

THE COMPLETE HOME DEFENSE GUIDE

YOUR STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO
DEFENDING YOUR HOME, YOUR
FAMILY AND YOURSELF



BY MIKE MARTEL

The Complete Home Defense Guide

*Get the Knowledge You Need to Protect Your Home, Your
Family and Yourself*

by

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Safety Warning!

Firearms will kill people, either on purpose or by accident.

Remember the 4 Rules of Gun Safety:

1. Treat every firearm as if it's loaded.

Even if you're absolutely certain a gun is unloaded, still follow these rules for safe gun handling. .

2. Never point a firearm at anything you are not willing to destroy.

Accept the mindset to always keep your gun pointed in a direction that would safely stop the bullet should it discharge. If you will be cleaning or handling your unloaded gun at home, find a safe direction ahead of time -- bullets penetrate floors, ceiling, windows, and walls. Masonry, a full bookcase, a full freezer, downward (if you're on the ground floor), or even a five gallon bucket of sand may be good options.

3. Always be sure of your target and what is beyond it.

You are responsible for the entire path of every bullet you fire from your gun. If you hit your intended target, the bullet may still continue through.

4. Keep your finger off the trigger until you are on target and ready to fire.

Whenever you are not on target and ready to fire, your trigger finger should always be outside the trigger guard and resting straight and flat alongside the body of your gun.

Do not handle a weapon without getting in person training from a responsible, knowledgeable instructor.

Don't do anything irresponsible!

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The Home Defense Handgun: Myths and realities

Handguns were designed to predominantly serve as a self-defense weapon. They lack the versatility of a shotgun and cannot touch the ranges of a full powered rifle caliber, but when it comes to individual self-protection, there are simply no better options.

The reason for this is threefold:

- Handguns are portable and can be wielded with one hand so that the other hand is free to use a phone or other equipment to notify police, wield a flashlight or open windows or doors.
- A handgun can be used for self-defense in the home and for carry outside the home in the pursuit of self-defense. The principles of both modes of protection are largely the same
- Politically, handguns are often targeted for legislation and possible banning at the state and federal levels, this has increased their demand as consumers want to buy them before they will no longer be available.

Many new buyers of handguns are urban city dwellers and not necessarily the traditional hunting demographic. When use of a firearm for self-defense comes to mind, the handgun remains king.

Unfortunately, many buyers or would-be buyers are not receiving the quality of information that they deserve regarding their handguns.

Most of these misconceptions started out as a form of solid advice from a well-meaning authority but like the old "telephone game" from grade school, the end result turns into a message completely different from the original intent.

We hope to dispel the myths, rumors and gun shop bravado as we take you step by step through the paces of purchasing a home defense handgun, learning how to use it properly, how to use it safely and incorporating it into a part of your home defense strategy.

The first question you must answer is if the handgun is the right choice for you and your situation.

If your city or state has onerous laws against the possession or use of handguns, you may have to consider a long gun for home defense. Should you be able to possess, use or carry a handgun legally in one of these jurisdictions, then you will be subject to extraordinary scrutiny if it is used in self-defense.

Myth Number One: New shooters should start out with a revolver as they are easier to use.

There is some truth to this, as there are with most myths. A revolver is a simpler tool and the learning curve is quite short. There are no safeties, take down levers, slide stops, decocking levers or other external controls on a revolver beyond the latch that is used to open the cylinder. So the ease of use mentality is correct.

Unfortunately a double action revolver can be one of the hardest firearms to learn how to shoot properly.

This was said by revolver shooting master Ed McGivern in the 1920s. McGivern may have been the best revolver shooter who ever lived. He could shoot airborne targets multiple times before they hit the ground and literally draw pictures in steel targets with bullets fired from his revolver. For someone who made revolver shooting look easy, he knew how difficult this task actually was.

On a double action revolver, the trigger performs two functions: it cocks the hammer and releases it. This requires a longer and harder pull weight than found on most semiautomatic pistols.

While a revolver may serve as a stepping stone to learning basic handgun safety, there are a number of semiautomatic firearms that can serve this purpose equally for a student who has little or no previous experience with firearms.

Myth Number Two: A handgun in the home is 13 times more likely to be used against the homeowner than an attacker.

This story has been debunked numerous times since its release in 1983, yet proponents of gun control still use it as if it were fact.

In 1983 an antigun professor extrapolated facts based on a case study of a town in Washington State using the town's homicide and suicide rates and comparing them to handgun ownership. He simply extrapolated this data against the national murder rate to arrive at his predetermined conclusion. How's that for junk science?

Legal scholars, criminologists and statisticians have pointed out the folly with this type of study, yet it is an often repeated lie that people most likely hear from their personal physicians because it was printed in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

To put it in perspective, more police officers have been killed with their own handguns than private citizens. This flawed data model makes a better example for one seeking a rationale to restrict police from having handguns.

Myth Number Three: A handgun is useless if the caliber does not start with a Four.

This may be a personal favorite if you choose a handgun in 40 S&W, 45 ACP, 45 Colt, 44 Special, 44 Magnum or even 10mm (metric diameter of the 40 caliber bullet). You want a big heavy bullet and are not concerned with its muzzle velocity.

Why then are record numbers of police departments returning to the 9mm (.355" diameter bullet) after decades with the 40 S&W, 45 ACP or even 10mm?

The lower cost of 9mm ammunition may play a factor as well as the lower recoil of that cartridge when compared to 40 S&W. The round by modern standards performs in an almost identical manner and as a byproduct gives the shooter less recoil and more magazine capacity (15 -20 rounds as opposed to 10-15 in the same sized handgun).

With those myths out of the way, let's take a look at the realities of using a handgun for home defense and guide you through the process.

Step one: Shoot one first

In recent years, fewer American shooters spend their time hunting and most modern gun owners lean toward handguns for target shooting.

If it is at all possible, fire a variety of handguns before you purchase one. Whether it is a trip to the range or even a local dump try to shoot one that belongs to a friend or rent one if at all possible. Experience the recoil, learn to aim and to hit what you are aiming at.

Some shooters take to striker fired handguns like Glocks immediately. Others prefer a double action/single action combination with a de-cocking lever like the Sig Sauer classic P-series. Traditional types might lean toward the revolver or Model 1911 pistol.

The important thing is to find a handgun that makes you feel comfortable and not afraid to shoot it at that moment of truth.

Step two: Select a caliber

Caliber makes a more crucial difference in purchasing a handgun than in any other firearm. A round with harsh recoil like the 357 SIG will feel almost uncontrollable to a novice shooter when fired from a polymer framed striker fired handgun like a Glock than when fired from an all steel double action pistol like a Sig Sauer P229.

While we debunked the myth of “caliber can’t start with less than a 4”, there are certain limitations for lower powered cartridges.

For a novice shooter the absolute minimum caliber we recommend in a semiautomatic pistol is 380 ACP or 38 Special in a revolver.

Ideally we lean toward the 9mm, 40 S&W, 45 ACP in semi autos and the 357 Magnum in a revolver. The second caveat we offer is to look toward the same handgun and ammunition combination used by your local police agency.

