



Pros and Cons of Different Types of Weapons

This document will provide a description of the primary types of personal protection weapons and the pros and cons of each. Research weapons you are considering well and visit local sporting goods stores or self-defense training centers to actually handle weapons you are considering.

Remember your primary objective is to create distance between you and the attacker. Though you may choose to carry a firearm, you may also want to carry a less lethal device[s] that allows you to inflict sudden pain or shock and run away.

With all personal protection options available you need to be aware of your local and state laws for their ownership and use. It is very important that you check your state's "Castle Doctrine" laws regarding your right to use deadly force to defend yourself and property.

1 – Pepper Spray

Pepper Spray, also called OC Spray which is named after Oleoresin Capsicum which is an extract from chili peppers, is a viable part of your personal protection strategy. There are a wide range of pepper spray products on the market from small keychain containers to large aerosol cans designed to deter grizzly bears with ranges of up to 30 feet. The larger of the two, such as [this product](#) could be a suitable strategy for your home or vehicle defense whereas smaller version that fits in your pocket could be part of your EDC.

There are pepper spray guns that fire projectiles filled with pepper spray, or tear gas, that have an even longer range. The limitation being you have to hit the target with a ½ inch size pellet.

Kimber, a high quality firearm manufacturer, has a [product](#) that has been successful and on the market for several years. It is a liquid rather than aerosol based; however, you are limited to two shots before you have to reload.

Pros

- Can be used from a distance.
- Widely available and cost effective.
- Available in a wide range of packages to make them concealable.
- Can leave a UV die on the attacker to allow police to identify them.

Cons

- Can be ineffective in a windy environment.
- Some cans have a significant safety, or locking mechanism, that can slow you down in an emergency.

2 – Expandable Batons

Expandable batons have long been used by law enforcement. They are relatively easy to carry at approximately eight inches long and with a quick flick of the wrist will expand to

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approximately 25 inches long, which will allow you to strike from further away and allow for valuable space between you and your attacker.

Pros

- Can be used with more distance than typical hand held devices such as Kubotans.
- Can inflict serious damage.

Cons

- Harder to conceal and may be too big for EDC.
- Can be difficult to deploy in a defensive manner if you are in the grasp of an attacker.
- May be considered 'using deadly force', check local and state laws.

3 – Kubotans

A kubotan is a small, hand held tool designed for self-defense by being used as a striking instrument. They are readily available and can be easily used for a quick strike to stun the assailant and allow you to run away. If you choose to carry a kubotan practice with it regularly. See [this article](#) for more information on the history of kubotans.

Pros

- Relatively easy to conceal and have readily accessible.
- Inexpensive.
- Sturdy and reusable.

Cons

- Only effective at very close range.
- Requires practice, some skill and strength to use effectively.

4 – Tactical Flashlights

Tactical flashlights provide multiple uses for self-defense. Since a flashlight is a valuable part of an emergency kit, a flashlight that can also serve as a blinding or striking device is an excellent multi-purpose tool.

These lights come in a wide range of quality and when considering one for self-defense you should purchase a light from a quality manufacturer with good reviews for the uses you are wanting. The adage you get what you pay for is very applicable in this market.

Pros

- Used to provide light in dark areas.
- Can temporarily blind the attacker. Consider a light with at least 500 lumens.
- Can be used as a strike weapon. Look for a flashlight with an impact resistant housing and lens.
- Can be used as a DNA collector if equipped with a strike bezel, such as [this product](#).

Cons

- Requires batteries.

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5 – Stun Guns

Stun guns disable a person by applying a large voltage to them. They can work through typical clothing but heavy layers of clothing may make them less potent. They are a very competitive market and come in a wide variety of sizes and with additional features.

Pros

- Very effective and does not require exceptional physical strength.
- Hand held and discreet. Available models that look like a cell phone offer use in virtually any situation.
- Can be used as preventative, as well as defensive, by discharging in the air as a 'warning shot' to dissuade a predator.
- Can provide additional self-defense features such as a flashlight, panic alarm, and DNA collector.
- Many have safety features such as disable pin wrist straps that can prevent it from being used against you by the attacker, or can be used when at home to prevent unauthorized use by a child.
- Can be very small and concealable.

Cons

- Must be close enough to physically touch assailant.
- Can be less effective against layers of heavy clothing or rubber clothing such as rain gear.
- Not legal in all state.
- Requires batteries or regular charging.

6 – Tasers

Tasers use the same principle as a stun gun, an electrical charge. The primary difference of a taser vs. a stun gun is that it fires a projectile connected by wires that can be deployed by up to fifteen feet away. Although tasers are used by law enforcement to subdue a suspect, they are not as common for civilian use.

