



# Victoria Police

## Handgun Safety Awareness Course

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Initial Material:  
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This course was designed in 1997 as a result of a legislative requirement for a Handgun Safety Awareness Course for all new members of pistol clubs.

The course is not designed to facilitate any particular pistol shooting discipline or to increase skill level but will provide a basic knowledge in relation to the safe handling of handguns in a sporting shooting environment.

The aims of the course are:

- To instruct the student in current legislation about the possession use and ownership of firearms.
- To provide a basic knowledge of handgun types and their safe handling.
- To teach the student the basic knowledge of gun handling skills and safety consciousness required of the shooter.
- To measure individual skill levels to ensure that all students have the basic level of safety skills.

The course consists of 2 parts:

- (a) A theory component of four hours duration where instruction will be given in:
- Basic handgun types and actions
  - Legislation about handguns
  - Safe handling of handguns
  - Basic ballistics including reloading

A theory assessment will be carried out during this component

- (b) A practical component of four hours duration where instruction will be given:
- Safe handling of handguns
  - Making safe a handgun
  - Loading and unloading a handgun
  - Safe clearance of malfunctions
  - Live fire exercise

A practical assessment in the safe handling of handguns will be conducted

Safety is the primary concern in the sport of handgun shooting. As the instructor carries out this course the one question continually in mind is....

Is this shooter a safe shooter?

## INTRODUCTION

When you began the class you were unconsciously unskilled. You were unaware that you didn't know. By the end of the class you will have advanced to being consciously unskilled.

At this point your gun handling skills will probably be low with awkward movements, but you know and now you can change it. Practice will bring steady improvement as you move towards becoming consciously skilled.

Prior to handling handguns or firearms of any type you must be aware of the three laws of gun control. In the event that you have an unintentional discharge, which may be at the range or at another location, be assured that it will be frightening if you have not obeyed the three laws of gun control it could be tragic.

**First law:**            ***The gun is always loaded.***  
Every time you pick up or handle a gun, inspect it in a safe manner (muzzle direction) and always treat it as a loaded gun

**Second law:**        ***Never point the gun at anything you are not prepared to shoot.***  
The only safe way to handle guns is to assume the worst case scenario. The empty gun is going to fire. Since you are prepared for that you only point the gun in a safe direction. This way if an unintentional discharge does result it will be into a safe impact area and there will not be a tragedy.

**Third law:**            ***Always be sure of your target and what is behind it.***  
Bullets can penetrate a number of items before coming to a halt. Always identify your target and what is behind it before firing. If you are unsure do not fire. Always ensure that there is a safe impact area behind your target before firing.

## HANDGUN LEGISLATION

1. The purposes of the Firearms Act 1996 are to give effect to the principle that possession, carriage, use, acquisition and disposal of firearms are conditional on the need to ensure public safety and peace by regulating licensing, registration, storage and education of the community in the safe and responsible use of firearms.
2. To give a brief understanding to prospective handgun licence holders the following summarises some of the important components of the Firearms Act 1996 applicable to handguns.

## HANDGUN LICENCES

3. Section 15 of the Firearms Act 1996 allows the Chief Commissioner to licence a person to possess, carry or use a handgun for various reasons including for target shooting.
4. For the purpose of demonstrating that a licence is required for target shooting the applicant must be a current member of a shooting-club or shooting organisation that is approved by the Chief Commissioner.
5. To obtain a handgun licence the applicant must:
  - not be a prohibited person
  - be 18 years of age or over
  - be a fit and proper person to possess a handgun
  - not be a danger to public safety or peace
  - have passed a course of firearms safety approved by the Chief Commissioner and have a good knowledge of the firearms laws
  - can comply with the storage requirements set out by the act

Handgun licences for recreational use are subject to the following conditions:

6. General Conditions (contained in Schedule 1 of the Act)
  - the holder of the licence must permit a member of the police force to inspect the holder's storage arrangements at any reasonable time.
  - the holder of the licence must not transfer, lend or give the licence to another person.
  - any firearms held under the licence must not be used for any reason other than the reasons authorised by the licence.

7. Special Conditions (contained Section 15 (2)(b))
  - the holder must be a member of an approved club and the firearms held under the licence must be used at an approved shooting range.

