

Click on a letter to go to that part of the Glossary.

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [W](#)

+P or +P+

A cartridge loaded to higher-than-standard pressures for its caliber, to produce higher velocities.

1911

The Colt-Browning United States Government Model of 1911 .45 automatic pistol. loosely, any pistol that uses the same design.

ACP

Abbreviation for Automatic Colt Pistol and used with caliber designations such as 25 ACP, 32 ACP, 380 ACP, and 45 ACP.

AD

Accidental Discharge. A term incorrectly used to identify a negligent discharge. Following the three basic safety rules of handling a firearm is no accident. Not following them can lead to a negligent discharge. Firearms safety is no accident.

ACTION

The working mechanism of a firearm. Various types exist, including single-shots, multi-barrels, revolvers, slide- or pump-actions, lever-actions, bolt-actions, semi-automatics and automatics.

AG

Attorney General

AIR GUN

Not a firearm but a gun that uses compressed air or CO2 to propel a projectile. Examples: BB gun, pellet gun, CO2 gun.

AMBIDEXTROUS SAFETY

A manual, external safety which can be easily reached with either hand. It often features dual levers, with one lever on each side of the firearm.

AMMUNITION (Ammo is a shortened version of Ammunition)

This generally refers to the assembled components of complete cartridges or rounds i.e., a case or shell holding a primer, a charge of propellant (gunpowder) and a projectile (bullets in the case of handguns and rifles, multiple pellets or single slugs in shotguns). Sometimes called "fixed ammunition" to differentiate from components inserted separately in muzzleloaders.

ANTIQUE

By federal definition, a firearm manufactured prior to 1899 or a firearm for which ammunition is not generally available or a firearm incapable of firing fixed ammunition.

ARMOR-PIERCING AMMUNITION

By federal definition, "a projectile or projectile core which may be used in a handgun and which is constructed entirely (excluding the presence of traces of other substances) from one or a combination of tungsten alloys, steel, iron, brass, bronze, beryllium copper, or depleted uranium.

Such term does not include shotgun shot required by... game regulations for hunting purposes, a frangible projectile designed for target shooting, a projectile which the Secretary finds is primarily intended to be used for sporting purposes, or any other projectile or projectile core which the Secretary finds is intended to be used for industrial purposes, including a charge used in an oil and gas well perforating device."

ASSAULT RIFLE

By U.S. Army definition, a selective-fire rifle chambered for a cartridge of intermediate power. If applied to any semi-automatic firearm regardless of its cosmetic similarity to a true assault rifle, the term is incorrect.

ASSAULT WEAPON

Any weapon used in an assault (see WEAPON).

AUTOLOADER

A semi-automatic pistol, shotgun, or rifle.

AUTOMATIC

A firearm designed to feed cartridges, fire them, eject their empty cases and repeat this cycle as long as the trigger is depressed and cartridges remain in the feed system. Examples: machine guns, submachine guns, selective-fire rifles, including true assault rifles.

AUTOMATIC PISTOL

A term used often to describe what is actually a semi-automatic pistol. It is, technically, a misnomer but a near-century of use has legitimized it, and its use confuses only the novice.

BACKSTRAP

The part of a pistol that is exposed at the rear of the grip.

BALL

Originally a spherical projectile, now generally a fully jacketed bullet of cylindrical profile with round or pointed nose. Most commonly used in military terminology.

BALLISTICS

The study of what happens to moving projectiles. Internal/Interior Ballistics studies what happens inside the firearm from the moment of ignition until it leaves the barrel.

Exterior/External Ballistics studies the motion of the projectile after it leaves the barrel. Terminal Ballistics studies the projectile's impact on the target.

BARREL

Rifled or smooth tube that the bullet when fired travels down before exiting the firearm.

BATFE (BATF) (ATF)

The BATFE is the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. Until recently, they were part of the Department of the Treasury, since their original mandate was handling tax stamps for firearms. Due to the War on Terror, they've been moved within the Department of Homeland Security. Their mission has over time become less focused on tax collection and more focused on investigation and enforcement of laws.

BATTERY

Most firearms do not have literal batteries. But a firearm is said to be *in battery* when the breech is fully closed and locked, ready to fire. When the breech is open or unlocked, the gun is *out of battery* and no attempt should be made to fire it. A semi-automatic is *out of battery* when the slide fails to come all the way forward again after the gun has fired, making it dangerous or impossible to fire the next round. This condition can be created by a misfeed, a dirty gun, weak springs, the shooter's thumbs brushing against the slide, riding the slide, or any of several other causes.