The attitude behind this is that if you are engaged in a lawful defensive shooting yet find yourself targeted by a prosecutor, using a “Tactical Delta Ninja Nightmare

10mm Automatic” may not look as good in front of a jury as “a pistol and ammunition identical to what the local department issues its officers for safety”

Step three: Take a training course

The handgun has a short learning curve, but some training is required. Instructors can be found via the website for the National Rifle Association or sometimes the bulletin board of a local shooting range. Train as soon as possible with your new carbine and practice often.

An attacker will not wait for you to come up to speed and under stress you will not rise to the occasion and necessarily win. You will default to whatever your level of training is. Do not let that level be “Zero”.

Step three: Analyze your home

As with any plan for home defense, you must look for the tactical advantages and disadvantages in your home. Will an errant shot that misses an attacker go through a window and hit your neighbor’s home?

Are there hiding spots outside your home where a home invader can work on a window frame for hours unseen? Be aware of where your handgun can be a threat to outsiders or neighbors. Even a handgun round can still remain effective as far away as 200 yards.

Be mindful of the distances at which you may need to engage an attacker, as well as moving while keeping it close to you for retention purposes. If you live in a single story home, the muzzle can be pointed either upward or downward. Apartment dwellers or those who live in multi-story homes have to account for people in upper and lower floors and keep the muzzle pointed in the safest of those directions.

Step four: Shooting

Although this may be done as part of your training, not all instructors will cover it or have time for it in their courses. This is for individual practice after the initial purchase of the carbine.

Pistol rounds will perform differently when they are made by different manufacturers. Some will be more accurate than others and some will penetrate different depths or expand at different points.

This is largely a trial and error process. However, when it is performed, it will take the worry out of stray bullets striking an innocent target.

Step five: Accessories

There are a plethora of manufacturers offering everything from flashlights and lasers to red dot sights to help customize your handgun. Do not be swayed by some new gadget that appeared in the most recent episode of *The Walking Dead* or hit the big screen in the latest *Terminator* movie.

Only use what will make you a better shooter.

One of the most important accessories may be a mounted flashlight to help you identify your target as well as determine if it is your 14 year old son sneaking in after curfew or a bad guy with evil plans for your family. We prefer the weapon lights made by Surefire and prefer them only mounted on metal framed handguns or polymer framed handguns with a steel chassis like the Sphinx or S&W M&P Series. The main reason is that under recoil, those flashlights pound away at the polymer frame of most handguns. It will not be an issue if you shoot less than 40000 rounds over the life of the firearms, but serious shooters have had their handguns come apart on them over time.

The cost is minimal to replace a damaged frame, but you do not want it to happen when you are in the midst of fighting for your life.

Another common mistake is to replace every part with some high speed titanium piece that will reduce lock time, ease the trigger pull, etc. These things are fine for a

sporting handgun used in competitive matches, but not on a working gun used to defend home and family, not to mention yourself.

For one, it could become a legal liability (he altered his pistol because he's a gun nut vigilante) and another, people do more negligent damage by taking their guns apart and replacing perfectly good components with those of questionable value.

The author has personally examined firearms used by legendary lawmen and gunfighters and very few of those handguns have ever been altered from the factory configuration beyond changing the sights or the grips.

If lasers, red dots and the like make you a better shooter, by all means use them. Otherwise try to keep it simple.

Step six: Safe storage

This will vary depending upon circumstances. If you have children, roommates or frequently entertain and have guests over, you will not want to leave your handgun loaded and laying on your nightstand. By the same token, it will be of little benefit if left unloaded in a safe in the garage or basement when a home invader kicks in your door at midnight.

There are various child locks and wall or closet safes that can safely contain a handgun and keep it out of the wrong hands while still being accessible when needed.

Better yet, keep it in a comfortable holster and wear it at all times or as often as you can.

We hope this guide has helped you make an informed decision when it comes to a home defense handgun. If it sounds like it may not fit your needs or lifestyle, you may want to look into a handgun or shotgun for home defense.

The Home Defense Shotgun: Myths and realities

For decades the shotgun has been considered the ultimate self-defense firearm. Unfortunately there are a number of misconceptions about the use of the shotgun in a home defense scenario.

Most of these misconceptions started out as a form of solid advice from a well-meaning authority but like the old "telephone game" from grade school, the end result turns into a message completely different from the original intent.

We hope to dispel the myths, rumors and gun shop bravado as we take you step by step through the paces of purchasing a shotgun, learning how to use it properly, how to use it safely and incorporating it into a part of your home defense strategy.

The first question you must answer is if the shotgun is the right choice for you and your situation.

If your city or state has onerous laws against the possession or use of handguns, it may be your only alternative. Rifles and carbines can fill this void, too, but in general if obtaining a handgun is difficult where you call home, chances are that an appropriate semiautomatic carbine will be frowned upon as well.

Enter the shotgun, it is widely more acceptable in the majority of these jurisdictions and even more so in the free states and cities of America. If your local or state government does not trust you to keep a shotgun for defense of your home or family, then you most likely reside in North Korea or New York City.

Myth Number One: Just the sound of racking a pump-action shotgun will frighten off an intruder.

This may have been true at one time, maybe in the 1930s if a farmer was trying to scare a hobo off his apple orchard or in the 1960s if a gang of teenagers was mucking through his cow pasture looking for magic mushrooms after a rainstorm.

Most people take it as Gospel because they have heard a variation of the story or seen it happen in a movie or television program.

Unfortunately, most modern criminals are sociopaths and that tell-tale sound will either embolden them or simply give away your position.

An armed robber or home invader is a particular breed of criminal. They may have started out as a burglar or petty thief who relied on negligence or chicanery to get what they wanted, but have now graduated to using a weapon to extort what they want.

Most of them have been in altercations with police or people who were armed and they have little to no fear of the distinctive rack of the shotgun. That tell-tale noise will only draw fire, not make the bad guys run.

The home defense shotgun should be loaded and ready to go by disengaging the safety and squeezing the trigger. Never give away your position and never be a second too late when you put your defense plan into action.

Myth Number Two: The shotgun requires no skill or training, just point and shoot; you don't even need to aim.

While the learning curve to using a shotgun is short, to say that it requires no skill is a blatant insult to anyone who has ever ran one in competition, carried one on duty or used one to bring home ducks and pheasant for the dinner table.

The same principles behind firing a handgun or rifle come into play when using a shotgun for self-defense. Acquire a cheek weld on the stock, align the sights or the bead with the target and squeeze the trigger.

The part about not having to aim is based on the nature of the projectile; instead of a single bullet shotgun shells are loaded with pellets of various sizes. This is excellent for hunting birds in the air. Yet ask any bird hunter, trap shooter or competitive skeet shooter if they do not aim while shooting and be prepared to be laughed at.

Shot patterns expand at longer ranges while hunting and shooting competitively, but in the short ranges at which self-defense takes place, the pattern is not likely to widen by much.

Myth Number Three: Only use bird shot indoors as the larger pellets found in buckshot loads will penetrate walls and kill innocent people.

