



AUGUST 2026 NEWSLETTER

DRILL OF THE MONTH

Throughout 2026 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/> .

3 Second Standards, version 2.0

There are several variations of the 3 Second Standards. This is my favorite version.

A lot of defensive shootings take place at about a car length. My vehicle is 18 feet long (6 yards), so this entire drill is shot from 6 yards.

At that distance, the entire fight is over within about 3 seconds, an awful lot of the time. So, each stage has a time limit of 3 seconds.

Distance- 6 yards Time limit- 3 seconds, every stage

This drill is intended to be shot on a Rangemaster Q-5 or Q-6 silhouette. The chest ring and the head ring are 10 points, any other hit above the belt line is 5 points. If you use an IDPA target, the chest circle and head box are 10 points, the C Zone is 5 points, and the D Zone is a miss. 15 rounds total, possible score of 150 points, 135 (90%) or above is "passing".

Stage 1 Start holstered, concealed. On signal, draw and fire 4 rounds, freestyle

Stage 2 Start gun in hand, dominant hand only, at low ready. On signal fire 3 rounds.

Stage 3 Start gun in hand, in non-dominant hand only, at low ready. Fire 2 rounds on signal.

Stage 4 Start gun in hand, at low ready. On signal, fire 2 rounds to the chest and immediately fire 1 round to the head. Run twice.



Distances Involved in Self Defense Shootings

Over the years I have seen many training programs directed toward private citizens that relied on sources like the FBI's annual Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted Summary (LEOKA). The problem is, most police shootings involve uniformed patrol officers, doing things private citizens simply don't do, like felony vehicle stops, hold-up alarm response, and serving arrest warrants.

The FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) however, employ agents who wear plain civilian clothing, with concealed pistols, and drive un-marked cars. These are the same conditions private citizens with CCW permits work in. In fact, most years about half of FBI agent involved shootings stem from someone trying to rob or car-jack an agent, not realizing who it is. In addition, we have had 75 student involved shootings in which we have a debrief from the student involved, or from law enforcement who handled the investigation. Let's look at what actually happens, rather than engage in speculation.

First, the FBI conducts an audit every few years to see exactly what their field agents have been involved in. They use this information to keep their training current and relevant. These are handgun engagements, carbine uses are recorded separately. Let's look at some of their recent findings.

1993-2009

0-7 yards	72%
7-15 yards	19%
16-25 yards	4%

Jan 2012- Jan 2016

0-7 yards	70%
7-15 yards	21%
16-25 yards	9%

These numbers have remained remarkably consistent over many years. The DEA in 2007 had 44 incidents in which shots were fired against criminals. The average engagement distance was 14.6 feet. The typical American sedan is 16 feet long, so we could just say, about a car length.

In the case of our students who had to shoot in self-defense, the distances involved were:

Contact distance	4%
3-7 yards	91%
Beyond 7 yards	4%

The 3 shootings beyond 7 yards were at 15,17 and 22 yards, so some work at that sort of distance is needed, but not a lot.

So, we put the vast majority of our effort in class on fast, reliable vital zone hits at the 3,5,and 7 yard lines, with a heavy emphasis on 3-5 yards. Three yards could be classified as “conversational distance”,and is the zone in which we normally talk to strangers. Five yards is essentially one car length. 7 yards is across a large room. If you think in those terms, the reason 91% of our shootings took place at from 3 to 7 yards makes a lot of sense. Keep this in mind when structuring your practice sessions.

PATREON PAGE, Information for You

We have a Patreon Page at Patreon.com/tomgivens . From ten to twelve times or more each month we post text articles or videos with solid training information. We opted to have no advertising on this resource, so that all you get is the training material, without being bombarded with ads. So, 100% of the revenue comes from your subscription. A subscription is only \$10.00 per month, or even less if you pay annually, which brings you a lot of timely, professional training content for 33 cents per day. I would really appreciate your support and subscription to this training resource. It takes a lot of research, time, and effort to put out multiple articles and videos every month, but I think the result is worth the effort. Thanks!

More Laws?

It appears that some gun control advocates are mentally ill. You can show them reality, and they just ignore it and drive on.

Here is a study from a prestigious medical school that found no real link between gun control laws and the rates of firearm homicides or suicides.

