

Home and Personal Security

Your choice of a gun at home should be made carefully and thoughtfully. But, all of the authorities I have read say that your choice of hardware is just the beginning of the process. Practical training with your firearm, developing defensive tactics, maintaining situational awareness, and having the fundamental mental readiness to actually use your weapon if needed are at least as important as your particular choice of firearm. That is, the best quality shotgun or .45 automatic is useless in the hands of someone who has not practiced using it safely and effectively or who has not thought out just how a real fight might take place in or around their home or who has not finally decided if they could ever pull the trigger on another person. So, anyone unwilling to put in thought and effort probably should stop reading right now. This is as serious as a heart attack and not for the light-headed.

I am no expert in this subject and so please regard this little article as only the briefest introduction to the subject of firearms, intended to stimulate thinking rather than to provide final solutions. Before paying the money a good firearm costs, you should do some real research and think about what you actually need. Go to a gun store or a gun show and handle the choices. Ask an experienced person like a well-trained police officer. Read Massad Ayoob, Paxton Quigley, David Kenik and Jeff Cooper who have written extensively about every aspect of the safe, legal and effective use of guns and combat tactics. Surf the web for information. Borrow some guns from friends and do a little shooting if you have not fired a weapon for a while.

Your first task is to realize that firearms are just tools and before you choose any tool, you must always be clear on what you want to use it for. The simple fact is that **A GUN IS FOR STOPPING AN ATTACK IF ONE HAPPENS**. The goal is not to kill anyone, though if an assailant dies in attacking you, so be it. Also, know that it takes a lot to stop a determined adult human quickly before they hurt or kill you; especially if they are high on dope. So, you must choose a weapon that is powerful enough to stop the fight immediately, **NOT ONE THAT MERELY INFLECTS INJURY WITHOUT COMPLETELY AND IMMEDIATELY DISABLING YOUR ASSAILANT**. So, this month we will just talk about shotguns as home defense weapons, since the most effective weapon you can use to stop a fight is a shotgun.

Shotguns come in different sizes, the most common of which is the 12 gauge. Any 12 gauge shotgun firing standard #4 shot shells will stop a fight immediately provided you hit the target squarely. Even smaller shotguns like 16 gauge, 20 gauge and .410 weapons can do the job. The chances of a solid hit are helped a little by the fact that they fire many pellets instead of a single slug like a rifle or pistol, but at a distance of 10-30 feet, as is usual in self-defense situations, the spread of the pellet pattern is only about an inch or two and so does not really make up for lousy marksmanship. You still have to make a direct hit even with a shotgun. They tend to be big and slow to point and in very close quarters, the muzzle can be slapped away more easily than if you used a pistol. So, choose one with a barrel as short as you can legally get it (18 inches long). If children are ever present, you have few real choices with a shotgun and even less choice if the children have any developmental problems. Keep a gun lock on it or keep it unloaded and with the ammunition locked away separately (and hope you have plenty of time to bring it to bear). Any other choices, including securing the shotgun too high for children to reach even standing on a chair must be made with great care and eternal vigilance. A decent new pump-action 12 gauge shotgun is about \$250.00 but used are less. Good choices are the Winchester Defender (model 1300) or the Mossberg police model. I suggest OO buck or number 4 shot, since this is what the U.S. Marines use in combat scatter guns. Forget double barrel "coach" guns with exposed hammers. They are short, wicked looking and romantic, but they are not as safe as the pump-action gun and only have two rounds. It is no coincidence that police and military shotguns are all pump-action weapons.

A shotgun is a lot of gun, so consider whether you are physically able to handle one and what will happen as you age and your bones start to ache. Borrow one from a friend and see how it works for you before making your choice. You will need to plan in order to keep it safe from kids but still quick and simple to use when needed.

Lowell Nicolaus

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