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HANDGUN FUNDAMENTALS

- I. **Grip (Strong Hand)**-ideally the weapon should be placed in the hand so that a straight line is formed starting with the slide of the weapon and running through the shooter's wrist and forearm.

This straight line should always be visible when the shooter is viewed from above.

A side view of the shooter will yield an image of two parallel lines, one formed by the slide and the other formed by the shooter's forearm and locked wrist.

The web of the hand should be high and fully under the tang of the back strap. While the older 1911 style weapons might still bite the hand, most pistols as they are produced today incorporate hammer profiles and a matched hammer tang combination that have all but eliminated this problem. **THERE IS NO NEED TO GRIP THE GUN LOW ON THE FRAME!**

Grip the weapon with the thumb, middle, ring and little fingers of the shooting hand. The index finger is the **TRIGGER** finger not a **GRIPPING** finger. By using only the three fingers and the thumb, the shooter (even one handed) is locking the gun solidly from side to side. The three fingers also pull and lock the gun firmly back into the web of the hand.

The index or trigger finger is kept away from the side of the frame. The pad area of the finger tip is still the most desirable surface to allow in contact with the trigger. In theory, it has the most sensitivity and its location allows the greatest mechanical advantage for a straight to the rear press of the trigger in both the double and single action modes.

We are all quite familiar with the tendency of the trigger finger to push or turn the gun to the side (when the trigger is pressed to the rear) if the finger is placed either too deeply or, in some cases, not fully enough, on the trigger surface.

But we have an additional problem here, in that contacting either side of the frame with the trigger finger might actually inhibit the double action stroke or block it's movement altogether in some guns.

- I A. **Grip (Strength)**-Due to the changing nature of law enforcement and to the ever-widening group of people who are entering the field, we can no longer apply many of the concepts and training analogies to the teaching of shooting fundamentals that we may have employed in the past.

Grip strength can no longer be equated with a "firm handshake". Such a comparison was probably a poor one to start with and it certainly has no place in our work today.

Due to the great variance in physical abilities and perceptions of strength, we feel that each officer should initially grip the weapon with the strong hand with sufficient force to cause shaking.

This front sight-only concept is somewhat foreign to most experienced shooters; but again, looking at the time frames with which we must concern ourselves, it is the only way to be "competitive".

Obviously moving beyond this 12 yard handgun combat distance, or when situations require precision marksmanship at any distance, proper alignment of both sights must be maintained in order to fire accurately.

Of the five fundamentals discussed here, it is the combination of sight alignment and sight picture that we believe to be the most important when applied to combat shooting.

- IV. **Trigger Control**-In either the double action or the single action mode, it is defined as:
A steadily increasing pressure straight to the rear, without disturbing sight alignment or sight picture, until the weapon fires.

Once the weapon fires the trigger finger returns the trigger to the point of "sear or trigger reset" the trigger finger does not allow the trigger to over travel beyond the reset point on the forward movement. It also does not break contact with the trigger and "fly" forward, off of the trigger, after re-setting only to be yanked back on to it if a follow up shot is needed. THE TRIGGER FINGER MAINTAINS CONTACT WITH THE TRIGGER THROUGHOUT THIS FRONT-TO-REAR/REAR-TO-RESET CYCLE.

The descriptive term here is a press and not a squeeze. It is a smooth, continuous movement to the rear with a steady pressure applied from start to finish. We do not attempt to "stage" the trigger at any point during this operation.

- V. **Stance**-Either of two stances is recommended. The WEAVER Position involves blading the position of the feet and body approximately 45 degrees away from the attacker with the strong side to the rear. This is consistent with the stance and body position utilized with empty hand and intermediate weapon skills as well as the interview position taught at most police academies. Shoulder weapons are also best fired from this body position.

In order to fire the handgun in the WEAVER Position, the support or weak arm is bent with the elbow pointing down, not flared. The shooting arm is very locked. The shooting arm presses forward while the support arm pulls back which creates a balanced, stationary tension or isometric equilibrium. This tension aids in recoil control.

The classic ISOSCELES Position involves having the chest and feet square with the attacker and locking both arms straight. The name derives from the fact that an Isosceles triangle (one with two equal sides) is formed with the arms and chest of the shooter. While many master shooters have used this position over the years, it is not consistent with the interview position, the use of shoulder weapons or other defensive skills. The classic Isosceles Position should not be used in place of a bladed or interview stance prior to shooting.

