- 4.) There are still two states in the United States that do not allow law abiding citizens to carry a concealed handgun in public.
- 5.) There are three components to a centerfire pistol ammunition cartridge.
- 6.) If your handgun fires in both single action and double action, practice in double action is important for self defense uses.

- 7.) A .22 Long Rifle Revolver is a great choice for big game hunting.
- 8.) Most semi-automatic cartridges can be also used in revolvers.
- 9.) Checking out a firearm manufacturers repair policy before buying one of their handguns is a great idea that many people don't think of before it's too late.
- 10.) The "Golden Rule of Gun Safety" is to always point the barrel in a safe direction.

Scroll down a bit for the answers to this true/false quiz.

ANSWERS

- 1.) True
- 2.) False, it should be at least 500.
- 3.) True
- 4.) True
- 5.) False, there are four. They are case, powder, primer and bullet.
- 6.) True, self defense shooting should be practiced in double action mode.
- 7.) False, only the largest and most powerful handgun cartridges should be considered for hunting most game animals. Shooting a game animal with a .22 Long Rifle would be cruel and only result in injury and prolonged death for anything but the smallest of game.
- 8.) False, in fact, doing so could lead to serious injury or death.
- 9.) True
- 10.) True

SOME RECOMMENDED HANDGUNS

For a handgun specifically meant for recreational target practice I would recommend a quality handgun in .22LR caliber. I will give you both a revolver and a semi-automatic recommendation. I'm a big fan of Sturm-Ruger Firearms Co, so they'll both be Rugers. Their SP-101 revolver in .22LR caliber with a four inch (4") barrel is a great choice. In addition, staying with Ruger, I'll heartily recommend their Mark III semi-automatic .22LR pistol, with a 6 7/8" barrel. It's a ten-shot semi-automatic handgun of superior quality and workmanship. A version of Ruger's Mark II and Mark III semi-automatic handguns have been used as training handguns for the United States Military.

For a handgun for purposes of home defense where caliber is important and barrel length is not very important. I choose the .357 Magnum revolver. For a couple of recommendations, I'll give you the Ruger GP-100 in a six inch barrel as well as the Smith & Wesson model 686.

For concealed carry in a public place, there are literally hundreds of quality handguns that meet every stringent criterion that I could muster. I'm going to give you three models that I feel would fit the bill. Sig Sauer's Sig-Pro SP2340 in .40 S&W is one of them. Another would be Beretta's model 92F, which is the choice sidearm of the United States Military. A third choice for women or men with smaller hands, would be Kahr P-40 with a 3.5" barrel. Another great choice would be just about anything from Glock.

For handgun hunting when considering taking deer sized game, I would recommend a double-action revolver in at least 44 Magnum caliber. That's why I would choose the Ruger Super Redhawk in the new .480 Ruger caliber with their popular 7.5" barrel. The new Ruger .480 cartridge won't drop below the .44 Magnum's muzzle energy until the bullet's gone eighty five yards. That's plenty of muscle for big game, made into one of the strongest revolver frames ever designed. Not to mention that it would really impress that guy at work that you've wanted to take out to the range for a while!

There are hundreds of quality handguns that I could recommend in this space. I obviously cannot list every model that meets my requirements for specific purposes. I encourage you to look around quite a bit before purchasing that handgun you've been wanting.

Here are some general tips to recap some of my prior recommendations.

- 1 For informal target and recreational shooting, choose a quality revolver or semi-auto handgun in .22LR, with a barrel at least four inches long, six or more is better.
- 2 Make sure the handgun fits your hand and try to test fire models that you're considering to purchase.

- 3 Reliability should be a primary concern. Five hundred shots without a misfire is a minimum.
- 4 Concealed carry handguns should not be the largest in any category, but should not be the smallest either.
- 5 Good handgun cartridges for self defense are 9MM, 38 Special, 357 Magnum, 40 S&W, 45 ACP and 10MM. There are calibers on either end of this scale that I could recommend as well, but in my opinion, they are either too light on the one end or too heavy on the other.
- 6 Only the most powerful of handguns should be considered for big game hunting. Generally the range would begin at the .357 Magnum and end at the new .500 S&W Magnum.
- 7 If I was to choose just three calibers of handguns to use specifically for purposes of self defense, they would be the .357 Magnum, .40 S&W and the .45 ACP.