BLANK CARTRIDGE

A round loaded with black powder or a special smokeless powder but lacking a projectile. Used mainly in starting races, theatrical productions, troop exercises and in training dogs.

BLOWBACK ACTION

A system where the pressure and energy from the cartridge discharge pushing rearward against the empty cartridge case is used to operate the unloading and loading cycle of a semi-automatic or automatic firearm.

BODY ARMOR

Material that can stop certain bullets. It is manufactured in different resistant levels, light weight and usually made of Kevlar.

BOLT-ACTION

A gun mechanism activated by manual operation of the breechblock that resembles a common door bolt.

BORE

The interior of a firearm's barrel excluding the chamber.

BRASS

A synonym for expended metallic cartridge cases.

BREECH

The rear of the barrel into which the cartridge or propellant is inserted. Also called chamber.

BUG

Acronym for "Back Up Gun." Usually a small firearm that can be hidden very easily on the body. A 5 shot 2 inch barrel revolver in 38 spl is the firearm most people think of when they think of a BUG.

BULLET

The projectile expelled from a gun. It is not synonymous with cartridge. Bullets can be of many materials, shapes, weights and constructions such as solid lead, lead with a jacket of harder metal, round-nosed, flat-nosed, hollow-pointed, etc.

BULLET PROOF VEST

Slang for body armor. No vest is bullet proof. They are manufactured in different grades to stop certain bullets. They are rated in Levels.

CALIBER

The nominal diameter of a projectile of a rifled firearm or the diameter between lands in a rifled barrel. In this country, usually expressed in hundreds of an inch; in Great Britain in thousandths; in Europe and elsewhere in millimeters.

CARBINE

A rifle with a relatively short barrel. Any rifle or carbine with a barrel less than 16" long must be registered with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Shotguns with barrels less than 18" long fall into the same category.

CARTRIDGE

A single, complete round of ammunition.

CASE, CASING

The envelope (container) of a cartridge. For rifles and handguns it is usually of brass or other metal; for shotguns it is usually of paper or plastic with a metal head and is more often called a "shell."

CCW

1. "Carry Concealed Weapon" To carry a handgun concealed.
2. "Concealed Carry Weapon" A permit/license to carry a concealed firearm.

CFP

Carry Firearms Permit. A permit/license to carry a concealed firearm.

CHL

Concealed Handgun License. A license to carry a concealed firearm.

CN (Tear Gas)

CN (chloracetophenone) is widely distributed irritant. It is applied for the needs of law enforcement, military agencies and civilian self-defenders. CN causes flow of tears when sprayed, but the irritant is relatively mild. It usually doesn't exert a strong influence on people; effect can usually last for a few minutes. CN doesn't affect on dogs, drunken and drug affected people.

CS

CS (ortho-chlorobenzalmalononitrile) - double-action chemical agent, which irritates both eyes and respiratory tract. It's actually stronger than CN. CS is a white crystalline substance that has been used for many years by the police forces and the military. It's a widespread irritant on German and Russian civilian markets, but used in the USA strictly for law enforcement. CS is a teratogen, that's why the substance is not recommended for the common use. As a CN, CS doesn't affect on dogs, drunken and drug affected people.

CPL

Concealed Pistol License. A license to carry a concealed firearm.

CWL

Concealed Weapons License. A license to carry a concealed firearm.

CWP

Concealed Weapons Permit. Permit to carry a concealed firearm.

CENTER-FIRE

A cartridge with its primer located in the center of the base of the case.

CHAMBER

The rear part of the barrel that is formed to accept the cartridge to be fired. A revolver employs a multi-chambered rotating cylinder separated from the stationary barrel.

CHAPMAN STANCE

Named for Ray Chapman, this is a modified form of the Weaver stance. It is sometimes called a modified Weaver. The strong side elbow is held straight and locked out, while the weak hand pulls back against the strong hand thus producing the push-pull tension typical of the Weaver stance.

CHECKERING

A diamond-like patten on fore-ends and grips of firearms. (The diamonds are made by cutting crossing lines into the material with special tools.)

CHOKE

A constriction at or near the muzzle of a shotgun barrel that affects shot dispersion.

CLEARANCE DRILL

The manipulation of the firearm in hopes of alleviating malfunctions, usually necessitated by the weapon's failing to feed, fire, extract or eject. Clearance drills will not suffice when a weapon is mechanically incapable of continuing to fire.

CLEARING

Unloading a gun, and double checking that it is unloaded.

CLIP

A device for holding a group of cartridges. Semantic wars have been fought over the word, with some insisting it is not a synonym for "detachable magazine." For 80 years, however, it has been so used by manufacturers and the military. There is no argument that it can also mean a separate device for holding and transferring a group of cartridges to a fixed or detachable magazine or as a device inserted with cartridges into the mechanism of a firearm becoming, in effect, part of that mechanism.