The Chief Commissioner also has power to impose other conditions on handgun licence.

### **JUNIOR HANDGUN LICENCE**

8. Section 18 of the Firearms Act 1996 allows the Chief Commissioner to licence a person who is of or over 12 years of age and under 18 years of age to carry or use handguns of the type specified in the licence for the purpose of receiving instruction in the use of such firearms or engaging in competition shooting
9. To obtain junior handgun licence the applicant must:
  - ▶ not be a prohibited person
  - ▶ be a fit and proper person to possess a handgun
  - ▶ not be a danger to public safety or peace
  - ▶ have passed a course of firearms safety approved by the Chief Commissioner and have a good knowledge of the firearms laws
  - ▶ have the written consent of the parent or guardian

Junior handgun licences are subject to the following conditions:

10. General Conditions (contained in Schedule 1 of the Act)
  - ▶ the holder of the licence must not transfer, lend or give the licence to another person.
  - ▶ any firearms held under the licence must not be used for any reason other than the reasons authorised by the licence.
11. Special Conditions (contained in item 4 of Schedule 2)
  - ▶ the holder of the licence must not carry or use a handgun under the licence except under the immediate supervision of a person who is the holder of a handgun licence
  - ▶ the holder is authorised to carry or use a handgun, the carriage of use of which is authorised by the licence, on an approved shooting range.
  - ▶ The holder is not authorised to purchase ammunition.

The licence is also subject to any other condition the Chief Commissioner imposes.

### PERMIT TO ACQUIRE A HANDGUN

12. Section 103 of the Firearms Act 1996 allows the Chief Commissioner to issue a permit to a person to acquire a handgun if that person is the holder of a licence that authorises the possession of handguns.
13. The applicant for a permit to acquire a hand gun must:
  - ▶ not be a prohibited person
  - ▶ be a fit and proper person to possess a handgun
  - ▶ be able to comply with the storage set out under the Act
  - ▶ be able to demonstrate that the reason for which the licence was required continues to apply in respect of the handgun for which the application for the permit is made
  - ▶ can demonstrate a genuine need for the handgun.
14. In determining the genuine need to possess, carry or use a handgun the Chief Commissioner must have regard to the number, category and type of firearms already possessed by the applicant.
15. Applications for a permit to acquire must be in the form and manner approved by the Chief Commissioner and verified by statutory declaration.
16. For the first acquisition, a permit to acquire will not be issued until 28 days have expired after the making of the application. The permit remains in force for a period of 28 days or until the firearm to which it relates is acquired or the permit is cancelled.

*Note: All transactions involving the acquisition or disposal of handguns must be conducted with or through a licensed firearms dealer.*

### STORAGE OF HANDGUNS

17. The requirements for the storage of handguns is set out in Schedule 4 of the Firearms Act 1996.
18. Handguns must be stored in steel safe -
  - ▶ which is of a thickness that is not easily penetrable and
  - ▶ which, if it weights less than 150 kilogram when it is empty, must be bolted to the structure of the premises where the firearm is authorised to be kept, and
  - ▶ which, when any firearm is stored in it, is locked

19. If more than 15 firearms are stored on the premises where the firearm is stored, the premises must be fitted with an effective alarm system.
20. Any ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a separately-locked container (i.e. neither loose nor accessible from the safe in which the firearms are stored without the use of a separate key).

#### SAFEKEEPING OF FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION WHILE BEING CARRIED OR USED

21. Section 126 of the Firearms Act 1996 requires that a person who is carrying or using a handgun must:
  - ▶ Ensure that the handgun is carried and used in a manner that is secure and is not dangerous and
  - ▶ must take reasonable precautions to ensure that the handgun is not lost or stolen.

*Note: The onus is on the licence holder to ensure that his handguns are secured at home, whilst travelling to an approved range and whilst shooting at approved ranges.*

#### NON-PROHIBITED PERSONS WHO ARE EXEMPT FROM THE REQUIREMENT TO HOLD A LICENCE

22. Schedule 3 of the Firearms Act 1996 exempts certain categories of person from requiring a licence.
23. It includes any person who is of or over the age of 18 years who is receiving instruction in the use of a handgun by or under the immediate supervision of the holder of a handgun licence.
24. This only applies when carrying or using at an approved shooting range the handgun specified in the supervisor's licence for the purpose of receiving instruction.

