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PHOTO: Richard Schutz

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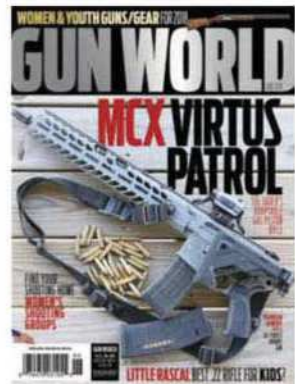
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TAKE YOUR KIDS TO THE RANGE

I am a firm believer that the way to ensure the future of the 2A is the spread of gun culture to the mainstream. So, I'm thrilled to see people of both genders and all ages, races and backgrounds shooting at ranges and competitions.

One area I'm particularly passionate about is youth shooters. Because I have three boys—aged 9, 10 and 12—and am involved with both the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, it's important to me to see kids learning the value of the 2A, as well as seeing that shooting guns can be a safe and fun activity.

The general sentiment is that kids spend too much time with electronics and playing video games. The irony here is that whenever I'm at a youth event of any sort, it's the parents that sit staring and thumbing at their cell phones. The truth is that if given the choice between sitting inside and playing video games or spending time outdoors with their parents hiking, shooting, camping, etc., I've found very few kids who will choose to stay inside to play video games.

Put the smart phone/laptop/tablet/TV remote down and take your kids shooting. Take them to hunter's safety; the gun-handling safety instruction is invaluable, even if they don't hunt. Take them to the range. Kids are naturally curious about guns, and they are drawn to them ... they want to shoot them. All you have to do is offer to take them shooting, and they will go. My kids love it. They'll burn through half a brick of .22s in an afternoon.

An additional benefit is the focus and self-discipline it teaches them. Seeing how unfocused young kids are and how short their attention span is, this is pretty amazing to watch as they focus on getting that ragged, little hole inside the bullseye.

Start them shooting while they are young, and you'll have them hooked for life. **SW**

READER LETTER

I just read Chuck Taylor's "Striker-Fired Shootout" (April 2018). Outstanding! I've owned all of those pistols, and his assessment is dead on!

Very well written (English teacher speaking here!).
Mark A.

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A close-up, low-angle shot of a soldier in full tactical gear, including a helmet with night vision and a rifle. The soldier is looking forward with a focused expression. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the gear and the soldier's features. The word 'RAIF' is overlaid in large, semi-transparent, grey letters across the center of the image. The 'R' is on the left, and the 'F' is on the right, with 'A' and 'I' in between. The letters are slightly offset from each other, creating a layered effect.

RAIF

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BRV



1

MAKE: Heavy Cover
MODEL: USGI Style Titanium Mess Kit
INCLUDES: Titanium Canteen (1 quart), Canteen Cup (23.7 ounces), Cup Lid, Tritan Canteen Cap
ACCESSORIES: Ti Canteen Cap (\$12)
MSRP: \$155
URL: HeavyCoverInc.com

We're big fans of the military-issue canteen mess kit, but Heavy Cover has taken it up about five levels with this one. It's as tough as the stainless steel kit but about half the weight. Unlike the GI-issue plastic canteen, the Ti canteen can be put directly over fire, is non-toxic and won't absorb taste/odor so beverages other than water can be carried. It comes with a non-toxic Tritan screw-on cap, but a stainless one is available. The Ti cup is non-stick, easy to clean, heats faster than steel and includes a lid. It will not rust. It's not cheap, but it's built very well and will last several lifetimes.

2

MAKE: EEZOX
MODEL: Gun Care
MSRP: \$4 (1.5-ounce dropper)
URL: EEZOX.com

We've been using EEZOX for a number of years, and it's a solid product. It's an excellent cleaner, a good lubricant, and we haven't had any corrosion or rust on anything we've used it on. It's a dry lubricant; and, if applied correctly, there's no film at all, so it won't collect lint or dust—making it perfect for pistols used for pocket carry. To use: Strip the firearm and clean it using EEZOX, then wipe everything dry. Then apply a clean, light coat and let it dry completely. Assemble the gun, and it's ready to go—no oil or residue. It leaves a nice-looking finish and makes future cleanings easier. Plus, it actually smells good.

3

MAKE: Buck Knives
MODEL: 110 Folding Hunter LT
MSRP: \$38
URL: BuckKnives.com

Every American kid's first knife since 1964 was a Buck 110, either handed down from his grandpa or his ol' man. New for 2018 is the LT, made of lightweight molded nylon. It weighs next to nothing, at 3.2 ounces. The hollow-ground, clip-point blade is made of 420HC stainless steel, tumbled finish, and comes out of the box razor sharp and ready to go. The 110 has been around so long that the 110 LT feels a little odd, because it's so light. However, it has the same quality as its heavier brother and still opens with that satisfying *twack!* A nail nick is located on the left side of the blade for two-handed opening.

4

MAKE: Hogue
MODEL: Fixed Buttstock (AR15/M16 with A2 buffer tube)
MSRP: \$60 (OD Green, FDE, Red Lava [tested], purple, pink, aqua, Ghillie Green); \$50 (black)
URL: HogueInc.com

Fixed AR buttstocks aren't as popular as the more-versatile collapsible stock but are still superior for providing stability. Made of reinforced polymer, this Hogue fixed buttstock is lightweight and tough. It has three QD points on each side and three slots for sling mounting. It uses overmolded rubber for a comfortable cheek rest that Hogue advertises is "beard safe." A rubber buttpad stays in the shoulder and dampens recoil. The Fixed Buttstock is available in eight colors.



7

8



8



5

6



5

MAKE: Real Avid
MODEL: Armorer's Master Wrench
MSRP: \$60
URL: RealAvid.com

This is the most robust AR armorer's wrench we've used. Made of hardened stainless steel, it weighs over 1.5 pounds, and it's solid. It's designed with wrenches for the barrel nut, free-float barrel, muzzle break, castle nut and fixed stock receiver extension. It also accommodates a 1/2-inch torque wrench. It has a steel-head hammer and a receiver for interchangeable hammer heads of brass, nylon and rubber (included). Behind the hammer heads, torque specs are etched in for your reference.

6

MAKE: Heavy Cover
MODEL: Titanium Spork Multi-Tool
SPECS: Length 8.5 inches, 1.1 ounces
AVAILABLE COLORS: Metallic Gold (shown), blue (shown), Polished Ti
MSRP: \$23
URL: HeavyCoverInc.com

Although not technically a spork—it has a separate fork and spoon—this multi-tool makes a fine addition to any mess kit. In addition to the two eating utensils, it has a bottle opener and five wrenches (3, 4, 5, 8 and 10mm). Unlike many backpack eating utensils, this one works well: The fork is an actual fork, and the spoon is big enough to hold more than a rehydrated pea, making it appropriate for camp stews and soups. This multi-tool is also super lightweight.

7

MAKE: BlackPoint Tactical
MODEL: DualPoint AIWB Holster
AVAILABLE: Dozens of gun makes/models (SIG P365 shown)
MSRP: \$95 (holster); \$125 (holster plus pouch, as shown)
URL: BlackPointTactical.com

This is an innovative new holster design, and BlackPoint is jumping right in with a model for the new SIG Sauer P365. Designed from the ground up for appendix carry, the side-mounted metal strut loop pushes the grip toward the body, minimizing printing. The optional Plus Pouch (\$30) is attached to the holster via a flexible leather wing, so it bends with the contour of the body. It can also be carried IWB and positioned anywhere along a belt; and, by changing out hardware, it can be converted for OWB carry. This holster is fully adjustable for retention, ride height and cant.

MAKE: Center Line Systems
MODEL: The "Mother" Canteen Carrier
MSRP: \$100
URL: Center-Line-Systems.com

Much more than a canteen carrier, the MCC is designed for the maximum amount of gear in a minimum amount of space. It carries the survival essentials—water, fire, shelter and food. The main pouch can carry just about any individual-sized water vessel on the market (Heavy Cover, Yeti, Nalgene, etc.) and has a rubberized nylon interior to keep moisture inside so contents in external pockets don't get wet from condensation. An internal slot holds a canteen cup lid or small field stove. A large center pouch houses items such as a survival shelter, cell phone, water purifier, small handgun, etc. There are also two side pouches for a knife, cell phone, flashlight, 550 cord, IFAC, etc. Two sets of MOLLE loops are for attaching additional items or holding chem lights. The MCC can be mounted/carried using the MOLLE-compatible back side or carried using the sturdy shoulder straps. All materials, buckles and stitching are heavy duty. This carrier comprises design and manufacture at their best. Center Line Systems is a veteran-owned company whose products are made in the USA by the hands of real people.



A no-frills riflescope—made here, in the United States—to bring in the meat. Yes, this American VX-Freedom 3-9x50 also has a place on imported rifles.

LEUPOLD'S NEW LINE OF RIFLESCOPES: THE VX- FREEDOM

A COMBINATION OF FORMER OFFERINGS, IT ALSO INCLUDES SOME REDESIGNED FEATURES.

The VX-Freedom line of riflescopes from Leupold is new for 2018. It replaces the venerable and respected VX-1 and VX-2 series. The VX-Freedom is an amalgamation of those former offerings and incorporates some redesigned features.

The Freedom line is priced at the low end of Leupold offerings. The 2-7x33 Rimfire has an MSRP of \$235, and the highest-priced Freedom, the 4-12x40, has an affordable MSRP of \$390. Street prices are significantly lower. There are eight models available, including rimfire and muzzleloader variants, and some have multiple reticle choices.



SCOPE FEATURES

Tubes. The scopes are constructed with two-piece, 1-inch tubes. Contrary to popular opinion, larger-diameter tubes do not transmit a brighter image; instead, they only allow more room for elevation and windage adjustment. Most hunting applications for which these scopes were designed have little or no use for more turret adjustments than what a 1-inch tube can deliver. The classic 1-inch tube is light and does not significantly alter the weight of a medium-weight gun like a larger-tubed model can.

The glass inside the tube has what Leupold calls its Twilight Light Management System. This system of coatings reduces glare, increases contrast and increases performance in low-light conditions. The outer lens surfaces are “scratch resistant to military-standard extreme abrasion specifications.”

Reticles. The reticle focus is adjusted by unfastening the lock ring on the eyepiece and screwing the entire eyepiece in or out until sharp reticle focus is achieved. Then, tighten the lock ring. This saves manufacturing costs and was the standard way to adjust reticles to fit the individual shooter's eyes until fast-focus eyepieces came into vogue in the last decade. Remember: The eyepiece only focuses the reticle to your eye. It has little to do with your overall picture quality.

Power rings. In front of the eyepiece is a newly designed power ring. It's easily grasped with frozen and gloved hands. (On the two samples I received, the ring moved smoothly and without noticeable differences in feel between “low” and “high” power.)

Eye Relief. Eye relief is a typically excellent attribute on Leupold scopes, and the Freedom is no different, at around 4 inches at “low” or “high” power. This is plenty of room to avoid filleting your eyebrow with the edge of the eyepiece under heavy recoil or contorted shooting positions.

Turrets. The turrets have ¼ MOA clicks and are not sloppy nor cheap-feeling; rather, they are fundamentally sound. They are simple knobs—undoubtedly a large reason the VX-Freedom line can be sold at such reasonable prices.

The turrets are not resettable to zero, although there is a sliding friction ring with a gap on it that you can place where

To many shooters, the gold ring around their Leupold scopes are similar to the halo over a saint!



Slide the gap in the gold-colored friction ring to mark your zero under the non-resettable knobs.

your turret's “zero” is. So that you don't align the zero on the turret on your sighted-in optic to a mark on the scope, you move the friction ring to the place under the zero on your turret wherever it ends up. This is not an issue at all for the way these scopes will be used. Leupold calls the markings on the turrets “high contrast.” These markings could use a bit of prettying up.

TESTING THE SCOPES

I received two new VX-Freedom scopes for testing: a 3-9x50 with a Duplex reticle and a 2-7x33 Rimfire with Leupold's Rimfire MOA reticle.

The Freedom 3-9x50 would have been patriotically perfect on a new Ruger American rifle, but I instead mounted it on a favorite hunting rifle—a Howa 1500 in .30-06. This rifle has accounted for dozens of animals from the plains of Africa to the cliffs of Montana.

The Freedom scope is simple, just like the rifle: no frills, but fundamentally sound in construction and quality control. This scope would be an ideal choice atop one of the new crop of economy American hunting rifles from Savage, Weatherby, Remington and others. These are all guns that will work every time, but with economy of frills. Yes, the scope worked on my Japanese Howa as well.

The scope adjusted perfectly as asked, and the huge 5.55mm exit pupil at 9x from the 50mm objective lens allows more light to enter your pupil in low-light conditions. The Duplex reticle is a standard invented by Leupold, and it draws your eye to the center of the crosshairs for easier shot placement.

Keeping it all-American this time, I mounted the 2-7x33 Rimfire on a Ruger 10/22. This little scope is perfectly sized for the compact autoloader when equipped with a standard barrel and stock. It's fast, attractive, simple and unintimidating. Like the 3-9x50, it adjusted perfectly and was simply a joy to use with this pet rifle. The Rimfire MOA reticle has hash marks for elevation adjustments and is clean and unobtrusive. I didn't shoot the 10/22 at such distances that the reticle was useful, but it's a useable feature that doesn't add too much to the overall cost of the scope.



Proud Americans build these in Beaverton, Oregon.





The VX-Freedom 2-7x33 Rimfire is perfect sitting atop "America's .22 rifle"—the Ruger 10/22.

The VX-Freedom line, like all Leupold scopes, is "Made, Designed, Assembled in the U.S.A." Every Leupold scope is tested to the same ruggedness and quality-control standards as its top-tier products.

Some shooters feel the golden ring on Leupold scopes is similar to the halo over a saint. This new VX-Freedom line of scopes might not be considered holy, but these scopes will help put lots of "holies" in your targets.

Hooray for a reasonably priced quality scope made here on our home ground! **GW**



The lock ring secures the eyepiece after adjusting for reticle sharpness.

LEUPOLD VX-FREEDOM 3-9X50

SPECIFICATIONS

WEIGHT: 14.6 ounces
LENGTH: 12.1 inches
TUBE DIAMETER: 1 inch
MOUNTING SPACE: 4.79 inches
LINEAR FIELD OF VIEW (LOW): 33.1 feet
LINEAR FIELD OF VIEW (HIGH): 13.6 feet
EYE RELIEF (LOW): 4.17 inches
EYE RELIEF (HIGH): 3.66 inches
ELEVATION AND WINDAGE ADJUSTMENT RANGE: 60 MOA
MSRP: \$325

LEUPOLD VX-FREEDOM 2-7X33 RIMFIRE

SPECIFICATIONS

WEIGHT: 11.1 ounces
LENGTH: 11.04 inches
TUBE DIAMETER: 1 inch
MOUNTING SPACE: 4.81 inches
LINEAR FIELD OF VIEW (LOW): 43.8 feet
LINEAR FIELD OF VIEW (HIGH): 17.8 feet
EYE RELIEF (LOW): 4.17 inches
EYE RELIEF (HIGH): 3.70 inches
ELEVATION AND WINDAGE ADJUSTMENT RANGE: 75 MOA
MSRP: \$235

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Steven K. Ledin is a former U.S. Navy nuclear gunner's mate and current director of a prominent online optics retailer. He's a CCW and NRA instructor and has been a sponsored competitive shooter and private investigator. He has hunted (and gotten lost) from Alaska to Africa.

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The .22 is ideal for teaching young shooters how to safely handle firearms. These bullets produce minimal muzzle blast and almost no recoil, so they allow kids to devote their attention to safe gun-handling. This young shooter is using a Savage Rascal—the perfect rimfire for a small-statured shooter.

IN PRAISE OF THE .22 LR

THE WORLD'S FAVORITE FIREARM CARTRIDGE CAN DO MORE THINGS THAN YOU'D IMAGINE.

When I was 7 years old, I shot my first .22 LR, and a year later, I was given my own .22 rifle. I suppose “given” isn’t exactly correct—my father kept the gun under lock and key and made sure I followed safety protocol whenever we headed to the range.

But in my mind, that was *my* rifle and mine alone, and although it was incredibly basic by some standards (a single-shot bolt-action with rough sights, a rather plain stock and a heavy trigger), that was the gun with which I learned how to operate a firearm safely and effectively. And, over time, I became fairly adept—let’s call it “minute-of-soda-can”—with that .22.

... THE .22 LR IS LIMITED WITH REGARD TO ITS EFFECTIVENESS AS A HUNTING ROUND, BUT THERE IS NO CARTRIDGE BETTER SUITED FOR TEACHING NEW SHOOTERS HOW TO SAFELY HANDLE FIREARMS.

My story is hardly unique. But, like so many other shooters, I drifted away from the .22 LR to larger and more capable cartridges.

I find myself coming back to my .22 roots more and more often, however, and I'm learning to appreciate just how much I still have to learn from the .22. There are a lot of reasons to love this cartridge, and the mild .22 offers something for every shooter—even experienced cranks.

A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF THE .22 LONG RIFLE

Although the .22 LR is, in terms of sales, the most popular firearm cartridge in the world, very few shooters know how this cartridge evolved or the origin of its name.

In the late 1850s, Smith & Wesson developed an enclosed .22 round for its First Model revolver, and it became an immediate hit. About 15 years later, an extended version of the Smith & Wesson appeared, and the world suddenly had a short and long .22.

Not even the mild .22 was immune to the magnum craze, and, in the 1880s, the .22 Extra Long arrived on the scene. Finally, in 1887, the J. Stevens Arms and Tool Company got the recipe right: It took the case from the .22 Long, loaded it with the 40-grain bullet from the .22 Extra Long and created the cartridge we now know as the .22 Long Rifle. Cheap, accurate and quiet, the .22 Long Rifle soon found worldwide acceptance.

With some practice and quality ammunition, rimfire rifles are incredibly accurate. This 50-yard group was produced using Aquila's SuperExtra load.

Even as many rimfire cartridges died away in the wake of modern centerfire rounds, the ubiquitous .22 Long Rifle thrived. Oh, it's almost certainly been overshadowed a bit by a laundry list of other cartridges that have come to pass since the late 1880s, but a few years ago, the shooting world witnessed just how popular the .22 LR still is: When there was a national rush to purchase ammunition, the very first round to disappear from store shelves was the .22 Long Rifle, and when boxes of .22 ammo arrived at gun stores, there was a long list of people willing to pay inflated prices—just to have more rimfire ammo.

THE .22 LR AS A HUNTING ROUND

For small game at moderate ranges, the .22 is still a superb choice; and, with so many new rifles, optics and .22 loads, the modern Long Rifle is more capable than ever before. In many states, tree squirrel seasons start at the end of summer; and, in some areas, ground squirrel and woodchuck seasons are open year-round. So, there's plenty of opportunity to spend time in the field swatting rodents of all shapes and sizes with these mild guns.

If you want to sharpen your hunting skills and provide plenty of meat for the pot, spend some time in the winter still-hunting cottontails with a rimfire rifle. And, when it comes to hunting furbearing species, the .22 is an ideal choice, which is why so many hunters carry these rifles when chasing raccoons with hounds and why the .22 has been the firearm-of-choice for trappers for over a century.

Although it's hardly the ideal option, I know of at least one fur hunter who used a .22 with hot, 40-grain plated bullets to hunt fox at close range, because the report was so quiet, and there was absolutely no fur damage. Fox are certainly at the upper end of the .22's capabilities, but that gentleman chose his shots carefully, knew his weapon well and never stretched the .22 beyond its limits.





I FIND MYSELF COMING BACK TO MY .22 ROOTS MORE AND MORE OFTEN ... AND I'M LEARNING TO APPRECIATE JUST HOW MUCH I STILL HAVE TO LEARN FROM THE .22.

THE ULTIMATE TRAINING ROUND

Yes, the .22 LR is limited in regard to its effectiveness as a hunting round, but there is no cartridge better suited for teaching new shooters how to safely handle firearms.

For starters, there are many .22s that are perfectly sized for even the smallest shooters; guns such as the Savage Rascal (see the article on this gun that begins on page 72 of this issue of *Gun World*). The primary issue most new shooters have is that they are trying to learn to fire a gun that overwhelms them, either in terms of recoil, muzzle blast and/or gun weight. But a light .22 is manageable, and that allows novice shooters to focus on details such as sight alignment and trigger control.