COM

Center Of Mass

CONDITION 1

Pistol: Full magazine, cartridge in chamber, hammer cocked, safety on. AKA "cocked and locked.

CONDITION 2

Pistol: Full magazine, cartridge in chamber, hammer down, safety off.

CONDITION 3

Pistol: Full magazine, chamber empty.

CONDITION 4

Pistol: Full magazine separate from gun, chamber empty.

COLOR CODES (Condition White, Yellow, Orange & Red)

See <http://www.handgunlaw.us/documents/CooperColorCodes.pdf>

CONTROLLED PAIR

Two shots fired in rapid succession. It is distinguished from a double tap because in a controlled pair, the second shot will be fired after the shooter has obtained a second sight picture, whereas in a double tap both shots are fired based upon the initial sight picture alone.

COP-KILLER BULLET

An inflammatory phrase having neither historical basis nor legal or technical meanings.

CQC

Close-Quarters Combat

CYLINDER

The drum of a revolver that contains the chambers for the ammunition.

CYLINDER GAP

The maximum space between the cylinder and the barrel.

CYLINDER STOP

A device in a revolver to stop cylinder rotation that aligns the chamber containing the cartridge to be fired with the firing pin at the rear and the barrel at the front.

DAGGER

Double edged sheath knife with a symmetrical blade intended for stabbing.

DOUBLE ACTION ONLY (DAO)

Some pistols and revolvers can only be trigger cocked and are impossible to thumb cock. Even though it drives traditionalists nuts, these are called double-action-only firearms.

DEADLY FORCE (Lethal Force)

That degree of force which is likely to cause death or grave bodily injury.

DECOCKING LEVER

It allows for the hammer to be decocked with the aid of a lever, and, on some pistols, may also be positioned to prohibit firing of a weapon if the trigger is pulled.

DERRINGER

A small single-shot or multi-barreled (rarely more than two) pocket pistol.

DOUBLE-ACTION

A handgun mechanism where pulling the trigger retracts and releases the hammer or firing pin to initiate discharge.

DOUBLE ACTION / SINGLE ACTION (DA/SA)

DA/SA firearms are designed to operate in *double action* on the initial shot, and in *single action* on the second and subsequent shots. Consequently, these guns tend to have a long, heavy trigger pull for the first shot, and a relatively short and light trigger pull for subsequent shots. This is because the first trigger pull gets the internal parts into position, while the energy from the first shot is used to prep the mechanism for follow-up shots.

DRY FIRING

Aiming and firing the weapon without live ammunition. This is an excellent technique to improve marksmanship skills and does not cause any damage to a center-fire firearm. It is best done with an expended case in the chamber to cushion the firing pin's fall.

DUM-DUM BULLET

A British military bullet developed in India's Dum-Dum Arsenal and used on India's North West Frontier and in the Sudan in 1897 and 1898. It was a jacketed .303 cal. British bullet with the jacket nose left open to expose the lead core in the hope of increasing effectiveness.

Improvement was not pursued, for the Hague Convention of 1899 (not the Geneva Convention of 1925, which dealt largely with gas warfare) outlawed such bullets for warfare. Often "dum-dum" is misused as a term for any soft-nosed or hollow-pointed hunting bullet.

DUMMY ROUND

Cartridge containing a bullet but no propellant, and an inert primer. Used for safe demonstration of loading procedure, testing of rifle actions, etc. Usually identifiable by hole drilled through case wall.

EJECTION PORT

The opening through which the empty, spent ammunition case is cast out of a firearm.

EJECTOR

The mechanism which throws the cartridge case free from the gun.

EMERGENCY RELOAD

is the reload in which you have spent all the rounds from your magazine/cylinder and your slide is locked back and the magazine is empty or the cylinder no longer contains any live ammo and the firearm must be reload to fire again.

EXTERNAL SAFETY

A safety which is placed on the outer surfaces of the firearm and is accessible to the user. Not all external safeties require user attention. For instance, a grip safety is an external safety, but requires no deliberate act on the part of the shooter in order to do its job.

EXTRACTOR

A hook device which pulls the case out of a chamber as the breech mechanism is opened. (The extractor generally brings the case within reach of the ejector, which then flips it out of the gun.)

EXPLODING BULLET

A projectile containing an explosive component that acts on contact with the target. Seldom found and generally ineffective as such bullets lack the penetration necessary for defense or hunting.