*Note: This does not apply to persons under 18 years of age and is only for the purpose of receiving instruction, not competition shooting.*

## OFFENCES

25. Apart from the general offences relating to possession, using, storing and acquiring handguns there are many other offences within the Act that can relate to a person possessing a handgun. These include but are not limited to:
- ▶ failing to notify the Chief Commissioner within 7 days of change of address
  - ▶ failing to notify the Chief Commissioner of the loss, theft or destruction of a handgun within 24 hours
  - ▶ failing to advise the Chief Commissioner of the permanent removal of a handgun from Victoria
  - ▶ failing to produce a licence on demand of a member of the police force
  - ▶ failing to produce a handgun for inspection by police
  - ▶ permitting an unauthorised person to carry or use a handgun
  - ▶ damaging property with a firearm
  - ▶ using a handgun in a dangerous manner
  - ▶ carrying a loaded handgun or using a handgun in a town etc
  - ▶ carrying or using a handgun whilst intoxicated

### Ammunition

- 25.1 A person must not possess ammunition unless that person:
- ▶ is the holder of a firearm licence, or
  - ▶ is the holder of a licence under the Dangerous Goods Act, or
  - ▶ is not required to have a firearms licence

A person with a firearms licence must not possess ammunition that is not suitable for use in the category of firearm for which the person is licensed.

*Note: A finding of guilt at court for an offence against the Firearms Act 1996 (where the court was able to impose a term of imprisonment) or an offence against any other Act involving possession and use of firearms (where the court was able to impose a term of imprisonment) will result in the cancellation of a handgun licence.*

## TYPES OF HANDGUNS

26. There are four main types of handguns commonly available to the sporting shooter in Australia. These are:
- ▶ Revolvers
  - ▶ Semi-automatic pistols
  - ▶ Air pistols
  - ▶ Single shot pistols

27. **Revolvers**

The majority of revolvers are six shot breech loading handguns, a number of centre fire revolvers are currently being manufactured with a seven shot capacity and some rimfire revolvers may hold up to nine rounds.

The majority of revolvers are produced with a solid frame and a swing out type of cylinder having six chambers located around a central axis and can be fired either double or single action.