What was their conclusion? This clearly shows the need for more laws. SMH

<https://www.firearmsnews.com/editorial/med-research-gun-control-homicide-study/502176>

Rangemaster Shotgun Instructor Development Courses

Tim Chandler and Ashton Ray have taken over the shotgun training operation for Rangemaster. They will be teaching the same content, same workbook/manual, same class. Both have apprenticed extensively with me, plus have trained with other well known shotgun trainers. Both are wizards with the shotgun, and frankly they will do a better job of this class than I can. We have two shotgun instructor courses scheduled for 2027. They are:

May, Echo Valley, West Virginia

<https://rangemaster.corsizio.com/event/6a15d71ef9af4d8ca08a28c>

September, Carmichaels, Pennsylvania

<https://rangemaster.corsizio.com/event/6a173e0af9af4d8ca28a110>



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 several times 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 clear 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 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

It'll Never Happen to Me!

I (Tom Givens) live in a quiet agricultural town of just 45,000 people, in the middle of nowhere halfway between Tampa and Orlando. In the first six months of this year, we have had 11 murders. Master trainer and good friend Cecil Burch lives in Peoria, Arizona, an outlying suburb of Phoenix. He recently sent me this:

"I wanted to write you because I think you will find it interesting - but not surprising in any way - and it goes directly to something you have been preaching for decades.

I live in what by any stretch would be called a safe neighborhood by anyone (anyone who doesn't understand these things anyway). Very middle class and upper middle class. We are quite literally on the northwest end of the metro area, and it is a very family driven area.

This morning I was woken at 5:30am by 4 distinct noises that sounded very much like gunshots. I looked around through the windows and such but saw nothing amiss. Later, when I was up and moving I found my street outside my garage completely blocked by 8 cop cars and a huge section of the street path cordoned off with police tape. It turned out that those noises I thought were gunshots were, in fact, gunshots. SIX DOORS DOWN from me, a man was murdered by being both stabbed and shot.

I could throw a rock from my driveway to the victim's garage door. I walk past his house every time I go to the mailbox. I walk my dogs past there any day I do not take the pups to the dog park. Before I switched my rucks to around my academy, I would ruck past the house 3-4 times a week.

Right now the police aren't saying much, and the officer I talked to for about 15 minutes had to keep it close to the vest, but I got the general sense that it was pretty bad inside.

Beyond that, three weeks ago, in the grocery store that both Eillen and I shop at multiple times a week, there was a shooting murder in the parking lot in the late afternoon, which is a typical time Eileen would go there after she closed out her work for the day. It was a shooting by the victim's estranged girlfriend, but she could easily have not wanted any witnesses and tried to kill anyone around.

A few years ago, there was an armed robbery on the street in the middle of the day just across the main road from my house. In fact, the exact location where it happened was the exact same path I took for my runs/rucks, and the DAY BEFORE, at the exact same time, I ran through that spot. And some people look weird at me when they find out I carry a firearm on my rucks.....

None of this surprises you I know. You have been telling people this for decades. There is no such thing as a safe

neighborhood. But I think this really brings that home, hopefully for at least some people.

I am going to write about this on FB, but I know you are like me and only go on there at limited times, and I wanted to feed this into your data bank before I told anyone else.

I have attached a couple of pics so you can see how truly close that house is to me. The first is from my garage door, and the second is from just past my front door.”



The Best M&P?

For a couple of years now I have been working with various versions of the M&P 2.0 metal frame handguns. These are very similar to the original M&P autoloaders, but with an aluminum frame rather than polymer. They weigh less than 3 ounces more than the polymer frame version, but the difference in recoil is noticeable.

I tried the stock gun, and the Carry Comp version. I have now settled on a lightly customized version that meets my needs perfectly.

I took two standard gray 2.0's, 4.25" barrels, and had the following work done to them:

1. Replace factory sear with an Apex sear. The rest of the internals are stock. This gave me a better trigger pull and a fast, positive reset.
2. Had Apex gunsmith fit barrels installed. This brought the accuracy up considerably.
3. Had the entire guns finished in matte black Duracote. I dislike the factory gray finish. The M&P is all aluminum and stainless steel, so it is already

rust resistant. They are now black and non-reflective. I prefer to wear a black gun and a black undershirt, so the gun is hardly noticed even if my outer shirt were to be raised for some reason.

As is my custom, I had two examples done identically. I carry one daily and the other is my dedicated practice/training gun. Most of my shooting is done with the training/practice gun, so my carry gun gets very little wear and tear. The highest endorsement I can give a pistol is to carry one every day as my sidearm.



