

Choosing a Defensive Handgun

Hello, my name is Bill Godfrey. I am the Firearms Instructor here at Eagle. I do not claim to be an expert on fighting, nor am I a writer. However I will address areas I am experienced in or have been exposed to personally. They will be real world answers to real world problems, and they generally work.

Possibly, the only topic to generate more arguments than politics is the never-ending discussion of what qualifies as the “best” defensive gun. Choosing the tool you hope will save your life is a very important thing, and selecting a handgun is personal – too personal to allow me or anyone else to do it for you. The truth of the matter is no single shooting system meets the needs of every individual or household. Every firearm is an exercise in compromise. Each platform has limitations to be considered carefully when making a choice.

Things to consider

Define your needs – What is your budget? The firearm you own for personal protection MUST be 100% reliable and easy to operate. With handguns, you often get exactly what you pay for in terms of longevity and reliability. Buy a quality handgun and always remember you may be betting your life on this thing. Once you have narrowed down the field, it is time to “kick some tires”. Never buy a defensive handgun unless you have fired at least a box of ammo through one like it.

Having said all that, I can offer some advice based on my experiences teaching others to shoot:

- A semi automatic handgun is not just a pistol for a professional. In fact many new shooters find the lighter trigger of a semi automatic easier to learn.
- Compact revolvers are very often the worst first gun for either a man or woman. Their short sight radius makes them difficult to shoot accurately, the triggers are generally hard to pull, and the recoil is often objectionable.
- Most shooters will find they can comfortably shoot a 9 mm handgun in a full or medium size.
- The smaller a handgun gets, the easier it is to carry and the harder it is to shoot. If you are a new shooter, consider a full size pistol as a starter side arm.
- The only way you can learn how to shoot a defensive handgun better is by shooting – a lot.
- Choose a handgun with sites or have the handgun fitted with sites that are easy for you to see. For a defensive handgun consider a laser of some sort. It will also be a tremendous help while you are learning handgun fundamentals as well as, very possibly, during a life-and-death counter.

Food For Thought

Finally and most importantly, you should be able to shoot your handgun accurately at distances you will need – realistically. There are many “experts” out there that will tell you – you must be able to shoot a six inch group @ 25 yards – yes - to win a national competition. Personal defense shooting is more like 30 feet ... the distance across a room or the length of a car or down a hallway.

So you must ask yourself - how much time, effort, and money are you willing to put into training. And how much will you be able to practice? If your answer is, “Not much.”, then a revolver or pistol is probably not the best choice ... perhaps a big dog or stick...

With any firearm, especially one for personal protection; you must practice ... practice, and then practice more. Remember you are carrying a handgun you really do not want to use. If you have to use this handgun, you'll only be betting your life on it.