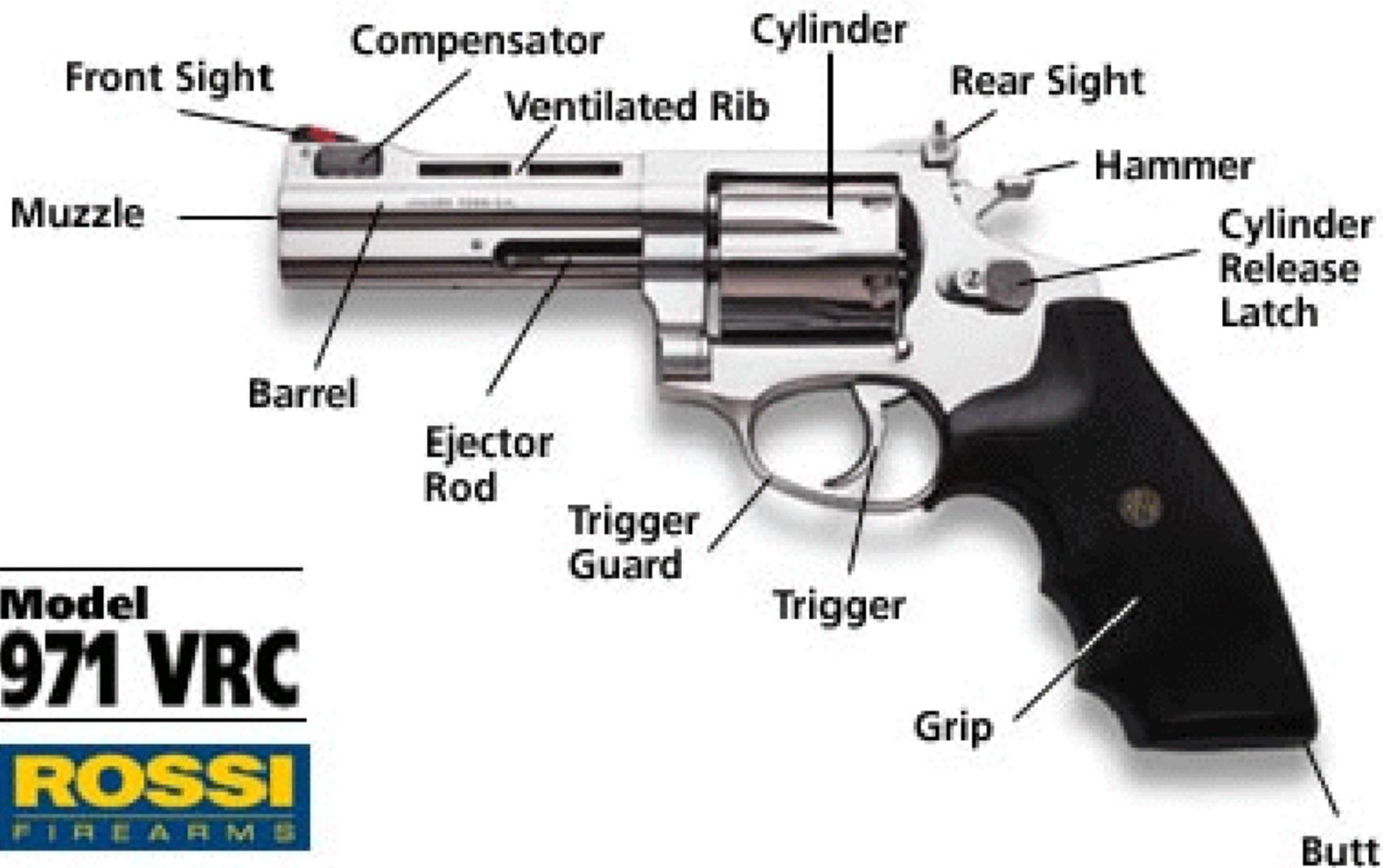
Single-action is when the hammer must be manually cocked and squeezing the trigger performs only one function, this being the release of the hammer.

Double action is when squeezing the trigger performs two functions, these being the movement of the hammer from the de-cocked position back through the cocked position and then the release of the hammer as per single action.

Some single action type revolvers do not have a swing out cylinder and are loaded/unloaded and checked through a 'loading gate' located on the right hand side of the frame.

The following sequence forms the safety precautions for a revolver (swing out cylinder)

- ▶ Hold revolver with master hand, ensuring that finger is outside the trigger guard.
- ▶ Release cylinder catch and swing out cylinder.
- ▶ Inspect cylinder chambers to ensure they are clear of rounds. If rounds present continue.
- ▶ Transfer revolver to weak hand, point muzzle straight up and strike the ejector rod with the palm of the master hand.
- ▶ Inspect cylinder chambers to ensure they are clear of rounds.



**28. Semi-automatic pistols**

A semi-automatic pistol is a mechanically locked, recoil operated handgun featuring either a single or double action trigger (or combination) and fitted with some form of safety mechanism. All semi-automatic pistols reload after each shot until the source of ammunition is depleted.

The term 'semi-automatic' pistol by accepted usage signifies a handgun in which squeezing the trigger when the chamber and magazine are loaded will:

- ▶ Fire the cartridge in the chamber
- ▶ Eject the fired cartridge case
- ▶ Cock the firing mechanism ready for the next shot and
- ▶ Load a cartridge from the magazine into the chamber in position for firing

Some gas operated semi-automatic and blowback pistols are available however the majority of semi-automatic pistols are recoil operated.

Most double action pistols perform as single actions once they have been fired as the slide movement re-cocks the hammer.

Magazines for semi-automatic pistols are generally inserted in the grip area through the base of the grip. Some variations may be inserted down through the breech or in front of the trigger guard. Magazine capacities may vary between five and twenty rounds.

