

Ten Essential Tips for CCW Holders

The ultimate guide to CCW carry



A publication of



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Intermediate content is for shooters who are familiar with the subject but have only basic experience in the subject matter. This content typically covers the fundamentals and moves on to reveal more complex activities, drills and tips.

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Introduction

Carrying a concealed handgun requires a certain amount of confidence.

You need to be confident in your knowledge of laws and regulations.

You have to have confidence in your accuracy, and you need to trust that you can carry a gun effectively, securely and comfortably.

If a gun is a burden for you to carry, you probably won't.



1. Knowing How to Carry Your Gun Comfortably and Effectively

There are two popular types of semiautomatic concealed carry weapons: pocket guns and holstered guns. Size is the obvious distinction, but there are more subtle differences in form and function. Some small guns, like .25 ACPs, and .380 ACPs, are ideal for tucking inside a pocket holster. Most of these guns have very short barrels and minimalist sights. Both make the drawing these guns easier.

Yet these concealment assets can be liabilities if your intended target isn't close. Larger guns are typically worn in holsters inside the waistband (IWB) or in traditional belt holsters that can be covered with a jacket. While a large handgun may be much harder to conceal, they're typically more versatile guns, and more accurate at longer distances.



Learn about
the Nano



Whichever size you choose, you will need a holster. Holsters come in three basic varieties: leather, plastic (or Kydex), and nylon. Leather has a traditional look and feel, and is ideal for a belt holster. Kydex is popular for its rigidity and retention. Nylon offers the most flexibility, and is an ideal material for holsters that fit inside pockets. The key is security. A holster hold a gun securely, but not so tightly that it can't be draw quickly. The balance can be difficult to achieve, but your life may depend on it. So don't settle on just any holster.

2. Dressing to Keep Your Weapon a Secret

Once you've chosen a holster and a gun, you have to hide them both. The trick is keeping the gun both concealed and accessible. The main give-away is the gun's outline being visible through clothing (this is commonly referred to as "print".) Wear pants that have enough room in the pocket or in the waist band to comfortably carry the gun. Shirt tails provide good coverage. Wear shirts that are meant to be worn untucked, and make sure your shirt extends past your waistband.

If you will be wearing shorts and T-shirts, you will have to consider carrying a small gun. A slim gun in an IWB holster should easily be covered by a shirt. In fall and winter, heavy clothing will allow the concealment of even full sized handguns. Suit jackets and coats make concealment easy.



Discover our
Holsters

3. Understand Your Weapon's Capabilities

All handguns have limited range, but some are much better than others. Longer barrels usually result in better long range accuracy. But this is rarely needed from a concealed carry handgun. Most concealed carry guns are designed to be reliably effective at close range. And that's enough.

But it isn't just the length of the barrel, or the caliber that influences accuracy. The gun's action is important, too. Single action guns are most often carried with their hammers cocked (and safeties on). A simple pull of a single action trigger is ineffectual unless the gun is cocked. Double action only guns don't require manual cocking, but their trigger pulls are often a bit heavier. The third option guns combine these two into a more versatile action. Hammers can be cocked, or not, which allows for a light trigger, or a heavier trigger.

“It is better to have a small gun with limited capabilities that you can carry effectively than a larger gun that sits at home in the safe.”



To generalize, smaller guns with shorter barrels are not as accurate. They often have heavier trigger pulls. They may have fewer safety mechanisms. But they're easier to conceal. And at close range, they are just as worthy. It is better to have a small gun with limited capabilities that you can carry effectively than a larger gun that sits at home in the safe.

4. Choose a Suitable Caliber

Here the rules are easy to understand. Larger rounds require larger guns, and typically do more damage. Small framed handguns with short grips can be difficult to grasp. But larger guns are harder to conceal. Again, there is a balance that must be considered.

The .25 ACP is a tiny round that is fired from tiny guns. While easily concealed, the .25 ACP is not known for its stopping power.

The .32 ACP is moderately larger, and can be a perfectly effective round (though most consider a .32 to be a backup for a larger gun).

The .380 ACP is a very popular choice. The .380's recoil is manageable, which allows for more accurate repeat shots. And many ammunition manufacturers make excellent .380 defensive rounds.