The second acceptable stance is a blend between the Weaver and Isosceles Positions. The

THE DRAW & RECOVERY

A frequently overlooked aspect of firearms training is holster work. Although it seems to be treated as an incidental subject during in-service training, it is really quite crucial to the effective, safe handling of the handgun, either for police, security, military or corrections personnel. Too often the student appears to have been left to his or her own devices to decide how best to draw and reholster the handgun. This article examines some common mistakes in holster work and addresses some related training concerns.

Let's start by reviewing the stages of the draw. The body should remain erect and relaxed with the eyes directed towards the assailant throughout the drawing process, which occurs with relaxed smoothness and economy of motion.

Stage 1-The strong hand obtains the proper one-hand grip. The thumb opens thumb snap (if present) while seeking its position in the one-hand grip, and the weak hand comes to belt level slightly towards the strong side. The user of a border patrol type strap usually must unsnap before establishing the one-hand grip rather than unsnapping simultaneously while gripping.

Stage 2-The handgun is withdrawn only far enough to clear the holster and the wrist is locked straight.

Stage 3-The handgun is pivoted, at the top of the holster into the "speed rock" position. If using a pistol it is canted slightly.

Stage 4-The handgun is moved forward just enough to allow the weak hand to safely establish a proper two-hand grip and the two-hand grip is established. This is known as the "close quarter hold".

Stage 5-The handgun is moved straight to the target. The finger is placed on the trigger when the muzzle is on the opponent.

Sounds simple enough, doesn't it? But there are serious fundamental errors that you probably see every time you conduct firearms training for your department, or will see once you start looking. Now let's look at some of the problems that we see at each stage.

reholster about as fast as they draw. This habit leaves an officer more vulnerable to a second assailant (or an assailant that didn't go down) than he might have been if they had been trained to anticipate further action before reholstering. We recommend that an officer be trained to count "one-one thousand, two-one thousand" after firing but before lowering the gun to a ready position. The officer should then count four more seconds before reholstering. Only by training to actually count and turn the head to look around can we defeat the time distortion and tunnel vision likely to be present during and after a firearms confrontation.

After the officer has determined that no threat remains and has decocked or engaged the safety, if applicable, the draw process should be reversed back to the holster. We should avoid conditioning students to allow their shooting position to fall apart before reholstering. If so, and a threat would appear after the shooting position collapsed, the officer would be forced to reassume an effective two-hand grip and shooting position from whatever position they had affected before perceiving the new threat. It is difficult enough for many officers to get consistent hits from the holster or the ready position without introducing the variable of impromptu starting positions. By reversing the draw to reholster, all the officer needs to address the new threat is to put the draw back into forward gear, so to speak.

The finger must be outside of the trigger guard at any time that the shooter cannot accept the weapon firing.

Just as we draw with one hand and with our eyes directed towards our threat, we must do the same when we reholster. To do otherwise is quite dangerous. When we look at our holster, we take our eyes off the area of threat.

Locating the holster with the weak hand is perhaps more dangerous. This technique passes the muzzle of the loaded weapon across the weak hand. Most of us pride ourselves on our safe gun handling and not pointing our weapon at others unintentionally. Why point it at ourselves? It is also foreseeable that an officer might need to control a suspect or support himself during reholstering.

Just as we should stick to a reversed draw sequence when reholstering, we should maintain a proper one-hand grip on the handgun until it is completely holstered.

This is both to minimize our reaction time to effectively deal with a new threat and to assure that we don't release the handgun prematurely and cause it to fall.

Once the handgun is completely within the holster, the final step to reholstering is to snap whatever retaining device(s) is present. If training conducted from a snapped holster of proper design, the snap is no practical impediment to speed (smoothness).

If we permit officers to snap sometimes and not others, to unsnap prematurely when making traffic stops or to snap only when engaging in strenuous activity the resultant inconsistency is far more detrimental to speed (smoothness) than training them to unsnap for every draw and snap whenever reholstering. This issue relates to weapons retention as well. One of the primary reasons that officers are disarmed is that the holster is unsnapped at the time of confrontation. In short, the release of the snap should only be done as part of the draw and the holster should be snapped as part of the