

Rangemaster Firearms Training Services
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AUGUST 2021 NEWSLETTER

DRILL OF THE MONTH

Throughout 2021 we will be running a Drill of the Month in each edition of the newsletter. The goal is help motivate folks to get to the range and actually shoot their defensive weapons, and to have some fun in the process. Each month we'll post a drill or a short course of fire. You are encouraged to go to the range, shoot the drill, and then post your thoughts and a photo of your target on the Rangemaster Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/rangemaster/> .

The 3M Test

The "3 M's" are Marksmanship, Movement, and Manipulations. This drill was designed to test all of these skills in a quick, 10 round format. This drill is intended to be shot cold, from concealed carry, at 5 yards.

This can be shot on an RFTS-Q, an IALEFI-Q, or an IDPA cardboard target, as they all have an 8" circle in the chest. For this drill, only hits in the 8" chest circle or the designated head shot to the head circle count. This is a Pass/Fail drill, so a single round outside the 8" circle or the head circle is a Fail. Any procedural error is a Fail. If you shoot the drill clean with no errors, you Pass.

The original inspiration for this drill came from Larry Nichols, who was the Rangemaster of the Burbank, CA, police department many years ago. John Farnam made some changes to the drill and showed it to me over 20 years ago. I added a couple of touches, and started using my version over 15 years ago. It goes like this.

Start with a round in the chamber, and a magazine in the pistol. That magazine in the pistol will have 6 live rounds (not more, not less) and one inert dummy round in it. The dummy should be the 3rd, 4th, or 5th round in the magazine, not the first round nor the last round. Obviously, someone other than the shooter should load this magazine, so that the shooter does not know where in the magazine the dummy resides. Have a loaded spare magazine.

On signal, sidestep, draw and fire into the chest circle until the gun has a malfunction (click, instead of bang). Sidestep, and remedy the malfunction. Continue to fire to the chest circle until the gun runs empty. Sidestep, reload, and fire 2 more rounds to the chest circle, then fire 1 round to the head ring to finish the drill. This is a total of 10 shots. You MUST move on the draw, on the malfunction and on the reload. Failure to move on these tasks is a FAIL. If a single round is outside the chest circle or head circle, that is a FAIL. If all 10 rounds are in the circles, under the time limit, with no errors, you PASS.

Time limits are as follows:

Regular Earth People	15 seconds
Proficient shooters	12 seconds
Instructors	9 seconds.

In a single 10 shot drill you have practiced/tested all of these critical skills: a concealed presentation while moving; accurate shooting at speed; the ability to quickly clear a malfunction; the ability to reload quickly and efficiently; and the ability to engage a smaller target, making the transition from speed to more accuracy, all while moving to avoid being shot while

accomplishing any non-shooting task. Give this drill a try. I think you will like it.

LOCK YOUR DOORS!

This happened five years ago in Indianapolis, but the lessons are 100% applicable today. A young woman was brutally raped and murdered in her own home at 7:00am by two intruders. The young woman's husband left their home shortly after 6:00am to go to a local gym. He told police he left the front door of their home unlocked. When he returned two hours later he found his wife raped and near death, shot in the back of the head. She was lying face down on the living room floor. It appears that the perpetrators of this atrocity had just burglarized a home two doors down from the Blackburn's home. It is likely that the suspects saw him leave, and just as likely that they saw him fail to lock the door. They simply entered the home and committed their heinous crimes. There are a number of lessons here.

First, no time of day and no neighborhood are "off limits" to violent crime. It appears the suspects in this case had broken into two or three other homes in the same neighborhood between 5:30am, and 7:00am, stealing money, a laptop computer, clothing and other items. A few years ago, a student of ours was forced to shoot an intruder who kicked in the front door and entered the student's home at 6:30am. Our student had to transition from getting his kids ready to go to school to shooting an intruder, in just seconds. Next, lock your damn doors! It doesn't matter what time of day it is, or that you will only be gone briefly. If an intruder has to break down a door to enter, that gives you warning and time to arm yourself. If they can just walk right in through an unlocked door, there is no delay, no noise to alert you and no time to react. Third, use your alarm system. Again, a burglar alarm won't keep an intruder out, but it alerts you that you have a problem, making a response possible.

Now, here's something to think about. In the Indianapolis case, the husband told police he deliberately left the door unlocked. He didn't want to be bothered carrying keys when he walked to the nearby gym to work out. That combination of laziness and willful naivete cost his wife her life. "But I don't want to live in fear.", the wide-eyed sheep says. Locking your doors is not living in fear, any more than wearing a seat belt in traffic or having a fire extinguisher in your home is. Locking your doors is simply taking a reasonable precaution against a real and foreseeable threat. This is a perfect example of a preventable tragedy. Complacency and willful naivete combine to get decent people killed.