This may seem to make sense on the surface, but like the other myths it is based on misinformation. The size of the shot used in bird shot is much smaller than that intended for hunting deer, but the reason for that is that a bird is much smaller than a deer. Birdshot may be devastating to an attacker at extremely short ranges, but the larger sized shot is preferable for use in stopping an attacker at distances of more than five feet.

If a conscientious hunter would not use bird shot against a deer, why should a conscientious home owner use it against someone who is determined to kill him?

With those three myths out of the way, let's take a look at the realities of using a shotgun for home defense and guide you through the process.

Step one: Shoot one first

Shotguns are one of the more prevalent arms used in home defense. In the past, this was mostly the result of being a byproduct of our hunting culture. Most traditional hunters had little use for handguns and most traditional hunting rifles were overkill or simply unwieldy for home defense. The versatile shotgun filled that niche perfectly and when those scatterguns were not being used to harvest ducks, turkey or pheasant; they could be put into service to defend hearth and home.

Whether it was a single shot, double barrel or pump action model,; most homes in America had a shotgun somewhere.

In recent years, fewer Americans spend their time hunting and most modern gun owners lean toward rifles and handguns for target shooting, so the shotgun has been overlooked by many outside of competitive shooters and hunters.

If it is at all possible, shoot a shotgun before you purchase one. Whether it is a trip to the range, trap field or local dump try to fire one that belongs to a friend or rent one if at all possible. Experience the recoil, learn to aim and hit what you are aiming at.

Maybe the recoil of a 12 Gauge is too harsh, if so, try to step down to a 20 Gauge or even 410 as a last resort. The important thing is to find a shotgun that makes you feel comfortable and not afraid to shoot it at that moment of truth.

Step two: Acquire a shotgun

After becoming familiar with shooting, loading and making a shotgun safe, it is now time to buy one. A new firearm is always preferable, but budgetary constraints can lead the prospective owner to the “Used Gun Rack” at the local sporting goods store.

Thankfully, shotguns are less expensive than handguns and we are not necessarily looking for a \$40,000 handmade masterpiece to adorn the wall in the great room, living room or man cave. We want something reliable, practical and usable. A quality US made pump shotgun can be had for as little as \$200. If that price is too high, a quality single shot version can be had for half that price, but it does limit its usefulness when multiple attackers are concerned.

Step three: Take a training course

The shotgun has a short learning curve, but some training is required. Instructors can be found via the website for the National Rifle Association or sometimes the bulletin board of a local shooting range. Train as soon as possible with your new shotgun and practice often.

An attacker will not wait for you to come up to speed and under stress you will not rise to the occasion and necessarily win. You will default to whatever your level of training is. Do not let that level be “Zero”.

Step three: Analyze your home

As with any plan for home defense, you must look for the tactical advantages and disadvantages in your home. Will an errant shot that misses an attacker go through a window and hit your neighbor’s home?

Are there hiding spots outside your home where a home invader can work on a

window frame for hours unseen? Be aware of where your shotgun can be a threat to outsiders or neighbors, it may be considered a short range weapon, but that short range is about 50 yards or half a football field away.

Be mindful of the distances at which you may need to engage an attacker.

Step four: Shooting

Although this may be done as part of your training, not all instructors will cover it or have time for it in their courses. This is for individual practice after the initial purchase of the shotgun.

When at the range, it is important to learn how your shotgun patterns. Patterning is determining where the shot will impact the target. This will vary between types of shotguns and the ammunition used. The choke on the shotgun plays a role here and most shotguns designed for home defense are timed to “Cylinder Bore”.

Using a standard FBI Silhouette target, you will want to ensure that the pattern is contained within the torso area as much as possible. If it is too wide and hits the outer edges or goes around the sides completely, you will need to try another type of ammunition.

Patterns will change at different ranges, too. This is why you must assess the distances in your home as we mentioned in step three.

This is largely a trial and error process. However, when it is performed, it will take the worry out of errant pellets hitting an innocent target.

Step five: Accessories

There are a plethora of manufacturers offering everything from recoil pads to red dot sights to help customize your shotgun. Do not be swayed by some new gadget that appeared in the most recent episode of *The Walking Dead* or hit the big screen in the latest *Terminator* movie.

Only use what will make you a better shooter.

The two most important accessories are a mounted flashlight and a sling. The sling will help you retain the shotgun or allow you to use a phone to call 9-1-1 while still retaining control. The flashlight will help you identify your target as well as determine if it is your 14 year old son sneaking in after curfew or a bad guy with evil plans for your family.

If lasers, red dots, pistol grips and the like make you a better shooter, by all means use them. Otherwise try to keep it simple.

This last point is particularly important if there is any question about a district attorney prosecuting you for defending yourself in your own home. Chances are, you may be looking at the shotgun as a politically correct alternative to a handgun or semiautomatic rifle. If that is the case and you go to a jury trial, it might be better if that scattergun evokes jurors memories of their grandfather hunting ducks with a wood stocked pump shotgun and not something that looks like a prop from a post-apocalyptic zombie movie.

Step six: Safe storage

This will vary depending upon circumstances. If you have children, roommates or frequently entertain and have guests over, you will not want to leave your shotgun loaded and propped up against your nightstand. By the same token, it will be of little benefit if left unloaded in a safe in the garage or basement when a home invader kicks in your door at midnight.

There are various child locks and wall or closet safes that can safely contain a shotgun and keep it out of the wrong hands while still being accessible when needed.

We hope this guide has helped you make an informed decision when it comes to a home defense shotgun. If it sounds like it may not fit your needs or lifestyle, you may want to look into a handgun or carbine for home defense.

The Home Defense Carbine: Myths and realities

Almost from their inception, handguns have dominated the home defense/personal defense market with shotguns as a close runner up. Rifles and carbines have often filled this role, but not nearly as much as the aforementioned arms. However, that dynamic is beginning to change as rifles and carbines have made huge inroads into the hands of modern shooters.

The reason for this is threefold:

- As a nation who has been at war for over a decade an increasing percentage of US citizens are military veterans who were issued rifles, regardless of whether or not their primary job was in combat arms.
- A plethora of first person shooter type video games have become increasingly popular and as the teenagers who played them come of age, they want the same types of firearms they used in their games.
- Politically, semiautomatic rifles are most often targeted for legislation and possible banning at the state and federal levels, this has increased their demand as consumers want to buy them before they will no longer be available.

Many of the buyers of these types of rifles are urban city dwellers and not necessarily the traditional hunting demographic. Whether it is collectability, target shooting, nostalgia or preparing for the “Zombie Apocalypse”, legions of first time shooters are turning to their carbines as possible home defense firearms.

Unfortunately, many buyers or would-be buyers are not receiving the quality of information that they deserve regarding their carbines.

Most of these misconceptions started out as a form of solid advice from a well-meaning authority but like the old "telephone game" from grade school, the end result turns into a message completely different from the original intent.

We hope to dispel the myths, rumors and gun shop bravado as we take you step by step through the paces of purchasing a home defense carbine, learning how to use it

properly, how to use it safely and incorporating it into a part of your home defense strategy.

