

In This Issue

- ▶ TEACHING SEMI-AUTO RELOADS 1
- ▶ UPCOMING CLASSES 2
- ▶ CRUISER READY 3
- ▶ DON'T BE THAT GUY: RANGE ETIQUETTE 4
- ▶ DEFENSIVE AMMO MAINTENANCE 5
- ▶ POP QUIZ! 6

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DEFENSIVE TACTICS
FOR THE REAL WORLD

Firearms Training Services

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When discussing the advantages of semi-automatic pistols over the revolvers, most people highlight the increased ammunition capacity; the easier, faster reloads; and the fact that semi-autos are easier to shoot well than revolvers. For the purposes of this discussion, we'll limit our focus to the first two items.

Ammunition capacity can be an important feature. Although many (if not most) civilian self-defense shootings involve a relatively small number of shots fired, they don't always. Bill Davidson of Tac Pro in Mingus, Texas, was involved in several handgun fights while doing executive protection and related security work in southeast Asia and Africa. He believes a self-defense handgun should hold at least ten rounds, based on his experiences.

Among our students here in the US, we have had shootings requiring eight, eleven, and twelve rounds in the past few years. Fortunately, the students involved had guns that held enough ammo. Multiple attackers are becoming more and more common, and it often takes several shots per assailant to solve the problem. A high

capacity handgun helps avoid the dread disease, Ammunition Deficit Disorder, which can be fatal.

Teaching Semi-Auto Reloads



by Tom Givens

As noted in the opening paragraph, one advantage of the semi-auto is that loaded spare magazines are very easily carried on the person, and they make reloading a fast, simple procedure. In this article let's examine two reloading techniques, the speed reload and the emergency reload, which serve different functions.

The speed reload could also be called a proactive reload. If you have fired your handgun in defense of your life, odds are that you will be somewhat

excited and will not be able to count shots fired. After decades of investigating shootings, it appears to me that most people fire more shots than they realize. This means your gun is probably closer to being empty than you realize. So, at the first lull in the action, get a spare magazine into your support hand, get it right up by the gun, then jettison the partial magazine from the handgun and insert a new, fully loaded one. Your reload is completed when both hands are back on the gun and you are ready to fire again, if needed. The goal is to get the new magazine right up by the gun and exchange them quickly, so the gun is not unloaded for any longer than absolutely necessary.

Have your students imagine a line extending forward from their nose and their chin. This space, right below the line of sight, is the best place to conduct the reload inside. This keeps the gun in the shooter's peripheral vision and prevents looking down at the gun, thereby losing track of the assailant(s).

If the handgun runs out of ammunition while you are still engaged in the fight, that requires an

emergency reload, which is also called a reactive reload. If you look in your dictionary for the word “emergency,” it says, “Your gun is out of ammo and someone needs to be shot right now!”

The procedure is largely the same as for a speed reload. Keep the handgun in the “work space” described above. At the same time, get your gun hand thumb onto the magazine release and grab a fresh magazine with your support hand. Eject the spent magazine as the new one comes to the gun. Insert the full magazine, continuing upward with the support hand to grasp the slide and jerk it

rearward, chambering a fresh round. Get your hands back on the gun and go back to shooting.

Claude Werner, formerly the chief instructor at the famed Rogers School, opines that the main reason people need to reload is because of missing the target. He’s right. Learn to shoot well and practice frequently to maintain your skills. However, throw in multiple attackers, partial targets obscured by cover, movement, and the chaos and stress of real life and death encounters and the need for more ammo than your gun holds may materialize at the worst moments.

Knowing how to quickly and efficiently reload is the remedy.

Keep in mind that any time you stop to reload, you are, by necessity, taking the gun out of action until the reload has been completed. This is why we prefer to do a speed reload at the first opportunity rather than letting the gun run dry. You would not wait until you run out of gas to look for a gas station. Same with your gun. Reload at your first opportunity, not when the gun runs out. The purpose of a high capacity magazine is NOT to let you shoot more: it is to let you reload less. ■

Speed Reload:

Also called the proactive reload, partial gun reload, voluntary reload, or in-battery reload.

Emergency Reload:

Also called the reactive reload, empty gun reload, involuntary reload, or out-of-battery reload.



Upcoming Classes...