The Four Safety Principles

From time to time I am asked about the Four General Firearms Safety Rules. Specifically, I am asked about their genesis, and if they are in the correct order. "The Four Rules" were first promulgated by Jeff Cooper about 50 years ago, and they have served very well over that time. One advantage of a widely used set of standardized rules is brevity/clarity of communication. For instance, everybody knows what a "Rule Three" violation is, if everyone uses the same rules.

Looking in my personal reference library, I found the following info. In Cooper's 1961 book, *The Complete Book of Modern Handgunning*, he lists three safety rules. He credits them to the NRA.

1. Treat every gun as if it is loaded.
2. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
3. Be sure of your target.

He then goes on to add some guidelines, which included keeping your finger out of the trigger guard unless actually firing. Cooper's 1965 book still has these same 3 rules, again with further admonishments. In 1974, Cooper on Handguns still has these same rules, with the same further explanation in the text about trigger finger. The consensus is that the Four Rules appeared when Cooper opened Gunsite, in 1976. I know that I was there in 1978 and after, and the Four Rules were prominently displayed already.

As for their sequence, it is a "building block" approach.

All guns are always loaded. This is a reminder that guns are made to shoot. If one wants to do any administrative task with the gun, he must first unload it. This also is meant to discourage waving a gun around on the theory that it is "unloaded". Treating all guns as loaded reminds us about muzzle discipline and trigger finger discipline at all times.

Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy. This helps reinforce the notion that all guns are loaded (and, therefore, dangerous) and that we are accountable for every bullet that leaves the gun.

Keep your trigger straight and outside the trigger guard until your sights are on the target. If your sights are on the target, you are willing to destroy it (see Rule 2). Only then does your finger enter the trigger guard.

Be certain of your target and what is around and beyond it. Put last because it only applies if we actually fire the gun. So, as you can see, there actually is a logical progression. These rules have been in extremely widespread use for almost fifty years. Changing them for the sake of novelty is hazardous.



**A HOLSTERED PISTOL IS SAFE
KEEP YOURS IN LEATHER
EXCEPT WHEN ON FIRING LINE**

**GUNSITE FIREARMS
SAFETY RULES**



1. **All** guns are **always** loaded.
2. **Never** let the muzzle cover anything which you are not willing to destroy.
3. Keep your finger **OFF** the trigger until your sights are **on the target**.
4. **Always** be sure of your target.

Gunsite Academy, Inc.
www.gunsite.com

You Are On Your Own!

You Are on Your Own! To borrow a phrase from trainer Darryl Bolke, when someone breaks into your home or pulls a gun on you in a street robbery, YOU are the first responder. The police are secondary responders, who will arrive long after the event is over.

According to a recent article in the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Atlanta police were the slowest to answer high priority, life-threatening situations, such as armed robberies, assaults, shootings in progress, and similar high priority emergency calls among police departments from seven similar-sized cities. The results were part of a survey of police response times. In Atlanta, in the period covered by this study, on average, it took 11 minutes and 12 seconds from the time a high-priority 911 call was received until an Atlanta police officer showed up at the scene. The response times reported by the El Paso (Texas) Police Department were only one second quicker than Atlanta's, with an average of 11 minutes and 11 seconds. This is sadly typical in just about all large cities.

In May, 2021, Austin Police Department case # 211430419, a shooting call came in at 5:35am. A victim had been shot in the head. There were NO units available, city wide, for 12 minutes. A car finally made the scene at 5:51am, 16 minutes after the call. No one is coming to save you. Be aware, be alert, be armed.

An Old-Timer's Trick

An old-timers' trick to help students learn trigger control is to have them work with a double-action revolver for a while. If you have a well set up revolver with a smooth (not necessarily light) trigger pull, it works wonders for learning a clean trigger press. I was reminded of this again recently.

Both Lee Weems and Greg Ellifritz sent me drills designed to be shot with the double-action revolver with short barrel, often referred to as a snubby. I wanted to shoot these drills to get a feel for a baseline performance on them, so I went by the range one morning. I used one of my favorite wheelguns, a well worn S&W Model 12 Airweight, 2" barrel. After 42 rounds of .38 Special in that aluminum framed flyweight, my hand had had enough. So after a five minute break I switched to my Glock 17 and shot the Baseline Assessment Drill, one of my favorite tests of handgun skill. I shot 200 points out of a possible 200. After shooting the lightweight double-action revolver, the service sized semiauto was a piece of cake. Give this a try next time you go to the range.

MAGIC WORDS OR JUST MAGICAL THINKING?

Steven M. Harris

(Florida Bar – 1979)

Martindale Preeminent® - AV (35+ years)

Refer to your state's statutes and caselaw for what you need to know.

