

# Fighting Carbine Manipulation “Status Check”

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Although the M4/Carbine is designed to be a rugged and reliable weapon system, there is always the possibility of events beyond the control of the operator causing either a stoppage or a malfunction. Once this occurs, the operator must attempt to clear the carbine and get back in the fight or transition to the pistol.

The concept of “when to” reload the M4/ carbine must be combined with the “how to.” Phrases such as “reload whenever you can” or “every chance you get” or “whenever there is a lull in the action” must be expanded upon and examples and exceptions critically discussed whenever teaching techniques.

This contrasts with those who insist that a person in the midst of the confrontation will have too much to think about to know when they are getting low on ammunition and consequently should focus on learning to reload only when on the empty magazine. Yet, an empty magazine can be mistaken (especially in the dark) for a type II malfunction and therefore extra time will be used up performing unnecessary clearance procedures instead of simply reloading.

Instructors must also factor into their thinking that the best thought out technique which works flawlessly for *them* on the range will deteriorate for *their students* when exposed to the mental, physical, and environmental chaos of the deadly force confrontation. As instructors, we need to constantly explore and evaluate available techniques. We must find those with the fewest drawbacks, expose the student to those which are proven in battle, and allow the student to develop those options which accomplish the desired results.

I teach while training or fighting with a carbine it is important to remember that if your carbine goes down inside of 25 yards that the operator immediately transition to their pistol and fight to cover. If beyond 25 yards then move to available cover but MOVE off the X. The thought being that beyond 25 yards you are just making noise with the pistol and in most cases will not place accurate hits on target. However you want to move to cover and get the carbine back in action as soon as possible. The carbine is your primary weapon when you have both a pistol and carbine or rifle.

When your carbine or rifle goes down with a malfunction the first thing you want to do is move off the X. And perform a transition to the pistol if inside 25 yards and then when behind cover or in a lull in the action before we perform some sort of immediate action drill I teach my students to do a “Status Check” what is a Status Check you might ask? While in my good shooting stance and with the carbine pointed at the threat, I simply roll the carbine to the left so that the ejection port is facing up and take    of a second to look into the ejection port to actually see what is going on with the carbine before I perform an Immediate action drill of some kind.

The eye is the fastest muscle in the body so I think we should use it. The    of a second it takes me to look at the ejection port saves me at least 2-3 Tap, Rack, Bang evolutions which is a “Primary” Malfunction Clearance Procedure. If for instance I have a double feed T,R,B, will not fix the problem. This allows me to go right to Lock, Rip, Work, Replace which is a “Secondary” Malfunction Clearance Procedure. So lets talk about malfunctions.

*All* manipulations of *any* firearm require that the trigger finger is indexed above the trigger guard alongside the receiver and the muzzle is kept pointed in a safe direction throughout the process. Whenever possible, students should learn to manipulate the charging handle, magazine catch, and forward assist and safeties using the strong hand only keeping in mind that at some point the support hand may be incapacitated or occupied with other tasks such as holding a flashlight

Malfunctions are any interruption in the cycle of operation which can be remedied by performing malfunction clearance procedures (sometimes referred to as an “immediate action drill”.) The interruption can be caused by mechanical failure of the weapon, the ammunition, or be induced by actions of the shooter.

Technically, a malfunction is distinguished from a jam in that the jam requires tools or disassembly to be remedied. For purposes of this training article, malfunctions will be divided into *two general types*. **Type I** can be cleared by performing a “Primary” Malfunction Clearance Procedure. **Type II** can be cleared by performing a “Secondary” Malfunction Clearance Procedure. Remember that it is not important at the time for the operator to know *why* the rifle malfunctioned but rather *how* to return the weapon to action.

## Type I Malfunction – Failure to Fire

### Some Common Causes:

- An empty chamber
- A defective round of ammunition in the chamber
- Magazine not fully seated
- Defective magazine
- Broken firing pin (Jam)

### Usual Symptoms:

An audible click instead of the expected detonation when the trigger is pulled.  
No recoil when the trigger is pulled.

### **Primary Clearance Procedure** – Immediate Action

Type I malfunctions described above are the most common and can usually be cleared by performing the three steps of the primary clearance procedure. As with reloading the carbine, when the malfunction occurs, the shooter should tuck the stock of the carbine under the arm pit keep the weapon just below line of sight to allow unobstructed view of the threat area. When performed reflexively and correctly, these types of malfunctions can be cleared in a matter of seconds before the opponent realizes that it has occurred.

**“TAP”** While pointing the muzzle of the weapon in a safe direction (pointing up) while tucking the stock under the arm pit and keeping the trigger finger indexed outside the trigger guard, firmly tap the bottom of the magazine in the carbine with the palm of the support hand.