Pros

- Can be used from several feet away.
- Can penetrate more clothing than a stun gun.

Cons

- Only get one shot and need to reload.
- Look like a firearm and not as convenient as a stun gun to carry openly in public.
- Rubber clothing such as rain gear can limit effectiveness.
- Not legal in all states.
- Requires batteries or regular charging.

7 – Knives

Knives are an essential preparedness tool and have an extremely large array of shapes, sizes, and specifications, though a knife fight is not something most of us would care to be involved

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in. For that reason, knives should not be considered your primary personal protection item unless you are very well trained in their use.

Still, a good knife is a valuable part of your EDC and all emergency kits, so choosing one that may serve multiple purposes is wise. It is critical to think through the use of a knife and your willingness to use it against another person.

Knife types, use, and maintenance will be discussed in detail in Lesson 11.

Pros

- Can cause severe injury or death. Know the laws in your state.
- Can be used for endless survival scenarios from cutting a seat belt, breaking glass, hunting, cooking and many more.
- Readily available and cost effective.

Cons

- Must be used at close range.
- The chance of an unskilled, or under sized, person having the knife taken from them and used against them is severe.
- May not be legal to carry, or have size restrictions, in some states.

8 – Firearms

Types of guns

Guns come in four basic formats: rifles, shotguns, revolver pistols and semi-automatic pistols. There are indeed numerous varieties that blur these broad descriptions, but for the sake of clarity we consider these. There are of course vast differences between these firearms regarding their effectiveness for self-defense.

If you decide to purchase a firearm, please attend a certified training class on how to use, safety store, and maintain it. Always check local and state laws regarding use of firearms.

Calibers and gauges

Firearms come in different sizes, determined by the 'caliber', which is the diameter of the bullet it shoots. The exception being shotguns which refer to the size as the 'gauge'. Popular shotgun gauges from smallest to largest are .410, 20 gauge, 16 gauge, and 12 gauge. 12 gauge being the most popular size for personal protection.

Calibers are measured in millimeters, such as 9mm, or hundredths or thousandths of an inch, such as .223. Calibers of guns range from .17 caliber to .50 caliber. The larger the caliber the more the gun will recoil, which will make it harder to aim the next shot accurately. This is especially true for persons with less arm strength. To compound this, using larger, more powerful, cartridges such as personal defense rounds in smaller concealable handguns can make them very hard to control and accurately aim multiple shots. There are Handgun Recoil Tables available on the internet to learn more about these statistics.

Accessories

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Many firearms today come with an accessory rail, often called a 'picatinny' rail, that accepts various options such as 'optics', devices you look through to aim the gun, or 'lasers' which project a laser dot on the target. Flashlights are also available, or a combination of two such as this [product](#) from Streamlight.

Preppy Tip: When considering a firearm for personal protection strongly consider purchasing one that has a laser site, or has the ability to add a laser site. A laser site is a projected laser beam that shows where the bullet is aimed. This eliminates the need to raise the gun to eye level to take aim allowing you to keep the gun held at chest height and your eyes fully trained on the target. This is a very useful tool in an intense encounter.

Choosing a firearm can be a scary task for a first time buyer, visit a reputable store and ask a lot of questions. Look for the following:

- Understand your primary purpose of buying. Is this home defense on concealed carry? Large handguns are typically easier to shoot with less recoil because they weigh more, while smaller handguns are preferable for concealed carry for obvious reasons.
- Firearms that are comfortable in your hand.
- Choose the size you are comfortable with. Many firing ranges have guns you can shoot to test them out. Most experts do not recommend anything smaller than a 9mm for a defensive handgun.
- Pick a firearm that is easy to understand how to use and easy to train with. Keep it simple and practice often.
- Choose a firearm that is easy to clean and maintain.
- Consider what options are available and what accessories may be available for the gun.

Bullets [Cartridges]

One of the primary differences of firearms is the type of ammunition each uses. It is as important, perhaps more so, to understand your choice of ammunition as it is your choice of gun. Because of this the next section is dedicated to discussing the types of ammunition available. Though the term 'bullet' is commonly used to describe the entire 'cartridge' the bullet is actually only the part of the cartridge that fires and comes out of the gun. The rest of the cartridge, or 'brass', is expelled. This is described in more detail in the next section.

