

Being able to hit what you aim at with a Handgun

By: Tom Perroni

As I read the plethora of Handgun, Shooting, Combat, SWAT, magazines I am perplexed. Everyone has their own style of training always use "One Hand" in a close or CQB situation. Always use "Two Hands" at a distance or use the Weaver stance, NO only use the "Isosceles" stance always do this never do that etc.

I also read things like: Don't train on square range. Force on Force is the only real way to learn combat shooting skills. Classroom Training "Talking" is for those who can't really shoot ...just get out on the range and shoot. Combat Focus is the new wave of handgun training.

What I have discovered is there is no shortage of experts on the subject of shooting. Just go to any Internet "Firearms" chat forum and see for yourself.

So not wanting to be left out of the fun, I thought I would share my thoughts on how to hit what you aim at with a handgun for target practice or combat shooting situation.

So if you want to be able to hit what you aim at with a handgun in any situation read the following:

Stance:

Each shooter, under the guidance of the Firearms Instructor, and consistent with safety must find the shooting stance which is best suited to them and provides the greatest degree of stability and accuracy for shooting. The shooter must be able to assume their stance instinctively, as a reflex action with minimal effort or conscious manipulation of their body. Having said that it is my opinion that the placement of your feet has absolutely nothing to do with where the bullet impacts the target. You shoot from the mid chest up so to speak. However you need to be able to Move, Shoot and Communicate. Getting off the X is very important in a gun fight. A high degree of control is necessary to deliver a rapid, accurate shot. Every individual is unique and possesses characteristics that are theirs alone. These characteristics include height, weight, muscular and skeletal development, degree of flexibility and more. Therefore, there can be no universal shooting stance that can be utilized by all people

Grip:

A proper grip aids in controlling recoil and muzzle flip. It also allows the shooter to obtain a second sight picture more rapidly. Hands must have a 360 degree grip around the weapon. This allows the shooter to engage targets more rapidly

Grip is acquired in the holster, prior to draw and presentation. The web of the shooting hand must beat the top of the tang on the back-strap and no higher. If you are too high the slide will "bite" your hand. If you are too low with your grip you allow the gun to move more with recoil making sight recovery and follow-on shots more difficult and time-consuming. A key point is to have both thumbs pointing at your target. The heel of your non-shooting hand should cover the area on the grip that is exposed. You should squeeze the handgun with no more force than you would use to shake someone's hand.

The support hand applies pressure in exactly the same fashion. The idea behind the two hand grip is to completely encircle the grip of the gun in order to be in control of recoil. The support hand thumb will be on the same side of the gun as the weapon hand thumb. "Fingers over Fingers and Thumb over Thumb". A good test of correct grip is; with your trigger finger off the trigger and placed along the slide it should be even or directly across the slide from your weak hand thumb also along the slide.

Front Sight Focus:

In order to get accurate hits on target you must have "Front Sight Focus". First you must understand that your eye can only focus on one thing at a time....All too often we walk around all day looking at the "Big Picture" In order to be able to hit what we aim at with a handgun we must focus on the front sight 100% of the time Not the target. Not the rear sight the FRONT sight. I often hear student say the front sight looks a little fuzzy....I tell them that is o.k. give all of your attention to the front sight. But where on the Front Sight should you focus? The **Top Edge** is the answer. The object is to press the trigger to the rear while not moving the front sight off the target once the handgun fires. Each shot should be a surprise. Anticipation will cause trigger pull or trigger jerk. I will often tell my students to repeat "Front Sight, Front Sight, Front Sight, Front Sight" until the shot breaks so that all of their attention is focused on the.....Front Sight! I also tell my students that for every pull of the trigger they must have 2 sight pictures the one they had just before the shot broke and the one right after. They must have 2 sight pictures so if they fire 2 shots they need 3 sight pictures etc.

Trigger Control / Press:

Trigger Control in either double action or single action mode, it is defined as steady pressure exerted on the trigger straight to the rear to release the hammer and fire the weapon and immediately allowing the trigger to return so the weapon can be fired again. Descriptive term here is a press and not a squeeze. Note the trigger finger continually maintains contact with the trigger.

When pressing the trigger, the shooter should use the tip of the index finger. This should be accomplished by utilizing a smooth movement isolating the trigger finger only. All other fingers must remain still during the trigger press. Another important part of trigger control is trigger reset. Once the trigger has been fired, slowly release pressure on the trigger until an audible click is heard and felt. At this point, the shooter need not release any more pressure on the trigger to fire again. This maintains a proper sight alignment and sight picture more easily.