EXPLOSIVE

Any substance (TNT, etc.) that, through chemical reaction, detonates or violently changes to gas with accompanying heat and pressure. Smokeless powder, by comparison, deflagrates (burns relatively slowly) and depends on its confinement in a gun's cartridge case and chamber for its potential as a propellant to be realized.

FAILURE TO EXTRACT (FTE)

A semi-automatic firearm malfunction in which the extractor fails to yank the old case out of the way as the slide travels back, so the spent case is still in the chamber as the slide on its return journey tries to stuff the new round into the same space. A failure to extract often causes a double feed malfunction.

FAILURE TO FEED (FTF)

A semi-automatic firearm malfunction in which the slide passes entirely over the fresh round, failing to pick it up to insert in the chamber as the slide returns to battery. Failures-to-feed and misfeeds are closely-related malfunctions, and the two problems often share a root cause.

FAILURE TO FIRE

Any malfunction which results in nothing happening when the trigger is pulled. Most commonly caused by a failure to feed the ammunition properly into the chamber, a failure to fire can also be caused by bad ammunition or by a broken firing pin.

FEEDING RAMP

Upward sloping, slightly concave metal ramp immediately below and in front of the chamber mouth, to guide the cartridge in its travel from magazine to chamber.

FIREARM

A rifle, shotgun or handgun using gunpowder as a propellant. By federal definition, under the 1968 Gun Control Act, antiques are excepted. Under the National Firearms Act, the word designates machine guns, etc. Air guns are not firearms.

FIRING PIN

The part of the breech mechanism which strikes the primer of the cartridge.

FIXED AMMUNITION

A complete cartridge of several obsolete types and of today's rimfire and center-fire versions.

FLASH HIDER/FLASH SUPPRESSOR

A muzzle attachment intended to reduce visible muzzle flash caused by the burning propellant.

FLINCH

To move or jerk a firearm involuntarily while shooting.

FMJ

Acronym for Full Metal Jacket. The bullet has a jacket that covers the bullet. In most cases this jacket is made of copper.

FOLLOW-THROUGH

The continued mental and physical application of marksmanship fundamentals after each round has been fired.

fpe

Acronym for Foot Pounds of Energy. If you know the velocity and weight of a bullet you can figure its Foot Pounds of Energy.

fps

Acronym for Feet Per Second, the common units for expressing bullet velocity

FRONT STRAP

The surface of the forward part of the handgun grip.

GAP

Glock Automatic Pistol This term was first introduced for the .45 GAP round. This is a .45 caliber cartridge that is shorter than the more common .45 ACP

GAUGE

The bore size of a shotgun determined by the number of round lead balls of bore diameter that equals a pound.

Grain, gr.

A unit of weight used in the U.S. for powder and bullets. There are 7,000 grains in a pound.

GRIP

The small portion of the stock gripped by the trigger hand.

GRIP SAFETY

In some handguns, such as the venerable .45 Colt semi-automatic pistol, an auxiliary locking device located on the grip prevents firing until it is depressed.

GUN

The British restrict the term in portable arms to shotguns. Here it is properly used for rifles, shotguns, handguns and air guns, as well as cannon.

GUNPOWDER

Chemical substances of various compositions, particle sizes, shapes and colors that, on ignition, serve as a propellant. Ignited smokeless powder emits minimal quantities of smoke from a gun's muzzle; the older black powder emits relatively large quantities of whitish smoke.

HALF COCK

The position of the hammer when it is being retracted and held by the sear so it cannot be released by a normal pull of the trigger.

HAMMER

The part of the action that drives the firing pin forward.

HAMMER BLOCK

A safety device that separates the hammer from the firing pin except when the trigger is pulled.

HAMMER SPUR

The extension on an exposed hammer that acts as a cocking aid.

HAMMERLESS

A firearm whose hammer and striker (firing pin) are concealed within the metal frame.

HANDGUN

Synonym for pistol.

HANGFIRE

Extended delay (up to a second or more) between the firing pin blow and the ignition of the powder, usually caused by old or contaminated primer/propellant which ignites slower than usual. 1. Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. 2. Count to ten SLOWLY. 3. With the opening in the action pointed away from your face, eject the cartridge and examine it. 4. Attempt to determine the cause of the failure.

HARDBALL

Slang for an FMJ bullet, usually one with a round nose. In casual conversation, the term is most commonly used in referring to .45 ACP caliber ammunition, but may be used for other calibers as well.

HIGH-CAPACITY MAGAZINE

An inexact, non-technical term indicating a magazine holding more rounds than might be considered "average."

HP (Hollow-Point)

A bullet with a concavity in its nose to increase expansion on penetration of a solid target.