Rifles

Rifles are long guns typically used for hunting or long range shots. They are not typically considered self-defense guns. The AR-15, a very popular rifle today sometimes called an 'assault rifle', hold magazines that carry 30 cartridges, or more. They are a sporting rifle and although very potent, considering the amount of ammunition they can deploy, they are not practical for self-defense unless you are defending a home or property from a distance. Rifle cartridges are made to travel very fast and long distances, they can penetrate a typical household wall and keep going for a considerable distance, making them very dangerous to fire in a household or urban setting.

Rifles come in several types of 'actions', which is the way the cartridge is fed into the barrel. Rifle actions include:

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- Single Shot – a single cartridge is loaded manually for each shot.
- Lever Action – a lever, that looks like a handle, under the barrel is pulled down and a new cartridge is loaded. Cartridges are typically stored in a tube under the barrel or in a magazine on the bottom of the gun.
- Bolt Action – very popular configuration where the cartridge is loaded with a small lever on the top of the gun. This is unlocked, pulled back and forward to chamber a new cartridge. Cartridges are typically stored into a tube under the barrel or in a magazine on the bottom of the gun.
- Semi-Automatic – this is a very popular configuration that once loaded automatically feeds a new cartridge into firing position with every trigger pull. They are slightly more complicated and somewhat more difficult to clean. The cartridges are typically housed in magazines that are placed under the gun in the 'receiver'. The AR-15 is a very popular sporting rifle with magazines that typically hold 30 cartridges of the .223 caliber.

Pros

- Long range accuracy.
- Wide variety of styles.
- Very useful for hunting. A .22 caliber rifle is a good entry level firearm for small game hunting such as squirrels and rabbits.

Cons

- Not suitable for use in home or confined spaces. Bullets will easily penetrate walls, even exterior walls, and keep going with deadly capability.
- Difficult to accurately aim in a confined space.
- Not recommended for personal protection except when used in an open environment from a distance.
- Needs a large safe to be securely stored.

Shotguns

Perhaps nothing is more intimidating than the sound of a pump shotgun being cocked. Shotguns are long rifles that shoot cartridges, or 'shells', that each contain several 'pellets' or 'shot'. They are designed for hunting game such as birds or rabbits since the 'pattern' or area where the shot hits are spread out and capable of killing a small animal on the move without the need to hit it directly with a single bullet. Shotgun cartridges are also available as 'slugs', which is a single lead projectile. Slugs are very useful for hunting larger game such as deer. They are also very popular for personal protection, especially in the home, and can be used with larger pellets that have significant stopping power. Shotgun shot travels a much shorter distance, especially after penetrating a wall, which makes them a formidable self-defense weapon for home use.

Shotguns have a 'choke' at the end of the barrel. A choke changes the diameter of the barrel at the exit, or muzzle, and thus changes the 'pattern' the shot travels in. A full choke, for instance is a tighter pattern and used for longer shots vs. other chokes.

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There are two basic types of shotgun ammunition that vary because of the difference in size of the pellet. Birdshot, or simply 'shot', is a group of smaller pellets used for hunting small game. No.9 shot has over 500 pellets per ounce. Buckshot which includes pellets up to .36 in diameter including 000 buckshot, or 'triple aught buck', which has eight pellets per cartridge each roughly the size of a 9mm bullet, making it a very significant personal protection round.

Shot Sizes													
	F	T	BBB	BB	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7½	8
Pellet Diameter													
Inches	.22	.20	.19	.18	.16	.15	.14	.13	.12	.11	.10	.095	.09
mm	5.59	5.08	4.83	4.57	4.05	3.81	3.56	3.30	3.05	2.79	2.54	2.41	2.29

Buckshot Sizes						
	No. 000	No. 00	No. 0	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3
Pellet Diameter						
Inches	.36	.33	.32	.30	.27	.25
mm	9.14	8.38	8.13	7.62	6.86	6.35

Shotguns come in several action types, including the following:

- Single Shot – a single cartridge is loaded manually for each shot.
- Double Barrel – two barrels, each single shot either side by side or over and under each other.
- Pump – the front forearm of the gun is pulled back to load a new cartridge. Cartridges are typically stored in a tube under the barrel. Very popular since it has increased capacity, is simple to use, has fewer moving parts and is easier to maintain than the semi-automatic.
- Semi-Automatic – similar to a semi-automatic rifle in that once loaded it automatically feeds a new cartridge into firing position with every trigger pull. They are slightly more complicated and somewhat more difficult to clean and heavier than a pump action shotgun. Cartridges are typically stored in a tube under the barrel.