Trigger Manipulation

- Speed at which the trigger is pulled – a single gear, one smooth continuous motion at a single speed... not increasing as you apply pressure.
- The Motion in which the trigger is pulled – Is a smooth continuous motion, not a jerk, not a little at the time.
- Always remember that you press or pull a trigger, you never jerk the trigger.

The finger is placed so that the trigger is halfway between the tip of the finger and the first joint. “The trigger is pressed straight to the rear in a smooth continuous manner without disturbing sight alignment.” You should not be able to predict the instant the gun will fire. Each shot should come as a surprise. Note the trigger finger continually maintains contact with the trigger.

Once the sights are aligned, the shooter must apply steady pressure to the trigger until a surprise break (hammer fall) occurs. The pressure is directed rearward with no interruptions, stalls or hesitations present. The proper trigger control allows the weapon to fire without disturbing the sights.

To begin proper trigger control, the shooter must first properly place the index finger on the trigger. The index finger is placed in the middle of the trigger at the most rearward curved portion. The trigger should cross the finger approximately halfway between the tip of the finger and the first joint, over the swirl of the fingerprint.

Trigger Press. After attaining proper placement of the finger on the trigger, proper trigger pressure can be applied to the trigger. There are three parts of trigger pressure each time the weapon is fired. They are **Slack, Press, and Follow through.**

All three parts are important to proper trigger control.

1.Slack. The shooter must first take up the slack at the beginning of the trigger movement by applying slight pressure to the trigger. The trigger will move slightly to the rear until the internal parts of the trigger mechanism come into full contact with each other, and the “softness” in the tip of the finger is eliminated.

2.Press The trigger is then in the press portion of its movement, which is when the internal parts of the weapon are being disengaged from each other to allow the hammer to fall. The pressure should be a smooth, constant, and even pressure, applied straight to the rear so that the sights are not misaligned at the instant the hammer falls. Once the hammer begins to fall, the follow through portion of trigger control begins.

3.Follow Through. Follow through is the continued steady pressure applied to the trigger until the trigger reaches its most rearward point of travel. If the shooter does not continue to apply the constant, even pressure during follow through, it is possible that the impact of the round could move on the target, thus spoiling an otherwise good shot.

- On Glock handguns we use a technique called ‘Catching the Link’ Once you have pressed the trigger to the rear hold the trigger until the slide cycles then let the trigger out until you hear a “CLICK” then you may follow through with another shot. What you have done is cut your trigger pull in half which makes you more accurate and increases the speed of follow up shots 80%.
- Always finish the shot, never quit the shot.
- Keep the gun at eye level doing the exact same thing as the shot breaks that you were doing prior to the shot; aligning the sights, maintaining target acquisition.
- Maintain the gun in front of the eyes long enough to ask two questions:
 - a. Did I hit the target?
 - b. Did it work?

Dry Fire – This when the trigger is pulled **without** live ammunition in the firearm. This method of training can be done just about anywhere and costs absolutely nothing. In this Instructor's opinion it is vital to anyone who uses or carries a handgun. Essentially you are doing everything you would do at the range except your handgun is empty. (NO AMMO) The most important single fundamental skill in shooting - Trigger Control – is one which can best be improved off the range in dry practice. As I have stated in past articles all the fundamentals of Handgun shooting can be practiced with Dry Fire grip, sight alignment trigger control, malfunction drills, reload drills and all at no cost.

Practicing the above drills for 10-15 minutes each day will greatly benefit the shooter. I have seen marked improvement in students who practiced these drills for just 2 days. However please remember Handgun Skills are like buying a car: if you do not make your payments the car will be repossessed. If you do not practice the new handgun skills you paid for they will also be repossessed.

In conclusion remember smooth is fast, and speed is economy in motion; Accuracy always takes precedence over speed. Speed is fine but accuracy is final.

Well there you have it. I think this would be a solid foundation for any shooter. You can learn a great deal from a Basic Class it's the foundation of your shooting skills. So before you take that "ADVANCED HANDGUN COURSE" make sure you have a solid understanding of the Fundamentals of Handgun Shooting. Remember you have to crawl before you walk and walk before you run.

Stay Safe & Shoot Straight!

And remember ; "Conflict is inevitable; Combat is an option".

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I would also like to thank Chris Pick a new Instructor at Perroni's Tactical Training Academy for his input on this article.
