



SEPTEMBER 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, Hit Factor Version

Last month we shot the 3 Seconds Standards, Version 2.0, using the 3 second time limit. This month we'll give you a chance to see just how well you can perform these fundamental defensive skills at your own best speed. Use a timer and record the time for each stage. Once all the stages have been fired, total the points on the target. Total the times for all stages. Divide points by time for your score. Since a perfect score on the time limit version would be 150 points in 15 seconds, your par score is 10. Your goal is a final score of 10 or higher.

All stages are fired at 6 yards. Use any RFTS-Q5 or Q-6 target, or an IDPA target. If using the IDPA, 10 points in the head box or in the -0 circle, 5 points in the C zone, 0 points for the D zone. On

our targets, score 10 points for all hits in the 8" circle or head ring, 5 points for all others.

Draw from concealment and fire 4 rounds to the body.

Start at Ready, gun in dominant hand only. Fire 3 rds

Start at Ready, gun in non-dominant hand only. Fire 2 rds

Start at Ready, fire 2 rds to the chest and 1 rd to the head. Do this stage twice.

15 rounds total, 150 points possible. Points divided by time = score. Par score is 10. Your goal is a score higher than 10.

I recently shot this cold and scored all 150 points, in a total time of 8.73 seconds, for a final score of 17.18 . Here is my target:



Institutional Memory

Those in firearms training really suck at two things:

community outreach and institutional memory.

Our total lack of institutional memory is why we have to relearn things every 15-20 years, often at a very high cost. This is why in our higher level courses we spend some time on the history and development of modern firearms training. It's hard to see where we need to go if we don't know where we came from and how we got here.

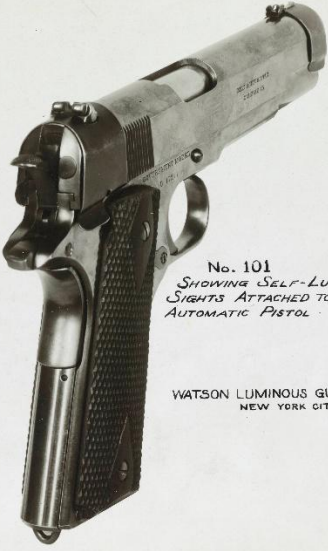
Here are a couple of examples. The night sights shown here are self luminous, powered by a small bit of radium. Note the patent date-- 1919.

The other photo shows a picture perfect Weaver Stance. That pic was taken in the late 1920's.

Beware of Instagram heroes who just "discovered" some technique. Odds are, I can pull a book from one of my shelves and show you that technique from 50-100 years ago.

SUBJECT:		NUMBER AU
WATSON LUMINOUS GUN SIGHT CO.		
165-VV		392D 24
PHOTOGRAPHER		
REC'D 1-7-19	TAKEN	
DESCRIPTION:		
SELF-LUMINOUS SIGHTS ATTACHED to Colt automatic pistol manufactured by Watson Luminous Gun Sight Co., N.Y.C.		
ISSUED: M		NOTES:

W-101



No. 101
SHOWING SELF-LUMINOUS
SIGHTS ATTACHED TO COLT
AUTOMATIC PISTOL.

WATSON LUMINOUS GUN-SIGHT CO
NEW YORK CITY



Why 00 is best.

00 Buck has been the traditional standard for law enforcement and military use for well over a century. There are good reasons for that.

000 Buck loads tend to pattern poorly. I have tried them in several shotguns and got bad results in most of them.

Smaller buckshot, like #4, tends to not penetrate enough. If we have to get through a car window or windshield, or through heavy clothing to get to our Bad Guy, #4 Buck may fail to penetrate enough.

An internet gun guy who goes by the name Brass Fetcher has done a lot of posting on shotguns over the years, and my experience says he is right about most things. He conducted some testing with properly calibrated ordnance gelatin shot at 50 yards and posted the results:

50 yard buckshot tests by Brass Fetcher

Load	Muzzle Velocity	vel @ 50 yds	penetration*
000	1320 fps	920 fps	16.3"
00 full charge	1239 fps	920 fps	16.2"
00 reduced recoil	1150 fps	862 fps	14.2"
#4 full charge	1318 fps	840 fps	9.0"

*calibrated 10% ordnance gelatin at 41 degrees

The FBI ammunition protocols and other reliable sources call for penetration in the 12-14 inch range for maximum effectiveness. Either full charge or reduced recoil 00 loads give this performance, even at 50 yards. Use whichever patterns best in your shotgun.