The 9mm is very popular, and close to the upper limit for lightweight concealed carry.

The .40 S&W is slightly larger, still. It is a popular choice for many law enforcement agencies.

The .45 ACP is a venerable handgun round, and offers excellent stopping power, though it is a bit slower than the 9mm.

The 10mm is seen by many as the upper limit of practicality. It is a .40 caliber bullet backed by more powder.

Many feel like the debate over caliber misses the mark. Practice, skill, and accuracy will do more for your success than a big bullet. Look for a gun that's easily concealed in a caliber you can confidently handle and work on your shot placement.



5. Practice Some Basic Skills Before You Get to the Range, and Before You Get in Trouble

Practice is essential. Some shooters spend all of their practice time shooting. But that is only one necessary skill. You will need to become proficient at drawing a weapon from a holster. Start with an unloaded gun. Eventually you will progress to drawing from a holster and engaging a target with live fire. And then doing that in one rapid, seamless motion.

And practice shooting on the move, with dry fire, before you go to the range. While standing at a known distance and shooting at a stationary target might improve your aim, it isn't a realistic scenario. Odds are if you're drawing your weapon, your heart will be racing. Practice with simulated stress if possible. But stay in control and stay safe. And if you plan on carrying an extra magazine or two, practice changing them quickly.



6. Try Your Hand at Point Shooting

Draw your gun and get a solid two handed grip, but don't pull up to aim. Keep the barrel pointed down range, and slightly down. This position is called low ready. The gun is lower than it would normally be when you take a well aimed shot, but you still have two hands on the gun and are ready to shoot.

Raise the barrel of the gun in the direction of a target no more than 3 yards away. The idea is that you keep the barrel pointed toward the target. While this isn't aiming in the traditional sense, it is still a controlled way to shoot. And it may be all you have time for.

If the threat is imminent, you may be required to fire before you've taken the time to properly align the sights.



Some people refer to this as instinctive shooting and it is an important skill to learn. With a bit of practice, it can be mastered. Lasers and lights aid in point shooting, as the light will show roughly where the bullet will hit. Lasers are useful for practicing this technique, too. Aim the gun like you would when point shooting, then turn the laser on. See how close you would have been to what you were pointing at.



7. Training to Clear Your Weapon of a Malfunction

What can go wrong will go wrong, and that applies to handguns as well. Sometimes primers don't ignite the powder. Or the bullet will fire, but the gun won't extract the spent brass. Or the next round won't feed quite right. Anytime this happens, you have to fix the problem. Try a tap-rack. Pull the slide back with your non-dominant hand, hard, and let it go again, like you would if you were chambering a round. Sometimes a little shake will free a loose piece of brass. When the slide falls, it usually picks up the next round, or may push a stuck round into place.

This is easily practiced. Snap-caps and/or dummy rounds will allow you to simulate these problems without live rounds in the gun. See how easy (or hard) jams are to clear, and how quickly you can do it. Keep practicing these drills until the tap-rack becomes second nature.

In the worst case scenarios, you will need to lock the slide back and drop the magazine in order to clear the issue. Practice this, too. Your life may depend on your ability to understand the problem and fix it quickly.



8. Stage Your Weapon for Your Current Situation or Threat

When you are in a dangerous area, it is best to have your gun ready. If you have a snap closure on a holster, for example, take it off. Keep your hands free and your gun accessible. Unzip your coat. Tuck in your undershirt. Be as ready as you can be. And be alert. But remember to keep your cool and avoid drawing attention to yourself.