The .22 is not just a round for new shooters, though, and every hunter needs to have a training rifle to help them concentrate on the finer points of proper shooting technique. I know that after a session on the range with a powerful magnum, I like to cool down with a few dozen rounds of .22. No matter how much we'd like to think we can all handle magnum recoil effectively, a session with a .22 helps shooters of all skill levels focus on the minute details that rob accuracy.

There are many different .22 loads available for everything from low-priced plinking to match shooting to small-game hunting. And now that supply has caught up with demand, .22 ammo is cheap—between a nickel and a dime per round.

It's much easier for me to diagnose my technique issues, as well as those of other shooters, with a .22 LR than with a larger, more-powerful round. Additionally, more .22 models are offered with threaded barrels so that you can add a suppressor and reduce noise levels even further. Cans are also a great upgrade if you're doing pest control near urban or suburban areas.

Perhaps most importantly, .22 practice is affordable. Whereas it costs shooters roughly a dollar or more each time they fire a round of factory centerfire ammo, you can expect to spend roughly a nickel to a dime with each trigger pull of a .22. That means you can get in a lot of pre-season practice and build skills that will make you a better big-game hunter with more-powerful rounds. **GW**

Squirrels are the primary quarry for rimfire hunters. These animals require patience and precise shooting—lessons that carry over when hunting any big-game animal.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brad Fitzpatrick is a full-time freelance writer based in Ohio. His works have appeared in several print and online publications, and he is the author of two books: *The Shooter's Bible Guide to Concealed Carry* and *Handgun Buyer's Guide 2015*. He has hunted on four continents and was a collegiate trap and skeet shooter before becoming a writer.

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This is not what it looks like—nobody's planning to dispose of a body. These items just keep things clean, tied down and dust free ... seriously!

CHANNEL YOUR INNER “MACGYVER”

FIX-IT GEAR YOUR
RANGE BAG CAN'T
DO WITHOUT

My love for guns and shooting pairs well with my dislike for housework and cleaning. However, I do love organizing my range bag, and I make it a point to carry a few items that even “MacGyver” would be proud of.

Aside from packing what you must have for the range, there are other items you should consider tucking away in your range bag or vehicle for those range emergencies for which you wish you had thought ahead.

Here are 15 things I have used or have heard of that I now keep with my gear.



➤ PAPERCLIPS

My number-one use for a paperclip is as a takedown pin for my 2011 pistol. It can also be used to mend a canopy, re-hang a target or fix a sling. I've seen sling hardware break while hunting, and a paperclip can be fashioned into a working fix. A paperclip can also secure excess sling out of the way.

➤ VELCRO

Not just for toddler shoes, Velcro makes legit first aid for problems in the field. It is handy for keeping your magazine pouches from sliding around on your belt or keeping duck calls and other gear from making noise while hunting. I once gave a piece of Velcro to a friend whose pants fly broke in the middle of a match. It also works great to couple two Sure-Fire AR mags to create a monopod, repair broken straps or hook gear to a belt while dragging game out of the woods.

➤ UMBRELLA

Keeping your gear bag or yourself dry are obvious uses for an umbrella. But if you need a squib rod, an umbrella rib can work.

➤ DUCT TAPE

From repairing ripped pants to reinforcing a makeshift bipod to fashioning a pistol magazine pouch, duct tape can save the day. It works as shipping tape to send your ammo home from a hunt and is the product-of-choice when repairing a broken range cart or taping target sticks that have broken. I leave a roll of duct tape in my car at all times.



Forgetting a takedown pin for a 2011 or needing a piece of wire to secure a sling or strap on your gear makes having a stash of paperclips a good plan.

➤ NAIL POLISH

I prefer using super glue, but if your fiber-optic sight falls out, many women use nail polish to double as a temporary glue. I have used this on the fiber-optic for a Glock, and it worked great.

➤ ZIP TIES

These are my go-to belt-keepers. With the aggressive movement in 3-gun matches, gear can get snagged. Use zip ties to prevent your gear and belt from moving and shifting. I have also attached slings and bipods to rifles and secured gear to my belt or zipper pull to free up a hand when hunting. I've secured game tags to deer and even used a very small zip tie in place of a takedown pin.

➤ LOCTITE

I keep a tube of Loctite in my makeup bag. I've used it on the screw on my pistol magwell, pins that walk, sight screws and other small parts. Loctite is less MacGyver and more of a necessity for a well-stocked range bag. Formulas with different levels of hold are available—from "This keeps the screw from moving but can be removed with a screwdriver" to "This isn't coming apart with a jackhammer."

Whether you are a guy or girl, loading a shotgun can often lead to painful thumbnails. The number of times I've needed to super glue my thumbnail has taught me that this item is invaluable to have in my vehicle.



Sometimes, life gives you late nights and tired eyes. You overlook what you thought you had stowed in your gear box and end up needing to make due with what's at hand.

I ... LOVE ORGANIZING MY RANGE BAG, AND I MAKE IT A POINT TO CARRY A FEW ITEMS THAT EVEN "MACGYVER" WOULD BE PROUD OF.



➤ JB WELD

I've use JB Weld to repair stocks and other nonstructural parts, along with filling cracks and holding things in place. It's not a permanent solution, but in a pinch, it's strong enough to keep you in the match or out in the field. (Don't repair anything structural on a firearm with this fix!)

➤ ALCOHOL WIPES

Shooting ranges come with splinters, dust, bugs ... all sorts of things that can irritate. Pack alcohol wipes for cuts, bee stings, and to clean glasses or parts of a firearm.

➤ LIGHTER

You need a lighter or flame to melt fiber-optic when you replace it or to repair a frayed rope or a belt. And, if you are stranded while hunting, a source of fire is always a good plan.

➤ STAPLER

Securing targets is the obvious use for a stapler, but if you don't have needle and thread or Velcro, a stapler works in a pinch to mend torn pants or a broken fly (you might want to remove the pants first, though!). In a match setting, a spare stapler will earn you brownie points with any range officer whose stage has ground to a halt because they need staples.

I KEEP A TUBE OF LOCTITE IN MY MAKEUP BAG. I'VE USED IT ON THE SCREW ON MY PISTOL MAGWELL, PINS THAT WALK, SIGHT SCREWS AND OTHER SMALL PARTS.

It's the little things that count, and sometimes, those are so small that they're easily overlooked. Don't overlook things that can be stashed in your range bag or vehicle that might save the day!

➤ SEWING KIT

Of course, the best way to fix torn clothing, mend slings, repair bags and shooting rests is with a good, old-fashioned needle and thread; and they're usually free from a hotel.

➤ SHOWER CAP

Another hotel item is a shower cap. Use it to cover your pistol to keep the rain and dust off. A shower cap also works as a makeshift cover for your phone or camera.

➤ CHAPSTICK

ChapStick is handy to fend off the sun and wind. In addition, if you are working with someone who cannot shoot with both eyes open, a little bit of ChapStick on the non-dominant eye's shooting glasses lens can work as an occluder to help them focus with the correct eye.

➤ MEDICINE

A little less MacGyver and more Florence Nightingale, I learned the hard way that medicine is a must when competing overseas. Dramamine will always be in my range bag—along with charcoal capsules for food poisoning or intestinal distress. Eye drops help with dust (for example, Boiron Optique is a single-dose eye drop. You can put a few in your bag and forget about

It doesn't take much to potentially save someone's day or keep their appendages from swelling up: Benadryl for bee stings, eye drops to clear dust/debris from the eyes, ChapStick for the lips, and alcohol wipes for cleaning wounds and optic lenses.



them until you need them). Benadryl is a must for those who are mildly allergic to bee stings. In fact, I've seen range officers get stung and worry because they didn't have an antihistamine; they were overjoyed to be handed a Benadryl.

It might help you out of a tough spot, from saving your entire party from listening to someone whine about their chapped lips to having all the game scared off by clanking calls around your neck. **GW**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Author Becky Yackley competes in action shooting (3 Gun, USPSA, Bianchi and IPSC) with her husband and three sons. When she isn't shooting matches or writing, she is busy with her camera. Becky is the founder of the 2A Heritage Junior shooting camps and works in social media for several firearms industry companies.

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Critical missions demand a weapon that is adaptable to changing situations on the fly. SIG Sauer addresses this requirement with the MCX Virtus Patrol rifle.

Conceived by SIG Sauer for the Special Operations community, hunters and competitors will find it equally appealing. A quick-change barrel provides the operator with the ability to change between 5.56x45 NATO and .300 Blackout in a couple of minutes, allowing the shooter to tailor the gun for their needs at the time, whether it is hog hunting or 3-gun competition.

Accuracy and longevity are also mission-critical. The new Matchlite Duo 2-stage trigger allows the operator to better realize the rifle's accuracy, and the cold hammer-forged barrel provides longevity unmatched by other barrel types.

WHAT'S NEW

The SIG Sauer MCX Virtus Patrol is the follow-up to the MCX Patrol R rifle. The new Matchlite Duo 2-stage trigger replaces the MIL-SPEC trigger used on the MCX Patrol R. The finish on the Virtus Patrol's receiver and handguard is gray Cerakote Elite, whereas a hardcoat-anodized finish is used on the Patrol R. An M-Lok attachment system is used on the Virtus Patrol's 15-inch handguard, while the Keymod system is used on the Patrol R's handguard. The quick-change barrel now has a new profile and uses a bolt with tapered lugs. The trigger alone is worth the \$102 difference between the old and the new MCX Patrol rifles.

MCX VIRTUS PATROL

SIG SAUER'S GAS PISTON RIFLE IS TOUGH, ACCURATE AND HIGHLY ADAPTABLE, WITH HUNDREDS OF USER-CHANGEABLE CONFIGURATIONS FOR CHANGING MISSIONS.





The SIG Sauer MCX Virtus Patrol rifle is accurate, adaptable to a variety of missions and lightweight. Its gray Cerakote Elite finish gives it a great-looking and durable finish.

OPERATION

Like its predecessor, the MCX Virtus Patrol is a magazine-fed, gas-operated semiautomatic rifle. A short-stroke gas piston operates the bolt carrier group (BCG), keeping it free from hot gases and residue inherent with the direct impingement design found on most ARs. The two-position gas block has “+” and “-” settings to optimize performance with different types of ammo and for suppressor usage. This can be set through the top of the handguard using the bullet tip of a cartridge.

Being of light weight and compact dimensions, the Virtus Patrol is ideal for carrying in a vehicle or for CQB operations. It can be fired with the stock folded; but when it is folded, the stock prevents access to the bolt release lever. Plus, bolt lockback after the last round is not assured. With a little practice, the stock can be folded or opened in a fraction of a second.

Controls are like those of any standard AR, except that the safety, magazine release and the charging handle are bilateral. A forward assist and an ejection port cover are also provided.

Some AR manufacturers use a tension screw to remove play between the upper and lower receivers. SIG Sauer uses a simple rubber compression block instead. This eliminates

The buttstock on the MCX Virtus Patrol folds neatly to the left side of the receiver. Unfortunately, when folded, it blocks access to the bolt release lever. Folding the stock will also trigger the release of the bolt if it is locked to the rear.



movement between the upper and lower receivers and requires no adjustment.

The folding SIG Sauer buttstock has five settings for length and quickly folds to the left side. A simple polymer pistol grip with an integral battery storage compartment and without finger grooves works for all hand sizes. QD sling attachment points are located on each side, and at the rear of the buttstock, lower receiver and handguard.

The 15-inch alloy handguard has a 1913 MIL-SPEC rail on top and M-LOK attachment points at the 3, 6 and 9 o'clock positions. It attaches to the receiver by sliding into grooves in the extended upper receiver and is secured by the front pivot pin.

The 16-inch carbon steel barrel is cold hammer-forged and capped with a three-prong flash hider. Removal and installation are easy using only a T27 Torx bit and a torque wrench. Simply field-strip the rifle, remove the carriage assembly and the front pivot pin. Then, separate the upper and lower halves. Loosen the two captive barrel clamping bolts using the T27 Torx bit, and pull the barrel straight out of the upper receiver. It might be necessary to insert a 1-inch-diameter wood dowel through the upper receiver and tap the barrel out. To re-install the barrel,



Looking into the rear of the upper receiver, you can see the upper area where the bolt return springs operate and the back of the carriage assembly. Note the dual operating levers and springs on the charging handle.

CONCEIVED BY SIG SAUER FOR THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMUNITY, HUNTERS AND COMPETITORS WILL FIND IT EQUALLY APPEALING.



make sure all surfaces are clean and that the barrel index pins are aligned properly. Then, slide the barrel in until it seats firmly in place; tighten the barrel clamp to 60 inch-pounds. (All the necessary parts are included in a Caliber Exchange Kit [MSRP: \$612]).

VARIATIONS

The MCX Virtus product line includes the Patrol chambered in 5.56 NATO and .300 BO with a 16-inch barrel; an SBR version in both 5.56 NATO (11.5-inch barrel) and .300 BO (9-inch barrel); and a pistol version in both 5.56 NATO (11.5-inch barrel) and .300 BO (6.75-inch barrel). The original MCX versions are also still available.

AMMUNITION & MAGAZINES

I used five different factory loads for the accuracy portion of this report. These loads, as well as several other 55-grain FMJ factory loads, functioned without any problems through the approximately 600 rounds I fired.

The Hornady 55-grain TAP ammunition clearly provided the best accuracy in this evaluation: 0.99-inch average for three five-shot groups. Black Hills 55-grain FMJ ammunition came in second: just under 1.5 inches.

I used several different magazines during this evaluation.

The upper and lower receivers open for cleaning, just as on any standard AR-15.

These included the supplied Lancer L5 and ones made by Magpul (PMAG, various generations) and C-Products Defense. All of them functioned flawlessly.

OPTICS

No sights are provided with the MCX Virtus Patrol, so I used a variety of optics for the different parts of this evaluation.

For the 100-yard accuracy evaluation, I used a Nightforce 7-35x56mm ATACR F1 riflescope with an MOAR reticle. It was mounted using a Nightforce X-Treme Duty Ultralite Unimount. I have used this combination for several evaluations, because it is a no-alibi setup: If there is a problem with accuracy, it isn't the scope or the mount.

I used a SIG Sauer ROME04S red-dot optic with a quick-detach mount for the CQB work. The reticle is illuminated (red) using solar and battery power. The reticle can be changed among Ballistic Circle QuadPlex, Ballistic Circle QuadPlex with holdover points, Plex, and Plex with holdover points by simply holding the "+" and "-" illumination buttons simultaneously for approximately three seconds.



TRIJICON ACCUPOWER RIFLESCOPE

Released in 2017, the Trijicon AccuPower 1-8x28 rifle scope is designed for competitive, tactical and sporting applications. This scope offers rapid target acquisition at 1x and precision targeting out to medium distances at 8x. Its first focal plane reticle allows subtensions and drops to remain constant at all magnifications. This allows the shooter to quickly gauge distance and apply the appropriate holdover and offset.

The scope I used had an MOA segmented-circle crosshair reticle with red illumination. This scope is also available with green illumination. A MIL version reticle is also available with either red or green LED illumination. There are 11 brightness levels, with an "off" position between each brightness setting.

The power adjustment ring worked smoothly, with just enough friction to hold settings. Elevation and windage adjustments are made by first extending the turret, making the adjustment and then collapsing the turret. Once the scope is zeroed, the adjusters can be set to zero by unscrewing the turret cap, lifting the turret off of the shaft, replacing it on the shaft at the "zero" position and then re-installing the cap. There is no parallax adjustment.

This scope is extremely well built, and the adjustments are repeatable. One area in which this scope excels is the ability to shoot with both eyes open. Using the Bindon Aiming Concept (named after Trijicon founder Glyn Bindon) at powers above 1x, using the illuminated aiming point in the reticle and by focusing on the target through the magnified eye, the brain will view the target through the non-magnified eye and superimpose the reticle on the target.

This is beneficial while hunting and shooting at a moving target and when in a tactical environment, where situational awareness is important. With proper care, the Trijicon AccuPower 1-8x28 rifle scope will last a lifetime or two. I mounted it using the LaRue Tactical SPR /M4 Scope Mount QD LT-104, and it was rock solid.

SPECIFICATIONS

- MAKE:** Trijicon
- PRODUCT LINE:** AccuPower
- MODEL:** RS27-C-1900026
- FOCAL PLANE:** First
- MAGNIFICATION:** 1-8x
- OBJECTIVE LENSE DIAMETER:** 28mm
- WEIGHT:** 28 ounces
- ADJUSTMENT INCREMENTS:** 1/4 MOA per click
- TUBE SIZE:** 34mm
- TOTAL AMOUNT OF ADJUSTMENT:** 100 MOA
- LENGTH:** 10.8 inches
- WATERPROOF:** To 10 feet



Firing the MCX Virtus Patrol from the bench using a Nightforce ATACR 7-35x56 F1 rifle scope

Finally, for a three-gun tactical competition, I used a Trijicon AccuPower 1-8x28mm F1 rifle scope using a LaRue Tactical QD LT-104 mount. This setup worked well for speed and accuracy—from CQB distances of a few yards out to 100-yard paper targets. This is an expensive combination, but it is solid, precise and repeatable when removed and reinstalled.

AT THE RANGE

I found the MCX Virtus Patrol a pleasure to shoot during 100-yard accuracy evaluations. The trigger on the reviewed rifle had a slightly rough second stage, but SIG Sauer has made a running change to the trigger, so this is no longer an issue.

The end result was that I found one factory load that produced a sub-MOA average for three consecutive five-shot groups. The Hornady 55-grain TAP FPD ammunition produced a 0.56-inch five-shot group along the way to a 0.99-inch average for three five-shot groups. Second place went to Black Hills 55-grain FMJ ammunition, with a 1.48-inch average for three five-shot groups. Both are very respectable averages for a rifle of this type.

SIG maintained the forward assist and dust cover while adding a bilateral safety and charging handle.





The gas regulator and piston assembly are attached to the top of the CHF barrel. Note the two Torx socket head cross bolts to the lower left of the barrel that clamp the barrel extension to the upper receiver.



Shown here with the charging handle, the bolt carriage assembly stays much cleaner than does the bolt carrier group (BCG) in a direct-impingement-style AR-15.

The piston-operated system mitigated what little recoil there was from the 5.56x45/.223 Rem. ammunition, and I didn't miss the spring *twang* from the buffer assembly found on most direct impingement ARs.

One of the most notable benefits of the gas piston system over the direct impingement system is how much cleaner the BCG stays. There is no gas tube or gas key to clean with a pipe cleaner, no need to scrape the carbon off the bolt radius, and the whole action stays much cleaner.

AGAINST THE COMPETITION

I couldn't wait to use the SIG Sauer MCX Virtus Patrol at my monthly 3-gun tactical match. The MCX Virtus Patrol didn't let me down.

The rifle performed well in the transition drill during combat task evaluations and the mid-range (40 to 50 yards) stage. The Trijicon AccuPower 1-8x28 F1 scope was a big help in the mid-range stage. I then scored 91 out of 100 at the 100-yard stage.

For the shooting-while-moving and shoot house stages, I switched to the ROME04S red-dot sight. I had a few misses on the shooting-while-moving stage but didn't do badly.

The shoot house was a problem for me, however. I wanted to use the Virtus Patrol with the stock folded, but at the last minute, I decided that the inability to reach the bolt release lever would be a liability if I had to make a magazine change. As a result, I elected to go in with the stock out, fully collapsed.

That worked okay, but I just couldn't get used to the sling position when moving from strong side to weak side and back, and my operation of the safety while moving from room to room wasn't as smooth as it needed to be. I found myself overexposed several times because I didn't get the safety off quickly enough. (I'm used to

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SIG SAUER MCX VIRTUS PATROL

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 5.56 NATO (.300 BO available)
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 30-round Lancer L5
ACTION TYPE: Semiautomatic, magazine fed
OPERATING SYSTEM: Short-stroke gas piston
BARREL: 16 inches, cold hammer-forged carbon steel, nitride finish
MUZZLE DEVICE: SIG Sauer three-prong flash hider; 1/2x28 threads
HANDGUARD: 15-inch M-LOK
UPPER RECEIVER: 6061 aluminum extrusion
LOWER RECEIVER: 7075 aluminum forging
RECEIVER FINISH: Stealth Gray Cerakote Elite
INTERNAL PARTS FINISH: FNC, DLC or magnesium phosphate
RIFLING: 1:7-inch twist rate
SCOPE MOUNT: Full-length, 1913 MIL-SPEC rail
SIGHTS: None
TRIGGER: SIG Sauer Matchlite Duo 2-stage; 5 pounds, 7.5 ounces (as tested, using a digital Lyman trigger pull gauge for 10 consecutive pulls)
STOCK: SIG Sauer five-position folding
GRIP: SIG Sauer polymer (no finger grooves); with battery storage compartment
OVERALL LENGTH: 35 5/8 inches extended; 33 1/2 inches collapsed; 26 7/8 inches folded
WEIGHT: 7 pounds, 8.7 ounces (without magazine)
MSRP: \$2,233

CONTACT INFORMATION

SIG SAUER
SIGSauer.com

BLACK HILLS
Black-Hills.com

DEFENDER AMMUNITION
DefenderAmmunition.com

HORNADY
Hornady.com

LARUE TACTICAL
LaRue.com

NIGHTFORCE
NightforceOptics.com

TRIJCON
Trijicon.com

A magazine release button has been added to the left side of the lower receiver.

the safety on my personal rifle, which is lighter and operates more smoothly than the one on the MCX Virtus Patrol—the difference between 600 and 10,000 rounds fired.)