Preventive Maintenance of Pistol Mounted Optics

I teach 30+ classes a year and I see a lot of preventable problems with Pistol Mounted Optics (PMO). These are generally caused by user error, not something inherently wrong with PMO's. Here is the short summary:

1. PMO's must be mounted properly. As a last resort, if all else fails, read the directions. Here is a good step-by-step guide: <https://blog.ndzperformance.com/pistol-optics-installation-guide-expert-tips-and-techniques/>
2. Thread locker is vital. We have moved away from Loc-Tite for this application, and recommend Vibra-Tite VC3. Use it a few days before class, not the night before, so it can cure. Sealing the edges of a screw's head with lacquer (clear fingernail polish works) will keep cleaning solvents from deactivating the thread locker.
3. Witness marks are crucial. A small dab of paint or colored fingernail polish can warn you if something is starting to shift.
4. Before a high round count, three or five day long class, put a new battery in the PMO. Be sure to check your zero after a battery change.
5. Zero with the ammunition you intend to use. At 5-7 yards, different ammo will hit pretty close to the same place. However, at 25 yards there may be a significant shift with different bullet weight, muzzle velocity, etc.
6. Zero at 20-25 yards. A 10 yard zero is just like using a bore-sight collimator to get a hunting rifle "on the paper" before you actually zero it at 100 yards, saving time and ammo. With a PMO, the 10 yard zero is just the same—it is a preliminary zero to get you close. Then, tweak the adjustments at 20-25 yards. Not all

pistol engagements are at room ranges or on big targets. A good zero will help.

If you follow this advice you are far less likely to have a problem with your optic during class. This will allow you to concentrate on learning, instead of fighting your gear.

SHOTGUN NOTES



I wrote this at the request of a law enforcement agency that was looking at updating their shotguns and shotgun policy. The same info applies to the civilian defender, as well.

Observations on shotgun stock length and buckshot selection.

Shotgun Butt Stock Length

“Length of Pull” (LOP) refers to the straight-line distance from the trigger to the center of the shotgun’s butt. This measurement is critical for proper performance, and ideally, the LOP is fitted to each individual officer. Obviously, this is only practical where shotguns are issued to individual officers, or officers are allowed to use department approved, personal weapons. In agencies where shotguns are issued at each shift, the LOP needs to be standardized so that all officers can work at least acceptably well with the shotgun.

There are two primary factors to be considered when discussing LOP in a self defense or Law Enforcement (LE) capacity.

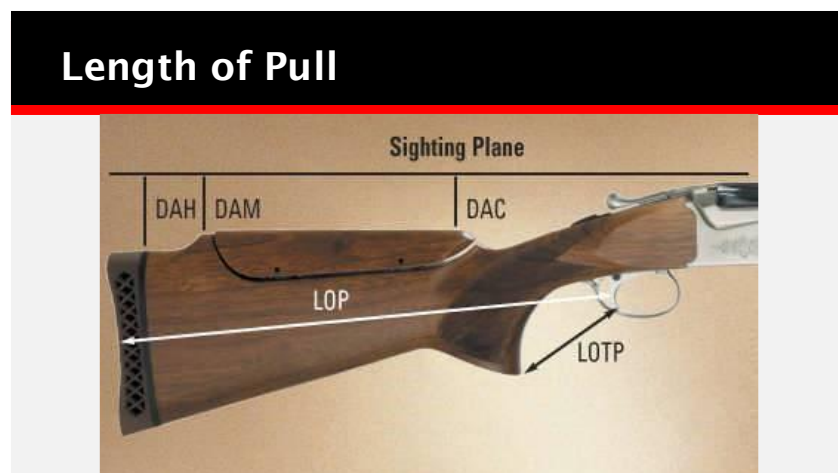
American shotguns were designed for sporting use, on live birds such as ducks or doves, and on clay bird sports such as trap and skeet. Shooting technique for these sports involves a more bladed body posture or shooting stance, and light clothing is generally worn. The standard LOP became about 14 inches.

In modern law enforcement, many current officers are of smaller stature than in the past. Add to that, body armor adds thickness to the torso, in effect shortening the arms. The shooting stance with the fighting shotgun is more squared up to the target, with hips and shoulders facing the threat. This provides commonality of training with the handgun or empty hand techniques. It also keeps the body armor oriented toward the threat. We do not want the arm openings in the body armor pointed toward an adversary.

With these things in mind, a LOP in the 12-12.5 inch range works far better. Shooters wearing body armor will be able to mount the gun

properly and have a more secure grip on the gun, to prevent disarming attempts. A too long LOP hyperextends the support side arm, making it harder to reliably function a manually operated pump action shotgun, leading to malfunctions. It also makes it much easier for an assailant to take the shotgun from its user.