The following sequence forms the safety precautions for a semi-automatic pistol:

- ▶ Hold pistol in master hand, ensuring that trigger figure is outside trigger guard
- ▶ Ensure safety catch is in 'safe' position
- ▶ Depress magazine release and remove magazines.
- ▶ With the muzzle pointed in a safe direction rack the slide, allow the cartridge to eject (if present)
- ▶ Visually inspect chamber to ensure no round is present
- ▶ Allow the slide to travel forward
- ▶ Insert an EMPTY magazine for magazine disconnected pistols
- ▶ With the muzzle pointed in a safe direction fire the action (the definitive safety check)

*NOTE: 'Dry firing of rimfire and air pistols may cause damage to the mechanism and therefore should not be done with those types.'*



## 29. Air Pistol

Air pistols come in a variety of designs, a number duplicate the characteristics of either revolvers or semi-automatic pistols. The majority of air pistols are of a single shot design.

The air pistol is unique in that it uses compressed air to generate the driving force behind the lead pellet (projectile).

The compressed air may be released from a storage cylinder into the barrel by means of a regulator activated by the trigger mechanism or by means of a piston and spring mechanism that forcibly compresses the air at the moment the trigger is activated.

Air pistols are designed to be shot in indoor venues and have an extremely low velocity that averages between 300 and 600 feet per second (approximately 92 and 183 m/s respectively).



EXAMPLES OF CO2 AIR PISTOLS

30. **Single shot pistol**

Similar to air pistols, single shot pistols come in a variety of designs and calibres. Single shot pistols are noted for their accuracy and ease of use. Due to the simplicity and inherent safety of single shot pistols they are widely regarded as excellent pistols for new shooters.



THOMPSON CONTENDER SINGLE SHOT PISTOL

*NOTE: Single shot pistols often have a very light trigger pull and may not have the inherent safety features of modern revolvers or semi-automatic pistols.*

## BASIC BALLISTICS

31. The study of exterior ballistics imparts knowledge to shooters as to what occurs when a bullet is actually fired. A knowledge of how far a bullet will travel is imperative in understanding the dangers associated with all firearms if due care is not exercised in selecting appropriate range areas with suitable backstops.

The sporting handgun shooter will use both rim fire and centre fire cartridges.

32. How a cartridge works  
Conventional cartridges (known as fixed ammunition) as we know them have been in common use in their current form for over 130 years. The cartridge comprises the following components.

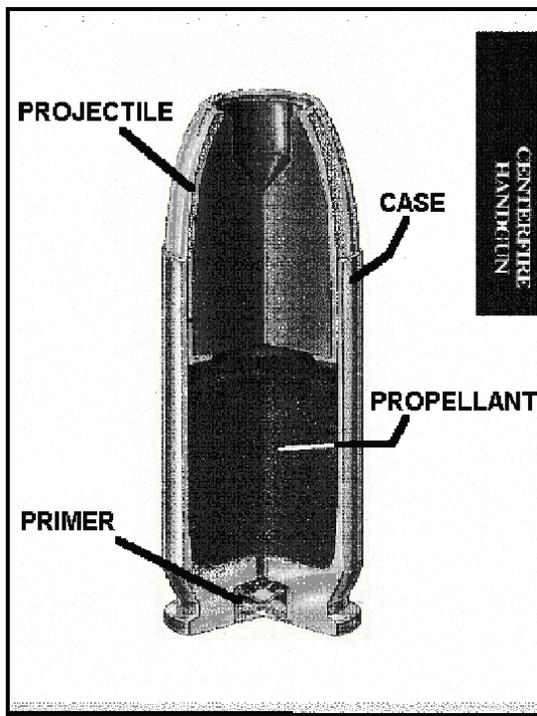
- ▶ Cartridge case - generally made from brass however examples may be found of copper, aluminium or steel. Brass cases are suitable for reloading due to the inherent properties of brass that allows the case to expand and contract during the discharge of the round. The brass case is able to be resized during the reloading process.
- ▶ Primers - two types in cartridges, centre fire and rimfire. Rimfire cartridges cannot be reloaded. The priming compound is located in the rim of the cartridges cases and is ignited when the firing pin strikes the rim of the case detonating the primer compound. This priming compound is placed in the rim during the manufacturing process and is unable to be replaced.