The bottom line is that I received far too many procedurals in the shoot house to score well overall. Even after winning the pistol-only, man-on-man steel stage for my squad, I gave it all back—and then some—in the shoot house. My final rank was 25th out of 42 entries. The rifle did its part; I just failed to practice enough with it in the types of scenarios I would face at the match.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Sometimes, you get to shoot a rifle you are excited about and want it to perform well. That's how it was with the SIG Sauer MCX Virtus Patrol. I liked the looks and feel of the rifle right from the beginning, and it performed well throughout the evaluation.

It took a bit of work to squeeze the accuracy out of it that I was looking for, but given the limited time and ammunition I was afforded, finding a factory load that gave sub-MOA results was satisfying. I always hope for even better accuracy, but seldom find it in a factory AR.



SIG SAUER ROMEO4S OPTIC

SPECIFICATIONS

MODEL: SOR43022
MAGNIFICATION: 1x
MOUNT: Quick release
WEIGHT: 6.4 ounces
LENGTH: 3 3/8 inches
EYE RELIEF: Unlimited
OBJECTIVE LENS: 20mm
CLICK VALUE: 1/2 MOA
RETICLES INCLUDED: CirclePlex, CirclePlex with ballistic drop, Plex only, Plex with ballistic drop
ILLUMINATION: MOTAC (motion-activated illumination)
ILLUMINATION POWER: Solar with battery (CR2032) backup
MSRP: \$539.99

The Virtus Patrol's magazine well is generously beveled to facilitate smooth and quick magazine changes.



PERFORMANCE RESULTS

AMMUNITION	Velocity (fps)	E.S.	S.D.	Small Grp. (inches)	Avg. Grp. (inches)
Hornady TAP 55-grain FPD	2,882	62	21.6	0.56	0.99
Black Hills 55-grain FMJ	2,814	37	15.3	1.34	1.48
Black Hills 52-grain Match HP	2,950	66	22.9	1.66	1.88
Defender 5.56 77-grain SMK	2,468	54	19.3	1.74	1.90
Hornady American Gunner 55-grain HP	2,806	123	36.9	1.76	2.16

NOTES: Three five-shot groups were fired from a foam front rest and rear sandbag at 100 yards. **Small Grp.** = size of the smallest single group for that ammunition in inches; **Avg. Grp.** = the average group size in inches. Velocity is in feet per second (fps), calculated at the muzzle using a LabRadar device. **E.S.** = Extreme Spread; **S.D.** = Standard Deviation.

The rifle performed flawlessly throughout approximately 600 rounds of various types of ammunition and in various conditions. Added to that, I liked the way it felt and handled during competition.

The one thing that really sets the MCX Virtus Patrol above other ARs is the ability to quickly and easily change barrels and even cartridges. That type of modularity would make a big difference to someone looking for one platform that could be chambered for both 5.56x45 NATO and .300 Blackout ammunition.

If I were starting out fresh with an empty gun safe, I would buy the SIG Sauer MCX Virtus Patrol as a flexible, modular, accurate piston-operated AR. That said, I have to be picky these days, because there are only a few spots left in my gun safe. I already have several "favorite" ARs, and I seldom sell a firearm. If I can convince myself that I should have a .300 BO rifle, I will probably buy it. (I do want a piston-operated AR ...) **SW**



The SIG Sauer ROME04S red-dot optic was right at home on the SIG rifle.

HKS

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MARKSMANSHIP SKILLS, MEET
OTHER LIKE-MINDED WOMEN
OR JUST SOCIALIZE, THERE'S
A GROUP FOR YOU. ■■■

Over the past few years, I've had the opportunity to get involved with some female shooting groups and participate in various women-only events around the country. These experiences have broadened my horizons and opened my eyes to the purposes of the groups and the reasons women decide to join.

Thinking back, the first ladies-only firearms event I attended was Women on Target. These half- or full-day, hands-on instructional shooting clinics from the Women of the NRA are designed to give women experiences with firearms they might never have had the opportunity to try. The best part is that as a participant, you just show up. Experience and equipment are not necessary.

During this first event, I saw something I didn't expect to witness. When we had the opportunity to shoot an IDPA-type scenario, one of the women got a bit flustered after she shot ... actually, she was crying. Thinking back now, I can't remember what upset her; I just know she wanted to go home. Somehow, ■■■ I, along with a few other women, talked her through it and



convinced her to stay and participate in the rest of the clinics. She ended up having a great experience and enjoying herself.

After that event, I attended quite a few other women-only events that involved firearms experiences. These included Ohio's Becoming an Outdoors Woman.

MUTUAL SUPPORT

One thing I experienced with all of them is the support women give each other—from cheering and clapping to hugs after walking off the line. I saw mothers, daughters and even grandmothers in attendance; all were having a great time. These first experiences were quite a few years ago, maybe 10 or more.

Fast-forward to 2016, when I attended the Brownells' Ladies Fall Fest, a multi-gun competition put on by A Girl & A Gun (AG&AG). Although I knew about this women's shooting group and had met founder Julianna Crowder numerous times, I'd never been actively involved with this group. This would be another new experience for me—more than 200 women

Fellow *Gun World* columnist Becky Yackley helps another competitor with her gear.



■ The author's squad
■ at the first Brownells' Ladies Fall Fest



spending a weekend together and competing against each other. And I was a squad mom for 12 of them.

As with my past experiences at other women-only events, what happened was much more than I ever expected. My squad had quite a few ladies who had never competed in a match before and were somewhat nervous. Although they were apprehensive at first, they were soon comforted when they saw we all worked together as a team. Competitors shared gear and sometimes even guns if someone was experiencing malfunctions.

We helped each other stage guns prior to shooting and return

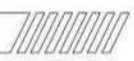
- On the range at the
- AG&AG National
- Conference

them to the table when finished. If someone struggled while they shot, we even coached them to breathe, take their time and then cheered them on. Yes, the dynamics of this ladies-only match were quite different than other matches I had participated in. Honestly, I don't know if many competitors even asked about their scores on the stage.

READY TO TRAIN

Because I had such a positive experience with the group of women at this match, I wanted to learn more about what these female shooting groups were all about. Fortunately, I had the opportunity in 2017 to teach at both the AG&AG





National Conference in Texas and The Well Armed Woman (TWAW) National Chapter Leader Conference in Utah.

My first impression at both of these events was, *Wow! These ladies are super-excited about being together and learning.* The cheering and clapping as they arrived at the range was almost over the top. They walked up to my bay, often in groups of two or more, with smiles on their faces and excitement in their eyes. They were ready to train!

What I actually taught throughout these events is irrelevant to this article. However, I held live-fire, hands-on demos with rifles,

live-fire training with pistols and rifles, and even classroom training demos with rifles. I came away from these training sessions with a new understanding of why these female-only shooting groups are so important to so many women.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Unlike other firearms classes I've attended or been involved with as an instructor, the students in these classes seemed eager to ask questions. Often, when a question was asked, I saw others nodding "Yes!" as if they had the same question. I felt we had a very open, nonjudgmental dialog—something not always present in mixed gender classes.

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Classroom instruction at an AG&AG National Conference





Above: The author demonstrates shooting positions at a TAW National Chapter Leader Conference. *Left:* She explains the “what and why.” *Bottom:* Then, she watches as the student does it.



MAKING MISTAKES

On the range during live fire, I witnessed those who were not currently shooting watch the line and vocally support the shooters. I even heard them reiterating tips I had mentioned when their friends might have been getting sloppy with their tactics. And if the shooter's shots on target weren't up to par, the positive support they received when they walked off the line gave them the courage they might have needed to keep working on it.

THAT AH-HAH! MOMENT

One of the most rewarding parts of being a trainer is seeing a concept click with a student. A few ladies came up to me after the class or later in the weekend and said, “I finally understand [fill in the blank here]. I've asked in other classes and just couldn't grasp it. Somehow, you said it in a way I understood.” As a teacher, I was thrilled.

I know what it's like to not grasp a concept. These all-female events seem to allow more-relaxed dialog, through which concepts are taught in a different way. Julianna Crowder calls it “speaking Girls.” No one is there to say, “That's just silly; I would never teach that way.” Well, if it enables someone who didn't “get it” before to now understand a concept, there must be something right about it.

BAGGAGE

This is where things were a bit uncomfortable for me. I own and use firearms for many different reasons: to compete, teach, hunt and, of course, for personal protection.

Some of the women I meet at these events become involved because of a tragic event from their past that involved a male. Regardless of the reason, they feel more comfortable learning

WE HELPED EACH OTHER STAGE GUNS PRIOR TO SHOOTING AND RETURN THEM TO THE TABLE WHEN FINISHED. IF SOMEONE STRUGGLED WHILE THEY SHOT, WE EVEN COACHED THEM TO BREATHE, TAKE THEIR TIME AND THEN CHEERED THEM ON.



The author instructs a group of women at the AG&AG Conference.



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from women and gain strength from being around them. They tell their stories and can often find someone who can relate to them when they are struggling. Yes, they might bring along some personal “baggage,” but these female shooting groups support them and help build them back up.

FIND YOUR GROUP

There are so many reasons to join a women’s shooting group, both at the national and local levels. Whether you want to learn something new, improve your marksmanship skills, meet other like-minded women or just socialize, there’s a group for you. It’s just a matter of finding one that fits your needs. Heck, my friend, Victoria Knowles-Lacks of England, recently expanded her Shotgun and Chelsea Bun Club and created the Ladies Shooting Club. This is quite an accomplishment, considering the gun laws across “the Pond.”

Founder Carrie Lightfoot speaks at a TAW National Chapter Leader Conference.



Colonel Grossman’s classroom at the TAW National Chapter Leader Conference



WOMEN’S SHOOTING GROUPS

A GIRL AND A GUN (AG&G): AGIRLANDAGUN.ORG

Julianna Crowder, founder of AG&G, states that this group’s events are intended to be fun, social gatherings at which women can come together for support, encouragement, ask questions in a safe and nonjudgmental environment, improve their marksmanship and bond together in the shooting community.

AG&G’S GOAL: to empower, educate and have fun at the range.

THE WELL ARMED WOMAN (TAWW): THEWELLARMEDWOMAN.COM

According to founder Carrie Lightfoot, TAWW is a complete resource for the female gun owner. It will introduce you to the ins and outs of armed self-defense, gun ownership, gun safety, shooting skills and products for women shooters.

TAWW’S GOAL: to educate, equip and empower woman as gun owners.

WOMEN ON TARGET: WOT.NRA.ORG

The Women on Target instructional shooting clinics are designed to teach you firearm safety and the fundamentals of marksmanship, giving you the confidence you need to safely handle and operate a firearm upon completion.

BABES WITH BULLETS: BABESWITHBULLETS.COM

Babes with Bullets is a traveling firearms academy that offers handgun and rifle training to women at all levels. Taught by an all-female team of national and world shooting sports champions, this group’s three-day gun camps are designed to teach women how to safely and confidently handle and operate a firearm in an informal “camp” atmosphere.

SHOOT LIKE A GIRL: SHOOTLIKEAGIRL.COM

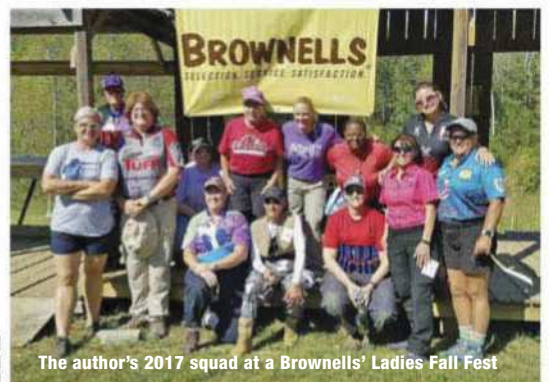
Karen Butler created Shoot Like a Girl to increase the number of women involved in shooting sports by empowering them to participate with confidence. Through Test Shots, women can shoot a 9mm pistol, .223 rifle and compound bow in a state-of-the-art, 53-foot mobile range that features military-grade firearms simulation systems.

Do your research, ask friends, stop at a local range, or go online to find a few of these groups in your area. Most will welcome women to attend a meeting or event and see what it is like.

You might want to find the answers to the following questions when you attend:

- When and where are the meetings held and how often?
- What events do they have planned and how far in advance?
- Am I comfortable with their gun-handling skills at the event I attended?
- Did I feel welcome in their group?
- What are the cost and benefits of joining this group?

Take your time; choose a group you enjoy. And along the way, if things change, move on. There are more than enough groups out there that will welcome you with open arms. **GW**

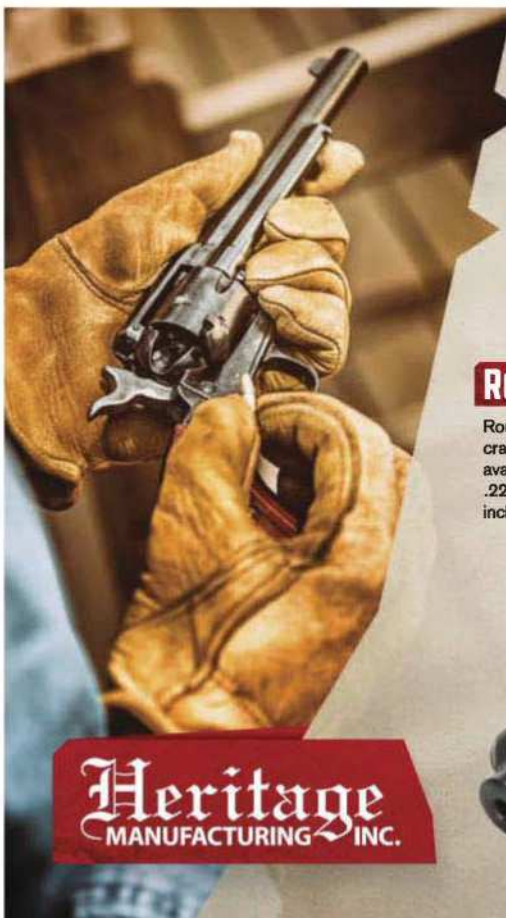


The author’s 2017 squad at a Brownells’ Ladies Fall Fest



A "groupie" at an AG&AG Conference. Women shooter groups are generally more supportive—with less pressure—than mixed gender groups, allowing participants to relax and have fun.

THERE ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH GROUPS OUT THERE THAT WILL WELCOME YOU WITH OPEN ARMS.



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MAKE: Propper

MODEL: Kinetic Tactical Pant

MSRP: \$55

URL: Propper.com

The Propper Kinetic Tactical Pant is built with durable NEXStretch mechanical stretch fabric. It is cut for a women's shape and designed to move the way she moves. This ripstop fabric with integrated stretch holds up against the most demanding conditions while offering premium comfort. A gripper waistband, cargo pockets with internal dividers, wider belt loops and gusseted crotch add to the updated, modern design. It is available in black, charcoal, coyote, khaki, LAPD Navy and olive in sizes 2 to 24 with an unhemmed length; short, regular or long.

WOMEN'S 2018 NEW GEAR ROUND-UP



MAKE: HidingHilda
MODEL: Jackie Bag
MSRP: \$110
URL: HidingHilda.com

HidingHilda's trendy Jackie Bag is one of the latest additions to the company's Concealed Carry purse line. It was designed in collaboration with Liz Lazarus, author of *Free of Malice*, which is based on her survival of an attack in college. The Jackie Bag is named after the protagonist in her second novel, *Plea for Justice*, which will be released this spring. It is machine washable, with a separate Velcro holstered compartment in the back to safely carry a firearm. It can be used right- or left-handed or even set up for top draw.



MAKE: Girls with Guns Clothing
MODEL: Carbine Pant
MSRP: \$70-\$80
URL: GWGClothing.com

Girls with Guns Clothing's Carbine Pant is both lightweight and water resistant. This tactical pant features four-way stretch and reinforced, articulated knees (with knee pad pocket) for a better range of motion. This everyday range-wear pant, with its asymmetrical design, has side cargo pockets, magazine pockets and a reinforced, 1½-inch waistband with belt loops and an accessory D-ring. An adjustable Velcro pull tab waistband and snap-adjustable inseam give the Carbine Pant a customizable fit. It is available in black in sizes XS-3XL and with a 32- to 36-inch inseam.



MAKE: Frogg Togg
MODEL: Grand Prairie Mudd Boots
MSRP: \$100
URL: FroggTogg.com



Frogg Togg's Grand Prairie Mudd Boot is lightweight and features a removable ethyl vinyl acetate (EVA) insole for added comfort. The fully lined boot is designed for optimal comfort, with 4mm neoprene for added warmth. At 14 inches tall with a molded rubber outsole, the pink-accented Realtree Xtra print is quite stylish. The Grand Prairie Mudd Boots are available in sizes 6 to 11.



MAKE: UnderTech Undercover
MODEL: Concealed Carry Crossroads Fitted Vest
MSRP: \$130
URL: UnderTechUndercover.com

UnderTech Undercover's Crossroads Vest is water resistant with quilted insulation, stretch side panels and reflective details. The dual key-locking zipper concealment pockets use Velcro to attach a universal handgun holster inside, allowing the wearer to conceal and carry most self-defense handguns. The other pocket is perfect for storing a spare magazine, keys or even a cell phone. For added comfort, the front zipper has a zipper "garage" to prevent chin chafing, and the back is mesh lined at the center for added ventilation. This vest is machine washable in cold water and is available in black and Army green in sizes XS-2XL.



MAKE: Girls with Guns Clothing
MODEL: Sable
MSRP: \$100-\$110
URL: GWGClothing.com

Girls with Guns Clothing's Sable soft-shell jacket is its first solid-color, non-camo jacket. The durable, water-resistant (DWR) finish is both windproof and breathable. The jacket features a four-way stretch material with highly articulated joints for a better range of motion. A zippered chest pocket, elastic wristband and no-fold collar add to the sleek design. It is available in black in sizes XS-3XL.



MAKE: Silver State Apparel
MODEL: Incline
MSRP: \$100
URL: SilverStateApparel.com

The Silver State Apparel Incline concealed-carry vest is made of a water-resistant, lightweight, breathable, fleece-lined, soft-shell fabric to block water and wind. Two large exterior double entry pockets are perfect for hand-warming on the top and in the inner pocket concealed carry. A wide elastic strap secures a small handgun and provides a trigger guard. A front zippered chest pocket is perfect for a cell phone, documents, wallet and keys. The Incline is machine washable and will be available in black and charcoal in sizes XS to 2XL this August.





MAKE: Syren
MODEL: L4S Sporting
MSRP: RH \$1,895, LH \$2,080
URL: SyrenUSA.com

Syren's L4S Sporting is designed to fit the female anatomy. It features a smaller pistol grip, making it ideal for a great variety of hand sizes. Syren has also added a higher-cheekpiece Monte Carlo comb and optimized the cast of the stock, pitch and length of pull. This easy-to-handle, 12-gauge competition shotgun has very low recoil. The signature purple Syren color is accented on the trigger, magazine end cap and cutoff button, and charging handle. Available with a 28- or 30-inch barrel for both right- and left-handed shooters.



MAKE: Propper
MODEL: Kinetic Short- and Long-Sleeve Shirts
MSRP: \$50 (short sleeves); \$55 (long sleeves)
URL: Propper.com

Propper's Kinetic Shirt is available in both short and long sleeves. These shirts are a perfect complement to the Kinetic Tactical Pant and are made from the same revolutionary NEXStretch fabric. Both styles feature collar stays, mic clips at shoulders, a chest patch pocket with pen slot, chest concealed document pockets and epaulette kit. The long-sleeved shirt has reinforced elbows and adjustable cuffs with roll-up stay tabs. Available in black, khaki, LAPD Navy and olive in sizes XS-4XL.