The standard factory butt stock on most shotguns can be easily shortened, or aftermarket stocks can be installed with nothing but a screwdriver for tools. This simple, inexpensive modification will greatly improve the officers' comfort, make them better able to use the shotgun effectively, and reduce the risk of disarming attacks. Improvement in shooting skill breeds confidence, which leads to properly deploying the shotgun in circumstances that indicate its use, such as hold-up alarm response and felony vehicle stops. There is no downside to the modification. Even the largest officers will be able to effectively use a shotgun with a 12-12.5 inch LOP, whereas a smaller male or most female officers will be at a severe disadvantage with a 14" LOP.



Buckshot Selection

For over a hundred years, the traditional military and police buckshot size has been 00 Buckshot. This pellet size offers an adequate number of pellets, and sufficient mass to ensure adequate penetration to reach vital organs situated deeply within the body, from various angles. Reducing the diameter of a sphere reduces its weight/mass

very quickly. Smaller buckshot sizes often lack adequate penetration for LE use, due to that reduced weight/mass. 00 Buckshot offers a combination of adequate patterning and adequate penetration.

For most of that same time period, the standard 12 gauge loading of 00 Buck has been 9 pellets. That number allows three layers of three pellets in a 2 ¾ inch standard 12 gauge shell.

A phenomenon that has long been noted with the standard 9 pellet load, is the “9th pellet flyer”. When fired, 8 of the pellets go into the same general area, with a 9th pellet taking off on its own at a tangent to the main pattern. This is believed to be due to the way the 9 pellet load is stacked within the shell. There is a lot of pellet to pellet contact, increasing the chances for a deformed pellet as the shot charge is blasted down the shotgun’s barrel, resulting in a flat spot somewhere on its surface. Once the pellets leave the shotgun’s barrel, air pressure is exerted differently on the curved surfaces of the round pellet and on that flat spot. That causes the pellet to fly off at an unpredictable angle.

I am personally familiar with two cases in which a 9 pellet 00 Buck load was fired at Person A, with most of the pellets striking person A. In both cases, however, a single pellet struck Person B, with fatal results. In one case, the person struck was a hostage, in the second, a law enforcement officer. Both died from the single pellet that struck them.

To counter this, most ammunition makers now offer an 8 pellet 00 Buckshot load. Eight pellets are stacked in the shotshell completely differently than are nine pellets, resulting in much less pellet to pellet contact. If an 8 pellet payload is combined with buffering (the granulated plastic filler between the pellets) and a modern wad like Federal’s Flite Control, the 9th pellet flyer issue is largely eliminated. This results in better patterns, more accountability for pellets fired in public, reduced danger to citizens or other officers in proximity to a person being engaged with buckshot, increased officer confidence in his equipment, and overall better performance.



UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Aug 14-16, Instructor Development, Bonfield, Illinois

(John Hearne)

<https://rangemaster.corsizio.com/event/69ac52cd4ae3804c4147cf5>

Aug15-16 Advanced Instructor Royal Range,
Nashville, TN (Tom Givens)

<https://rangemaster.corsizio.com/event/685eba6bf02127913e3503e5Aug>

Aug 15-16 Enhanced Coaching Skills, Georgia
Gun Club, Buford, Georgia

(Lee Weems) - Very nice, modern indoor complex,
Atlanta suburbs

<https://rangemaster.corsizio.com/event/69f1368b370441efb2334a8e>

Aug 22-23 Intensive Pistol Skills, Royal Range,
Nashville, TN (Tom Givens) **full**

<https://rangemaster.corsizio.com/event/685ebb3ef02127913e351a41>

Sept 11-13 Master Instructor Terre Haute, IN
(Tom Givens)

<https://rangemaster.corsizio.com/event/685ebc58f02127913e353333>

Sept 18-20 Instructor Course Buford, GA
(Tom Givens) (excellent indoor facility, Atlanta area)

<https://rangemaster.corsizio.com/event/685ebd40f02127913e353718>

Oct 2-4 Instructor Development Fleming, GA
(Tom Givens)

<https://rangemaster.corsizio.com/event/685ebf36f02127913e356e73>

Oct 17-18 Advanced Instructor Lakeland, FL
(Tom Givens)

<https://rangemaster.corsizio.com/event/685ebfe6f02127913e35894e>



Legendary Lawman, Chuck Haggard, at a Rangemaster event.
Rangemaster family tend to be smarter, happier and better looking
than other people.