The first question you must answer is if the carbine is the right choice for you and your situation.

If your city or state has onerous laws against the possession or use of handguns, it may be your only alternative. Rifles and carbines can fill this void, too, but in general if obtaining a handgun is difficult where you call home, chances are that an appropriate semiautomatic carbine will be frowned upon as well. Fortunately lever action or slide action carbines can fill that void if need be.

Myth Number One: Long guns are useless for home defense; a would-be bad guy can simply grab your barrel and take it from you.

There is a nugget of truth to this, as there are with most myths. A handgun can be kept relatively close to the body for retention purposes, but when a firearm is a minimum of 26" long, keeping it close and safe means pointing it downward or upward.

In this position it is possible for an attacker to attempt to wrest control of the firearm from you or use it as a brace in an attempt to pin you to a wall.

When keeping the carbine pointed in a safe direction, be ready to move at a moment's notice into the ready position at all times. Should someone attempt to grab the barrel and render it in a useless position, be prepared to fire upon them and make them regret it.

Myth Number Two: Long guns are impractical for self-defense in the home because the rounds will penetrate walls and kill your family members and neighbors.

The same principles behind firing a handgun or rifle come into play when using a carbine for self-defense. Acquire a cheek weld on the stock, align the sights with the target and squeeze the trigger. There is an inherent danger when using full size

rifle rounds such as 308 Winchester or 30-06, which is why we recommend an intermediate cartridge such as 223, 5.56 NATO, 7.62X39 or 300 Blackout for these purposes.

If the rifle in question has a long range scope or other optical sight and the distance between you and the attacker is close, the best bet may be to point-shoot the rifle instead of using sights. Many shooters equip their self-defense carbines with laser sights, backup iron sights or even flashlights to accomplish this same goal, but there is another method taught by military units and law enforcement agencies for use in CQB (close quarter battle) that does not rely on such equipment.

The shooter uses the non-shooting hand on top of the hand guard or in some cases the barrel to grip this part of the rifle with the pointer finger of that hand aligned with the bore. In this instance the shooter simply points this finger at the target and that is where the rounds will impact.

It is not the most precise aiming system in the world, but it can be effective at relatively close ranges when the rifle is not otherwise optimized for short range targets.

Myth Number Three: Pistol caliber carbines are useless as they fire a pistol round. If you want to shoot a pistol round, buy a handgun.

This may seem to make sense on the surface if you strictly look at calibers and think “a 9mm is a 9mm”. Yet, when fired from a longer barrel, projectiles pick up more velocity than if fired from a handgun.

A 115 grain 9mm bullet may be travelling at 1200 feet per second (fps) from a 4” Glock or Sig Sauer handgun, but out of a 16” rifle barrel, that velocity may be in the 1500 fps range or higher, approaching low level rifle caliber ballistics.

Myth Number Four: Rim fire calibers are completely useless.

Sometimes the author wonders if the self-appointed gurus of gun shop wisdom even know what they are talking about. Rim fire calibers may be used for target shooting

and plinking, but all too many “experts” proclaim them as useless as pellet guns or airsoft carbines and dismiss them as if they spent months shooting each other with them while wearing heavy winter coats.

They may represent the least powerful rounds on the market and to be certain, no military or law enforcement agency has ever issued them beyond a training capacity or for dispatching feral wildlife, but make no mistake: the 22 long rifle round has probably put more bodies in the morgue than every other rifle caliber combined.

Out of a handgun it may not be a viable choice for self-defense, but those dynamics change when the round is inserted into a rifle or carbine. In that instance, the tiny round is much more accurate and travels at a higher velocity than when fired from a handgun.

With those myths out of the way, let’s take a look at the realities of using a carbine for home defense and guide you through the process.

Step one: Shoot one first

In recent years, fewer Americans spend their time hunting and most modern gun owners lean toward rifles and handguns for target shooting. Some jurisdictions have strict laws on handguns and there are other factors at play that may prohibit you from owning a handgun such as being under the age of 21 or simply a factor of economics.

If it is at all possible, fire a rifle before you purchase one. Whether it is a trip to the range or even a local dump try to shoot one that belongs to a friend or rent one if at all possible. Experience the recoil, learn to aim and to hit what you are aiming at.

The important thing is to find a carbine that makes you feel comfortable and not afraid to shoot it at that moment of truth.

Step two: Acquire a carbine

After becoming familiar with shooting, loading and making a carbine safe, it is now time to buy one. A new firearm is always preferable, but budgetary constraints can lead the prospective owner to the “Used Gun Rack” at the local sporting goods store.

You will want something reliable, practical and usable. If you are strictly looking at home defense, pistol caliber carbines may be the order of the day. Semiautomatic rifles can be had in 22 Magnum, 9mm, 40 S&W and 45 ACP as well as the intermediate calibers mentioned previous.

If there are regulations or even implied social stigmas against using a semiautomatic rifle there are lever and pump action models available in revolver calibers such as 357 Magnum, 38 Special, 44 Magnum and 45 Colt that will be more effective than the aforementioned semiautomatic pistol rounds and in a wood stocked pump or lever action long gun, will appear more politically correct.

Step three: Take a training course

The carbine has a short learning curve, but some training is required. Instructors can be found via the website for the National Rifle Association or sometimes the bulletin board of a local shooting range. Train as soon as possible with your new carbine and practice often.

In many cases the carbine will supplement other firearms like pistols and shotguns. Training should also teach you when it is appropriate to escalate to a carbine if you have other options. A threat at a greater distance than 50 feet or perhaps an unruly mob of 5 or more attackers advancing on you would be an appropriate level of escalation to transition from a handgun to a carbine, for example.

An attacker will not wait for you to come up to speed and under stress you will not rise to the occasion and necessarily win. You will default to whatever your level of training is. Do not let that level be “Zero”.

Step three: Analyze your home

As with any plan for home defense, you must look for the tactical advantages and disadvantages in your home. Will an errant shot that misses an attacker go through a window and hit your neighbor’s home?

Are there hiding spots outside your home where a home invader can work on a window frame for hours unseen? Be aware of where your carbine can be a threat to outsiders or neighbors. Even in a pistol caliber a carbine has greater range than a

shotgun or handgun and can still remain deadly effective as far away as 200 yards. Some rifle rounds can still pose a threat as far away as a mile. Always be mindful of your backstop and what may lie beyond it.

Be mindful of the distances at which you may need to engage an attacker, as well as moving while keeping it close to you for retention purposes. If you live in a single story home, the muzzle can be pointed either upward or downward. Apartment dwellers or those who live in multi-story homes have to account for people in upper and lower floors and keep the muzzle pointed in the safest of those directions.

Step four: Shooting

Although this may be done as part of your training, not all instructors will cover it or have time for it in their courses. This is for individual practice after the initial purchase of the carbine.

Pistol rounds will perform differently when fired from a carbine, as will self-defense rounds for intermediate sized rifle cartridges. Some will be more accurate than others and some will penetrate different depths or expand at different points. Your goal is to find what works best for you in terms of accuracy and reliability.