STUDENT INCIDENT

We had an armed incident in July involving a Rangemaster certified instructor. She lives near staff instructor Aqil Qadir, and called him to report. This is from Aqil:

Paula M-----, (was H----- in 2010 when she completed the RM IDC) was driving to Florida with her husband and grandchild. They stopped in Morrow, GA to get gas. While her husband was gassing, she climbed in the back seat to feed the baby.

The suspect knocked her husband down and jumped in the car and attempted to drive off with her and the baby. She climbed into the front seat, grabbed her pistol, pointed, and threatened.

He suddenly realized it wasn't his car, got out, climbed in another car, and led the police on a chase, ultimately running into a Harley Davidson dealership and totaling the car. He's been charged with 9 felonies.

This happened this past weekend. She just read the police report to me over the phone with the details. She's a little thing, and very happy she had her gun, could access it, and was willing to use it.

Lessons learned:

1. It does not matter that you are on vacation, or it's broad daylight, etc. You do not get to pick the time/place, someone else does.

2. Women- just because you are with your husband, that does not relieve you of your responsibility to carry. You may well be the one who has to take action to defend loved ones.
3. Drawing a gun in a competent, aggressive manner can often end these things with no shots fired. Most of these ass-wipes are looking for an easy victory, not a real fight.

Engaging Moving Targets with the Handgun

By Tom Givens

When the bullets start flying, the feet start working! During gunfights it is very common for participants to run toward cover, run toward exits, or simply run because they are being shot at. Therefore, the ability to reliably hit a moving target is an important skill in the defensive gunner's repertoire. Before learning to hit moving targets with a handgun, your students should first be made aware of some basic principles that will apply.

First, they need to forget much of what they may have learned in the past when wing shooting ducks and geese or clay birds with a shotgun. To hit these aerial targets the shooter must swing ahead of the target, a process called "leading". That's lead (leed), not lead (led). This is because game birds fly very quickly. A dove can hit 40 miles per hour, so a fair bit of lead ahead of the bird is needed to assure that the flight path of the bird and the flight path of the shot charge intersect. Human beings cannot move nearly that fast. At typical defensive distances, a human target cannot move fast enough to need any appreciable amount of lead.

The reason people miss moving targets with the handgun is not lead, but rather it is stopping the swing the instant the gun fires. This invariably results in the bullet passing right behind the

intended target. This is caused by a chain of events that most people don't really think about until it is pointed out to them.

When your brain makes the decision to fire the handgun, the shot does not take place instantaneously. Rather, a whole series of events has to take place, as follows:

The command impulse has to travel down the spinal cord from the brain to the finger;

The trigger finger's muscles have to contract;

The trigger has to move through its arc, which may be a half inch or more;

The sear has to release the hammer or striker, which then must move forward to strike the primer;

The primer has to detonate, lighting the powder charge, which has to burn and generate gas pressure; so that

The bullet is kicked loose from the cartridge and accelerated down the barrel until it exits; and then

The bullet must fly from the gun to the target.

That's a lot of stuff going on. Although the increments of time involved may be very small (micro-seconds) once we add them all up it becomes an appreciable amount of delay between the decision to fire and the actual launch of the bullet. So, if you stop your swing as your brain says "Fire!", your bullet will get to the point where the target WAS, not where it is now.

Many larger police firing ranges have "runners", mechanical moving target systems that move a silhouette target along a track or on wires to allow trainees to learn to keep the gun swinging.

You may not, however, have access to such a system. No problem. All you have to do is learn to keep the gun moving while you track the sights and work the trigger smoothly. This can be easily done with a static target array, as illustrated.

Set up three to four targets in line abreast of each other, fairly closely spaced (see photo), at 5-6 yards as a starting point. Fire 1 round at each target, working your way across so that all targets are engaged in one continuous string. Your shots should not sound like “1.....2.....3.....4.....”, but instead, should simply sound like “1,2,3,4”. Another way to describe it is thus: “all four shots should sound like they are being fired at one stationary target in a 4 shot string”. Shoot from left to right, and right to left. Once you can do this smoothly, fire 2 rounds per target. Again, the goal is to have eight consecutive shots that sound like an eight shot string on one target, not like four pairs. “1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8”, rather than “1,2.....3,4.....5,6.....7,8”

The key here is to learn to track your front sight or dot as the gun moves. When the front sight/dot rises in recoil, bring it down on the next target to be engaged, rather than bringing it back down on the last target.

Work on this a bit, and at usual pistol engagement distances no one will be able to move fast enough to keep from being hit by your gunfire, unless they are running so flat out that they pose no threat to you, anyway.

Photo on the next page shows an easy way to practice this. Work swinging right to left, and left to right, keeping the gun moving as you engage each target.