IWB

Inside Waist Band. A type of holster that fits inside the pants at the belt line.

ISOSCELES STANCE

The gun is held thrust straight out from of the body, with both elbows locked in place. Thus, the arms and upper body form an isosceles triangle when seen from above. Modern Isosceles positions the lower body to fight or run. The feet will be shoulder width apart, knees slightly flexed, with the strong-side foot roughly a half-step behind the weak-side foot. Shoulders will be forward of the hips, and hips forward of the knees.

J FRAME

Small Frame S&W Revolver. Usually holds 5 rounds with 2" Barrel. (See K & L Frame)

JACKET

The envelope enclosing the core of a bullet.

JAM

A malfunction which locks up the gun so badly that tools are required in order to fix it. Sometimes used to denote a simple malfunction, but many people do make a distinction between a complete jam and a simple malfunction.

JHP

Jacket Hollow Point. A type of bullet that is designed to expand when it strikes its target.

JSP

Jacketed soft-point, a type of bullet generally used for hunting and not self-defense.

K FRAME

Mid size S&W Revolvers (See J & L Frame)

KEYHOLE (Keyholing)

The elongated hole formed by an unstable bullet hitting the target sideways due to the failure to remain balanced in flight.

Laser -- As used around firearms, a laser is an alternative sighting device similar to a laser pointer, which enables the shooter to quickly and accurately see where the firearm is aimed even when lighting or other conditions preclude being able to use the gun's normal sights. Lasers may be located within the or hung from accessory rails at the front end of the gun, or even placed within the firearm itself as part of the guide rod.

Laser Grip -- A type of aftermarket firearms grip which contains a pressure-activated laser pointer which enables the shooter to quickly and accurately see where the firearm is aimed even when lighting or other conditions preclude being able to see the sights.

L FRAME

Large Frame S&W Revolvers. (See J & K Frame)

LEADING

Fouling of a firearm bore by metal particles from bullets adhering to the metal surface caused by heat or friction.

LE

Law Enforcement

LEA

Law Enforcement Agency

LEO

Law Enforcement Officer

LETHAL FORCE (Deadly Force)

That degree of force which is likely to cause death or grave bodily injury.

LIGHT DOUBLE ACTION (LDA)

A double-action semi-automatic firearm which is designed to have a much lighter pull than is usual for a double action.

LLEA

Local Law Enforcement Agency

LTC

License to Carry. License to carry a concealed firearm.

LRN

Lead Round Nose [bullet design]

LSWC

Lead Semi-Wad Cutter [bullet design]

MAGAZINE

A spring-loaded container for cartridges that may be an integral part of the gun's mechanism or may be detachable. Detachable magazines for the same gun may be offered by the gun's manufacturer or other manufacturers with various capacities. A gun with a five-shot detachable magazine, for instance, may be fitted with a magazine holding 10, 20, or 50 or more rounds. Box magazines are most commonly located under the receiver with the cartridges stacked vertically. Tube or tubular magazines run through the stock or under the barrel with the cartridges lying horizontally. Drum magazines hold their cartridges in a circular mode. A magazine can also mean a secure storage place for ammunition or explosives.

MAGAZINE SAFETY

Also called a "magazine disconnecter." A device that prevents a pistol from being discharged when the magazine is removed. (Warning: These devices are not always reliable.)

MAGAZINE WELL

The opening in the bottom of the gun into which a box magazine feeds. On a semi-auto handgun, the magazine well is at the base of the grip; on a rifle, it is usually placed somewhere ahead of the trigger guard.

MAGNUM

A term indicating a relatively heavily loaded metallic cartridge or shot shell and, by extension, a gun safely constructed to fire it.

MAINSRING

A strong spring, aka an energy storage device, that operates the striker or hammer of a firearm.

MANUAL SAFETY

A safety which the shooter must deliberately disengage in order to fire the gun. All manual safeties are also external safeties, but not all external safeties are manual safeties as well

MISFEED

In semi-automatic firearms, a failure of the next round to completely enter the chamber. A misfeed can keep the gun from going into battery, which in turn may prevent the gun from firing. Misfeeds and failures to feed are closely related: a failure to feed is a round that never even leaves the top of the magazine, while a misfeed is a round that leaves the magazine but does not enter the chamber.

MOON CLIP

A circular loading device for revolvers, similar to a speedloader in that it holds the ammunition together and facilitates quick loading. Unlike a speedloader, however, a moon clip is designed specifically for rimless cartridges (such as 9mm Luger or .45 ACP), and it becomes an integral part of the revolver while firing.

MOUSE GUN

A gently derogatory name for any handgun which fires a small caliber.