MAKE: 5.11
MODEL: Charisma Bomber Jacket
MSRP: \$80
URL: 511Tactical.com

The 5.11 Charisma Bomber Jacket is perfect for the gym or out on the town. The soft and stylish midweight jacket has a zippered chest pocket and 5.11 Ready Pocket. It is machine washable and has a UPF rating of 50+. It is currently available in black, Python and Blueprint in sizes XS–XL.



MAKE: Girls with Guns
MODEL: 22 Jersey T
MSRP: \$30–\$35
URL: GWGClothing.com

Girls with Guns Clothing's 22 Jersey T semi-relaxed-fit jersey tee is part of the Practical Tactical Collection. The crewneck performance tee is made from moisture-wicking, antimicrobial fabric and lightweight, breathable, 100 percent polyester bird's-eye mesh. It will be available in black in sizes XS–3XL this August.





MAKE: 5.11

MODEL: Women's Defender-Flex Jeans

MSRP: \$70

URL: 511Tactical.com

5.11 Women's Defender-Flex slim-fit jeans are a great choice, with their sleek, tapered lines. Their mechanical stretch denim, five pockets and two magazine pockets make them comfortable and functional for the range. Then, paired with a blouse, jacket and boots, they can be worn for smart business casual or a weekend look. Available in bootcut (color: Pacific Indigo) and slim cut (colors: Indigo, Pacific Indigo, Light Wash Indigo).



MAKE: Frogg Togg

MODEL: Grand Refuge 2.0 JR Wader

MSRP: \$270

URL: FroggTogg.com

Frogg Togg's Grand Refuge 2.0 JR Chest Wader is multi-climate due to its 120-gram insulated, zippered and removable liner. It has a 1,200-gram Thinsulate boot with a cleated outsole and wool felt midsole. It is made with a four-ply polyester upper and heavy-duty, abrasion-resistant nylon in the shin, knee and seat for extra ruggedness and durability. Adjustable elastic suspenders with quick-release buckles and D-rings, as well as the adjustable wading belt with locking buckle, allow for a more customized fit. The zippered, flip-out security chest pocket and front storage pocket are perfect for money and licenses. A 10-count shell-holder allows for quick access to extra ammunition. It is available in two patterns: Mossy Oak Bottomland and Realtree Max5, both in sizes 4–10.



MAKE: Gun Tote'n Mamas
MODEL: Organized Rolling Range Bag
MSRP: \$156 (fabric); \$286 (leather)
URL: GunToteMamas.com

The Gun Tote'n Mamas' Organized Rolling Range Bag keeps your gear highly organized and easily accessible. A gun cube holds two firearms with zippered gun rugs that can be easily removed when storing the guns. This modular, removable system allows the bag to be easily converted from range to travel and is an airline-approved carry-on. The retractable aluminum handle extends to 6 feet, 3 inches and can hold up to 250 pounds. The adjustable/removable dividers, three elastic magazine holders, loop lining and interior side pocket allow for customizable storage solutions. For added security, the contents can be covered from view with a concealed sheath. Total case size: 16 inches (width) x 9 inches (depth) x 13.5 inches (height). It is available in black or burgundy quilted microfiber, blue paisley and distressed buffalo hide.



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BEST GUNS IN 2018 FOR FEMALE SHOOTERS

GONE ARE THE DAYS
WHEN "WOMEN'S"
GUNS SIMPLY FEATURED
SHORTENED STOCKS.
FIREARM COMPANIES ARE
NOW ENGINEERING GUNS
THAT ARE BUILT FROM
THE GROUND UP TO FIT
FEMALE SHOOTERS AND
HUNTERS.

In 2014, the National Shooting Sports Foundation released data regarding the rise in the number of female shooters and hunters: In 2001, there were an estimated 1.8 million women hunters. By 2013, that number had jumped to 3.3 million—an increase of 85 percent. During that same time period, the number of women target shooters jumped by 60 percent. In 2001, 10 percent of all hunters were female. But by 2013, that percentage rose to 19 percent. Women are, without question, the fastest-growing segment in the hunting and shooting industry.

The NSSF survey uncovered another revealing statistic about this new wave of women hunters and shooters. When asked which features were of primary importance when selecting a firearm to purchase, the female hunters and shooters surveyed cited gun fit as the single most important factor when buying a gun. Gun fit ranked higher than quality and even practicality. In short, women wanted a gun that fit them well.

There weren't a lot of really good options for serious female shooters prior to 2013, but that's changed today. There are more companies than ever offering guns specifically for women.

However, these are not the "pink-it-and-shrink-it" guns of yesteryear. Today's guns for women shooters are purpose-built firearms that have been engineered from the ground up with the input of some of the top female hunters and shooters in the industry.

Here's a look at some of the best competition and hunting firearms, both shotguns and rifles, for female shooters in 2018. **GW**



SYREN—SETTING A NEW STANDARD

Shotguns for female shooters have been around for decades, but for the most part, they were nothing more than compact versions of standard production scatterguns. When I was shooting in college, most of the dedicated female trap and skeet shooters I knew either made due with ill-fitting production stocks or had stocks custom built—a lengthy and expensive process.

When Syren USA launched its extensive line of shotguns built exclusively for women, that all changed. A division of Caesar Guerini and Fabarm, Syren was the first gun brand for women. Because building guns for female shooters—many of them serious competitors (just take a glance at the credentials of their pro staff)—is all that Syren does, it goes without saying that these firearms are designed to perfectly fit the most demanding and accomplished women shooters. While other companies build a handful of shotguns for female shooters, Syren offers women a wide array of upland, competition and waterfowl guns.

“Syren has over 70 options, even left handed,” says Syren pro staffer Chelsea Davis. “A lot of gun manufacturers don’t even have that for men. Every model has different barrel lengths, and some have adjustable combs. All you have to do is turn a wrench a few times to fine-tune it to make sure it fits perfectly. Syren is the first brand that has a whole line designed just for women.”

New this year: the L4S Sporting, a gas-operated semiauto built to the exacting standards of a high-level competition gun. Overall length of pull is just 13.75 inches, and the stock design—including

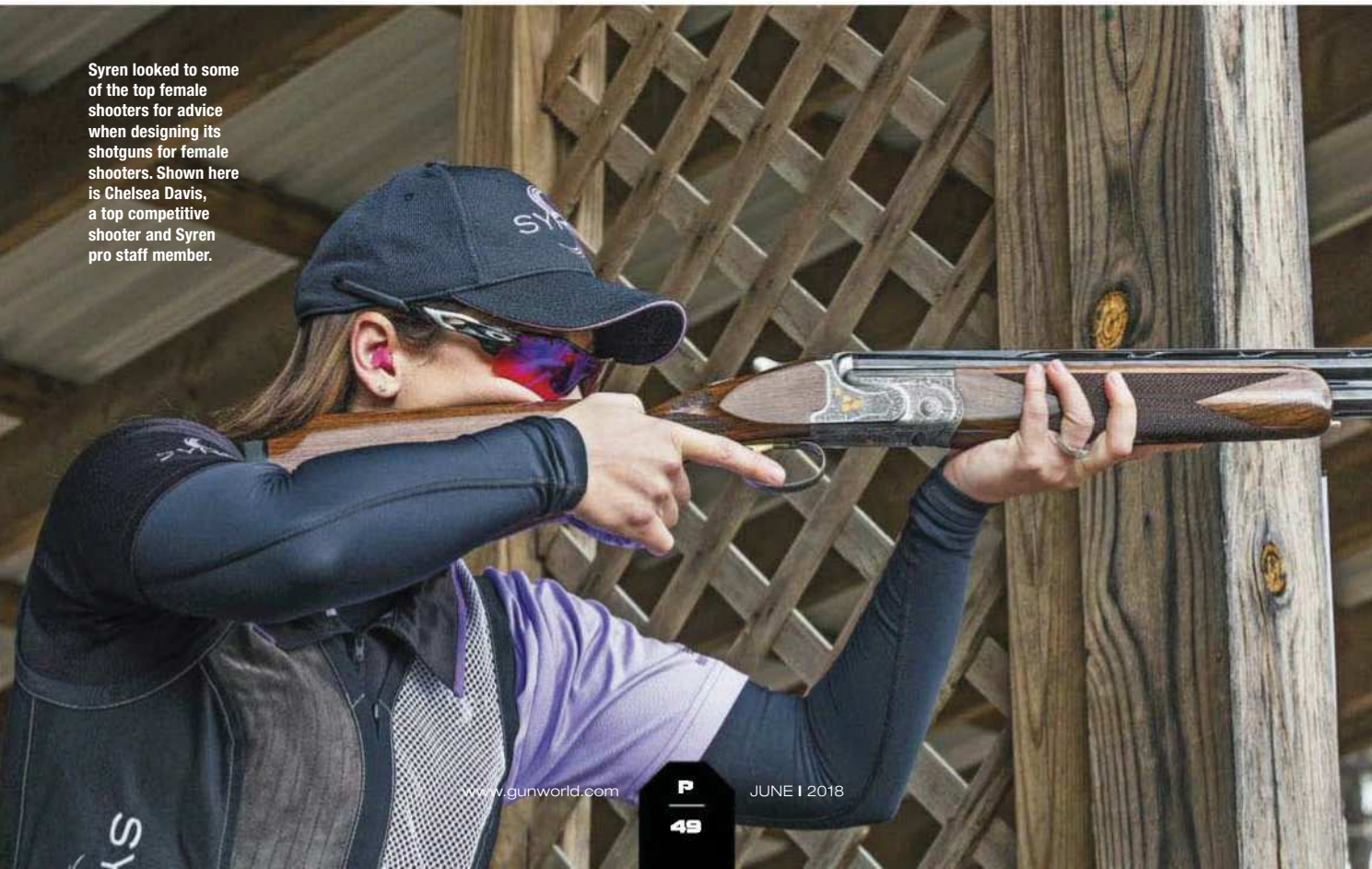


Lynne Green, Syren's brand manager, says that one of the reasons there has been such a positive response to its shotguns is that Syren models fit most female shooters directly out of the box.

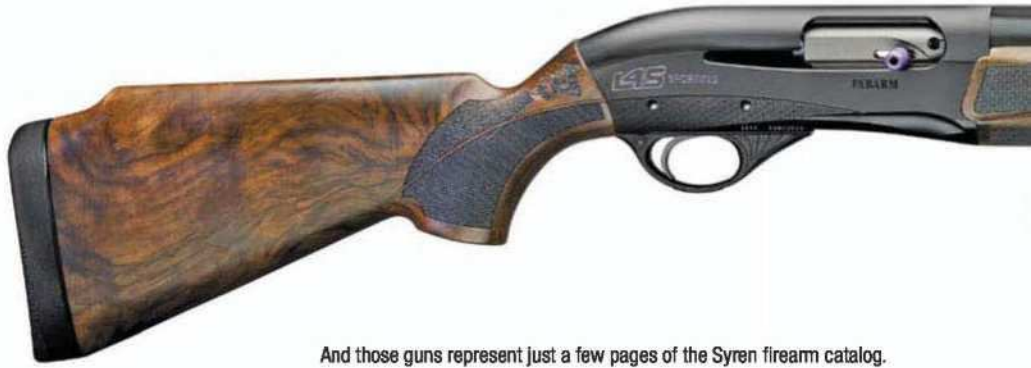
the raised comb on the stock—is engineered to properly fit female shooters. Also new, the Syren ELOS Sporting is an elegant competition boxlock with exquisite fit and finish and superb detailing. And women who like to hunt waterfowl should check out the XLR5 Waterfowler, a light-recoiling, fast-cycling gas gun that's duck blind-ready with its butt-to-muzzle Realtree MAX-5 camo dip.

All these Syren shotguns come with five choke tubes (Inner HP chokes come with the Waterfowler and EXIS HP chokes for the two competition guns), so you're ready for any shot presentation. ■ MSRPs are \$1,895 for the L4S, \$2,725 for the ELOS Sporting and ■ \$1,835 for the XLR Waterfowler.

Syren looked to some of the top female shooters for advice when designing its shotguns for female shooters. Shown here is Chelsea Davis, a top competitive shooter and Syren pro staff member.



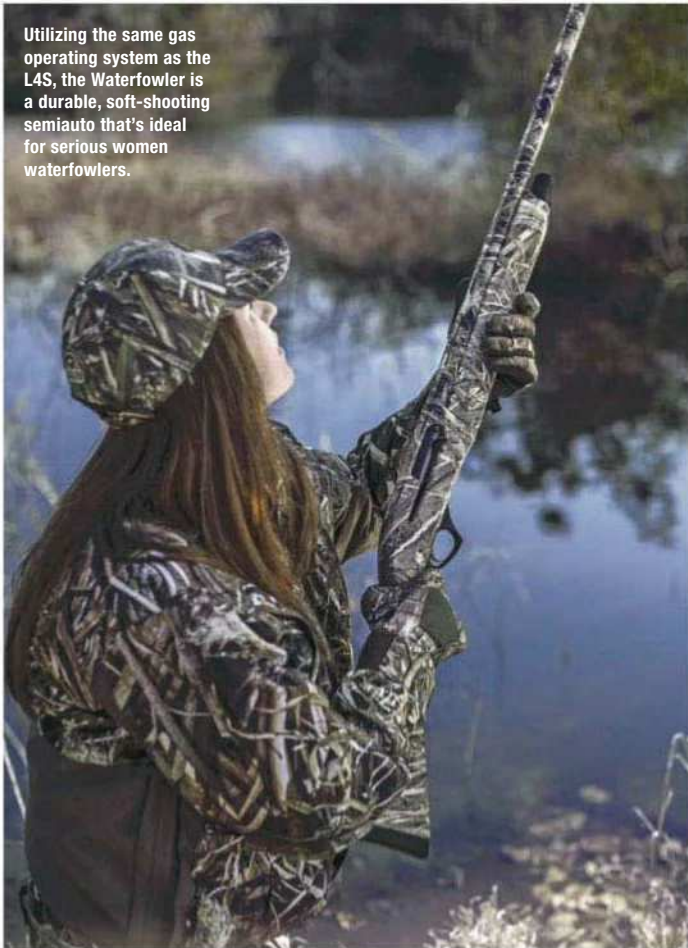
A favorite of female competition shooters, the L4S Sporting comes with a shortened length of pull and redesigned pistol grip that are perfectly proportioned for most female shooters.



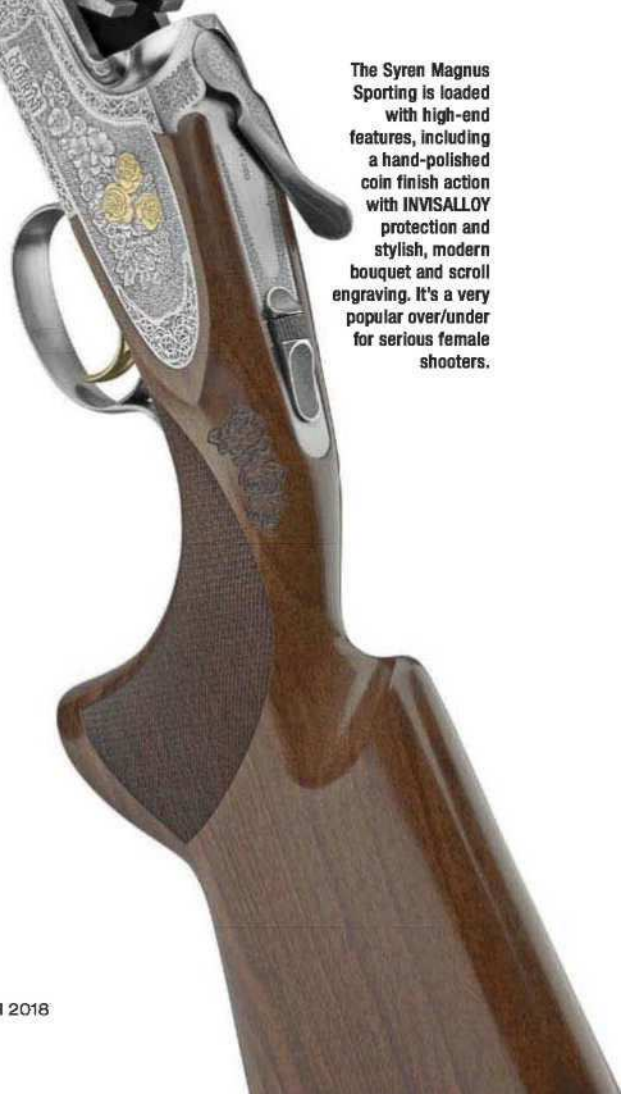
And those guns represent just a few pages of the Syren firearm catalog.

"The response on the Syren guns has been outstanding," says Lynne Green, competitive shooter and Syren brand manager. "Ladies in the industry, new and seasoned shooters, are thrilled to have multiple choices with the Syren line that includes sporting, field, trap and waterfowl models, over/unders and semiautomatics, right- and left-handed models, 12-, 20- and 28-gauges; and they fit most women right out of the box." (SyrenUSA.com)

Utilizing the same gas operating system as the L4S, the Waterfowler is a durable, soft-shooting semiauto that's ideal for serious women waterfowlers.



The Syren Magnus Sporting is loaded with high-end features, including a hand-polished coin finish action with INVISALLOY protection and stylish, modern bouquet and scroll engraving. It's a very popular over/under for serious female shooters.





SAVAGE'S LADY HUNTER 11/111 —BREAKING GROUND

Back in 2013, Savage set about building a version of its bolt-action 11/111 rifles specifically to fit women hunters. Unlike other "ladies" rifles that simply had truncated stocks, this new Savage was a rifle built specifically for female shooters.

Known as the Lady Hunter, this rifle features an oil-finished American walnut stock with a 12½-inch length of pull, a tall comb that helps align the eye with a scope, and a narrowed pistol grip and forearm designed to be more comfortable for women shooters.

Additionally, the rifle comes equipped with a 20-inch, light-contour barrel, which helps shift the balance rearward so the gun isn't as nose-heavy as longer-barreled models. The 11/111 Lady Hunter comes with all the standard features we've come to expect from Savage—a carbon-steel barrel mated to the action using a barrel nut that allows for very precise headspacing (and, in turn, superb accuracy), along with the bladed AccuTrigger, which is light, crisp, user-adjustable and safe.

There is a long list of available calibers, including .223 Rem, .243 Win, 6.5 Creedmoor, .270 Win, 7mm-08, .308 and .30-06. Priced at \$899, the Savage Lady Hunter is an accurate and affordable rifle that's built specifically to fit women shooters. (SavageArms.com)

The Savage 111 Lady Hunter: Savage redesigned the stock of its 111 rifle and gave it a higher comb and shorter length of pull for female shooters.

Courtney Smith, perhaps better known as "Sportswoman Courtney," takes aim with the Beretta 691 Vittoria at the range. Smith backs Beretta's claim that the Vittoria fits female shooters properly and provides a comfortable grip and proper eye alignment—all of which are keys to better shooting.



BERETTA 691 VITTORIA—SOPHISTICATED LOOKS AND DESIGN

If your goal is to develop a shotgun specifically for female shooters, it makes sense to take into account the opinions of top women competitors in the sport ... and that's just what Beretta did when it introduced the Vittoria series. Based on the robust 690 boxlock shotgun, the Vittoria offers the time-tested reliability of Beretta's world-beating, low-profile boxlock action with a totally reinvented stock design.

For a fair evaluation of the shotgun's performance (most notably, whether or not the improvements to the stock design were functional or fictional), I sought out a top female shooter, Courtney Smith. Better known as "Sportswoman Courtney," Smith is an avid shooter—and, as luck would have it, she had, indeed, spent time on the range and in the field with the Vittoria guns. She assured me that they lived up to their sales pitch.

"This gun was made with a woman's frame and body in mind," Smith says. She complimented the gun's shortened (13½-inch) length of pull, the narrowed pistol grip and the high Monte Carlo stock that, according to Smith, helps automatically and comfortably align the eye with the top of the rib. A comfortable and consistent cheek mount leads to better shooting and more broken targets or dropped birds; and Beretta's stock redesign offers female shooters the advantage of a proper fit.