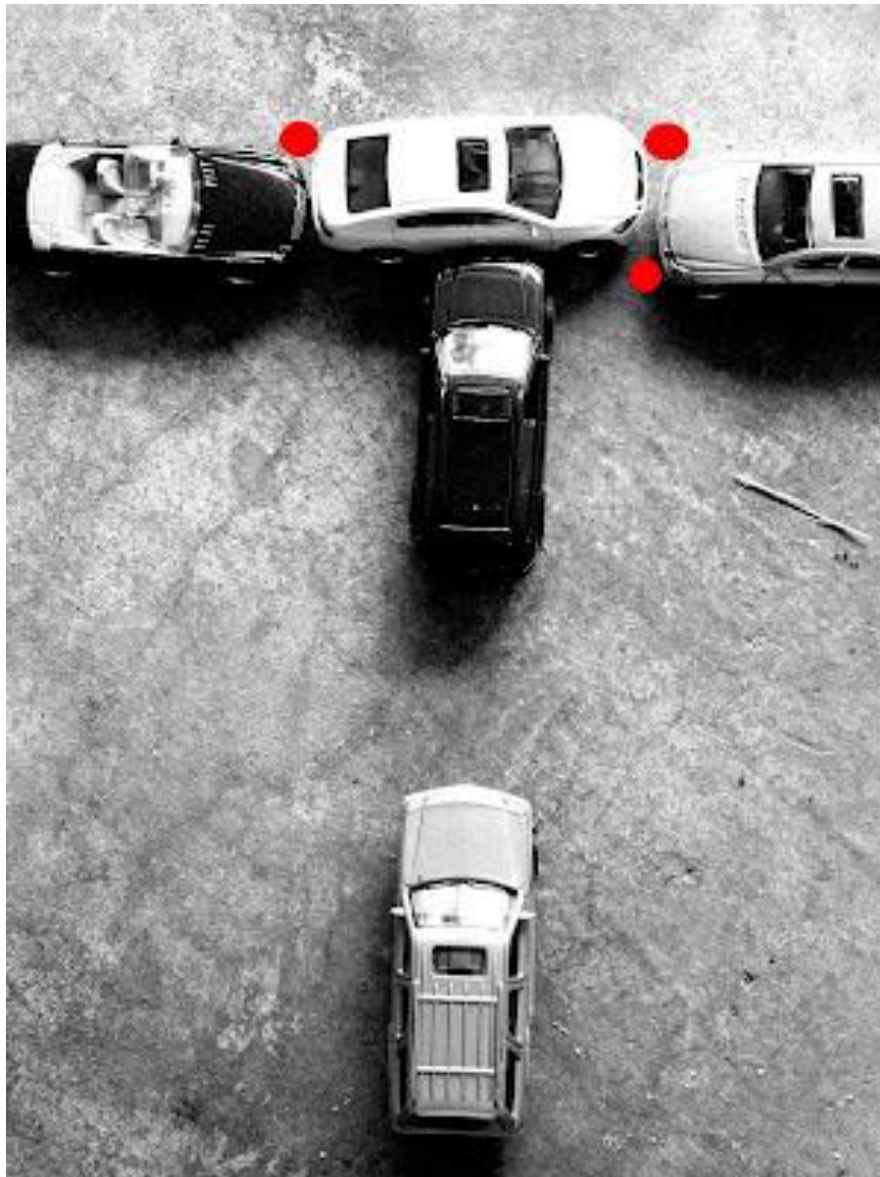
Ramming Through Roadblocks

Civil unrest is peaking in the US at present, and one dangerous tactic rioters are using is blocking a public street. You do not want your vehicle immobilized, as this makes you a sitting duck. Once your vehicle is stopped, pulling you out of the vehicle is possible, but

from your stand-point, highly undesirable. See Reginald Denny for an example.

Here is a good article on breaching a typical roadblock using your vehicle as a ram. Excellent advice. Hat tip to Greg Ellifritz for finding this gem.

https://straightforwardinacrookedworld.blogspot.com/2009/08/dark-arts-for-good-guys-break-on_19.html



You ARE the "X"

Imagine someone standing in the middle of a range with a large red X painted beneath their feet. Now imagine they take three quick steps to the left. Did they get off the X? Of course not. The X simply moved with them because the attacker wasn't aiming at the paint on the ground—they were aiming at the person standing on it.

That simple image illustrates what I believe is one of the most misunderstood concepts in defensive firearms training.

Few phrases in the firearms training world have become as universally accepted as **"Get off the X."** It has become almost automatic. Hear the command and everyone knows what is meant: don't stand still, move. While I agree movement often has tremendous value, I believe we've reached a point where we should ask a more important question.

Why are we moving?