MULTI-BARRELED

A gun with more than one barrel, the most common being the double-barreled shotgun.

MUSHROOMED BULLET

A description of a bullet whose forward diameter has expanded after penetration.

MUST INFORM OFFICER

In some states you must inform an LEO that you have a Permit/License and are carrying if approached by an Officer on Official Business. Stopped for a traffic violation etc. If you do not inform the LEO you are breaking the laws of that state.

MUZZLE

The open end of the barrel from which the projectile exits.

MUZZLE BLAST

The loud noise that occurs at the muzzle of a firearm when the projectile leaves the muzzle and hot gases are released into the air.

MUZZLE BRAKE

An attachment to or integral part of the barrel intended to trap and divert expanding gasses and reduce recoil.

MUZZLE ENERGY

A bullet's energy, measured in foot pounds, as it emerges from the muzzle.

MUZZLE FLASH

The bright flash or illumination at the muzzle of the firearm that results from propellant particles emerging from the barrel behind the projectile and igniting when mixed with oxygen in the air.

MUZZLE FLIP (Muzzle Rise)

Movement of the end of the firearm (Muzzle) upward when the firearm is discharged.

NEGLIGENT DISCHARGE (ND)

A term that is used to refer to unintended discharge of a firearm that causes bodily injury, property damage, etc. Gun advocates and proponents debate whether it should be synonymous with accidental discharge.

OFF HAND

To fire while standing, without bracing against a bench, bipod, tree, or any other rest.

OFF HAND

The non-dominant hand.

OUT OF BATTERY

The condition where the breeching mechanism is not in proper position for firing.

OVER-TRAVEL

Immediately after the trigger break which fires the shot, the trigger should be unable to move any further to the rear. If it is able to continue moving to the rear after the shot has fired, the trigger is said to over-travel.

OWB

Outside Waist Band. A type of holster worn outside the waist band.

P+ AMMUNITION (+p and +p+)

Many calibers are available in both standard and +p or +p+ variants. Ammunition marked +p produces more power and higher pressures than the standard ammunition produced in that caliber, while ammunition marked +p+ produces even more power and pressure than the +p loading.

PARABELLUM

Means "prepare for war." From a Latin maxim--si vis pacem, para bellum--"If you want peace, prepare for war." The European designation of the Luger pistol and (today more commonly) the 9mm cartridge it chambered.

PASSIVE SAFETY

Any safety, internal or external, which functions apart from the shooter's conscious control. Grip safeties are one example of a passive external safety; drop safeties are an example of a passive internal safety.

PEACABLE JOURNEY LAW

State laws concerning traveling through the state with a loaded firearm on you or in the vehicle without a permit. Some states allow for traveling through their state and keeping the firearm on you if you don't stop.

PEPPER SPRAY (OC)

OC (Oleoresin Capsicum) is a derivative of Hot Cayenne peppers. OC is much more efficient as compared to CN and CS; it's an inflammatory agent. Upon contact, it causes an intense burning sensation, temporary blindness, restricted breathing and disorientation. The effect of OC can last from 15 to 60 minutes depending on a concentration. Unlike CN and CS, OC perfectly affects on dogs, drunken and drug affected people. OC is a natural irritant, that's why it's much more innocuous in comparison with the chemical irritants.

PISTOL

Synonymous with "handgun." A gun that is generally held in one hand. It may be of the single-shot, multi-barrel, repeating or semi-automatic variety and includes revolvers.

PISTOL GRIP

The handle of a handgun or protrusion on the butt stock or fore-end of a shoulder-operated gun that resembles the grip or handle of a handgun. A "semi-pistol grip" is one less pronounced than normal; a "vertical pistol grip" is more pronounced than normal.

PLINKING

Informal shooting at any of a variety of inanimate targets. The most often practiced shooting sport in this country.

POA

Point Of Aim

POI

Point Of Impact

POINT SHOOTING

Shooting without using the sights. Instead of using sights, point shooters use body position or other cues to provide a rough index of where the shots will land. Point shooting is a source of much controversy in the shooting community, especially online.

PORTING

May mean either lowering the ejection port of a self-loading pistol to ensure greater reliability and less damage to cases or the practice of drilling gas vents in a barrel to reduce muzzle jump. The proprietary Mag-na-port system is a well-known example of this.

PRIMARY GUN

The first pistol you draw when a firearm is needed. Typically loaded with medium to large caliber rounds.

PRIMER

The ignition component of a cartridge generally made up of a metallic fulminate or (currently) lead styphnate.

PRINTING

A condition in which the outline of the concealed handgun may be discerned through the outer clothing. The firearm itself is not visible, but its presence and shape may be readily apparent to an observer.