This is largely a trial and error process. However, when it is performed, it will take the worry out of stray bullets striking an innocent target.

Step five: Accessories

There are a plethora of manufacturers offering everything from recoil pads to red dot sights to help customize your carbine. Do not be swayed by some new gadget that appeared in the most recent episode of *The Walking Dead* or hit the big screen in the latest *Terminator* movie.

Only use what will make you a better shooter.

The two most important accessories are a mounted flashlight and a sling. The sling will help you retain the shotgun or allow you to use a phone to call 9-1-1 while still retaining control. The flashlight will help you identify your target as well as determine if it is your 14 year old son sneaking in after curfew or a bad guy with evil plans for your family.

If lasers, red dots, vertical fore grips and the like make you a better shooter, by all means use them. Otherwise try to keep it simple.

This last point is particularly important if there is any question about a district attorney prosecuting you for defending yourself in your own home. Chances are, you may be looking at the carbine as a politically correct alternative to a handgun. If that is the case and you go to a jury trial, it might be better if that carbine evokes jurors' memories of their grandfather's hunting gun or a relic from the 19th century should you opt for a lever action piece and not something that looks like a military firearm.

Step six: Safe storage

This will vary depending upon circumstances. If you have children, roommates or frequently entertain and have guests over, you will not want to leave your carbine loaded and propped up against your nightstand. By the same token, it will be of little benefit if left unloaded in a safe in the garage or basement when a home invader kicks in your door at midnight.

There are various child locks and wall or closet safes that can safely contain a shotgun and keep it out of the wrong hands while still being accessible when needed.

We hope this guide has helped you make an informed decision when it comes to a home defense carbine. If it sounds like it may not fit your needs or lifestyle, you may want to look into a handgun or shotgun for home defense.

How to prepare the exterior of your home in order to defend against a burglary or home invasion

Without a doubt the most dangerous type of robbery scenario facing a home owner or apartment dweller is the strong arm home invasion. This is not a common residential burglary where a thief gains access via an open window or door, rather this can occur at any time of day and the primary goal of the intruders is to take cash or even force someone in the house to go to a bank and withdraw money.

Usually instigated by ringing a doorbell, the thieves come in armed and ready to fight while you are still unaware or otherwise preoccupied. The end result can leave household members dead or gravely injured.

The best way to deter these crimes is to be vigilant and to safeguard your home.

We are not talking about building massive fortifications or mounting machine guns on the roof or spending thousands of dollars on infrared cameras to monitor the outside of your home, but rather a common sense series of steps you can take to protect your home and family..

There are only eight steps that need to be taken in order to help the average home owner or renter deal with the nightmare of a burglary or home invasion.

Step one: Check the windows

Your windows are easy access points from criminals. Glass is easily broken, most windows are easily jimmed and modern landscaping lends trees and shrubs to obscure the view of a criminal working away in plain sight.

They also allow potential home invaders and burglars to survey the inside of your home even from across the street or blocks away by means of binoculars or other long range lenses.

If you want landscaping to accent your windows, choose something that is prickly like cactus, holly or even rose bushes. The most determined criminal will not seek

access or work away on a window if he is constantly being pricked by thorns in the process.

Use opaque, frosted or even tinted glass to prevent potential intruders from being able to see through the windows. If you find this impractical, the same affect can be achieved by using vertical blinds, Venetian blinds. Plantation shutters or storm shutters to keep the bad guys from looking in.

Keep the windows locked and use blocks on the inside rails of sliding windows and doors to keep them from being forced open.

Step two: Locks and keys

Next we come to the doors, some people are in the habit of leaving their doors unlocked and most home invaders will simply turn the knob to see if you are one of those types. Do not make it easy for them and make it a habit to ensure all external doors are locked,

When looking for a new lock after keys may have been lost or stolen or when purchasing a home from a previous owner who may have given keys to landscapers, cleaning people, baby sitters, etc.; the best brand to look for is Medeco.

Medeco locks cannot be picked by most criminals and the keys are registered and need to be made on a lathe at the factory. Should your key go missing or someone attempt to make a copy, Medeco will inform you immediately.

If Medeco is too pricey, at least look for a double cylinder dead bolt lock for similar piece of mind.

Some people are in the habit of hiding spare keys around their home in case they get locked out. In general this is a bad idea. An observant thief casing the home will look for hidden keys and may even watch for a family member or friend to go for the hidden spare.

Keep a spare key in your wallet if you are in the habit of losing keys or hide the key in a spot in the back yard that is protected from view,

Some home defense experts advise to use double dead bolt locks on the interior

doors or use a bar to secure the exterior doors. While we hate to call those steps over kill, they do pose a danger in denying escape from the home in the event of a fire or gas leak.

We want to keep the bad guys out, but sometimes the good guys need to make a quick exit as well.

Step three: Beware of the dog

A dog can be man's best friend and is often the first line of defense in a home defense situation. Some people seek out trained protection dogs like German Shepherds, Belgian Malinois or Doberman Pinschers. Others just opt for a large breed like a Labrador retriever, Great Dane or a setter of some time. Many more people share their homes with smaller dogs like Dachshunds, poodles, Basset hounds or terriers and these small dogs at least can provide an early warning system to alert you.

Even the small dogs can deter criminals because in the back of everyone's mind is the fear of being bitten by a strange dog.

If your home is not conducive to having a dog due to allergies, small children or simply not caring for dogs, you can still use this step to safeguard your home by placing "Beware of Dog" signs on your fence and leaving a large dog food bowl and chew toy in the back yard for a potential intruder to get the hint.

Some people will go an extra step if they cannot have a dog and will use recorded barking's that activate when the doorbell is rung or a motion detector is tripped.

Step four: Hit the lights

Outdoor lighting is a crucial part of your plan as most thieves or invaders prefer the cover of darkness.

Motion activated lights add an extra level of security in that it breaks the criminal's train of thought, ruins his element of surprise and he does not know for sure if someone inside the home flipped a switch or not.

Similar systems can be used inside the house to accomplish the same goal of deterring a burglar.

Step five: Put tools away

Nothing can be more exhausting than a hard day of yard work and there is great temptation to leave shovels, rakes, hatchets and other tools where they lay to go inside for a glass of iced tea or a beer.

Unfortunately, you can get distracted and forget where those tools were left and you have just given a burglar or home invader the means to enter your home by using those tools to work on a door or smash through a window.

When you are done working with hand tools, make sure to secure them inside the home or garden shed before relaxing.

Criminals are completely opportunistic and if you give them opportunity, they will take it.

Step six: Your smart phone

There are a number of apps available for download to your smart phone that make use of external hardware to allow you to monitor your home and surroundings even when you are not at home. This may sound expensive and complicated, but we recommend at least two of these programs that are free and use a minimal amount of external hardware.

One app called AHome Camera makes use of laptops, television sets, old desktop computers, or phones, or tablets to allow the homeowner to monitor their home remotely while using their smart phone without the need for specialized cameras. A similar app known as Presence accomplishes this by using two smart phones or I pads.