Centre fire cartridges as their name denotes have a primer located in the centre of the cartridge case base. The primers in centre fire cases are replaceable which enables the cartridge to be reloaded. Centre fire primers are self contained units and consist of a cup, priming compound and anvil. When the firing pin strikes the primer the priming compound is ignited when the compound is compressed between the cup and the anvil.

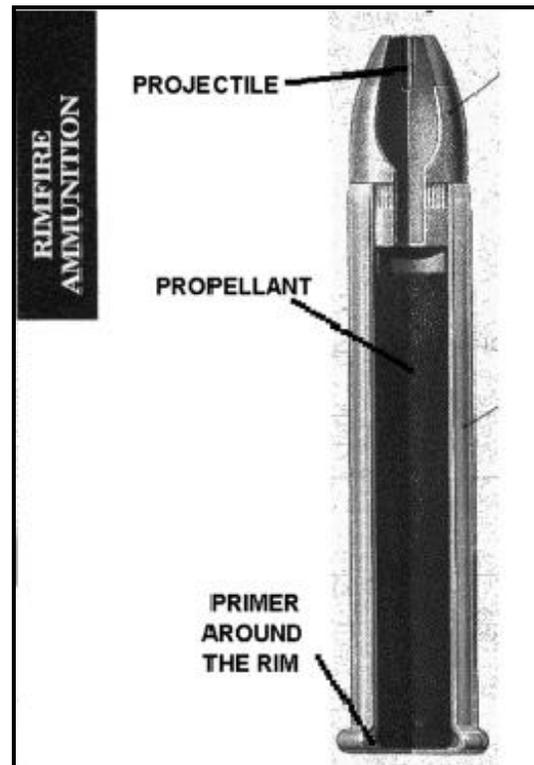
- ▶ Propellant Powder - designed to progressively burn and create vast volumes of gas which drive the projectile out of the barrel. Smokeless powder was developed in the latter part of the 1800's and is based on a nitrocellulose material. Propellant powders are manufactured to burn at various controlled speeds. Dependant upon the application a particular powder will be the most suitable selection. Calibre, bullet weight and desired velocity are all taken into consideration in the

process of selecting a powder for a particular use. Propellant powders should never be blended and recommended loads should never be exceeded.

- ▶ Projectiles - come in a multitude of designs, weights and sizes. The designs of many projectiles lend themselves to particular applications. Round nose, wadcutter, semi wadcutter, hollow point and truncated cone are just a few of the many designs available. Projectiles may be manufactured from lead of varying degrees of hardness, these lead projectiles may be gas-checked, Teflon, tin or copper washed. Jacketed, semi-jacketed or solid copper projectiles are also available.



CENTREFIRE CARTRIDGE



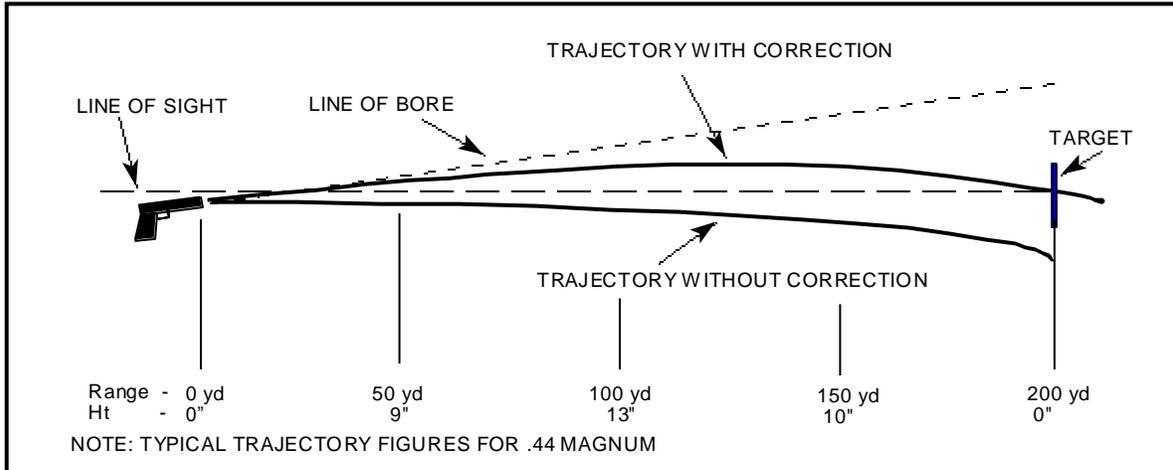
RIMFIRE CARTRIDGE

33. At the time a cartridge is fired the firing pin firmly dents the primer, the priming compound is crushed between the anvil and the primer cup and the primer compound detonates. The ignition of the primer sends a flame (in the case of a centre fire cartridge) through the primer hole in the base of the cartridge case into the propellant charge.