Pros

- Devastating short range stopping power.
- Can hold multiple shells.
- Can be successfully used by a less skilled marksman.
- Can come with shorter barrel and pistol style grip to make it more usable in confined spaces such as your home.
- Very useful for hunting.

Cons

- Can be challenging for a small person to shoot effectively.
- Needs a large safe to be securely stored.

Pistols – Revolver type

Revolvers are hand held guns that hold the cartridges in a cylinder that rotates to feed a cartridge into the firing position. They are typically limited to 6 cartridges, though smaller calibers may hold more. They are typically easier to understand for a beginning shooter since there are fewer moving parts and functions to operate than a semi-automatic handgun. They are also easier to tell if they are loaded or not by simply opening the cylinder.

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The most popular calibers for defense are .38 caliber, .357 caliber and .44 magnum and each has its advantages and disadvantages.

Revolvers come in single action and double action. Single action requires you to cock it by pulling back on the hammer, whereas with double action pulling the trigger will cock it and fire it. Note some guns can be fired single or double action, while others are strictly one or the other.

Pros

- The easiest handgun to learn to use, service and maintain.
- Available in a variety of calibers and sizes from concealable to large frame big caliber hunting guns.
- Relatively few moving parts increases its reliability.
- Can more easily tell if it is loaded or not than with a semi-automatic.

Cons

- Often less accessories are available for revolvers.
- Only carries six cartridges before you need to reload.
- Often has a longer 'trigger pull', which is the distance required to pull the trigger to make it fire, making it harder to maintain accuracy.

Pistols - Semi-Automatic type

Semi-automatic pistols are hand held guns that hold the cartridges in a 'magazine', or 'mags', that are placed into the guns hand grip and feed the cartridges to the barrel. When firing, the 'slide', which is the top part of the frame that houses the barrel, slides backward with great force. This cocks the gun and another cartridge is ready to fire with a single trigger pull, thus, semi-automatic. The slide can cause damage to your hand if not held properly.

Semi-auto pistols come in single/double action which means after you bring a cartridge from the magazine to the 'chamber', which is the beginning of the barrel inside of the slide, you then have to pull the hammer back to cock the gun and fire the first cartridge. After that the gun is cocked and a single trigger pull will fire another cartridge. Double action guns are cocked by chambering a round into the barrel by sliding back the slide and releasing it, and every successive trigger pull will fire a cartridge.

This 'chambering' of a cartridge into firing position is required for all semi-automatic pistols and in most pistols, except those that conform to special state regulations that have an indicator if a cartridge is in the chamber or not, you cannot tell if the gun has a cartridge in the chamber or not without pulling back the slide and looking. Thus, when you remove the magazine there could still be one cartridge in the chamber and the gun be loaded and ready to fire. This is a common mistake that has caused many injuries.

The most popular defense calibers are 9mm, 10mm, .40 caliber and .45 caliber. Each has its advantages and disadvantages.

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The advantage of a semi-automatic over a revolver is that a single mag can hold many more cartridges, some extended mags hold 20 or more. The second advantage is it is much quicker to reload, provided you have a second loaded magazine, by simply removing the empty mag and inserting a loaded one.

The disadvantage is they are more complicated than a revolver with more moving parts which can make them a bit more complicated to use and maintain. Semi-autos can be very simple, such as the Glock brand that has very few operating features, to other makes that have safety switches, decocking levers, and hammers to cock the gun.

Pros

- Increased capacity.
- Ease of reloading.
- Wide variety of sizes available in self-defense calibers for concealed carry or home defense.
- Many have rails to mount optional accessories which are typically on the underside of the barrel.

Cons

- More operating parts can make it more challenging to cock, aim and fire in a stressful situation.
- More moving parts than a revolver make them more difficult to clean and maintain.
- More moving parts makes it more likely to misfire, or jam, during operation.
- A moving slide can cause injury to an untrained shooter.

Bullets [Cartridges]

Firearms require cartridges. Cartridges, sometimes called 'rounds', come in a very wide range of configurations and have four basic parts as follows:

- The bullet, or projectile that leaves the gun and strikes the target. Note, the term 'bullet' is also widely used to describe the entire configuration of bullet, brass, powder and primer.
- The case, or container which is typically made of brass and often called 'brass' that holds the gunpowder, primer and bullet.
- Gunpowder, which is the explosive powder that explodes inside the case and propels the bullet.
- The primer, which is a small blasting cap at the base of the case that is struck by the firing pin of the gun and makes small explosive spark inside the case that ignites the gunpowder.