As we move into the future, more of this technology will become available to give the homeowner the best value in personal security at home. Most installed security systems such as ADT have smart phone apps to allow the homeowner greater access and control of their security when they are at home or away.

Step seven: Know your neighbors

Beyond just recognizing the people across the street or the old man who walks his dog every morning at 10 and every evening at 7 past your house, get to know them.

Know what they look like, what they sound like and who lives in their homes. Neighbors can be particularly helpful with keeping an eye on your home and you in turn, can help them by noticing activity around theirs.

Neighbors who are home or walking about the neighborhood during the day can often be a better alarm and deterrent system than the local police force. A sheriff's department cruiser passing by your house might think that someone near the bushes by your window is a landscaper, but the neighbor who has known you for 5 years may know that you cut your own lawn and trim your own trees.

In conclusion

You are not literally building castle walls or mounting guns on the roof by following these steps in a literal sense, but you are doing so in a figurative one.

These steps will allow you to safeguard the outside of your home at virtually no cost beyond being careful and practical. Thieves and armed robbers make use of opportunities. The best way to thwart them is to deny them a chance to ply their trade.

Safeguarding the interior of your home in order to defend against a burglary or home invasion

The most dangerous type of robbery scenario facing a home owner or apartment dweller is the strong arm home invasion. Unlike a common residential burglary where a thief gains access via an open window or door when no one is home this threat can come any time of day or night and the primary goal of the intruders is to take cash or even force someone in the house to go to a bank and withdraw money.

These crimes are typically instigated by ringing a doorbell or knocking, but there have been instances of the armed thieves making a hard breach while residents are unaware or otherwise preoccupied. The end result can leave household members dead or gravely injured.

The best way to deter these crimes is to be vigilant and to safeguard your home.

Protecting and fortifying the exterior is one step down this road, but what precautions can a homeowner take to be ready to defend their homes and families when the perimeter has been breached?

There are only eight steps that need to be taken in order to help the average home owner or renter deal with the nightmare of a burglary or home invasion.

Step one: Analyze your home

Walk around the inside of your house and perform an analysis. Only you will know the strengths and weaknesses present better than any guide you can download on the internet.

Be mindful of areas that can be used for cover and concealment not only for you and your family, but by invaders who seek to commit harm.

Take particular note of the following:

- If your front door does not have a peep hole with which to identify visitors who knock or ring the bell, install one.
- If you decide to make use of safe rooms or emergency exits, determine if routes to them could be compromised if an intruder enters the home through an alternate method such as a back door or kitchen window.
- If the home has an attached garage, ensure that this door is protected by a lock as strong as the one on the front door.

Step two: Use the peep hole

When someone knocks on the door or rings the doorbell always verify who they are before opening it. This is most commonly done by using the peep hole or a window on the door. Some people take this a step further and install cameras rigged to a monitor or smart phone.

Do not grant access to someone you do not know. If the person (or persons) refuses to leave, call 9-1-1 and prepare to defend yourself from a potential attack.

Step three: Prepare a safe room

A safe room is a secure area in your home that will keep you safe temporarily. In the event of a home invasion, this is where you will secure any children or elderly people in your home first.

An ideal safe room should contain a few essential items, such as a cell phone, flash light, pepper spray and a spare house key. Keeping a handgun in the safe room is largely dependent on who will retreat here for safety. If you merely place small children here while dealing with the threat it may not be the best idea. A strong lock and reinforced door jamb is key to providing security to the occupants.

A spare bathroom with a large bath tub makes a good retreat as most bath tubs will provide cover in case rounds are fired within the home.

The safe room should have a small window that does not allow entry, but can allow someone to drop the house keys to a police officer to gain entry if needed. Likewise, the local number of the local police department preprogrammed into the phone as

most cellular 9-1-1 calls typically go to the State Highway Patrol.

Step four: Have an escape route

Most homes in the Northeastern and Midwestern United States have basements or cellars. These are less common in the Southeastern and Western states, but homes without basements or cellars typically have a crawl space.

If there is no access to these from the inside, a prudent homeowner should make one in order to provide a safe egress for the family when a home invasion is under way.

Like the safe room, the escape route should have some features found in it like a cell phone or even a house phone wired into a phone jack, pepper spray and spare keys. In some instances the escape route can act as a backup to the safe room and provide a secure area to hide family members.

Step five: Install a home security system

Most people think of home security systems as a means of protecting their homes while they are away. Yet, these systems work well when you are at home and intruders come calling.

Most modern systems are easily configured to accommodate the home owner's lifestyle by ignoring certain actions (such as internal motion detectors when children or pets are present) or only sending an alarm when a door or window is opened.

The alarm typically scares off potential intruders and alerts either a private security company or the police that something is amiss.

Most installed security systems such as ADT have smart phone apps to allow the homeowner greater access and control of their security when they are at home or away.

A side benefit is that certain types of alarm systems allow home owners to obtain reduced premiums on house insurance.

Step six: Arm yourself

We are not talking about a handgun in a night stand, carbine in a safe or shotgun in a hall closet here. We are specifically talking about carrying a handgun in your own home.

This may sound a bit extreme to the uninitiated, but we are talking about events that are extreme that bring extreme violence with them.

If you choose to carry in the home at all times, make sure whatever you choose is comfortable. A colt 1911 in an Inside the Waistband holster is not the lightest or most comfortable thing to wear when laying on the couch and watching television, but maybe a Kel Tec or Ruger LCP in a pocket holster is.

Having the handgun on your person instead of in a desk drawer or night stand gun safe may be the key to winning the battle. This goes hand in hand with knowing where you can shoot in your house should you have to make a stand in self-defense.

If it still sounds extreme, there are other potential weapons like Tasers, pepper spray and even pocket knives that may fill a similar role.

It is important to always remember that the goal is to stop the threat, whether by using lethal force, non-lethal force or causing them to retreat.

If it still sounds extreme and paranoid, does it sound extreme and paranoid to keep a fire extinguisher in the home in case of a fire?

Step seven: Develop a plan

Every home is different and every family has a different composition to the extent that it is virtually impossible to come up with an emergency preparedness plan that will work for everyone. So in this instance we will look at the basics.

You must decide when to put your plan into place and work this out with your family. Will a knock on the door by the FED EX guy make your 9 year old son take his 4 year old sister into the safe room to break out the cell phone to call 9-1-1 and lock the door? Hopefully it does not.

So you must coach the members of your household on how to act and when to act.

A knock on the door that is out of the ordinary should make them think about moving to safety. A broken window in the middle of the night or an imploding front door followed by a squad of bad guys should definitely get them moving.

Step eight: Create a password

Another tool to use is a password like you would use on your computer. Choose something unique but not too out of the ordinary that can communicate to your family: “I am in trouble and you need to get to safety as soon as possible and contact the authorities.”

If you keep it to one word like “Sasquatch” it will let them know without alerting a bad guy who may have a weapon pointed at you and it will keep him from using it.

It is never a good idea to use too common of a word like “Stapler” or “Smart phone” lest you may trigger an alarm unnecessarily.