PROPELLANT

In a firearm the chemical composition that is ignited by the primer to generate gas. In air or pellet guns, compressed air or CO2.

RACKING THE SLIDE

A semi-automatic term which means pulling the slide back to its rearmost position, and then letting it go forward under its own spring tension. If the magazine is loaded and inserted in the gun, racking the slide loads the chamber and prepares the gun to fire.

RAILS

The usually metal surfaces upon which a semi-automatic's slide travels to and fro when each shot is fired. For proper function, they need to be clean and wear a light coating of oil.

RECEIVER

The housing for a firearm's breech (portion of the barrel with chamber into which a cartridge or projectile is loaded) and firing mechanism.

RECIPROCITY

A mutual exchange of privileges. When two states agree to honor each others privilege of carrying concealed firearms it is called reciprocity.

RECOGNITION

A unilateral action by one jurisdiction (state) to honor a permit or license from another jurisdiction.

RECOIL

The rearward or opposite force or movement of a firearm caused by and equal to the force the firing or moving the projectile forward. Commonly called kick and measured in foot pounds.

RECOIL SPRING

The recoil spring is the powerful spring that cushions the slide in its rearward travel and then sends the slide forward again with enough force to drive the fresh round firmly into the chamber.

REVOLVER

A gun, usually a handgun, with a multi-chambered cylinder that rotates to successively align each chamber with a single barrel and firing pin.

RIFLE

A shoulder gun with rifled bore.

RIFLING

Spiral grooves in a gun's bore that spin the projectile in flight and impart accuracy. Rifling is present in all true rifles, in most handguns and in some shotgun barrels designed for increasing the accuracy potential of slugs (a slug is a single projectile rather than the more common "shot".)

RIMFIRE

A rimmed or flanged cartridge with the priming mixture located inside the rim of the case. The most famous example is the .22 rim fire. It has been estimated that between 3-4 billion .22 cartridges are loaded in the U.S. each year.

RKBA

Right to Keep and Bear Arms.

RN

Round Nose. A type of bullet with a rounded nose.

ROUND

Synonym for a cartridge.

RUPTURE CASE

Cartridge case that splits or bursts open on firing, due to problems such as excessive headspace, oversized chamber, fatigued or brittle brass, etc. Extremely dangerous, as the escaping gases can blind or otherwise injure the shooter.

SA

Single Action, as opposed to double action (DA), SA releases the trigger for primer contact and firing after cocking of the hammer and positioning of the cartridge for firing by means other than pulling the trigger.

SAFETY

A device that blocks the firing mechanism of a firearm.

SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIAL

a pejorative or slang term used in the United States for any inexpensive handgun. It is sometimes called an SNS in written shorthand. Traditionally, Saturday night specials have often been defined as compact, inexpensive handguns with a barrel length of under three inches (for pistols, overall length of under six inches) and low perceived quality, although there is no official definition of "Saturday night special" under any federal or state law.

SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN (RIFLE)

Common term for federally restricted "short-barreled shotgun (rifle)" i.e. a conventional shotgun with barrel less than 18" (rifle less than 16") or overall length less than 26."

SCOTUS

Supreme Court Of The United States

SEAR

The portion of a firing mechanism that holds a hammer or striker cocked.

SELECTIVE-FIRE

A firearm's ability to be fired fully automatically, semi-automatically or, in some cases, in burst-fire mode at the option of the firer.

SEMI-AUTOMATIC

A firearm designed to fire a single cartridge, eject the empty case and reload the chamber each time the trigger is pulled.

SHALL ISSUE

The state must issue an applicant a permit to carry a firearm if they meet the requirements as set forth by the state. The issuing agency has no discretion on issuing permits to carry.

SIGHT ALIGNMENT

The manner in which the sights are lined up properly in front of the shooter's eye, to form a straight path to the target at the moment the trigger is pulled.

SIGHT PICTURE

What the shooter sees when looking through the sights at the target at the moment the trigger is pulled.

SIGHT, FRONT

The front sight is placed at the muzzle end of the barrel. It is often (but not always) in the form of a dot or a blade. To attain a proper sight picture and shoot with the greatest degree of accuracy, the shooter's eye should be focused sharply upon the front sight while shooting, allowing both the rear sight and the target itself to blur somewhat.

SIGHT, REAR

The rear sight is placed at the end of the barrel nearest the shooter. It may be in the shape of a square notch, a U, a vee, a ring, or simply two dots designed to be visually placed on either side of the front sight while shooting.

SJHP

Semi-Jacketed Hollow Point [bullet design]

SNUB-NOSED

Descriptive of (usually) a revolver with an unusually short barrel.