Like other Beretta shotguns, the Vittoria line is elegant and stylish. The Field version, which I saw at SHOT 2018, features roll-marked floral engraving on the receiver and an oil-finished grade 2.5 walnut stock. The Sporting and Field versions both come with a single selective trigger and ejectors. Beretta's over/unders have a solid reputation and hold their resale value well. This shotgun should be on the short list of all serious female shooters and hunters. The MSRP for the 690 Vittoria Field is \$2,650, and the 691 Sporting Vittoria model carries an MSRP of \$3,000. Welcome to the Vittorian age. (BerettaUSA.com)





THE SHOTGUN SISTERS—ITALIAN MAKER FAUSTI'S TAKE ON THE PERFECT WOMAN'S SHOTGUN

Italian gunmaker Stefano Fausti had always envisioned handing his successful company down to his son. There was just one problem—Fausti never had any sons.

Instead, his three daughters took over the reins of the company when their father retired, and they have managed to make Fausti guns popular with shooters and hunters the world over. Giovanna, Barbara and Elena Fausti (Italy's "Shotgun Sisters") are at the head of one of the nation's largest gun companies, and its custom-built side-by-sides and over/unders are as appealing to the eye as a Cornelian suit or a Maserati Granturismo.

Fausti sisters (from left) Barbara, Elena and Giovanna Fausti took the reins from their father when he retired from the family's Italian shotgun company. It's no surprise, then, that the brand's Aphrodite shotgun is one of the premier shotguns in the world for female shooters.

Because Fausti was the first major firearm company in the world to be owned by three sisters, it seems only fitting that the Faustis developed a high-end over/under shotgun built to fit women shooters. Named after Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, this new Fausti shotgun utilizes the brand's time-tested Four Locks boxlock action. The round body action is dripping with high-end engraving, and there's an image of the Greek goddess, herself, ringed in laurel on the action. The wood, fit and finish are up to the very highest Italian standards, and the hand-selected Turkish walnut stocks feature a Prince of Wales grip and an oil-rubbed finish. You can select from 12-, 16-, 20- or 28-gauge or .410 bore. Price is TBD, but guns of this ilk don't come cheap. (FaustiUSA.com)

Nearly every inch of exposed metal on the Aphrodite is covered with ornate engraving, making this one of the most striking boxlock over/unders on the market. Additionally, the oil-finished Turkish walnut is very impressive.



The Aphrodite utilizes Fausti's "Four Locks" system, which offers very secure lockup. The action can withstand years of hard use—that is, if you're willing to take a gun this magnificent into the field.



FRANCHI'S CATALYST LINE—AFFORDABLE AND BEAUTIFUL

Italian gunmaker Franchi's Inertia-Driven Affinity shotguns and its Instinct over/unders are both highly sought-after by upland hunters, competitive shooters and waterfowlers.

A few years ago, Franchi decided to start building versions of the Instinct and the Affinity with stocks designed to fit female shooters. These shotguns feature drops, cast, pitches and lengths of pull that are all optimized to properly fit female shooters.

The Affinity line of semiautos is available in both 12- and 20-gauge versions that offer A-grade satin walnut stocks with 13 7/8-inch lengths of pull. Inertia guns tend to be light, and the Affinity Catalyst is no exception: The 12-gauge version weighs 6.6 pounds, and the 20-gauge version weighs just 5.7 pounds. Both of these guns come with three choke tubes, a fiber-optic front sight and an MSRP of under a grand.

For double-gun fans, the Franchi Instinct Catalyst offers everything shooters love about the standard Instinct in a package that's custom designed for women. With its color case-hardened receiver and A-grade satin walnut stock, the Instinct Catalyst looks fantastic and is loaded with practical features, including a barrel selector, automatic ejectors and safety, a vented mid-rib and three interchangeable choke tubes. Perhaps most important for women shooters is the fact that the stock of the Instinct Catalyst—like that of the Affinity Catalyst—is designed to fit female shooters for maximum control and comfort. The MSRP of the Instinct Catalyst is \$1,469. (FranchiUSA.com)

The Instinct Catalyst from Franchi comes with a boxlock action and costs less than \$1,500—a good price for an Italian boxlock over/under of this quality.

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If you're a female shooter and you're looking for a go-anywhere bolt gun that's at home in the high country or the deer stand, look no further than the Mark V Camilla with Subalpine camo finish.



The Weatherby Mark V Camilla Deluxe: Roy Weatherby designed the Mark V action decades ago, and one of the newest bolt guns in the company lineup is a stylish hunting rifle built for female shooters. It is named in honor of Roy's wife, the late Camilla Weatherby.



Weatherby's Vanguard Camilla is affordable and extremely accurate, and it's designed to properly fit female shooters.



TODAY'S GUNS FOR WOMEN SHOOTERS ARE PURPOSE-BUILT FIREARMS THAT HAVE BEEN ENGINEERED FROM THE GROUND UP WITH THE INPUT OF SOME OF THE TOP FEMALE HUNTERS AND SHOOTERS IN THE INDUSTRY.



WEATHERBY—PAYING HOMAGE TO CAMILLA

Roy Weatherby is a familiar name to most big-game hunters. After all, Weatherby's ultra-fast cartridges helped usher in the belted magnum craze, and Roy's namesake rifles and shotguns are still very popular with hunters and shooters.

The Camilla line of rifles honors the late Camilla Weatherby, Roy's wife. The initial offering, the Camilla Vanguard, utilized the same push-feed action with dual lug bolt design and adjustable two-stage trigger found on the standard Vanguard rifles, but virtually every stock dimension was altered. The buttstock has reduced heel-to-toe dimensions, and the toe of the stock is angled away from the body for a more natural fit and more comfortable shooting.

Weatherby rifles are known for their classic Monte Carlo stocks with raised combs, and the Camilla Vanguard has a similar design that helps align the female shooter's eye with the optic for fast target acquisition. Pistol grip dimensions have also been altered on the Camilla Vanguard to include a finger groove, right-hand palm swell, a slimmer radius and shorter grip-to-trigger length, all of which help promote a more natural and comfortable hand position for female shooters. The overall length of pull on the stock was reduced to 13 inches, and the Camilla's forearm was shortened and slimmed down to improve balance. The Camilla Vanguard carries an MSRP of \$849.

For 2018, two Camilla Mark V rifles emerged: the Mark V Camilla Deluxe and the Mark V Camilla Subalpine. The former is a traditional walnut-stocked rifle with AA fancy-grade claro walnut. It comes complete with an exotic forend cap with maple spacers and fine-line, diamond-point fleur-de-lis checkering. The latter rifle comes with a hand-laminated composite stock in Gore Optifade Subalpine camo and a Flat Dark Earth Cerakote finish on the metalwork. Both rifles utilize the time-tested, six-lug Mark V action and the new LXX trigger, and both have stock dimensions that are designed exclusively for female shooters.

You can expect all the Camilla rifles from Weatherby to shoot extremely well (and the company backs that with a sub-MOA guarantee with prescribed ammo). The Mark V Deluxe carries an MSRP of \$2,700; the Subalpine costs \$3,000. (Weatherby.com)

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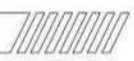
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FRANKLIN ARMORY

#17-A



THE ULTIMATE VARMINT GUN



Released in 2014 by Franklin Armory, the F17-L is a gas piston, AR-15-style rifle chambered in .17 WSM Rimfire—the first in existence. In order to adapt this venerable gun to the hot rimfire, the company set up some proprietary features in order to tame and channel the small—but mighty—projectile.

Although .17 WSM (Winchester Super Magnum) has been around for a while now, the caliber is still pretty exciting, and I can assure you after testing that it holds up to the hype. Plinking and target practice are areas in which the F17-L excels, but it feels like taking a Porsche out to the local go-kart track.

Franklin Armory has built a rifle that wrings every advantage out of the .17 WSM lightweight speedster, making it an undefeated contender for the ultimate varmint gun.

FABULOUS FEATURES

Having worked in law enforcement most of my adult life, I'm



used to what we'd call “stripper” models—meaning that every cost-cutting option was taken in order to save money. The F17-L is a welcome antithesis to this concept. At every turn, the company used excellent components to build this rifle.

Starting with the heart of the system, the upper is machined from 7075-T6 aluminum and includes great standard carryovers, such as a forward assist and dust cover. Add to this a free-floated handguard that is fluted, vented and protects/conceals part of the gas piston system. The end of the handguard also features an M-LOK section and has integral bipod and tripod adapters. The barrel is a heavy-profile bull style and runs a full 20 inches long, giving plenty of room for the mighty 20 grains to reach their ultimate speed potential. Forged from 4140 chrome-moly, the barrel ends with an 11-degree target crown and features a 1:9-inch twist.

The matching lower is also hewn from 7075-T6 aluminum and includes a flared magazine well to aid in loading and reloads.





This milled, billet-aluminum receiver has all the “comforts of home”—and then some.

The trigger guard is expanded a bit to allow for gloved fingers in colder weather but is a single piece with the lower. The grip, from Ergo, has a tacky texture and is shaped in a far more ergonomic style than its A2 predecessor.

The lower has ambidextrous quick-detach (QD) sling mounts, as well as a textured area on the front of the magwell for offhand grip. Additionally, the lower has a specialized tension screw, allowing shooters to eliminate any play between the upper and lower. Just below the mag release on the right side is a serrated index point that gives tactile feedback and reminds shooters where to index their trigger finger. Finally, the lower is equipped with a Franklin Armory “Factory Custom Tuned Trigger.”

Both of these pieces meld together with a hard-coat type III anodized finish. The color is an olive drab—which I did not think I would like at first, but it grew on me. The bore, chamber and finish are completed with a salt batch nitride finish, making it highly resistant to the elements. Overall, the fit and finish are superb.

The weapon comes equipped with modern AR functionality that reflects an attention to detail in design. There is a forward assist, shell deflector, dust cover and an expanded trigger guard. In addition, the stock is a Magpul MOE that proved to be a great aid in aiming. The 10-round magazine

The Vortex Cantilever Mount locked on solidly and made scope installation a breeze. You might be tempted to underscope with a rimfire cartridge, but do not underestimate the .17 WSM.

that comes with the rifle is slightly more curved, banana style, than traditional AR mags, but it makes sense when you recall that the weapon is slinging rimfires. And when I say, “slinging,” I mean it.

MODERN-DAY LASER

I reached out to Vortex Optics, which sent me a Diamondback Tactical 4-12x40 scope for use with Franklin Armory’s modern rimfire that shoots like a laser. The F17-L makes tiny holes from long distances, and I would soon learn not to hold the .17 WSM in the same class as its rimfire brethren.





I mounted the glass to the Picatinny rail on the rifle with a Vortex Cantilever Mount, which proved effortless. The unit mounted right up to the flat-top receiver and locked down with two bolts. I soon realized I would need the power of the Vortex to help me analyze what was happening.

The .17 WSM is a remarkable little round. Akin to the .22, it's a rimfire cartridge that only weighs in at around 20 grains. What's impressive is the amount of velocity the tiny round exhibits—speeds of 3,000 fps are not uncommon. This provides for a relatively flat trajectory for the first couple of hundred yards in exchange for a recoil that is marginally stronger than a .22. (Pulling the trigger, seeing the speeds on the chronometer, watching the hits, I was reminded of the old cartoon, *Mighty Mouse*: Huge, lantern-jawed cats were left stunned after the tiny rodent socked them in the chin ... clearly more than they were expecting!)

I received ammunition for testing the F17-L from Winchester, as well as American Eagle (Federal) and Hornady. There might have been some discussion about pricing when the ammo was first released, but I found all three offerings at under \$20 for a box of 50 rounds—much closer to the plinking price you'd

Lurking in open fields or near farms that draw critters, the F17-L can get the job done.

FRANKLIN ARMORY HAS BUILT A RIFLE THAT WRINGS EVERY ADVANTAGE OUT OF THE .17 WSM LIGHTWEIGHT SPEEDSTER, MAKING IT AN UNDEFEATED CONTENDER FOR THE ULTIMATE VARMINT GUN.



Using a good pack such as the Gypsy, you could spend an entire day varminting with the F17-L.





expect from rimfire. While the cost implied a budget “sedan,” I found “Ferrari” performance.

I set up the Caldwell chronometer on race day to see how fast things were moving. I was duly impressed.

OFF TO THE RACES

The .17 WSM has been quickly developing a reputation for being a varmint-zapper, combining light weights with wicked speed to deliver amazing stopping power. There are many examples available on the Internet of people taking small to medium game with the round. The F17-L, utilizing the bull barrel, takes full advantage of this round’s potent capabilities to deliver some impressive numbers.

The American Eagle clocked in at an average of 2,945 fps, and Hornady came in close, at 2,984 fps. The Winchester screamed

out of the barrel at 3,320.6 fps. Again, recoil was negligible, and even the sound of the report was not unpleasant. I began testing for accuracy, shooting five five-round groups of each brand of ammunition at 100 yards after zeroing the Vortex.

My preconceived notions of rimfire began to crumble; I was impressed to see all brands of ammunition providing sub-MOA groups. After shooting five groups at 100 yards, the numbers were impressive. The American Eagle averaged 1.466 inches, Hornady averaged 1.118 inches, and Winchester averaged

Charging handle, stock, billet magazine and grip—all quality components

Try this grip from Ergo, and you might want it on other guns too.

The 11-degree target crown graces the business end of the bull barrel.



**IF VARMINTS
HAD A UNION
OR COULD
ORGANIZE,
THEY WOULD
DEFINITELY BE
PROTESTING
THIS RIFLE.**

1.124 inches. However, I was able to achieve sub-MOA with each brand of ammunition: The smallest group for American Eagle was 0.81, Hornady was 0.79, and Winchester was 0.83. At the range, I experienced anywhere from 5 to 17 mph crosswinds, so this might also explain the variance.

I made some interesting general observations about the F17-L during multiple trips to the range. As mentioned before, the recoil is minimal for the velocities achieved. I could hear the spring in the stock eating up what little there was, and it vibrated a bit and made a noise. But otherwise, it did an excellent job. The Magpul stock is excellent. And, there was plenty of real estate on top to let me find my perfect eye relief for the Vortex scope.

Overall, the rifle was sturdy and had some heft that leaned toward the barrel end. The entire package was terribly familiar ... because it is an AR-15. The ergonomics of the rifle are excellent, thanks to the Magpul stock and the Ergo grip—

FRANKLIN ARMORY F17-L

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .17 Winchester Super Magnum Rimfire
ACTION TYPE: Semiauto; magazine fed
GAS SYSTEM: F17 piston
BARREL: 20-inch full contour; 1:9-inch RH twist
MAGAZINE: 20-round; 10-round (tested) for restricted states
TRIGGER: Franklin Armory Custom (average 4.5 pounds)
SIGHTS: None (flat-top optics rail)
STOCK: Magpul MOE
WEIGHT: 9 pounds, 10 ounces
OVERALL LENGTH: 38.25 inches
MSRP: \$2,070

CONTACT INFORMATION

FRANKLIN ARMORY
FranklinArmory.com

AMERICAN EAGLE AMMUNITION
FederalPremium.com

GREY GHOST GEAR
GreyGhostGear.com

HORNADY AMMUNITION
Hornady.com

VORTEX OPTICS
VortexOptics.com

WINCHESTER AMMUNITION
Winchester.com

PERFORMANCE RESULTS

Ammunition	Accuracy (Inches)		Velocity (fps)
	Average	Smallest	Average
American Eagle Tipped Varmint 20 grain	1.466	.81	2,945
Winchester VarmintX 15 grain	1.124	.83	3,321
Hornady V-Max 20 grain	1.118	.79	2,984

NOTES: Accuracy was tested using five five-shot groups at 100 yards. Velocity was measured using a Caldwell G2 located 5 feet from the muzzle.

both of which are outstanding. The grip, in particular, was very nice. After settling in to shoot, I found follow-up shots were easy, with little to no adjustment at all.

The magazine is a little odd but is a feat of engineering to accommodate the rim on the casing. It's more banana shaped than a standard AR magazine and holds 10 rounds. Loading is slightly different than I was used to, but it got better with practice. Getting the magazine in took a little more rocking

GREY GHOST GEAR GYPSY BACKPACK

Grey Ghost Gear is a tactical gear company that went in a different direction with the Gypsy. Following a wise trend of "gray man" products hitting the market, the 1,368-cubic-inch backpack is made of waxed canvas and has a flap-top design to help it resist the elements. The bag is tough and lightweight, yet it loads and carries well. During testing, I hauled items from mundane to dangerous in the mountains and coffee shops around my home with none the wiser.

This is an amazing bag for those wanting to avoid arousing the suspicions of hoplophobics (an expression coined by Colonel Jeff Cooper to describe an irrational aversion to weapons, fear of firearms or the fear of armed citizens) without sacrificing features and capability.



The Grey Ghost Gear Gypsy Backpack doesn't look "tactical" on the outside (when an AR isn't strapped to it), but it is.

motion (as on an AK-47), but the flared magwell assisted with this. The magazine, itself, is billet, with metal feed lips.

The Vortex scope was truly impressive. It was bright and clear and allowed me to view the tiny holes the .17 WSM made at 100 yards. I was really surprised by this. I had brought a spotting scope but did not need it. The Diamondback Tactical was a breeze to dial in after being bore-sighted, because the dials are solid, with stiff and knobby outer turrets. They were tactile, allowing for a firm grip, but didn't come off zero after getting bumped around from my many trips to the range. One minor annoyance was that after mounting the scope, the rifle barely fit into the case provided by Franklin Armory.

The trigger is good; it provides enough resistance to hold your finger in place. Then, it breaks. Trigger pull averaged 4 pounds, 5 ounces, with a crisp reset. I used this combination to set my numbers at 100 yards but was intrigued to see how far I could go. I eventually reached out to 200 with success and really began to wonder at the potential of the .17 WSM. So, I stretched it out to 400 yards and hit an 18-inch steel plate with fair consistency.

The Franklin Armory F17-L is an excellent example of what a motivated company can do with Eugene Stoner's original design. In this specific application, the .17 WSM is harnessed and routed through a long, heavy barrel that rockets small—but deadly—projectiles at around 3,000 fps.

Federal, Hornady and Winchester all provided the author with ammunition for this review. All performed well, with some sub-MOA groups.

Quality components fit the bill at every turn, making the F17-L a pleasure to shoot. Excellent ergonomics, marginal weight, no recoil and deadly accuracy are the hallmarks of this effort.

The Vortex Diamondback Tactical was a perfect complement to the weapon, allowing me to zero in and deliver the tiny bundles of velocity that are the .17 WSM—at ranges out to 400 yards. If varmints had a union or could organize, they would definitely be protesting this rifle. I could easily imagine someone fielding this gun, only to see a dozen white flags emerge from tiny holes in the ground. **GW**



Dan Wesson

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SHOTGUNS AND RIFLES FOR YOUNG HUNTERS



ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION OF SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN IS EASIER WHEN YOU FIND A FIREARM THAT FITS THEM PROPERLY. HERE ARE 11 OF THE BEST YOUTH MODELS FOR SMALL-STATURED HUNTERS.

It's no secret that passing down our hunting legacy to the next generation is a critical factor in preserving the sport we love. Some of my best memories are of time spent in the field with my father, and now that I have children of my own, I'm making plans to take them to the field when I feel they are ready.

Brody Hoke from Ohio bagged his first whitetail buck with help from his grandfather, Pat Richmond.

Part of children's development as hunters involves learning safe gun-handling practices, and that's much harder for them to accomplish when they're trying to wrangle a firearm that's too big and too heavy for them. When I was coaching 4-H Shooting Sports, one of the primary issues I encountered while teaching young children to shoot safely is that they simply couldn't handle the firearm they had brought along. Because the average full-sized firearm is engineered to fit the average full-sized hunter, those kids were perpetually frustrated as they tried to mount, swing and fire a gun that was built for an adult.

Today, however, there are many well-built, economical rifles and shotguns designed specifically for youth hunters and shooters. These guns are lighter and have shortened lengths of pull and barrels so that they're more manageable for kids.

If you're planning to introduce a kid to the hunting and shooting sports, take a look at these 11 youth options. **GW**



WEATHERBY VANGUARD SYNTHETIC COMPACT

Weatherby's affordable Vanguard rifles look good, and they are backed by a sub-MOA accuracy guarantee. The Synthetic Compact version features a durable, black, synthetic stock with a stock spacer that allows you to adjust length of pull from 12½ inches to 13⅝ inches, so this rifle can grow along with your young shooter. The three-position safety allows the rifle to be loaded and unloaded with the safety engaged, and the two-stage trigger is light enough so even the youngest shooters can quickly master trigger control. This 6½-pound rifle sports a 20-inch #1 contour barrel, and it is available in .243 Win., 6.5 Creedmoor, 7mm-08 and .308 Win.