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Aug 26
Defensive Shotgun
Athens, GA

Sep 15
Intensive Pistol
(1-Day)
Longview, TX

Sep 16
Defensive Shotgun
Longview, TX

Sep 29-30
Combative Pistol
Hot Springs, AR

Oct 6-7
Dynamic
Marksmanship
(2-Day)
Lincoln, TX

Aug 6-8
Instructor Development
Course (Pistol)
Ripon, WI

Aug 9-10
Advanced Firearms
Instructor Course
Ripon, WI

Aug 24-25
Intensive Pistol Skills
(2-Day)
Athens, GA

by Tom Givens

CRUISER READY

The handgun is worn in a holster, on the user's person. The pistol is in a secure holster that covers and protects it, specifically covering and protecting the trigger and trigger guard. Thus, the pistol can be carried fully loaded, chambered, and ready for instant use.

The shotgun is not normally carried but is stored nearby for deployment in an emergency. It is not in a holster, and the trigger and trigger guard are normally exposed. The shotgun is not drop safe, so even with the safety engaged, it is not safe to lean the shotgun in the corner with the chamber loaded. Therefore, when not in hand, the shotgun should be stored with the chamber empty, but in a state that allows quick retrieval and deployment. This has traditionally been called "cruiser ready," as this is how the shotgun is stored in a police vehicle. We also refer to this as "closet ready," since so many shotguns reside in a closet until needed.

We want the shotgun to be safe, so that it does not discharge if someone puts pressure on the trigger or knocks the gun over. However, we need to be able to deploy the gun quickly in a true emergency. This requires a specific routine.

NOTE: For long term storage, we recommend loading the magazine to one round less than full capacity for cruiser ready/closet ready. Shotgun magazine springs tend to be very thin wire and take a set if left fully compressed for extended periods. This can prevent the last round in the magazine from feeding properly. If your gun has a four-round magazine, load it with three rounds for cruiser ready/closet ready.



FOR PUMP-ACTION SHOTGUNS...

Verify that the gun is empty. Always check the chamber, lifter, and magazine tube to be sure. Double check the chamber, then disengage the safety, point the gun at the ground, and drop the hammer on an empty chamber. Now, load rounds into the magazine tube.

To get the gun into action, all you have to do is cycle the action briskly while mounting the gun. This can be done very quickly with a bit of practice. By leaving the safety off and the hammer down (action un-cocked), you can work the pump quickly as soon as you grab the gun. Leaving the safety engaged or leaving the action cocked would add time to the first shot. If the action is cocked, you have to use the action release bar to work the action to chamber the first round.

FOR SEMI-AUTO SHOTGUNS...

Verify that the gun is empty. Check the chamber, lifter, and magazine tube. Leave the action cocked. Load rounds into the magazine tube. Once the magazine tube is loaded with the desired number of rounds, crack the bolt back a half inch or so to verify there is no round in the chamber. Disengage the safety, point the gun at the ground, and drop the hammer on an empty chamber. On most designs, this puts a shell onto the lifter and the gun can be deployed simply by pulling back the bolt handle fully and releasing it. The bolt handle should be operated vigorously with the support hand, as the dominant hand holds the gun by the pistol grip.



Cruiser ready/closet ready allows us to keep the gun loaded, but safe. A round is not chambered until we pick up the gun in anticipation of immediate use. In the time it takes to mount the gun, the action can be cycled, loading a round into the chamber. Thus, we lose no time in deploying the gun but gain a large measure of safety and control. ■

DON'T BE THAT GUY.

Originally written for
The ShootingChannel.com
(April 17, 2014)



by
Tom
Givens

1 Once you're on the firing line stay there until you are dismissed by the instructor. It is very poor form to walk off the line without permission. The instructor will give you an opportunity to get more ammunition, hydrate, or do whatever you need to do. It is hard enough for the instructor to observe and control everyone on the firing line as it is. Help him by staying in your assigned spot on the firing line until given permission to leave it.

2 Do not handle your firearm off the firing line. The instructor has to focus his attention on the firing line, so he should not have to watch

doing anything else not directly involved in firing.

5 On the firing line there should be no casual chatting. Wait until you are off-line to talk about your performance, or anything else with other students. When you are talking you cannot be listening to the instructor's comments, to range commands, or to other important input. One exception would be when you are acting as a coach for another shooter. But even then, if the primary instructor begins talking you should stop talking and listen to him. You can resume your coaching when the primary instructor is finished.