At the same time a safety phrase such as “All Clear” should be used to let people know that the threat is over and it is safe to move from safe rooms or hiding spots when appropriate.

In conclusion

With these steps in place you will have a solid foundation for preparation when the bad guys are at the door. Do not let yourself become a victim and make sure that your loved ones are protected at all times.

Your end goal is not to kill anyone who unlawfully enters your house as “castle-doctrine laws” aside, you can be held liable for death or injury. The goal should be to protect yourself and your family and to deter an intruder or force him to flee if at all possible. At the same time, keep in mind that some criminals will not be deterred and that even the fastest 9-1-1 response time is measured in minutes and not seconds.

Making a safe room an integral part of your home defense plan

When developing a strategy for home defense regarding burglars and home invaders, the topic of the safe room or refuge room often comes up.

The safe room is the key to your survival in the event that your home and family are ever targeted for burglary or home invasion. When most people receive a little firearms training, they may be tempted to sweep their own home for danger and take out the threat on their own.

Against hardened criminals who may have repeated the same ambush scenario numerous times in the past this can be suicidal. Go to safety, hunker down, warn them to leave and notify the authorities.

This is not cowardice or defeat. This is your duty as a law-abiding citizen. You warned them, secured your family and called the police. If they continue, you must be prepared to meet them with force if they do not leave or penetrate your bunker before the police arrive.

We are not talking about a literal hardened bunker with steel reinforced concrete walls and gun ports off the family room, nor the high tech Panic Room from the film of the same name, but rather a part of your home for you and your family to take refuge in the event of a home invasion or burglary.

The construction of a safe room need not be expensive or complicated, but it does need to be safe and secure to ensure your family's well-being and survival.

Step one: Select a room

At the most basic level the safe room is a lockable secure room that cannot be accessed from the outside with ease.

The most commonly used rooms for potential safe rooms are bedrooms followed by bathrooms or laundry rooms.

A bedroom makes a natural choice for a safe room because it is the room you will

most likely be in when a burglar or home invader decides to attack you and your family.

Large bedroom furniture can be used to barricade doors or act as cover and concealment if fighting starts. Most bedrooms have telephones and other tools necessary when dealing with home invaders.

Bathrooms make a good choice for safe rooms as they can be easy to fortify and a bathtub can act as cover and concealment. Should the siege prove to be a long one there is also access to fresh drinking water.

The laundry room has some of these qualities with washers and dryers able to offer cover and concealment, too.

These types of rooms work best with larger families or families with small children who will not necessarily take refuge in their bedrooms and may need a centralized room in which to take cover during the crisis.

Whichever room you choose, will need to abide by the rest of our criteria.

Step two: Check the door

Inside doors and outside doors are two entirely different animals. Inside doors have a hollow core and are intended to provide privacy from room to room. Most modern ones actually have a Styrofoam or polystyrene core to dampen sound or provide insulation, but for our purposes they may as well be hollow.

These doors can be battered down, punched through, shot through and kicked in with relative ease.

The safe room needs a solid outside door that will resist battering, possible gunfire and will provide security. Your best bet is to install a solid core or exterior door as the door to your safe room.

Step three: Try the lock

Likewise with interior vs. exterior doors we have interior vs exterior locks. Interior locks are not as strong as those used on the outside of the house. Like interior doors

they were mostly designed for privacy over security.

The choice of the lock can be a single cylinder dead bolt that uses a built in lever instead of a key on each side as it will be easier to lock the door.

The use of multiple locks on the safe room door is a matter of personal preference. The appearance of 4 deadbolt locks on a bed room or bath room door may embolden a thief to think that there is something behind it and if a child seeks refuge, they may not have the presence of mind to lock all the locks.

For this reason we recommend floor bars and foot locks as well as rubber door stops to aid in wedging the door closed to resist brute force.

Step four: Frame it

Like the doors and locks, interior door frames were not designed with security in mind. So when upgrading the door and locks, the frame should be addressed as well.

An expensive exterior home lock mounted in an exterior door loses all effectiveness if it is in a cheap plywood frame.

Luckily when you purchase an exterior door to install in your safe room, it should come with a heavy duty frame; if not these can be ordered and installed.

The frame will need to hold up to repeated battering and most door salesman at home improvement centers can point you in the right direction for this.

With the right room chosen and the proper door, frame and locks in place we are halfway there to building the ideal safe room as we have the structure. Now we need to look at the contents.

Step five: Prepare the room

To make the room more effective a few key provisions will need to be in place.

A first aid kit makes the most sense and we endorse the various kits by Adventure Medical Kits specifically for hunting as they contain supplies needed to treat cuts

and gunshot wounds.

Spare house keys and keys to the safe room should be stored inside the room, particularly if the safe room has a window to the outside so that the keys can be passed to a first responder or trusted friend or family member.

Flashlights can come in handy at night time, particularly if the thieves cut the power or are raiding during an outage or black out. Spare batteries or rechargeable lamps will keep the lights on when there is no electricity.

A wire line telephone set or cellular phone will be needed to contact 9-1-1 for assistance. If using a cellular phone for this purpose it is recommended to program the 7-digit number of the local police department as most 9-1-1 dispatches over the cellular network still go to Highway Patrol dispatch in too many instances.

Storing food or drinking water is optional as well as spare medication. Most likely these items would not be needed, but a long siege might make them welcome additions.

Weapons will play a part in the safe room as the locks. Doors and hardened frames only buy time. If the door is breached, the fight will be on. This will largely be dependent on who will retreat here for safety. If you merely place small children in the safe room while dealing with the threat, then firearms may not be the best idea.

Should you opt for a firearm in your safe room, the handgun is the most logical choice to store in a secure lock box within the safe room. Loaded with extra ammunition in spare magazines is the best way to store it.

Pepper spray can be effective in the safe room as can other non lethal weapons such as stun guns and Tasers.

Should you choose to store any weapons be they firearms, sprays or Tasers, make sure that the occupants of the room are fully trained in their use if they need to be pressed into service.

Furniture and appliances can make for good cover and concealment in a safe room. Dressers and large television sets or night stands and bed frames can be pushed against the locked door to harden it.

Step six: Gadgets

If you are so inclined there are numerous monitoring systems that use mini cameras, smart phones and other technology to view the interior and exterior of your home. The safe room can make an ideal “command center” for this purpose, but again, this is optional.

Step seven: Outside access

Access to a crawl space or to a basement if the house has one is an option for a safe room but not mandatory.

Step eight: Practice

Whether every interior room in your home is a potential safe room or you have one designated rally point, it is important to practice taking cover so when a real situation develops, it is natural and fluid.

The adrenaline rush of the “fight or flight syndrome” means a loss of gross motor skills and cognizant thinking. People tend to go on autopilot when they are stressed by danger.

Practice will allow retreat to the safe room to be more natural for everyone involved.

Whether you rely on the security of one room for yourself and family or multiple rooms throughout the house, preparation of a safe room is the basic building block of home defense.

The safe room is probably more important than the installation of an alarm system, yet the two can work hand in hand.