MSRP: \$599

URL: Weatherby.com



**TODAY... THERE
ARE MANY
WELL-BUILT,
ECONOMICAL
RIFLES
AND SHOTGUNS
DESIGNED
SPECIFICALLY FOR
YOUTH HUNTERS
AND SHOOTERS.**





WINCHESTER XPR COMPACT SCOPE COMBO

Winchester's XPR Compact offers the same push-feed action as the full-sized XPR with a shortened (13-inch) stock. The black, synthetic stock and Perma-Cote finish on the metalwork make this bolt-action impervious to the elements; and the two-position safety with bolt unlock button allows the rifle to be cycled with the safety engaged. The field-ready Compact Combo model, which debuted in 2018, comes with a Vortex Crossfire II 3-9x40 scope. Available chamberings include .243 Win., 6.5 Creedmoor, 7mm-08 and .308 Win., as well as the .270 Win. and .300 Winchester Short Mags.

MSRP: \$710

URL: WinchesterGuns.com



MOSSBERG 510 YOUTH MINI SUPER BANTAM .410

Mossberg undoubtedly offers one of the most extensive lines of firearms for young shooters, and the brand's 5-pound 510 Youth Mini Super Bantam .410 offers a 10½-inch length of pull that will work with even the youngest, smallest hunters. There's an included stock spacer that allows length of pull to be extended to 11½ inches. This entire gun is covered with Mossy Oak Break-Up Country camo. The Youth Mini Bantam offers the flexibility of a 3-inch .410 chamber, and the tang safety is easy to reach for both right- and left-handed kids.

MSRP: \$470

URL: Mossberg.com



STEVENS 301 SHOTGUN

The Stevens 301 is a break-action, single-shot, hammer-fired shotgun that's available in .410 bore and 12- and 20-gauge. Lightweight (the .410 model weighs just 4.8 pounds) and simple in its design, the 301 is an ideal gun for a young hunter. Unlike many other single-shot shotguns with exposed hammers, the Stevens comes with a manual safety on the left side of the receiver that's easy to operate. There's nothing fancy about this gun; it comes with a black, synthetic stock, plain bead front sight and absolutely no frills. Nevertheless, for a youth field gun, it's just right. Plus, it's priced affordably.

MSRP: \$173

URL: SavageArms.com



RUGER HAWKEYE LAMINATE COMPACT

Ruger's controlled round feed, bolt-action rifles have a long and successful history in America's game fields, and the new Hawkeye Laminate Compact offers that same time-tested CRF action in a shortened version that's ideal for young shooters. With its 16½-inch barrel and 12½-inch length of pull, the Hawkeye Laminate Compact measures fewer than 3 feet long and weighs approximately 6 pounds, making it a manageable hunting rifle for even the smallest shooters. The black, laminate stock and matte stainless metal finish make this gun impervious to the elements. The LC6 trigger is excellent. Chambered in .243 Win., 7mm-08 and .308, the accurate and dependable Hawkeye Laminate Compact should be on your short list of best youth rifles.

MSRP: \$1,069

URL: Ruger.com



STEVENS 555 COMPACT

A few years ago, Stevens introduced a budget-friendly over/under shotgun. Known as the 555, this stack barrel offered everything upland hunters wanted—a solid boxlock action, good trigger, interchangeable chokes and excellent balance—without any of the frills that drive up cost. Now, Stevens has released a compact version of the 555 that comes with a short, 13.25-inch length of pull. The scaled receiver is made from aluminum alloy with steel inserts in the breech, and the 24-inch barrels are just the right size to maintain a front-of-receiver balance point. Plus, the Turkish walnut stock looks great for a gun in this price range. It's available in 20- and 28-gauge and .410.

MSRP: \$692

URL: SavageArms.com



SAVAGE PURPLE RASCAL

Many young shooters get their start with a single-shot .22, so the new Purple Rascal from Savage is an excellent choice for the child who's learning to handle a firearm for the first time or heading to the woods to try to bag a squirrel or cottontail. The diminutive Purple Rascal weighs in at just 2.66 pounds and measures 31.5 inches, making it manageable for almost any child. The aperture sight is easy to adjust, and there's a manual safety as well. If your child isn't a fan of purple, there are plenty of other stock color options.

MSRP: \$189

URL: SavageArms.com



BROWNING CYNERGY MICRO MIDAS

The Cynergy line of over/under shotguns is reliable and robust, and parents looking to buy their child a great hunting gun that serves equally well for trap, skeet and sporting clays competitions need look no further than the Cynergy Micro Midas. The Cynergy's low-profile boxlock action lends itself to a compact design, and it comes standard with a black walnut stock, silver nitride receiver, gold-plated trigger, three choke tubes and much more. The 20-gauge model with 24-inch barrels weighs just 6 pounds, so it's manageable for anyone; and the superb balance of this gun makes it ideal for kids who are serious about competition shooting.

MSRP: \$1,870

URL: Browning.com





MOSSBERG PATRIOT YOUTH SUPER BANTAM RIFLE

The Patriot Youth Super Bantam combines Mossberg's push-feed rifle action with a shortened synthetic stock and a 20-inch barrel. Weighing in at just 6½ pounds, this gun is light enough for kids to carry yet heavy enough to help them manage recoil efficiently. Standard length of pull is 12 inches, but there's an included spacer that can increase length of pull to 13 inches as your young shooter grows. There are many caliber options. Each of these rifles comes with scope bases and an LBA-bladed, adjustable trigger. The many stock color options include black, Muddy Girl camo and Kryptek Highlander (shown here).

MSRP: \$435

URL: Mossberg.com



WINCHESTER SX4 COMPACT

One of the hallmarks of Winchester's updated SX4 shotgun line is the use of high-strength polymers. These high-tech polymers are not only stronger than the aluminum alloy parts they replace, they're also lighter. As a result, the SX4 Compact 12-gauge semiauto weighs just 6 pounds, 8 ounces, with a 24-inch barrel. The Active Valve gas operation system is reliable and helps lessen felt recoil, so this 12-gauge won't kick the daylights out of a new shooter. Recoil is further reduced via a Pachmayr Decelerator recoil pad. The SX4 Compact comes with three choke tubes and a rugged, synthetic stock that can handle a lot of abuse.

MSRP: \$800

URL: WinchesterGuns.com





SAVAGE 110 LIGHTWEIGHT STORM



Unlike some of the other guns listed here, the 110 Lightweight Storm was not expressly designed as a youth model. However, because it incorporates the new Savage AccuFit system that comes with five comb risers and four length of pull spacers, you can customize the fit of this rifle to accommodate just about any shooter. A lightweight polymer stock, fluted bolt and short, 20-inch barrel all help keep weight to a minimum, so these guns weigh in at around 5½ pounds. The crisp AccuTrigger is smooth and crisp, and the tang-mounted safety is conveniently positioned. Plus, if the accuracy potential in this rifle is up to Savage's high standards—which it almost certainly is—you can expect to print small groups on paper. Available chamberings include .223 Rem, 6.5 Creedmoor, .270 Win., 7mm-08 and .308 Win.

MSRP: \$749

URL: SavageArms.com

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SHORTENED
LENGTHS OF
PULL AND
BARRELS SO
THAT THEY'RE
MORE
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- // Officer (6 shot capacity, 3.5" barrel, 35 oz.) // Novak Drift Adjustable Front and Rear Sights



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SAVAGE RASCAL .22

My three boys each got their own BB gun at age 4. We treat them as if they're real guns, even storing them in my gun safe. They each got their own .22 rifle at age 5, and at around age 8 to 9, they were shooting ARs.

Finding just the right kid's .22 rifle for my oldest was a little tricky, because he was small for his age. Most "youth models" are merely adult rifles with shorter stocks, and they didn't cut it. Add to that he's right handed but left eye dominant.

One choice I was looking at was a well-known small kids' model; it was just the right size, but the sights felt cheap and overall not that great. Even worse, despite being a bolt-action, the action must be cocked by pulling on a cocking knob located at the rear—no small feat for a small child.

Worse yet was that it had no manual safety lever, which, to me, was a big fail, because one of the main objectives is to

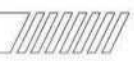
teach gun safety. Once a bullet is inserted into the chamber and the bolt is closed, the child pulls the cocking knob back to cock it, and the gun is ready to fire. No safety lever. Doesn't seem like a good idea to me.

Then, I discovered the Savage Rascal.

LITTLE RASCALS

Savage set out with a design charter of developing a true youth rifle that was the safest on the market and with the same operation as an adult bolt-action gun. On top of that, it had to be accurate.

Savage started out by measuring some of the 4- to 10-year-old children of employees, as well as hundreds more. They got this right, because when I got my boys their rifles, each at age 5, two fell somewhere in the bottom 15 percent percentile for height in their age group, and my middle son was in the top 80 percent for height.



The Savage Rascal is the perfect size for small-statured shooters and is a single-round-feed, low-recoiling .22 LR—making it the perfect kid's rifle. It operates just like an adult bolt-action.



THE BEST .22 RIFLE FOR KIDS



These three young shooters hold up their targets from the first time they took their Savage Rascals shooting.

AT THE HEART OF THE RASCAL'S ACCURACY IS THE ACCUTRIGGER ... THE SAME ONE FOUND ON SAVAGE'S ADULT RIFLES.

The Rascal fit well for all three boys. The smaller two could shoulder and fire it—just as the average-sized adult handling a standard-sized adult rifle. It might have been a smidge small for my middle son, but not by much, because it still worked perfectly for him. On the other side of the size spectrum, I know adults who use the Rascal as a compact truck/backpack gun.

Operationally, the Rascal is the same as an adult bolt-action. It is a single-shot, that being about the only difference, with the rounds being fed one at a time through the open bolt port. To load it, you open the bolt (it cocks upon opening), insert a round and then close the bolt. The bolt can be operated with the safety engaged—a safety feature I like on this rifle.

There is no separate cocking knob the kid has to pull, and the cocking force required for the Rascal's bolt is very low. This builds muscle memory for the kids, who will someday work an adult rifle bolt.

Another nice feature is the feed ramp. It's designed to be forgiving of cartridge placement and doesn't require surgical precision when a youngster inserts a cartridge. It's spring loaded and looks like a magazine follower, but it only allows for the one cartridge. Just set the .22 LR on the red feed ramp and, as the bolt closes, it drops out of the way, allowing for sure feeding each and every time.

The front sight is solid steel and drift adjustable for windage.

Synthetic stock models now have "Rascal" on the butt plate.



ACCURACY

It's not a precision match rifle, but it allows a new, young shooter to practice sound marksmanship techniques. If you're going to buy a kid a rifle, he or she deserves to have one they can shoot accurately.

At the heart of the Rascal's accuracy is the AccuTrigger ... the same one found on Savage's adult rifles. It's adjustable

The grip cap on new Rascal rifles is marked with Savage's new logo. Gone is the traditional Indian head logo.





from 2.5 to 6 pounds. Savage can make it this light because of the trigger blade safety, which I'll discuss later in the "safety" section of this article. A good trigger helps accuracy, as well as preventing poor trigger finger control—no pulling, tugging, mashing, etc.

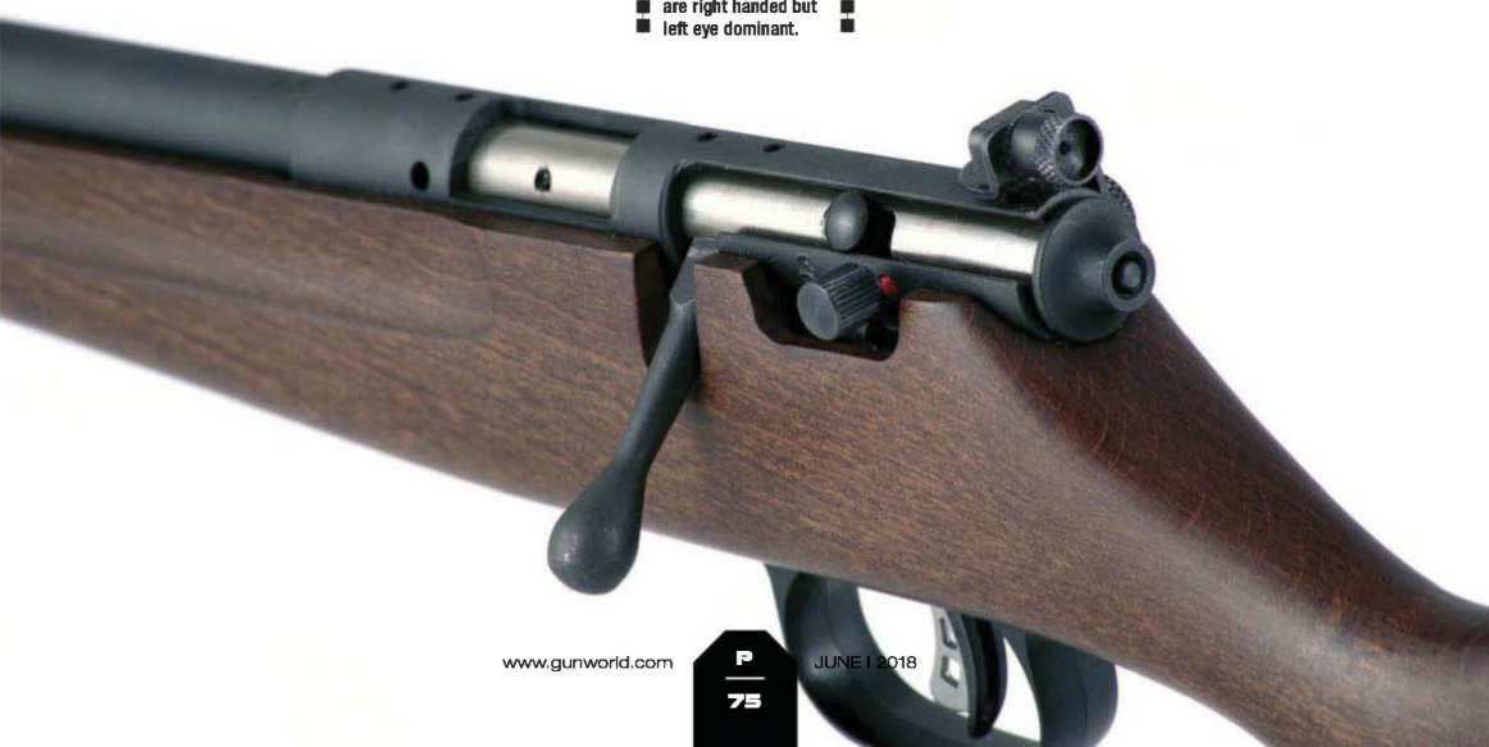
The barrel, itself, is nicely made of good-quality carbon steel and is button rifled. These are the same materials and processes used for all of Savage's barrels. There was no skimping here. It's also free floated. If I were to make only one request to Savage, it would be that it makes a model with a threaded barrel for a suppressor. There's nothing better for new shooters than a can: There's absolutely no sound or blast coming from a .22 bolt-action.

The final aspect of accuracy—the sights. Rugged sights made of metal ... imagine that! These aren't "kiddie" sights; rather, they are of similar quality and robustness as sights used for

The stock is perfect for small-statured kids. It also places the shooter's eye in perfect alignment with the sights. It's made of remarkably nice wood, especially for a kid's gun. Note the rear sling swivel stud.

The Rascal also comes in a left-handed stock. It's important for those who shoot left handed to learn proper technique, including those who are right handed but left eye dominant.

adult rifles. The front sight is drift adjustable for windage. The rear sight is a peep aperture that's adjustable for elevation and windage. My personal belief is that peep sights are the best sights for new shooters. A peep can attain match-level accuracy yet allows for learning the fundamentals of marksmanship, unlike a scope. But, if you want a scope for your youngster, the Rascal is drilled and tapped for a scope base or Picatinny rail.





The Rascal cocks upon opening the bolt and requires very little force, making it simple and easy for small children. This process of operation builds muscle memory when they later transition to larger bolt-action rifles. Once the rifle is cocked, it can be put on "safe" before a round is even inserted.

The safety is two-position, with "safe" being toward the rear. The bolt can be manipulated with the safety on—a nice feature for beginner shooters. Note the cocking indicator pin extending out the rear of the bolt, indicating that the action is cocked.

Here, the gun is cocked, and the safety lever is in the "fire" position.

SAFETY

Being safe is paramount, especially when teaching young shooters. The Rascal can be put on "safe" whenever a round is in the chamber, which is to say, when it is cocked. Opening the bolt cocks the gun, and at that point (with the bolt open), it can be put on "safe." The adult can ensure safety by handing young kids one round at a time, because the Rascal is a single-shot rifle. Once the round is inserted, with the safety already engaged, the bolt is closed. Once the rifle is fired, it's now uncocked, and the safety cannot be engaged; but once the bolt is opened, it's cocked, and it can be put on "safe" again.

When the rifle is cocked, the bolt has a rear cocking indicator pin that's exposed through the rear of the bolt.

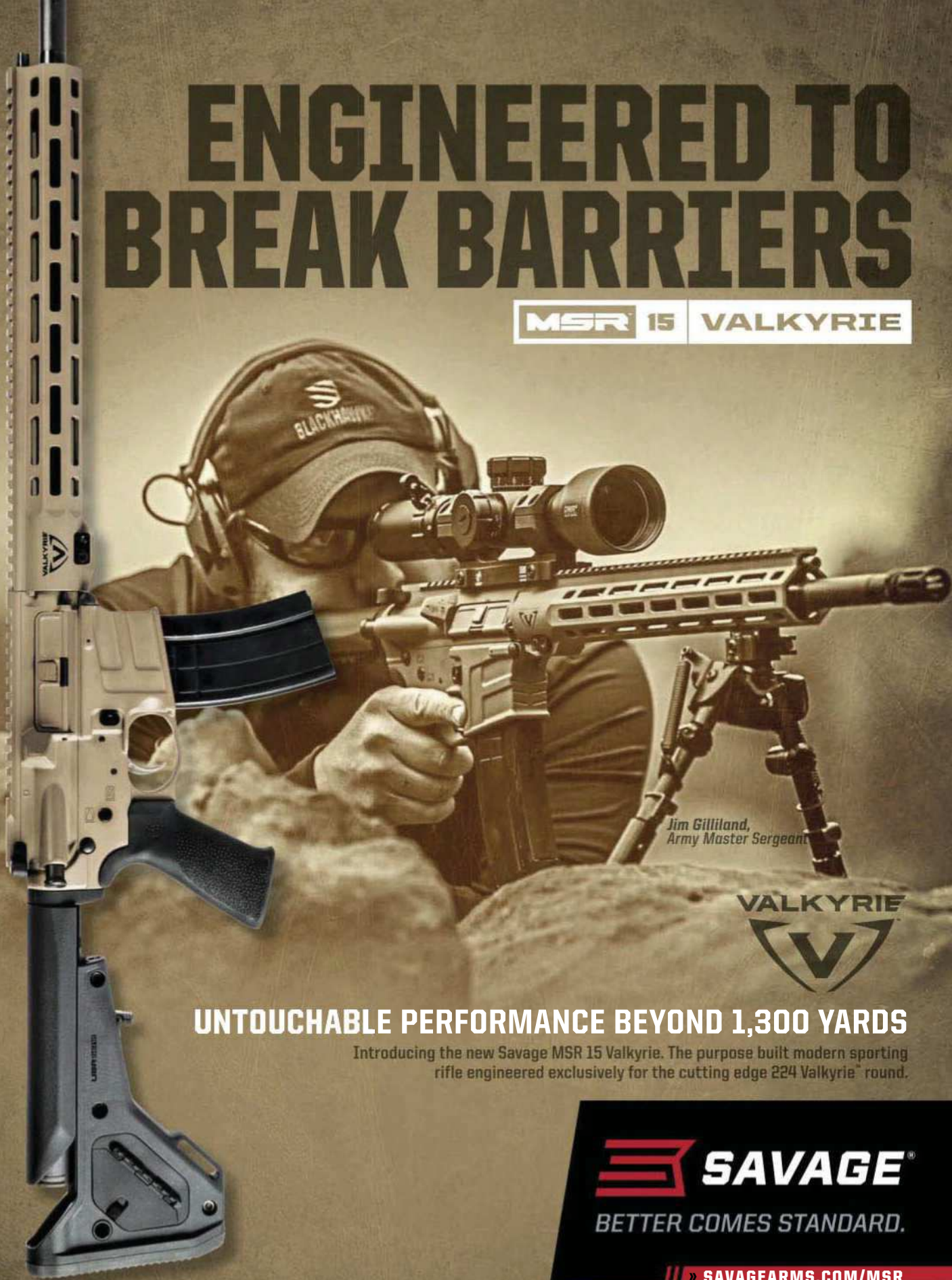
SAVAGE SET OUT WITH A DESIGN CHARTER OF DEVELOPING A TRUE YOUTH RIFLE THAT WAS THE SAFEST ON THE MARKET AND WITH THE SAME OPERATION AS AN ADULT BOLT-ACTION GUN. ON TOP OF THAT, IT HAD TO BE ACCURATE.