FINAL MESSAGES

I hope you have enjoyed taking my e-course on how to make a smart handgun purchase. I have enjoyed writing this e-course specifically with you in mind. I have put a lot of work and experience into this comprehensive and detailed look at the steps you need to take.

If you have not sent me \$5.00 for this e-course please do so now before you forget. I'm pretty sure that if you've read this far that you've benefited enough from my work here to send me five bucks. I trust you to do the right thing. To send in your contribution now by credit card go here:

<http://www.amazon.com/paypage/P3GXU3PIEM5ST1>

If you wish, you may write me a personal check as well. Please make out a personal check for \$5.00 payable to Marc H. Richardson and mail it to:

Marc H. Richardson
P.O. Box 424
Shapleigh, ME 04076-0424

In 1998, I stopped teaching in-person basic firearm education courses from the National Rifle Association of America. In that year, I went online with a personal website called *Marc's Gun Safety and Firearm Education Web site*.

Two years later in January of 2000, I went live with www.SaveTheGuns.com. As of this writing, I have had some 520,000+ visitors and well over 3,000,000 hits. I am still very largely an unknown

entity in fighting for gun rights, while promoting gun safety and education.

The National Rifle Association of America, established in 1871 however is not unknown. I'd be willing to place a bet that you have heard of the NRA at some point or possibly you're already a member.

As a Life Member of the NRA and Certified Firearm Instructor, I have taken the next step to help complete the goals and objectives of the National Rifle Association. In 2005, I became an NRA Membership Recruiter.

I encourage you to seek out more information about becoming a member of the National Rifle Association of America. You can learn more about the benefits of NRA membership on a webpage that I created myself. There are also convenient direct links to the NRA to make joining the NRA very easy with a credit card.

Please visit me online to learn more about NRA Membership and become a member today. The benefits keep getting better and we need your help to preserve your rights.

http://www.savetheguns.com/nra_membership.htm

Once again, I thank you for buying this e-course. I hope you have found it worth your time. If you need to contact me for any reason, I have included my contact information here:

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E-mail: info@savetheguns.com

P.S. Don't forget to mention that you have purchased this e-course and you would like additional information. If you or someone you know is a member of the paper or electronic media, you can view my Press-Media Kit here:

http://www.savetheguns.com/press-media_kit.htm

DISCLAIMER NOTICE

Because of the fact that I cannot give complete, individual and hands-on instruction to the reader, I will not accept any responsibility whatsoever for any use or misuse of the text, pictures or any information contained on www.SaveTheGuns.com or contained within this e-course.

The reader, on behalf of himself/herself and spouse, children, heirs, executors and administrators hereby release and forever discharge any claim that we or they might now or in the future have either in law or equity against Marc H. Richardson, SaveTheGuns.com, ClickBank.com, HostCentric.com or Commission Junction, LinkShare, Performics or any of their agents, servants or employees in any way relating to or arising out of either or both of us participating in any of the information or instruction or omission thereof contained on this Web site or e-courses, no matter how said claim is designated. I have carefully read and understood this waiver and its terms. I understand that I am assuming full and complete responsibility for any injury or loss occurring to either of us arising in any way out of the above mentioned activities. I/We have executed this waiver voluntarily and with full knowledge of its significance.

Neither I, nor www.SaveTheGuns.com takes the position that a firearm in the home is right for everyone, it's not. It is entirely the reader's responsibility and duty to closely determine what is right for themselves and their family considering all the possibilities.

The fact that you've purchased this e-course in making the right decision on which handgun to purchase indicates that you're leaning toward bringing a handgun into your home, possibly for the first time. Most first-time handgun owners believe that they would use a handgun to defend their home, their family and themselves in the case of an emergency.

I encourage you and indeed I insist that you learn and become familiar with your state's firearm laws, federal firearm laws and your state's statutes and ordinances regarding self defense.

Thank you and be safe at all times,

Marc H. Richardson
Former NRA Certified Firearm Instructor
NRA Life Member
NRA Membership Recruiter