Home Defense Training for Entire Family

There is probably nothing more precious and valuable to anyone than the lives, safety and wellbeing of their immediate family. Despite petty squabbles or bickering, the family is the basic unit of love in most of our lives and the one thing we may feel more compelled to defend than our own lives or our country.

Guaranteeing your family's safety begins with training for the whole family. That does not necessarily mean to arm your toddler with a Glock 19 and a Sure Fire flashlight to help "sweep the house for intruders", but away that they can play a crucial part in defending their lives and the lives of the entire family unit, no matter how small.

Step one: Training

If your defense plan involves firearms, then training is paramount. Some of the best trainers can be found through the training website for the National Rifle Association. Courses can be had in firearm safety, pistol shooting, rifle shooting, self-defense within the home and self-defense outside the home.

Some of these instructors may offer more advanced levels of training that can run the gamut from weapon handling and transition skills to force on force simulations with role players and either simunitions, paintball or airsoft.

All children over the age of 7 should know how to render any firearm in the home safe. Teaching children to shoot is a personal decision based on the age, maturity and physical capabilities of the child. We do not advocate one way or another for this choice, but if you practice shooting firearms, the children should be a part of that session at least as observers in order to attune them to the sounds of gunfire and to see firsthand what firearms are capable of doing.

For adults or older children who will use firearms defensively, while learning to shoot is important, learning to move with a firearm is of greater importance so that they do not injure or kill another family member.

Training in martial arts is an excellent supplement to firearms training as it often teaches nonviolent ways to defuse a potentially violent situation and self-defense

training is a confidence booster that ideally will project from the student when dealing with 99% of altercations.

Ideally, however, training is about mindset and recognizing non-verbal cues in order to gauge some one else's intentions.

Step two: Know your Role

Every defensive situation imparts three roles on the defender. We will keep these in aviation terms: Pilot, Navigator and Cargo.

While training individually, we often take on all three roles ourselves, however when paired with a spouse or other family member(s) these roles can be divided or moved back and forth.

The Pilot role is the leadership role and is what accomplishes tasks such as going to the ATM machine, driving, filling the car with gas, etc. In a defensive scenario the Pilot handles confrontations and threats.

The Navigator role ensures that while the Pilot is doing their thing that they are not surprised by a threat. In a defensive scenario the Navigator may be the person calling 9-1-1 or may have to step in and defend the Pilot.

The Cargo role handles everything else that does not pertain to direct action or security. This would be the handling of small children or elderly relatives. Sometimes this role is a shared burden between Pilot and Navigator. If an older child is present, it usually falls to them.

Role reversal can take place; these are not always static jobs. If the Pilot is injured or dead, the Navigator will need to step up.

Step three: Develop a plan

The best way to put family training into practice is to develop a safety plan for the whole family.

While most plans will have the same principles, there will be specifics that are unique to your family's dynamics.

For example really young children will more than likely need to be protected by another family member. Children over the age of five, on the other hand can either move to a safe room, barricade their own room or seek refuge through a crawl space or other exit situated in their room.

As a parent you will be the best judge of your own children's capabilities in this regard. Do not try to overtask them, but always be mindful of their capabilities.

Plans should be developed as methods of behavior in response to stimuli while engaged in certain activities in specific locations.

For example, the sound of breaking glass indicates an intruder may be present while you are lying in bed.

The first step may be to lock and or barricade the bedroom door, followed by retrieving a handgun from a night stand lock box and then calling 9-1-1 to report an intruder.

This can change if there are children in another bedroom in another part of the house. If a child or even an elderly relative are in another bedroom, they will have to have a plan of their own, whether it is barricading their door or seeking refuge in a safe room or escaping from the house.

Plans do not need to be specific to self-defense in the home. Attacks can occur at the grocery store, shopping mall, Sports Park, parking lots or anywhere else you may come in contact with a terrorist or criminal element that is determined to cause harm. We will address this in the last section.

The best plans are fluid or dynamic and allow the family members to react as appropriate when unexpected changes occur.

Step four: Create a password

Another tool to use is a password like you would use on your computer. Choose something unique but not too out of the ordinary that can communicate to your

family: “I am in trouble and you need to get to safety as soon as possible and contact the authorities.”

If you keep it to one word like “Sasquatch” it will let them know without alerting a bad guy who may have a weapon pointed at you and it will keep him from using it.

It is never a good idea to use too common of a word like “Stapler” or “Smart phone” lest you may trigger an alarm unnecessarily.

While on the subject of smart phones, it is a good idea for family members to be able to access one another’s phones in the event of an emergency in case their phone is not working or is inaccessible.

Step five: Know the plan

After you develop your home defense plan, you should have it memorized as well as documented.

Committing the plan to memory for all family members is an admirable goal, but not always a practical one. Beyond rehearsals, copies of the plan should be posted in conspicuous areas such as the refrigerator, in bedrooms and the garage or laundry room.

Digital copies of the plan can also be stored on tablets, smart phones or even a laminated note card kept in the pocket.

Step six: Rehearse the plan

After your plan is developed it should be rehearsed so that other family members will know what to do and if implemented correctly, they will begin to spot patterns of behavior in any given situation.

Just as you may perform fire drills, defense plans should be implemented on a regular basis in order to ensure familiarity. This is the best way to uncover flaws or other shortcomings in your plan and gives you time to address them.

Implementing your plan can be accomplished as simply as blowing a whistle or

activating an alarm and having the family react as they would if it were real or it can involve actual role players enacting the situation. If you go that route ensure that everyone maintains a serious attitude instead of treating it lightly or making jokes about it.

The goal is to have them familiar and comfortable so that actual execution becomes second nature.

Step seven: Outside the home

The steps for home defense training for the family can be adapted for outside the home as well.

There may not be predetermined safe rooms to take refuge in or hidden gun safes to access, but the same basic principles can be reused.

For example, most criminal activity initiated on the street is by a stranger stopping to ask for directions, money, cigarettes or the time.

The simple answer on the street is always: “No!”

Spouses and children of driving age should be directed to drive to a police station if someone is posing a threat either out of road rage or a determined attack.

A recent example in certain cities is a cyclist or pedestrian feigning that a motorist has struck them by hurling themselves at the vehicle. The goal here is for them to ask for a ride to the hospital, playing on the compassion of the driver. Once they gain access to the car they initiate a robbery or have accomplices waiting to swarm the vehicle with threats and demands for money.

Train everyone in the family to never let a stranger into the car. Offer to call 9-1-1, but be safe and never leave the vehicle as long as it is safe. It is your safe room on wheels.

Step eight: Repeat

Home defense training is never a one shot training session. It should be active and

ongoing. New techniques and methods will rapidly place old ones. Technology will make certain things easier in this regard but may make some things more difficult.

As children grow in age, skill and maturity they can take on additional responsibilities and that means more training.

Always analyze your plan and seek to improve it as your family dynamic changes with children growing and then eventually leaving the home at adulthood.

Conclusion

Hopefully this will give you an idea and a blueprint with which to get started. Protecting the family should be a task shared by all members that are able to perform their roles while keeping to the plan. It all starts and ends with training.