**“RACK”** Tilt the weapon over onto its *right* side at an approximate 45° angle. Canting the weapon allows gravity to assist in removing the obstruction as most carbine ejection ports are on the right side of the receiver. At the same time grasp the charging handle and rack the action vigorously one (1) time with the support hand to eject any obstructing casing and chamber a new round.

**“BANG”** Reestablish the correct two handed grip on the carbine. Make the decision to continue firing or not, based upon the dynamics of the situation. Keeping the eyes on the threat area throughout the manipulation will allow constant real-time appraisal.

Type II Malfunction – Double feed, Failure to Extract, Buried Stovepipe,

Some Common Causes:

- Defective or worn extractor
- Faulty magazine lips not holding the rounds in correct alignment during the firing cycle.
- Dirty chamber
- Faulty ammunition
- Shooter incorrectly attempting to perform Primary malfunction clearance procedure

Usual Symptoms

The weapon will not fire when the trigger is pulled and some weapons have a “mushy” trigger. Cartridge *may* be visible through open ejection port nosing into rear of chambered cartridge. Does not respond to Primary Malfunction Clearance procedure

### **Secondary Clearance Procedure**

If the carbine suddenly stops working during a deadly force confrontation, it is unlikely that one will know the cause for certain. Poor or non-existent lighting, the effects of stress, movement, and the need to maintain visual contact with the threat throughout the confrontation are just a few of the factors that may make instant recognition and analysis difficult if not impossible. With proper training, one in that position should reflexively respond by performing a “Status Check” procedure. If a Type II malfunction was the cause, the weapon will still be inoperable. At that time, it may be argued that the best course of action would be to draw your pistol and fight to cover. The ability to do so in less time than it takes to perform a Secondary Clearance procedure will depend upon the existence of such a weapon, the location on the person where it is carried, and how much the person has practiced with it under those conditions. As well as the distance of the threat to you and your distance from cover.

Steps:

#### **1. “LOCK”**

Keeping the trigger finger outside the trigger guard and the muzzle pointed in a safe direction Lock the bolt to the rear pulling back on the charging handle and pressing down on the bolt release on the left of the receiver.

#### **2. “RIP”**

Depress the magazine catch with the strong hand and using support hand fingers, pull the magazine from the magazine well. Drop it to the ground. The loose cartridge should usually fall free if not reach up into the ejection port area from the magazine well with 2 fingers and push out the spent casing and the stuck casing.

### 3. **“WORK”**

Grasp the charging handle and *vigorously* rack it and backward and forward about three times to remove any cartridge that may be lodged in the chamber. Note: If the extractor is broken this will not clear the malfunction.

### 4. **“TAP”**

Obtain a fresh magazine from the pouch using the correct grip and placing the flat of the back of the magazine to the flat of the back of the magazine well firmly seat it into the weapon. Give it a quick tug to make sure it is seated properly.

### 5. **“RACK”**

Grasp the charging handle and *vigorously* rack it and backward with the support hand and rack the action once to chamber the round

6. **“BANG”** Reestablish the correct two handed grip on the carbine. Make the decision to continue firing or not, based upon the dynamics of the situation. Keeping the eyes on the threat area throughout the manipulation will allow constant real-time appraisal.

Once any of the above Clearance Procedures are employed the carbine must be deployed back into the fight as quickly as possible and we must “Shoot to Stop the Threat” once this is done we lower the carbine to just below eye level to Assess the situation and ask two (2) questions did I hit the subject ? And do I need to continue to shoot? (Did they go down). Redeploy the carbine and stop the threat. Once this is done then I must scan for threats, scan left then right them 360 degrees. Once I feel safe I perform a tactical reload with retention and wait for the Calvary to arrive.

### **Communication is Key! (When working in a team environment)**

Release the master grip of the long gun and transition the weapon down and away so that the back of your support hand makes contact with the opposite thigh (sling tension will help hold the weapon in place)

Simultaneously take your master hand and draw the pistol so that you can continue to fight (move to cover).

Yell **“COVER”** so that a teammate knows you have a primary weapon problem. (Move to cover if you can)

When teammate acknowledges your need with **“CHECK”** and physical contact if possible, decock and reholster, and then fix the malfunction (perform the reloading drill).

Call **“UP”** when your weapon us up again, partner confirms with **“CHECK / UP.”**  
Re-engage the problem.

**(Note:** If both weapons are down or an operator is unable to fight with a firearm we will also practice verbalizing **“BLACK”** if this would ever occur.

Always remember what I teach is A way to do things and not THE way!

Stay Safe & Shoot Straight !

Stay in condition yellow and stay in the fight!

The information for this article came from several Firearms Instructor courses and manuals.