Disassembly is safe and simple, just as on many adult bolt-action rifles. Open the bolt and make sure the chamber is clear and not loaded. Then, pull the trigger as the bolt is pulled to the rear and out of the receiver.

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*Jim Gilliland,
Army Master Sergeant*



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Another safety is the trigger blade safety that's part of the AccuTrigger. It's the same principle as those found on most polymer striker-fired pistols, and it means the trigger cannot be pulled without the blade being engaged first.

SAVAGE RASCAL

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .22 LR

ACTION: Bolt-action, single-shot; RH and LH models

BARREL/RECEIVER COMPOSITION: High-quality carbon steel, blued (bbl/receiver only; polished bolt face)

RIFLING: Button-rifled barrel, RH twist, 16:1-inch rate (offered in .22 LR only)

SAFETY: Two-position

TRIGGER: User-adjustable Savage AccuTrigger that is adjustable from 2.5–6 pounds

AMMO CAPACITY: Single shot with self-aligning pivoting cartridge feed ramp

SIGHTS: Savage-designed and adjustable; driftable metal front sight (windage); rear peep aperture adjustable for windage and elevation. Drilled and tapped for two-piece scope mounts or Picatinny rail

BARREL LENGTH: 16.125 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 31.5 inches

LENGTH OF PULL: 11.25 inches

WEIGHT: 2.66 pounds

MSRP: \$189 (synthetic); \$239 (wood); \$234 (synthetic in Gator Camo)

CONTACT INFORMATION

SAVAGE

SavageArms.com

The peep aperture sight is well-made, rugged, accurate and adjustable for windage and elevation. These are the best factory sights that come on a kid's gun. Note that the cocking indicator pin is not extended out of the bolt rear, showing that it's not cocked.



The Savage AccuTrigger is an excellent trigger; it's the same one used on Savage's adult rifles. It's safe and adjustable from 2.5 to 6 pounds.

DETAILS

As impressive as all of this sounds, Savage also nailed it with the details.

First off, the stock—in particular, the wood. It's really nice wood. It lends a feeling of quality and pride-of-ownership for a kid. The stock is also available in synthetic that is offered in a multitude of colors (the most recent addition is purple).

The geometry of the stock is just right as well, from the length of the stock to the fit of the grip and forend. The butt is textured polymer and stays in the shoulder when shooting. The Rascal also includes sling swivel mounts fore and aft.

Savage also thought enough to make a left-handed model (in wood stock only). This allows for left-hand-shooting kids to learn proper shooting technique as well. This is the model I got for my son, who's right handed but left eye dominant.

Disassembly for cleaning is also a cinch and is the same as many adult bolt guns. Open the bolt and make sure the chamber is empty. Take the gun off "safe" and then pull the trigger to release the bolt so it can be pulled out from the rear.





Here is the Rascal in a black synthetic stock. It comes in an assortment of colors, including green, yellow, blue, pink, orange, Gator Camo and the new purple.

THIS IS A GUN THAT IS DESIGNED AND BUILT FOR KIDS, BUT IT'S NOT A "KIDDIE" GUN. BY THAT, I MEAN THAT IT'S NOT CHEAPLY MADE. SAVAGE DIDN'T SKIMP ON IT. IT'S MADE WITH THE SAME QUALITY AS ALL SAVAGE GUNS.

I recently went on a hunt in Texas, along with Chris Bezzina, VP of operations for Savage Arms. He's a great guy, and we hit it off well. At one point during the week, I happened to mention that my boys all had Rascals.

It turns out that he had a little to do with planting the seed from which the Rascal grew. He was in the same boat as me, looking for a rifle for his kid and not being happy with what was on the market. Most of all, he did not feel the offerings on the market were safe for kids; nor did they provide the performance that kids deserve.

And because he's the VP of Savage, he was able to have his problem rectified ... and kids such as mine get to enjoy the fruits of those labors.

KUDOS TO SAVAGE

In sum, this is an outstanding choice for kid shooters—not just small kid shooters aged 4 to 12, but for “kid-at-heart” shooters. Heck, I enjoy shooting it. It's a well-made gun, and if I had to sum it up in once sentence it would be: This is a gun that is designed and built for kids, but it's not a “kiddie” gun. By that, I mean that it's not cheaply made. Savage didn't skimp on it. It's made with the same quality as all Savage guns. And, with a street price of between \$150 and \$200, it's affordable.

As a testament to the Rascal, after buying one for my first son when he turned 5, I was so impressed that I bought another when my middle son turned 5. And when my youngest turned 5, I bought one for him.

They are now 9, 10 and 12 years old, and although they're lured by the “coolness” of ARs and other such rifles, if given a choice, they will each shoot their little Rascal that is theirs. **GW**

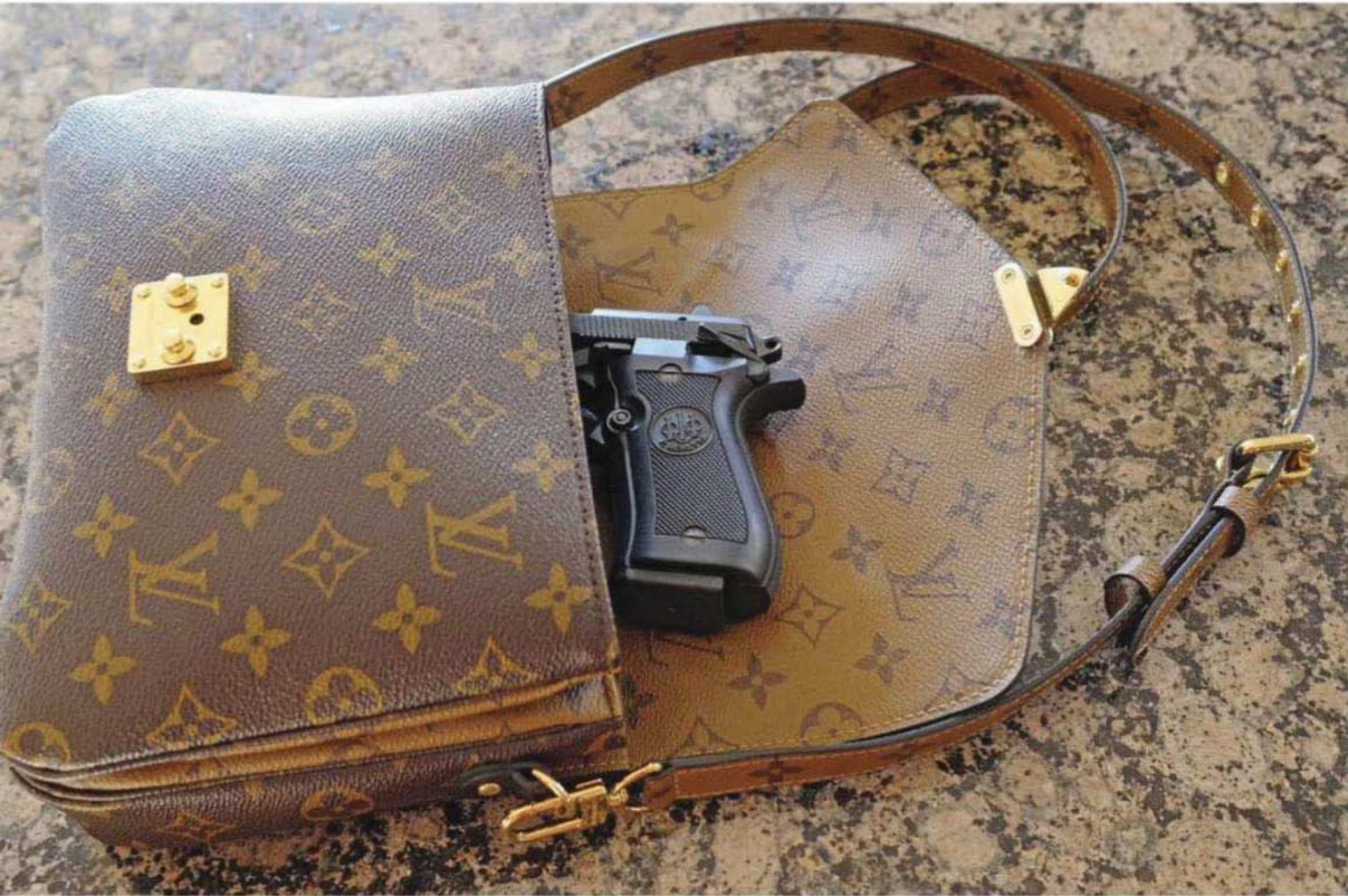
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YOUR FEMININE SIDE

WHEN IT COMES TO
DEFENSIVE HANDGUNS,
WOMEN SHOULD CHOOSE
HOW TO CARRY FOR
THEMSELVES.

Women might make different choices when it comes to concealed carry. (Photo: Robb Manning)

Women are different. I noticed that some years ago. And they dress differently too.

That's not a sexist statement. Women are very capable of anything to which they direct their efforts. But when it comes to concealed carry, what they carry and how they carry can vary, depending on several factors: body type, clothing choices and what they are willing to do.

So, if you have a wife, girlfriend, sister or daughter who is interested in carrying a concealed weapon, before you offer to help, you have to keep a few things in mind.

NOT EVERYONE IS A "GUN GUY"

I don't know many women who want to depend on some guy coming to their rescue. At the same time, not everyone wants to



enter shooting competitions, spend a week in deer camp without showering, start a gun collection or spend hours reading every gun magazine on the newsstand. Not everyone gets giddy at the mention of the upcoming gun show. So, don't force that. Some women simply want to be able to defend themselves. They don't want to be easy victims.

LEARNING CURVE

When I was a firearms instructor, I found that in many cases, women responded more easily to instruction. Maybe it was because there was no male ego involved on their part. They had none of the "I'm a guy, so I should know how to do this already" type of anxiety.

Just make sure there's no male ego involved on your side. You shouldn't throw any new shooters—man, woman or child—a curve by giving them more gun than they can handle. Start with a .22 pistol.

ON TARGET

Paper targets placed against a large piece of cardboard are great to start. You can diagnose problems with the fundamentals much easier if you don't have to guess at where her bullets are hitting.

Once she's got the hang of it, switch to fun reactive targets—steel that clangs, spins or topples when hit; soup cans; plastic jugs of colored liquid; bowling pins—anything that instantly rewards a hit. Keep sessions short, distances close and recoil low.

WHY CARRY?

Sometimes, the most difficult part is convincing a woman that she should carry. I've talked to women who will throw 20 pounds of stuff into their handbags and won't leave home without them but view carrying a 20-ounce gun as too inconvenient.

Some women might find these Undertech Undercover Concealed Carry Short Shorts the answer to their carry needs. (www.UnderTechUndercover.com) (Photo: Undertech Undercover)

... STRONG, INDEPENDENT WOMEN TAKE ON THE WORLD WITHOUT FEAR. THEY DON'T LIKE TO FEEL THAT THEY'RE VULNERABLE IN ANY WAY.

Part of that equation is that strong, independent women take on the world without fear. They don't like to feel they're vulnerable in any way. My grown daughter, for instance, becomes angry when I scold her about hiking alone.

Emphasize that bad things can happen to good people anywhere at any time. You don't get to choose those parameters. Carrying a gun is a "just in case" measure that doesn't indicate weakness or helplessness.

WHAT TO CARRY

Get her to try a variety of guns, but ultimately, let her choose her own gun. Yes, it has to be an educated choice, because not every gun is the best choice for concealed carry.

When it comes to semiautos, a woman should be able to manipulate the slide without tilting the muzzle in an unsafe direction to get better leverage on the gun. If hand strength is an issue, she might be better off with a revolver.

Many women naturally gravitate toward the smallest, most-lightweight guns, considering concealment first. But some small .380 pistols can be harder to control and shoot well than slightly



For carrying a handgun on the backside, Can Can Concealment offers this Hip Hugger Classic. (www.CanCanConcealment.com) (Photo: Can Can Concealment)



larger guns in more-powerful chamberings. A subcompact 9mm pistol or .38 Special snubnose revolver are usually good compromises, but I'd avoid the ultra-lightweights because of their greater recoil.

HOW TO CARRY

Ideally, your clothing should conform to your concealed-carry needs. But that's not always the reality.

Many women seem to resist carrying a gun on the belt—either inside or outside the waistband. Those who do carry around the waistline often find carrying in the small of the back or appendix positions provide the best concealment.

Pocket carry offers good concealment, but in many cases, women's clothing doesn't provide sufficiently deep pockets. Belly bands are good choices. They provide good concealment, and the handgun can be positioned anywhere around the midsection that's most comfortable. There are ankle holsters, thigh holsters and even holsters that attach to a bra, but quick access can be difficult.

Off-body carry has one major drawback, and it is something to bear in mind: The gun is carried in some sort of bag, which

This Cross-body Organizer from Gun Tote'n Mamas (www.GunTote'nMamas.com) is made of buffalo leather and features a special handgun pocket. (Photo: Gun Tote'n Mamas)



means it can be set down or even taken. The first thing a mugger reaches for is a woman's purse. If he grabs that, a woman loses her purse—and her gun (if that's where she keeps it). Set a purse down on a chair or in a shopping cart, and you've lost control of it if you step away for even an instant.

If a woman insists on carrying a gun in a handbag, it should be carried with a shoulder strap over the shoulder of the weak-side arm. It should have a secure, but easy-to-access pocket dedicated to the gun. Some shoulder bags feature steel cord in the straps to make a slash-and-grab more difficult.

RETENTION AND MINDSET

An attacker is apt to view a woman as someone who's more easily overpowered. That's why it's especially important for a woman to receive some training in weapons retention in case there is a struggle for her gun.

You have to embrace the idea that self-defense is likely to involve a physical struggle. Perhaps the most important factor for anyone—man or woman—is that you be armed with the mindset to fight back. Without it, the bad guy is apt to take your gun and use it against you. **GW**

When wearing a skirt or dress, the Can Can Concealment Garter Classic could be a good option. (www.CanCanConcealment.com) (Photo: Can Can Concealment)

Packin' Neat organizer inserts can be placed in women's existing purses that feature dedicated space for concealed-carry handguns. (www.Packin'Neat.com) (Photo: Packin' Neat)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Paul Barlow is a retired sergeant/station commander and former firearms instructor with the New York State Police. He has been writing on outdoor topics for more than 30 years and has served as the editor for a number of Engaged Media special publications, including *Gunslingers*.

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Sometimes, it's easier for female instructors to go "hands on" with another female than it would be for a male instructor. Female instructors are often able to explain things differently as well.

TRAINING THE FEMALE SHOOTER

THERE IS NO ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL WAY OF TRAINING. MEN, WOMEN, OLD, YOUNG—PEOPLE LEARN DIFFERENTLY.

promised myself that my training column this month would be educational and not a rant, but I need to tell you how this month's topic came about.

I'm involved with several female shooting groups, hang out with other women who shoot and belong to a variety of women's Facebook groups. I've heard and read a few statements I find to just be excuses:

"Women are completely different than men in how we carry a pistol. It's harder for women to carry."

That's like saying all men can easily carry in the same manner. Just like women, men come in all shapes and sizes. Long waist, short waist, thin with straight hips, those with big bellies, even some with wide hips. Sure, ladies' clothing styles are different, and that might be where the difficulty lies. However, don't make the excuse that all ladies have shorter torsos.

"Male instructors don't seem to understand that women are different. We have boobs, you know."

Yep, we do. I've had them for quite a long time now, since about 4th grade (I was an early bloomer). And guess what? They really don't get in my way; I've gotten used to them over the years. I've also seen quite a few men with "moobs" (male boobs) in classes, and they seem to get by just fine.

"A woman is usually smaller, shorter, lighter and weaker than a man."

On average, yes. But I'm 5 feet, 9 inches tall—and have been since 8th grade. My son is 6 feet, 2 inches tall and weighs quite a bit less than I do. As for "weaker": Yep, I'm weaker than my husband but stronger than quite a few of the men we've trained—not to mention that the smaller women in many of our classes usually outshoot the men. However, being smaller and weaker is not an excuse; rather, it is the reason women should train to protect themselves.



I've assisted in training many women and men since 2011, both law enforcement and civilians. Without a doubt in my mind, I can conclude that we're all different—both men and women—when it comes to body shape and size. So, regarding the physical aspect, women should not be trained any differently than men.

However, I've found there is a huge difference in how women learn ... and that's where trainers need to change their teaching strategies.

WOMEN LEARN DIFFERENTLY

My husband, Chris, and I make a good teaching team; we complement each other. He gives instruction his way. Then, if I see any puzzled looks, I re-explain another way. Yes, he often looks puzzled with my explanations, but after 23 years of marriage, he realizes I understand and often hear instruction differently and that perhaps other people do too.

I have read a few studies about the development of men's and women's brains. In a nutshell, females tend to learn better with words, and they interpret directions literally. When I compete, I talk almost the entire time I'm shooting. I verbalize when I'm putting my gun on "safe," engaging a long-range target

Yes, women come in different shapes ... but so do men.

A female instructor can influence and inspire other females.

... I'VE FOUND THERE IS A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN HOW WOMEN LEARN ... AND THAT'S WHERE TRAINERS NEED TO CHANGE THEIR TEACHING STRATEGIES.

and a variety of other movements. Through observation and discussion with other female shooters and listening to women in classes, I've found many do the same. We tend to verbalize each step in a shooting sequence, especially when first learning.

Ladies, if this works for you, don't be afraid to talk yourself through your manipulations.

VERBAL CORRECTION

Regardless of the situation, women and men usually respond differently to verbal correction. While a male might do well with good-natured teasing and sarcasm, a female might take it personally and become flustered. Likewise, a patronizing tone or comment can change a student's disposition in class. A good instructor finds a way to be assertive *and* supportive.

BENEFITS OF LADIES-ONLY CLASSES

Although the reasons vary widely, I've found that many women take up firearms training as a means of personal safety. Sometimes, this is proactive; many times, it's reactive because of a negative life-changing experience. An all-female class allows these women to feel comfortable asking questions and less intimidated when shooting on the line.

In addition, an all-female class avoids any influence of their significant others trying to be "helpful" on the range. Women want to learn for themselves and need to handle their firearms. Just knowing they're not being watched by this person might help them feel more relaxed.





I have also read that women are often more left-brained, which means we sometimes have a difficult time keeping reason and emotion separate.

When I attended one of my first training classes (a law enforcement instructor class that Chris was teaching), I fell apart once we began live fire and brass from the tall officer next to me was bouncing off my head. I panicked. Watching the destruction of the targets, I kept thinking about my children and how deadly guns are. Because I was the only female, I couldn't expect anyone to understand what I was feeling, so I left the line and packed everything up.

Now, this experience could have gone two different ways. Luckily, I quickly got over it. But I'll bet that without female support, this could have been some women's one and only firearms course.



Coed classes, especially with significant others, can sometimes hinder training.

When women are on the line, shooting together, they support each other.



TIPS FOR THE MALE INSTRUCTOR (MI) AND FEMALE STUDENT (FS)

MI: Have multiple ways to explain a topic. Watch for students who have puzzled looks on their faces.

FS: If you don't understand something, ask. If you still don't understand, ask for it to be explained another way.

MI: Offer suggestions to someone struggling because of hand strength. Remember that what works for some might not work for others.

FS: If you are struggling because of your hand strength, ask if you are manipulating the gun correctly or if there is another method you should try.

MI: If a female has a firearm that is not the best choice for learning, offer her the use of an alternate gun.

FS: Be familiar with the firearm you are bringing to class. Make sure it fits your hands. A full-sized pistol is usually the best choice when first learning to shoot.

MI: Keep in mind that there is a lot of new terminology for the beginning shooter. Be prepared to repeat yourself several times. Have important vocabulary written on a board for students to reference as needed.

FS: Take notes! If you missed something, ask for it to be repeated. Make sure you understand before the instructor moves on.

MI: Don't tell a female to quit talking while she is shooting (that has happened to me).