SLIDE LOCK

When most semi-automatic firearms have been fired until empty, the slide will remain in its rearmost position rather than going forward as if to chamber another round. This condition of the gun is called slide lock.

SLIDE RELEASE

The slide release lever, usually located on the left side of the slide, is pushed down to unlock the slide and allow the slide to move forward into its normal position. It is sometimes called the slide stop or slide stop lever.

SLIDE STOP

The slide release lever.

SNAP CAP

A type of dummy round. An inert ammunition-shaped object, used in practice to simulate misfeeds and other malfunctions. Some folks also use them in dry fire practice.

SOB

Small Of Back. A holster that holds the firearm in the Small of your back.

SPEED STRIP

A flat piece of rubber which holds revolver cartridges preparatory to loading them into the revolver's cylinder. It is designed to lie flat in the pocket, so it is a boon to concealed carry folks who want to carry extra ammunition discreetly. Using a speed strip to load a revolver is slightly faster than rummaging around in your pockets for loose ammunition before stuffing rounds into the cylinder one by one.

SPEEDLOADER

A circular gadget which holds revolver cartridges preparatory to loading them into the revolver's cylinder. It holds the rounds in the correct configuration to plunk all of them at once straight into the chambers.

STAGGERED COLUMN MAGAZINE

A box magazine that has two staggered columns of cartridges that increase capacity but not length of the magazine.

STOVEPIPE

Malfunction occurring when a case gets stuck between the breech face and the slide.

STRIKER FIRED

A striker is a form of firing pin that replaces the hammer and firing pin with a single unit. So a striker-fired handgun is a semi-automatic which uses a striker, rather than a hammer or a firing pin, to hit the primer and fire the round.

SUBMACHINE GUN

An automatic firearm commonly firing pistol ammunition intended for close-range combat.

SWC

Semi-Wad Cutter [bullet design]

TACTICAL RELOAD

is the reload in which you encounter a lull in the gunfight and you have time to top off your firearm to bring it back to its maximum ammo capacity. You know you have shot some ammo from your firearm so placing yourself behind cover you remove the magazine from your firearm and replace it with a full magazine. With a revolver replace the spent cartridges or dump the contents of your cylinder into your hand and keep the live rounds and reload the cylinder with a speed loader.

TAP, RACK, BANG

The slang term for the procedure to clear a misfeed. To clear a misfeed, tap the base of the magazine firmly to be sure it is properly seated, rack the slide to eject an empty case or feed a new round, and assess to be sure your target still needs shooting. If it does, bang.

TEFLON

Trade name for a synthetic sometimes used to coat hard bullets to protect the rifling. Other synthetics, nylon for instance, have also been used as bullet coatings. None of these soft coatings has any effect on lethality.

THUMB BREAK

A type of retention device built into some holsters, consisting of a strap of holster material which must be unsnapped or levered off the gun before the gun can be removed from the holster. It is called a thumb break because the shooter's thumb is most often used to accomplish this task.

THUMB SAFETY

An external, manual safety which is typically disengaged with the firing-hand thumb.

TMJ

Total Metal Jacket [bullet design]

TRANSFER BAR

A revolver safety mechanism that delivers the force of the hammer blow to the firing pin by means of an intermediary piece of metal that rises into firing position only when the trigger is pulled.

TRIGGER

The part of a firearm mechanism which releases the firing pin.

TRIGGER GUARD

A metal loop around the trigger designed to protect it.

TRIGGER PULL

The entire process of moving the trigger from its forward most position to its rearward most position, causing the hammer to fall and the shot to fire.

TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT

How much pressure the trigger finger must put on the trigger before the gun will fire. Trigger pull weight is measured in pounds and ounces.

TRIGGER SAFETY

An external, passive safety which can be found on the face of some trigger designs (most notably found on Glock firearms). It is intended to prevent the trigger from being pulled by objects which find their way into the trigger guard area.

WEAPON

Webster defines it as "an instrument of offensive or defensive combat." Thus an automobile, baseball bat, bottle, chair, firearm, fist, pen knife or shovel is a "weapon," if so used.

WEAVER STANCE

In the Weaver stance, the body is angled slightly in relation to the target rather than squarely facing it. The elbows are flexed and pointed downward. The strong-side arm is slightly straighter than the weak-side arm. The shooter pushes out with the gun hand, while the weak hand pulls back. This produces a push-pull tension which is the chief defining characteristic of the Weaver stance.

Updates to This Page:

5/23/12 – J, K & L Frame Definitions Added.

11/16/12 – Formatting for ease of Navigation.