Etiquette

If you have had any formal firearms training, you are familiar with the Four Basic Firearms Safety Rules. In addition to those rules, however, there are some established and customary range practices you should be familiar with.

out for people behind him with guns out. Your handgun should not be out of the holster unless you are on the firing line, facing the backstop, and you have permission to do so.

3 Do not dangle your handgun by your side. Unless you are at the ready or on target the gun should remain in the holster. If you blow a shot, don't throw up your hands or drop them by your side with a gun in your hand. Keep the gun under control and again, if you don't want it in your hands put it back in holster.

4 Don't turn around with a gun in your hand and sweep the line, the instructors, or observers. Always holster the gun before walking off the line, picking up any object, or

6 Immediately obey any instruction or command from the instructor. Do what he says first, and you can question it later. There may be circumstances of which you are unaware.

7 Electronic hearing protection is such an asset that it really should be mandatory equipment for a shooting class. With electronic ear muffs, you will pick up tidbits from the instructor you may have missed otherwise, including hearing coaching directed at other students. The same coaching may well apply to you.

If you will follow these guidelines you will be safer, your classmates will be safer, and just as importantly, you and they will derive the maximum benefit from class. ■

Range

Inspection and Care of

by Tom Givens

DEFENSIVE AMMO

Ammunition made in the US is of very high quality. However, American manufacturers, turn out tens of millions of rounds of ammunition each day. Any product that is made by the millions per day will suffer from defective, out of spec, or damaged specimens and these will find their way into the boxes shipped to your local dealer. Since you literally bet your life on your self-defense ammo, it would be wise to inspect it and care for it properly. Handguns, both revolvers and semi-automatic pistols, rely completely on quality, in spec ammunition to function. Here are just a few of the things we see go wrong frequently:

High Primer

The primer should be seated just below flush in the base of the cartridge. A “high primer” is one that protrudes above the base of the cartridge. In revolvers this can bind against the breech face, preventing rotation of the cylinder. In autos, this can keep the cartridge from sliding up under the extractor and keep the slide from going into battery.

Damaged Case

The case may have a big dent in it, or the case mouth may have been caught by the bullet’s base when the bullet was seated in the case, tearing the case mouth. These will often go into a magazine, but not feed into the pistol’s chamber, causing a stoppage.

Bullets

We see bullets inserted backwards in the case (they won’t feed), or loose in the case, or pushed back too deeply into the case. Bad juju.

Inverted Primer

Occasionally we find a cartridge in which the primer was inserted backward. Obviously, that cartridge won’t fire.

Damaged Rim

The extractor must grab the rim of the cartridge and pull it out of the chamber, so it can be ejected. The rim should be uniform, and have no bends, tears, or burrs. Below is a photo of two factory .38 Special rounds with significant burrs on the rim. These burrs were enough to keep the cartridges from seating fully in the chamber, preventing the cylinder from closing. These two rounds came from two twenty-round factory boxes of ammo.



We see a lot of ammo fired every year and we see these deficiencies in every brand and type of handgun ammunition. Before you trust your life to ammunition, inspect it carefully for the problems described above. I suggest the following for ammo you will actually be carrying:

1 Visually inspect the primers carefully. Always make sure every case has a primer, that the primer is seated fully, and the primer is not dented or damaged.

2 Visually, and by feel, check the rim for damage or burrs.

3 Visually check the case, especially the case mouth.

4 Visually check the bullets, then with only finger pressure make sure they are not loose in the case. You should not be able to move the bullet at all with your fingers.

One final step many knowledgeable shooters take is to remove the barrel from the semi-auto pistol and use it as a gauge for the cartridges. Holding the barrel pointed down, drop a round into the chamber. It should go all the way in easily and stop with the base of the case even with the barrel hood. Invert the barrel over a towel. The cartridge should fall out easily. You will have confidence that cartridges that have been subjected to this test will feed smoothly in your gun.

In addition to checking your defensive ammo, you must take care of it. This branches two ways: ammo you have on hand, for instance in your home; and ammo you are actually carrying in your gun or in spare magazines. Let’s look at them separately.

You should have a reserve supply of 100-200 rounds, at least, of your chosen defensive load at home. This should be kept in the factory boxes it comes in. The dividers or trays in those boxes help protect the individual cartridges, and identification of the ammo is easier in its original box. These should be kept inside your home, not in the garage or a detached storage shed. In those environments, the temperature and humidity vary too much. In a closet inside your home, the ammo will last indefinitely. If you want to ensure long term viability, keep the ammo in

metal GI ammo cans with a couple of packets of silica gel desiccant inside. Ammo stored inside your home in this manner is good for 50 years or more.

