

Oklahoma Personal Defense

Empowering Women to Protect Themselves

Top Tips

by Tammy Pinkston, Instructor

Take your SDA class with a semi-auto: In Oklahoma if you take your conceal carry course with a revolver, you are only certified to carry a revolver. If you take the course with a semi-auto, you will be certified to carry both. You may think you'll only carry a revolver, but what if you change your mind later? You can retake the course with a semi-auto, but I recommend you take your course with a semi-auto to start with...then you'll have the option to carry what you want!

Wear proper attire when using the range: Ladies, this means no low cut blouses. Why? Because hot shell casings fly from semi-autos, even if you are shooting a revolver the person next to you may be shooting a semi-auto and their hot casings may fly over into your area and go down your shirt. Ball caps are also a must to keep hot casings from hitting you in the face, or lodging between your eyes and safety glasses. Don't wear open shoes like sandals. Don't wear shorts – again, hot casings can hit your skin and it really hurts.

Try before you buy: This is SO important. Most of us wouldn't buy a car without at least taking it for a test drive; same with shoes or clothes, most of us wouldn't walk into a store and say, hey, I like the features of those shoes, they seem to be the right size, yes, I'll take them. Nope, for a \$60-\$80 pair of shoes, we want to try them on. So why on earth would you spend \$400, \$500 or more on a gun that you've never tried? This makes no sense, and yet people do it all the time – lots of times men buy a gun for their wife or a gun to be shared and it ends up not working for her. This is not being protective, this is setting her up for failure...guys you don't want to do this, ladies you don't want to have this done to you. There are MANY differences in pistols even of the same caliber; different brands are balanced differently so the recoil will feel different. Some people think they must have an external safety, that's fine but are you willing to make the commitment to train so much that in a crisis you won't forget to switch off the safety? Some pistols have tighter springs so the slide is harder to rack. Some have interchangeable grips, others do not. I cannot recommend a specific pistol for you any more than I can recommend a specific pair of shoes. So if you are considering purchasing a handgun, do yourself a favor and try some out – or at least try out the one you're thinking about – before you buy it.

Get a holster that fits your specific gun: Again, this is so important. I've seen people with universal holsters bend over and their gun fall right out of the holster. There are many reasons you don't want this to happen, and the only way to prevent it from happening is by purchasing a holster for your specific gun. Understand that you may have to try different holsters until you find the one that works best for you. I personally prefer inside the waistband (IWB) because it's the easiest for me to conceal, keeps my weapon secure to my body, and is very comfortable. This also works better for me as a woman because a traditional belt holster brings the grip of the gun up high enough that it's uncomfortable, particularly when sitting. Visit the More page of my website for my specific holster recommendation.

Self-defense calibers are 9mm and above: .22 caliber is not a self-defense caliber – I have read research, and heard first hand accounts of persons shooting an attacker with a .22 and it not stopping (and sometimes not even slowing down) the attacker. .380 is a marginal choice for self-defense because of its lower velocity, meaning it must be used at very close quarters to be effective.

Educate yourself a little about the mechanics of a firearm: The shorter the barrel, the more you'll have to work for accuracy. The smaller the gun, the more the felt recoil. Tiny guns may be cute and easy to conceal, but they can be very difficult to operate because there's nothing to hold onto and the functions are hard to get a hold of. For example, I meet a lot of women who have bought a tiny little .380 and are absolutely shocked when they first fire it and it feels like getting hit very hard in the hands with a brick. They are not pleasant to shoot because they hurt your hand, they are hard to hold onto which makes them difficult to control, and they are very difficult to maneuver because the buttons are so small. You might be better off getting a single stack 9mm such as a Kahr than a tiny .380, but you won't know until you try them.

Learn proper techniques: If you have good stance and good grip, you will shoot well with any caliber. If you have proper sight alignment and good trigger control, you will hit your target. If you're having difficulty, find a good instructor to learn from. This is not hard, but there are specific techniques to doing it – learn those techniques. I recommend the book *Women Learning to Shoot* by Vicki Farnam and Diane Nicholl (see the Links page of my website).

Don't fall for common stereotyping: I hear story after story after story from women who have gone to purchase a gun, only to be told she can only handle a revolver. Revolvers are certainly valid weapons, but there are disadvantages over semi-autos. One, the trigger requires about 12 pounds of pressure to pull and many women have difficulty with this. Secondly, most revolvers hold only 5, maybe 6 rounds. You may think that's enough to take care of an attacker, but what if you miss or there's more than one attacker? Finally, conceal carry revolvers have short, typically two inch barrels, which makes them more difficult to be accurate with. The reason this stereotype is in place is because women are told and have come to believe they cannot operate the slide on a semi-auto. It is true that women have less upper body strength than men so racking the slide can be difficult, however, I teach a method for a woman to rack the slide that any woman can do.

Technique for women to rack the slide: I call this method "Hold/Push." Instead of pulling the slide back with your weaker hand, HOLD the slide with that hand by establishing a firm grip on the grooves near the rear of the pistol. Do this by placing your palm flat against one side of the slide and wrapping four fingers over the top. DO NOT TWIST THE GUN AROUND AND GRAB IT WITH TWO FINGERS, YOU HAVE NO LEVERAGE THIS WAY AND YOU RISK POINTING THE MUZZLE IN AN UNSAFE DIRECTION. Once you've grasped the slide, HOLD nice and tight. Bring the pistol into your body so that you have somewhere to push to, always keeping the muzzle in a safe direction (turn your body if you need to). Now PUSH with your strong hand. You can put the entire weight of your body behind this push if need be. My most extreme example of a woman being able to do this was a 74-year-old woman with severe arthritis.

Have difficulty locking the slide open? Insert an empty magazine and hold/push. This will lock open the slide on any pistol that locks open on the last shot.

Use an UpLULA loading tool if you have difficulty loading your magazines: I have heard men say this is cheating. So what, who cares, you're not going to be reloading your gun in the middle of a gun fight (this is what spare magazines are for), so why not load your magazines with a tool such as an UpLULA?

Be proactive about your education: No one can do this for you, so be proactive about research, taking classes, and everything you can do to educate yourself in self-defense. Don't depend on someone else to always be there to protect you. Don't depend on someone else to make choices for you about what you need to protect yourself.