Like many popular expressions, the true origin of "the X" is difficult to pin down. Hollywood may deserve at least part of the credit. An "X" marked on a stage identified the spot where the actor needed to stand for the lighting, camera angles, and sound to work together. The concept later found its way into executive protection, where the "X" became the location of danger—the place where an attack was occurring and where the protectee needed to be removed as quickly as possible.

Military doctrine adopted the same language. In an ambush, the "X" is the kill zone selected by the enemy. Soldiers are trained to get off that X immediately, using battle drills appropriate to the type of ambush they face. In that context, the concept makes

perfect sense. The enemy has chosen a location to maximize their advantage, and remaining there only increases your vulnerability.

Somewhere along the way, the phrase migrated into the defensive firearms world, and that's where I believe we lost some of its meaning.

The problem is this:

You are the X.

The attacker isn't shooting at a spot on the ground. They're shooting at you.

If you take one step to the left, you've simply moved the X one step to the left. If you sprint ten yards across a parking lot without improving your situation, the problem came with you. Movement by itself doesn't solve anything. It only changes where the problem exists.

That's why I believe we need to stop thinking about "getting off the X" and start thinking about **movement with purpose**.

As instructors, many of us are constrained by reality. Large classes, narrow firing lines, and safety considerations often limit how much movement we can allow. I completely understand that. Sometimes all we can safely teach is a step or two during the presentation. That choreography has value because it reminds students that standing motionless is seldom ideal.

But we should also recognize its limitations. A two-step drill isn't teaching adaptive movement. It's acting as a placeholder for a much larger concept that deserves attention later. At some point in a student's development, they need room to actually move. They need space to solve problems instead of simply performing

rehearsed choreography. That means designing training where movement has an objective, not just a direction.

This is where my Decision Engine becomes valuable. Before moving, I want students asking themselves four simple questions:

- Who can help me?
- Who can hurt me?
- Where are my people?
- Where am I going?

That last question may be the most important.

Where am I going?

Not because movement is automatically good, but because movement should improve my position. Maybe I'm moving because that's where cover exists. Maybe I'm moving because that's the nearest exit. Maybe I'm moving to protect a family member. Maybe I'm moving to gain a better angle or create time. Or maybe I'm not moving at all because the best place to solve the problem is exactly where I am standing.

The point is that movement should always have a purpose.

Dennis Tueller's work provides another interesting perspective. We often summarize his research as "21 feet in 1.5 seconds." I find it helpful to simplify the conversation even further. If an average person can cover approximately 21 feet in 1.5 seconds, they can move roughly 14 feet in one second.

Now compare that to your own performance. If your concealed draw to first accurate shot averages two seconds, that same amount of time represents approximately **28 feet of potential movement** by another person.

That doesn't mean you should try to outrun a bullet. It doesn't mean movement is always the answer. It simply reminds us that time and movement are inseparable. While you're presenting the pistol, someone else may already be covering significant ground. That reality should influence how we think about our own movement, our positioning, and our training.

If I'm specifically training movement, then I should have enough room to actually move. Likewise, if I'm teaching movement, each student should have enough space to meaningfully apply it. Otherwise, we're not teaching movement, we're teaching a reminder that movement exists.

There is another idea that has significantly influenced my thinking, one that came from my good friend Steve. He said, *"When you get off the X, you take the X with you."* That simple statement changed how I viewed movement forever. The threat isn't attached to a mark painted on the ground; the threat is attached to you. Unless your movement changes the situation, you've simply relocated the problem.

That's why I don't believe the conversation should end with the instruction to "get off the X." I think it should begin by asking a different question: **If you are the X, where should you go?** Movement itself isn't the objective, solving the problem is. Sometimes that means moving to cover, sometimes it means moving toward an exit, and sometimes it means moving to protect the people you love. There will also be times when the best answer is not to move at all, but to plant your feet, get to work, and solve the problem right where you stand. The common thread is that every movement, or every decision not to move, should have a purpose that improves your ability to succeed.

Perhaps that's the evolution of the conversation. Instead of teaching students to simply "get off the X," we should be teaching them to become deliberate problem solvers. They should understand that movement is a tool, not a tactic by itself, and that every step should improve their position, create opportunity, or deny the attacker the advantage they sought in the first place.

At the end of the day, you are the X. The question isn't whether you'll move—it is whether your actions, your decisions, and your movement, if movement is required, increase your ability to solve the problem and prevail. Because the goal has never been movement for movement's sake. The goal is to win, and sometimes the first step toward winning is understanding that the X was never painted on the ground.

The X has always been you.

You Are the "X" was written by Jim Shanahan. Jim is a master instructor, Grand Master in USPSA and a Master in multiple IDPA divisions, a published author, and a good friend. – Tom Givens

UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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)

<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>