FS: If you need to verbalize your shooting sequence out loud, do so. However, you might want to let the instructor know so he doesn't think you are talking to him.

There is no one-size-fits-all way of training. Men, women, old, young—people learn differently. Whether you are the student or an instructor, you need to do your part to get the most out of your classes.

■ Ladies: Stop making excuses. Gentlemen: Treat the women the same as the men, but adjust your teaching methods a bit. **SW**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle Cerino is both a firearms trainer and the president of Cerino Consulting and Training Group, LLC—a firearms training company she built with her husband, Chris, in 2011. She writes, hunts and competes in major 3-gun matches nationwide.

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.22 LR SUBSONIC

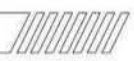
The shooting world is all agog over suppressors. Which is good. Even if you don't own a suppressor, we all benefit from the R&D poured into subsonic ammunition made for them.

Which leads me to subsonic .22 LR. Yes, in the recent past, .22 LR of any kind was so difficult to find that insisting only on subsonic ammo was a fool's quest. But the logjam has broken (the hoarders finally ran out of steam), and we can get rimfire ammo.

Subsonic .22 LR has another benefit aside from suppressors: You should be shooting it when introducing new shooters to our side. The fun side.

My insight into this came more than a decade ago, when my wife and I took a new shooter to the range. The new shooter had a background that made it just a bit edgy, sensitive and even

NOT JUST FOR
SUPPRESSORS



emotionally hazardous for her to be there. But she was curious, and we were patient.

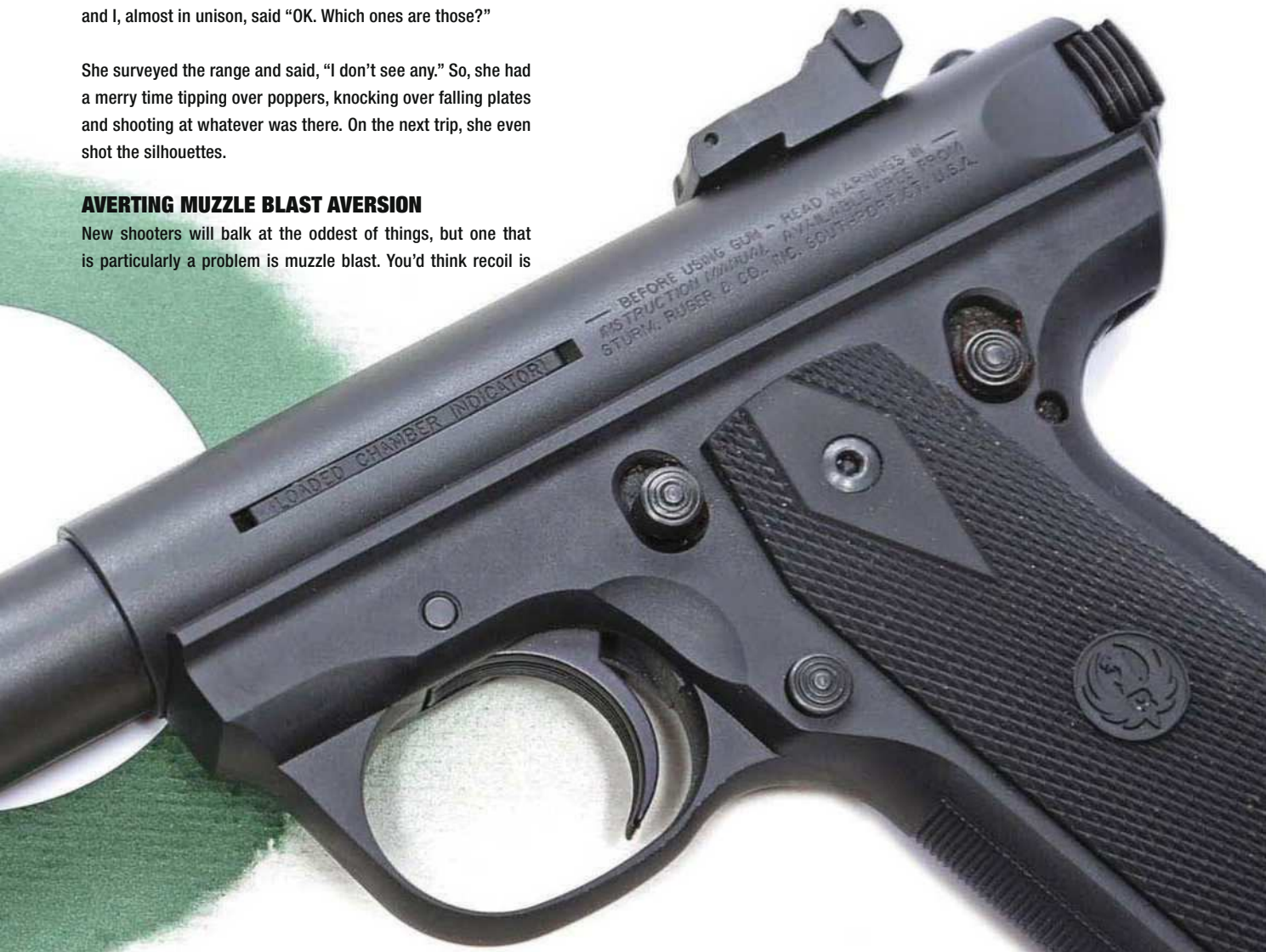
One thing she said when we finally got onto the range was, "I can't shoot at the ones that look like people."

There wasn't an IPSC target or silhouette in sight, so my wife and I, almost in unison, said "OK. Which ones are those?"

She surveyed the range and said, "I don't see any." So, she had a merry time tipping over poppers, knocking over falling plates and shooting at whatever was there. On the next trip, she even shot the silhouettes.

AVERTING MUZZLE BLAST AVERSION

New shooters will balk at the oddest of things, but one that is particularly a problem is muzzle blast. You'd think recoil is



... A .22 LR THAT BREAKS THE SOUND BARRIER WITH THAT SHARP CRACK WILL OFTEN BE PERCEIVED AS BEING "TOO MUCH" OR HAVE HARDER RECOIL THAN A SUBSONIC ROUND.

Even if it isn't target-specific ammo, subsonic .22 LR can be very accurate. Find what works and make learning to shoot a really fun time for new shooters.

the problem, but a sharp blast will be perceived as worse than a heavy recoil if the noise has more of a sharp crack to it.

So, a .22 LR that breaks the sound barrier with that sharp crack will often be perceived as being "too much" or have harder recoil than a subsonic round. Now, in the arithmetic world, it does. But a 40-grain bullet going 1,100 fps has a power factor of 44. At 950 fps, it has a PF of 38. Even to a tiny woman of 90 to 100 pounds, the Newtonian difference is inconsequential. But the crack? That makes the difference.



So, as an extra step to make sure your new shooter has the most fun possible, use subsonics.

There is another bonus here. A cartridge designed to be subsonic and that never breaks the sound barrier is going to have less powder. Oh, again, it isn't much, but the powder that would have boosted that bullet to 1,100 or 1,200 fps out of a rifle will have more noticeable muzzle blast out of a handgun than the one designed to only be subsonic.

COST CONSIDERATIONS

Now, back in the old days, before suppressors, the only subsonic rounds you could count on were full-on target ammo. I'm as happy as the next guy to introduce new shooters to the sport, but doing it with Federal Gold Medal or Eley Tenex really puts a tear in one's eye. In such an instance, they'd be shooting rimfire ammo that costs as much as full-power centerfire handgun ammo, shot for shot. Ouch!

In the new world of subsonic ammo, built for suppressors, we can now have the milder-report ammo at pretty much the same cost as vanilla-plain plinking ammo. Even if it costs more than the bulk ammo, it costs a lot closer to the plinking ammo than it does to the gilt-edged target ammo.

Progress is a good thing. As a result of the widespread adoption of suppressors, we are spoiled for choice when it comes to subsonic, accurate, not-expensive .22 LR from which to choose.

It is also going to be highly tested and reliable in pretty much any .22 LR firearm you can lay hands on. Some of the super-velocity .22 LR rounds can be very touchy about working well or shooting accurately in some firearms. When you find the combo that works, you're golden. If not, you've got a bunch of ammo that becomes a headache.

The makers of subsonic ammo know it will leave the muzzle and pass through an expensive, difficult-to-replace item, and they'd better not be the cause of problems. So, they work hard to make it right (not that any ammo maker is a slacker, but they know subsonic is meant to go through suppressors).

HOOKED ON SUCCESS

The extra benefit of a lessened muzzle blast is that new shooters can learn more quickly how to shoot, and there's nothing that makes something more fun than success. Once they start pinging the steel with a rimfire and get that immediate gratification, they will be hooked. Then, once they have enough shooting under their belt to not be put off, the smallest caliber that will knock over steel is called for. They'll invariably hit with the first shot and be as happy as pigs in mud. Then, they'll miss with the second and wonder what happened.

That's when you get to be an instructor. Have them go back to the .22 LR subsonic and work on the basics. Teach them trigger control, sight alignment and follow-through, and then try the bigger one again.

When they hit consistently with the bigger one, they have made the journey from "I've never shot a gun" to "I can hit what I aim at."

■ ■ ■ Now, break out the suppressor and have even more fun. **GW**

Expensive or not, opt for subsonics when you can for introducing a new shooter to our sport. The supersonic crack of standard ammo can be a hindrance to fun, learning and continued range trips.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Patrick Sweeney has been a decades-long reloader, competition shooter, gunsmith and firearms writer. He is also a state-certified law enforcement firearms instructor, a court-recognized expert witness—and winner of much more than his fair share of loot and glory.

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TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

AN ATTACKER CAN CLOSE A LOT OF DISTANCE VERY FAST. ARE YOU PREPARED?

During a recent conversation, the topic of personal defensive space came up. Invariably, the subject on this includes what many call the “21-foot rule,” or, more properly, “The Tueller Drill.” It was developed in 1983 by Lt. John Tueller while he was a firearms instructor with the Salt Lake City police department.

The idea behind the drill is to identify if an officer can draw and accurately fire upon an aggressor armed with an edged or striking weapon before making contact with the assailant.

I first heard of the 21-foot rule while attending my concealed-carry class almost 10 years ago. I don’t remember if the instructor gave credit to Lt. Tueller or even explained in detail how to bring the odds back into my favor.



To give some perspective on how close 21 feet is, it is the length of an average longbed pickup truck. For an assailant to get from the front to the back—where you might be—it will take them around a second and a half to cover that distance.

NATURAL REACTIONS

In that time, your body is doing several things. The first is your brain, which is trying to assess the threat. This might take up to half a second. Next is your response, another half to full second.

Most good shooters I know can draw and get the first shot off in just under one and a half seconds. However, these are not average shooters. They practice these types of scenarios often and continue to change them to get better.

Most handgun owners are not in this category ... but should be. You know the ones—once a month at the range (maybe). Some are even less experienced—those who get their concealed permit, get their gun and holster, and then never train.

Don't be that guy or gal!

GET OFF THE "X"

There are a couple things you can do to train for this type of incident. Most importantly, get off the "X": *Don't be a stationary target.*

A person running at you is building momentum; so, by moving laterally, you do two things. You increase the distance between yourself and the assailant, and you cause the assailant to change direction, which can throw them off balance. This gives you more time to draw your own weapon.

Your movement needs to be quick and more than just a step or two out of the way. If possible, move to the opposite side that your attacker is armed on. This makes it harder to swing the weapon at you if they go past you. Try this by having your training partner run at you and then move left or right. See what this does to the "attacker."

You can also change levels. Start by moving laterally; then, go to the ground, laying on your back as you draw your weapon. You can use your feet and legs to deflect both an armed and unarmed attacker. You are less likely to suffer an injury that will prevent you from defending yourself further.

TEST YOUR RESPONSE

The NRA offers a course for personal protection in the home (PPITH). A drill is demonstrated to emphasize the 21-foot rule. In the drill, the "defender" starts with gun in holster and facing downrange. The "assailant" starts with a hand on the shooter's non-firing shoulder. At "go," the assailant begins running in the opposite direction of downrange. The shooter draws and fires at a target fewer than 21 feet away. On the sound of the shot, the attacker drops an object so that it can be measured from the "start" position. This gives the shooter an idea about what

their real safe distance is. Based on updated data, 30 feet is a more realistic distance.

VARIABLES

A host of things can change the outcome. Experience will likely be number one. Other variables, such as fitness level, type of holster and carry mode, light conditions, what type of weapon the attacker is carrying (baseball bat versus knife) and perhaps the age of the shooter. You should also make use of any obstacles available (shopping cart, vehicles, bushes).

My additional suggestion is that you do not need to come all the way to position 4 (see the "Shooting Positions" sidebar on page 94) to take your first shot; you might need to be able to take your first shot from position 2. This is something you should practice ... under qualified supervision.

In reality, the 21-foot rule is not a rule at all; rather, it is a guideline about where you should set your training. By practicing via the ■ NRA's PPITH drill, you can safely get an idea about where your ■ safe distance is.

**... BY MOVING
LATERALLY, YOU
DO TWO THINGS.
YOU INCREASE THE
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CAUSE THE ASSAILANT
TO CHANGE DIRECTION,
WHICH CAN THROW
THEM OFF BALANCE.
THIS GIVES YOU MORE
TIME TO DRAW YOUR
OWN WEAPON.**





POSITION 1



POSITION 1 is your best opportunity to get a good grip and make solid contact with the firearm.

POSITION 3 is the meeting of the dominant hand with the non-firing hand for stability and better aim. The gun remains trained on the threat.

POSITION 3



This is also an exercise you can practice while dry-firing. However, make sure you have removed all live ammunition before practicing this drill. Of course, this advice is for blunt and sharp-edged weapons. If the attacker has a firearm, the tactics are very different.

It is also important to remember that you will not become an expert simply because you read it here. You need to train—and train hard.

POSITION 2



In **POSITION 2**, the firearm is drawn from the holster and is immediately pointed in the direction of the threat in the event the threat advances toward you.

POSITION 4 at full presentation. This is your best—and most stable—position for aiming at the threat.

POSITION 4



SHOOTING POSITIONS

POSITION 1: The firing hand moves to form its grip on the pistol grip. It is important in this first step to get a good grip on the firearm; it is unlikely you will have time to adjust in a defensive situation.

POSITION 2: Once the pistol is clear from the holster, it is instantly pointed toward the threat while continuing to move to the center of your body, connecting with your non-firing hand. (As a note, a slight cant away from your body with a semiauto will prevent the slide from contacting you if fired from this position.)

POSITION 3: Your non-firing hand solidifies the two-handed grip, with the muzzle pointed at your threat. In position 3, your finger remains off the trigger—except if the threat raises to the point that you must immediately shoot. It is recommended you only shoot from this position if you are proficient or possibly using a laser sighting system. Remain aware of your surroundings and backstop. You do not want to injure innocent bystanders. This is also a good “ready” position, because it does not create muscle fatigue (unlike position 4). Again, keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to fire.

POSITION 4: This is full-presentation position. From this position, you will be able to take your most accurate shot. This is not a position you can maintain indefinitely. Therefore, you should only execute it when you are ready to engage. Once complete, scan for additional threats and return to position 3 until help comes; alternatively, move to a more secure area to call for help.

Expertise comes from practice and from seeking qualified training from a good instructor. Hands-on training with constructive criticism is what will prepare you to defend yourself, should the need ever arise.

When your stress level is up and your adrenalin is flowing, you will revert to instinct and ingrained training—not something you saw once on YouTube or read in a magazine. **GW**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brian Berry is a retired Army Special Forces Command sergeant major. He is a former Special Forces weapons sergeant and has multiple combat tours under his belt. Brian is the co-founder of Spartan Defensive Concepts, at which he teaches concealed carry and defensive marksmanship courses. Brian retired in 2014 and is now a consultant currently working for the Special Operations community, as well as a senior instructor for American Survival Guide University.



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TEACHING THE WIFE TO SHOOT

unwillingness to listen make for a disastrous combination at the shooting range.

SHAME ON ME

Now, with that disclaimer out of the way, a couple of years ago, my “first” wife decided that she should get a permit to carry a concealed handgun. She has always kept a loaded revolver in her car, which is legal here without a carry permit, but I have always encouraged her to get the permit to carry legally, so she could always have a handgun within reach.

She knows how a revolver operates and, over the years, has fired one when needed. But I insisted she let me give her some detailed instruction so she would not “shame” me when she went to get qualified for her permit.

In retrospect, that statement was my first mistake.

The thing is, being the wife of Jeff Quinn, she should be able to shoot very well just by association ... or so I thought. After all, she has held the position as my first wife for 38 years now, so I figured she would be pretty good at it with just a bit of coaching.

PAYBACK TIME

However, with my instruction for her to not shame me, she thought it was payback time for making such a statement. And so, it began.

Let me begin this piece by stating flat out that a husband is always the worst choice for a shooting instructor to teach his own wife the fundamentals of shooting. He can teach his daughter, his grandkids or another man’s wife, but trying to teach his own wife is a mistake.

There are two basic reasons for this. First of all, she will not listen. Second, he expects perfection right from the start—because, after all, *he* can shoot, and by association, she should be able to easily do so as well. High expectations and an

GETTING SHOOTING INSTRUCTION FOR YOUR WIFE IS A GOOD IDEA—JUST MAKE SURE IT’S NOT YOU.

... BEING THE WIFE OF JEFF QUINN, SHE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SHOOT VERY WELL JUST BY ASSOCIATION ... OR SO I THOUGHT.

We walked out to my range carrying a .22 revolver and a brick of Remington hollow-point ammunition. I first tried to teach her how to properly hold the revolver, which didn't go well at all.

She proceeded to hold the six-gun with her thumb and forefinger, touching it as easily as possible—as if she had just picked up a piece of dried dog leavings from the yard. I very patiently tried to get her to grip the revolver with both hands, but she was having none of it, barely touching the little six-gun. I knew that any minute, that sweet little Smith & Wesson Model 63 was going to land on the concrete. However, she managed to secure a better grip. After some dry-firing, I was certain she was ready to put a few rounds on target.

I was wrong. With the target set at 7 yards, and after instruction on how to properly load the weapon, she proceeded to put bullets everywhere—except on the target. Standing behind her, I tried to help with sight alignment and trigger squeeze, gently offering advice about how to hold the six-gun and place her shots. Well, gently at first, anyway. No matter how many times I tried to correct her, there was no pattern at all to the way she was missing the target ... with every shot. Every. Shot.

I worked with this woman for a couple of hours, and no matter how hard I tried or how frustrated I became, she just could not get the hang of it. I didn't understand this at all.

She is highly educated, holding a master's degree in something that sounds important. I have instructed children, grown men and other women, and they all seemed to catch on rather quickly. But here I was, trying to teach my own sweet wife how to shoot. It was like trying to talk sense into a politician.

This just was not working at all. I now had to try to figure out a way to talk her out of wanting a carry permit, because I was certain there was no way she was going to be able to qualify, even on the simple course of fire, for a state carry license. This was bad. Real bad.

LO, A MIRACLE?

Then suddenly, as if God himself had miraculously intervened, her shooting improved dramatically! Instead of spraying lead across the countryside, she started shooting tight groups, cutting out the center of the target. She was gripping the gun properly and carefully aligning the sights before squeezing the trigger.

Then, her pace picked up while still maintaining excellent shot placement on the target. This was great! My instruction had paid off! I was finally feeling pretty good about myself and had the assurance that I would not have to suffer the ridicule of my shooting friends and colleagues because of my wife's inability to shoot ...

It was at that point that she informed me it was because of my instruction to her to "be sure and not shame me" that she had purposely been hitting everything except the target just to teach me a lesson.

So, there it is, fellows. If you think your wife might need some instruction on how to properly fire a handgun, hire a professional. It will be much easier—on both of you. **GW**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jeff Quinn is a full-time writer/reviewer on Gunblast.com, an online gun magazine started in 2000. He has also written for the *Gun Digest Annual* and enjoys living life in the woods of Tennessee, where he raises Longhorn cattle ... and his grandkids.

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When teaching kids or people of small stature to shoot handguns, .22 LR is the best for starting out. Look for a handgun that is light-weight and small and has grips small enough for them to get their hands on. The Ruger SR22 shown here makes a great choice—it's very light, it operates just like any standard-caliber carry gun, and even small kids can get their hands on the grip properly. Additionally, it has a threaded barrel. Suppressors such as this SilencerCo 22 Sparrow are excellent for kids, because they mitigate muzzle blast, sound and recoil.





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