The key principle of the ability to stop a person, or 'stopping power', is the amount of energy the bullet will have when it contacts the person. Energy is calculated as the bullet's weight multiplied by the velocity, or speed, it travels and is measured in foot pounds of force, or 'ft. lbf' designation. This energy is typically referred to as 'muzzle energy' on the cartridges packaging which refers to the energy delivered by the bullet at the point it leaves the barrel, or 'muzzle' at the end of the barrel. You may also see muzzle energy specification at a specific distance away from the barrel.

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The speed a bullet travels is a function of how much gun powder, the product that ignites and propels the bullet, vs. how heavy the bullet is. This is typically measured in feet per second, or FPS, and decreases as the bullet gets further away from the gun. You will see 'muzzle velocity' specifications which tell you the speed when leaving the barrel which are useful when comparing different cartridges.

The weight of the bullet is typically measured in 'grains', which is a unit of measurement specific to firearms. It is not necessary to understand how many grains compares to an ounce or other measurements, but it is necessary to be able to compare how many grains one bullet weighs vs. another. A heavier bullet will require more gunpowder to travel the same speed of a lighter bullet, and a heavier bullet traveling at the same speed of a lighter bullet will deliver more energy than the lighter bullet.

You will also see the designation 'Plus P' or '+P', which indicates that a cartridge is configured with more powder to make it travel faster and deliver more energy. You will also see "+P+" which is even a 'hotter' load, meaning it is faster and delivers more energy. Note that some guns are not rated to shoot +P or +P+ cartridges so understand your firearms capabilities before you shop for ammunition. Also, the hotter the load you are shooting the more kick the gun will deliver and the more difficult it will be to acquire your site on the subsequent shots.

Almost all bullets are made of lead though there are some solid metal bullets that are typically used for deep penetration in big game hunting, and armor piercing bullets exclusive to the military. Many lead bullets have a 'jacketing', or cover of the lead core. This jacket allows for less friction between the bullet and the 'bore', which is the inside of the barrel where the bullet travels. Less friction creates greater muzzle velocity and reduces the lead deposits within the bore which makes it easier to clean.

Bullets come in several configurations as described here:

- Lead bullets with configurations such as Round Nose, Wad Cutter and Semi Wad Cutter. These are usually reserved for target practice because they are more cost effective than jacketed and defense rounds.
- Semi-Jacketed, which has a jacket along the base of the bullet, where it contacts the bore, but exposed lead tip. This is a very common bullet also used for training as well as defense. The exposure of the lead allows the bullet to expand, sometimes called 'mushroom', on contact while providing better performance, or 'ballistics', than all lead bullets. The jacket also allows for a more predictable and uniform mushrooming effect.
- Full Metal Jacket, which is a lead bullet completely jacketed in a casing. These bullets will penetrate further into a substance, often completely through the substance.
- Semi-Jacketed Hollow Point – A semi-jacketed bullet with a small indentation at the tip, a 'hollow point', that allows for increased expansion upon contact. Very common for self-defense.
- Jacketed Hollow Point – A hollow point completely jacketed. These bullets are designed for self-defense. The jacket is typically designed with slight serrations to control the mushroom while the full jacket allows for deep penetration.
- Fragmented – These bullets are a casing containing small pellets, or 'shot', inside it. Similar to a shotgun shell except the travel as a single projectile and the shot is dispersed upon contact. They provide perhaps the most stopping power of any round and are designed solely for stopping a human by cause a deep and wide wound channel made by

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dozens of small pellets delivered with high energy. They are also very good choice for home defense since they will not over penetrate walls. Once they hit a wall, they will blow a hole in it, but they will not continue through other walls. There are few manufacturers of these products, Glaser, now owned by Corbon, is the originator and can be found [here](#).

- There are other specialty types of ammunition available for hunting, personal protection and other uses. Use the above guidelines as a base to understand and discuss with your retailer the characteristics of the ammo you are purchasing.

9 – Other Tactical Gadgets

Brass knuckles, steel reinforced gloves, tactical walking sticks, impact rings and jewelry and a host of other tactical weapons are available today. Be wary of this market as many are cheaply made products with more 'bling' than functionality. Still, there is some legitimate products in this category.

Tactical pens, such as [this](#) from Smith and Wesson, have become popular and a wide range are available that have extended features other than being used as a striking tool, like a Kubotan, such as a flashlight and other uses.

Another item relatively new to personal safety is this product called [personal safety siren](#) which when activated provides a very loud [130db] alarm to detract and attacker and allow you the opportunity to run.

Pros

- Readily available.
- Can be useful for a specific purpose.

Cons

- Subject to very cheap imitation products.
- Not all items are legal in all states.

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