Once you start carrying ammo, its service life starts counting down rather quickly. Ammo carried on your person is subjected to temperature and humidity swings, gun oils and solvents, and wear from being loaded and unloaded. Carry ammo should be shot up in practice and replaced in at least every six months. Going longer than that is just begging for trouble. Ammo routinely carried is susceptible to two major issues, which are potentially disastrous.

Issue #1

American ammo is loaded with Boxer primers. These primers consist of a metal cup, an anvil, a pellet of priming compound, and a sealant. The primer pellet is trapped between the cup and anvil, so that when the firing pin or striker hits the cup, the pellet is crushed between the cup and anvil, igniting the cartridge. Every time you chamber a cartridge in a semiautomatic firearm, the primer is subjected to impact by the breech face. Repeated strikes over time can cause the primer pellet to crumble. If it does, there is nothing between the cup and anvil to explode when the firing pin or striker hits, thus a misfired round. If

you chamber the same round twice, remove it from carry status and put it with your practice ammo for the next range trip.

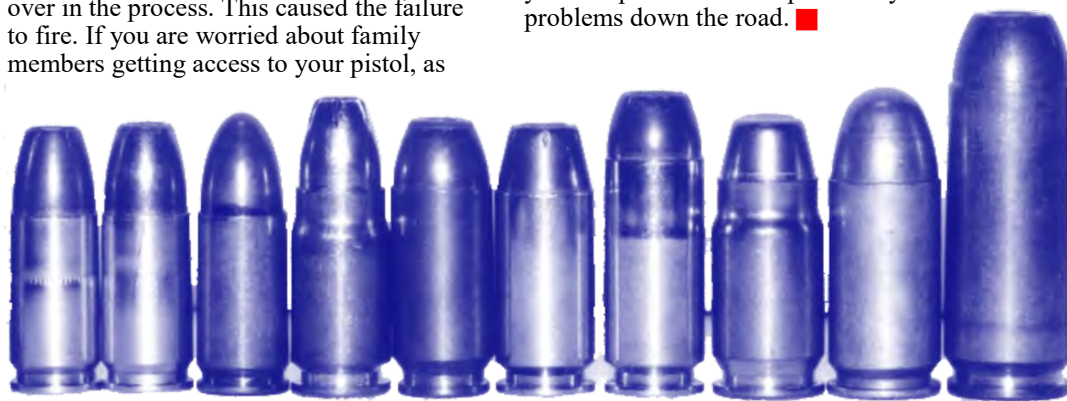
There was a recent, well-publicized law enforcement shooting involving this very issue. An officer attempted to fire his handgun in self-defense, and the round in the chamber misfired. The officer was able to apply immediate corrective action (Tap, Rack, Bang!), and won the fight. Understandably, both he and his agency were upset that a round of premium "Law Enforcement Only" ammo had failed to fire at a critical juncture. Examination of the misfired round showed that the primer pellet had disintegrated, as described above. Investigation revealed that the officer unloaded his pistol every night and reloaded it the next day before going to work, chambering the same round over and over in the process. This caused the failure to fire. If you are worried about family members getting access to your pistol, as

this officer was, lock it up, don't load and unload daily. Aside from the wear and tear on the ammo, most unintended discharges occur during loading/unloading. Load it, wear it, or lock it up.

Issue #2

The other problem with loading/unloading is wear and tear on the bullet. When a round feeds up the ramp and into the barrel, the bullet takes a pretty solid impact. Doing this repeatedly can push the bullet back too deeply in its case. This compresses the powder charge and can result in dangerously high pressures (kaboom!).

Check your carry ammo before loading your gun or spare magazines with it, then replace the ammo every six months and you will prevent a lot of potentially serious problems down the road. ■



Happy Independence Day from Tom & Lynn

Can you answer this month's trivia question? Be the first to post the correct answer in Tom's newsletter thread on the Rangemaster Facebook page, and YOU WIN!!!



POP QUIZ

At the Continental Congress, who introduced the original resolution that would lead to declaring independence from Great Britain?

A. Benjamin Franklin
B. Richard Henry Lee

C. George Mason
D. John Hancock