It is likely you have heard or read that being able to "articulate" (something or other) is the be-all and end-all to obtaining a determination that your use of defensive force was legally justified. My view: Nope. At best, the usual articulations only signal the force user's subjective belief that his or her use of force was necessary.

What a defensive force user utters to responding police (or later) is often not positive and decisive or even helpful. Time and time again, I take note of a defensive force user who repeats some thought-to-be magic words (learned at firearms or other self-defense training, or from an LEO) which actually exhibit nothing more than magical thinking. Often this is because the facts asserted simply don't support use of any defensive force, or the level of force used. Or the use or level of force used was based on a misunderstanding of the applicable law. (Legal mistake is not a defense to criminal charges arising from using or threatening to use defensive force).

The case *State of Florida v. Michael Drejka* is a widely reported-upon example of a self-defense fail with magical thinking masquerading as magic words. Read [THIS](#), for my take (with must watch linked videos) on his conviction. Another example is the shooting in Texas by then LEO (and trespasser) Amber Guyger -- of someone eating ice cream in his own apartment. Not one word she spoke or texted (before or after the shooting) was favorable to her defense, factually or legally. Some of her magical thinking is quoted [HERE](#). (Apartment mix-up does not provide the mistaken belief defense she, a Texas Ranger "expert," police trainers, and her attorney urge).

Sadly, lawyers too often suffer from similar magical thinking blunders when they make public declarations for a client who is asserting self-defense. Go [HERE](#) for a recent example of an attorney's statements which actually invalidate his client's (an FBI agent) justification for use of *deadly* force. Of note: An attorney's factual assertions can be considered admissions of the client. Read [THIS](#).

Examples of thought-to-be magic words which are only magical thinking include: I was standing my ground; I was in fear for my life; he might/could have had a weapon/gun; I shot just to stop the threat; I aimed for the leg/arm to wound, not to kill; I didn't mean to shoot, it was an accidental discharge; my attacker came within 21 feet; I am the victim,

that's the perpetrator, . . . ; I thought he was reaching for a gun; I thought he might kill me; I took a warning shot.

Magical thinking statements can stimulate a prosecutor to file charges, and can sink a justification defense when admitted in trial. You as the defendant may lose the right to an instruction on self-defense, or be saddled with some jury instruction which is narrowed based on a foolish theory you put forth articulating your magical thinking. North Carolina cases and those from other states are on point. To read a recent Michigan intermediate appellate opinion on point, go [HERE](#).

So, are there magic words? Yes. However, they require complex thinking and cautious verbalization. Few are capable of that immediately post-incident and when not properly advised. Read [THIS](#). True magic words are those which: establish the presence of the legal prerequisites for the level of defensive force used; demonstrate the objective and subjective reasonableness of your use of force; show why the force used was required immediately to counter an imminent threat of bodily harm or a specified crime which was being committed or about to be committed; show that lesser force would have likely been unavailing, and; show that the ability to safely disengage (commonly referred to as "retreat") was nonexistent or unknown, or would have been futile. In the case of deadly force, those words which show that the use of force defended against or sought to be avoided was clearly the kind which ordinarily inflicts or is capable of inflicting death or great bodily harm. In the case of the now highly frowned upon (but often entirely lawful and appropriate) "citizen's arrest," the magic words are "you are under arrest." The failure to say that phrase or to promptly proclaim the unusual defense is significant. (Wait for the upcoming trial in coastal Georgia for confirmation of this. Note -- I doubt the right to effect a citizen's arrest includes the right to make a *Terry* style detention under threat of deadly force.)

Takeaway: Ignore the dangerous urge to voice someone else's magic words to establish the reasonableness of and necessity for your use of defensive force.

UPCOMING TRAINING EVENTS

Aug 14-15 Advanced Instructor Development, Nashville, TN

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/advanced-firearms-instructor-development-course-tn-tickets-101235558280> **sold out**

Aug 20-21 Combative Pistol, Dahlonega, GA

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rangemaster-combative-pistol-ga-tickets-101753505474> **sold out**

Aug 22 Defensive Shotgun, Dahlonega, GA

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rangemaster-defensive-shotgun-ga-tickets-101753651912> **sold out**

Sept 3-5 Pistol Instructor Dev., Red Hill Range, Martin, GA

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/three-day-firearms-instructor-development-course-tickets-138850496573>

Oct 1-3 Master Instructor Course, McLoud, OK

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/master-firearms-instructor-development-course-ok-tickets-101013835100>

Oct 8-10 Shotgun Instructor, White Hall, AR

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/defensive-shotgun-instructor-development-course-tickets-112318704268>

Oct 15-17 Pistol Instructor Development, Kansas City, MO

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rangemaster-handgun-instructor-development-course-tickets-122880074611>



Q. Stevenson gets his Casino Drill coin, Instructor Course, Lincoln, Texas, at KR Training, April 2021