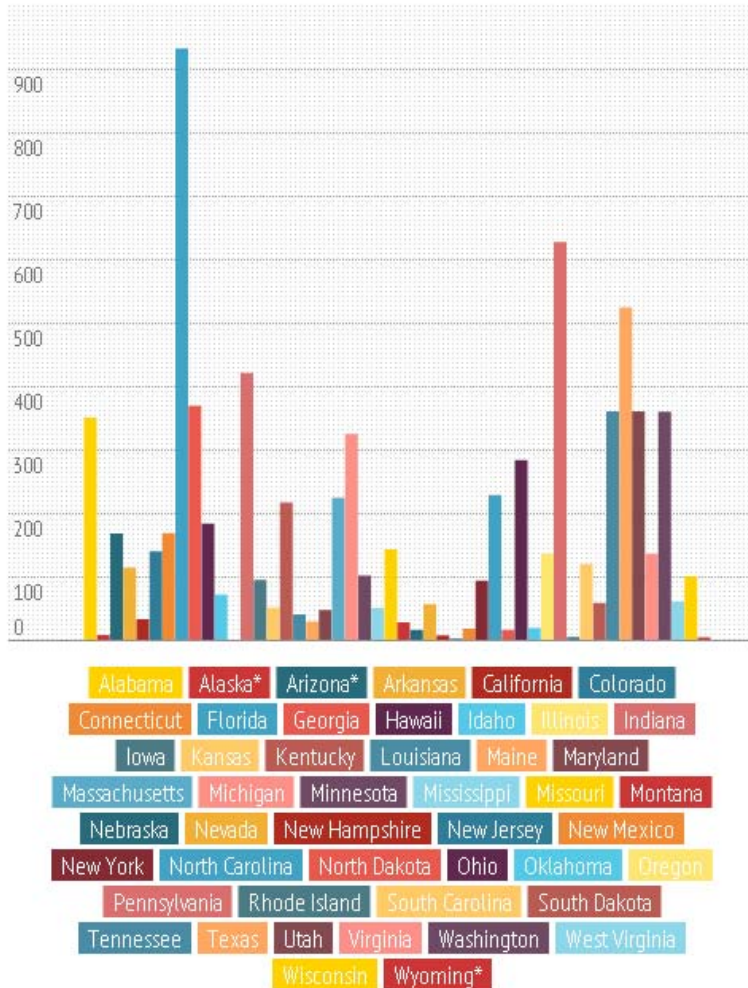
If you're someplace safe, make sure your gun is safe, secure and concealed.



But remember that a perception of safety is just a perception, and no excuse for letting your guard down.

If you're getting into or out of a vehicle, you may need to reposition your gun. Some holsters aren't comfortable to wear when seated.

A seatbelt might prevent you from accessing an IWB holster, or might make drawing cumbersome and slow.



“Remember that a perception of safety is just a perception, and no excuse for letting your guard down.”

Keep your eyes open. Even when you are not carrying a concealed handgun, you should be aware of people that look suspicious, that could pose a threat to you. Watch them more closely. It isn't a fool-proof method, but the easiest place to start. This creates situational awareness.

If you can sense a threat you can avoid it. Only draw your gun as a last resort. If possible remove yourself from a potential situation. And remember that every time you draw that gun there are repercussions.

* Unrestricted State

10. Closing to Engage a Threat

The gun you are carrying has limitations, especially if it is small. Some people can make amazing shots, but under stress the odds are slim that you will connect with your intended target. By closing the distance, you take luck out of the equation.

But you also may make yourself a target. In most cases, you can easily remove yourself from an active threat if there is any distance. If a target must be engaged, consider when to draw. Don't make yourself a threat to your target until you are close enough to decide if the threat is valid and your use of force is justified.

If possible, practice shooting while moving. This will demonstrate just how hard this skill is to master. But shooting on the move will close the distance to a target, and make you even harder to hit in return.

... SOME STATISTICS

55% of gunfights take place 0-5 feet.

20% of gunfights take place in 5-10 feet.

20% of gunfights take place in 10-21 feet.

95% of gunfights take place in 0-21 feet. (Source- FBI)

The average man can cover 21 feet of ground in 1.5 seconds.

The average man cannot draw a gun from concealment in under 2 seconds.

The average gunfight is over in 3-5 seconds.

3 to 4 shots are usually fired.

Most gunfights take place in low light conditions.

On average, one shot in four strikes someone.

Conclusions and additional resources

When you decide to carry a concealed handgun, you may feel liberated. After all, you will be taking control of your fate and this is empowering. But remember that concealed carry laws aren't universal. Most states (and many municipalities) have differing laws, and you are responsible for respecting those regulations. Carrying a gun is meant to keep you out of trouble. Choosing to follow carry laws may keep you out of legal trouble.

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