- The propellant ignites and burns at a fast, even rate. There is a common misconception that the propellant powder explodes and the force of this explosion is what discharges the projectile, this is a fallacy. What actually occurs is that the powder commences to burn and produces hot expanding gases, it is the pressure from these expanding gases that exert pressure in all directions and eventually drive the projectile down the barrel.
34. As the gases expand the pressure from these gases is seeking an avenue of release. As the breeching mechanism of the firearm does not allow the gases to escape through the chamber area it leaves the projectile as the area that offers the least amount of resistance. The expanding gases start the projectile down the barrel, as it does so the propellant powder continues to burn and accelerates the projectile until the projectile exits the barrel.
  35. As the projectile travels down the barrel the expanding gases force the projectile into the rifling in the barrel that in turns cause the projectile to spin at the same rate as the twist in the barrel. This spinning enhances the stability of the projectile and AIDS in the accuracy of the firearm.
  36. As each action must have an equal and opposite reaction, the reaction to the discharge of the projectile gives rise to what is known as recoil. The momentum imparted to the projectile is equalled by a similar momentum (in the opposite direction) that pushes the firearm backwards. The amount of recoil felt when firing a gun is decreased by the mass of the gun compared to that of the projectile. For any gun, the heavier the projectile and the higher its speed on leaving the muzzle, the more recoil is felt.
  37. The average maximum range of a handgun round is in the vicinity of 2 kilometres, however some of the magnum handgun rounds can travel out to 3 kilometres. As can be seen from these distances a shooter has to remain acutely aware of what is behind the target at which he is shooting and the effectiveness of any backstops.

### **Bullet path (Trajectory)**

38. From the time the projectile leaves the barrel it immediately comes under the influence of gravity and air resistance. These two forces progressively slow the projectile down and cause the projectile to fall to the ground. As a result as the target range increases the shooter has to aim higher to strike the target.



Projectile Flight Path

39. The maximum accepted range for a handgun is 200 metres when it is used in such matches as metallic silhouette, the diagram above relates to a .44 Magnum shooting a 240 grain (15.55 g) projectile at 1400 feet per second (427 m/s). It is evident that with the sights adjusted for point of impact at 200 yards (182 m) the following trajectory will be produced:
- ▶ at 50 yards (45.7 m) the projectile will be 8.9" (22.6 cm) high
  - ▶ at 100 yards (91.44 m) the projectile will be 12.9" (32.7 cm) high
  - ▶ at 150 yards (137 m) the projectile will be 10.3" (26.1 cm) high
  - ▶ at 200 yards (182 m) the projectile will be on target.
40. In order to strike targets at each of these respective ranges the line of bore has to be lowered by a corresponding amount to impact the target area.

## Reloading

41. Reloading reverses the process of firing a cartridge. When a cartridge is reloaded the components used when firing are replaced and the cartridge case is returned to dimensions that allow it to be re-chambered. The steps involved in reloading a cartridge are:
- ▶ The case is resized.
  - ▶ The spent primer is removed and replaced with a new primer.
  - ▶ A fresh powder charge is loaded.
  - ▶ A new projectile is seated and crimped.
42. Reloading is a simple process that can be carried out by any person. However there are a great many pitfalls await the unwary. The selection of propellant powder type and weight is critical and must be carried out in conjunction with research from appropriate reloading manuals or manufacturers handbooks that provide tables of data.

43. At no time must propellant powders be blended or used in excess of manufacturers data. When it is time for the novice shooter to commence reloading cartridges it is appropriate to seek advice from other shooters who have experience in this field. In the absence of such source of information gunshop proprietors and shooting organisations often hold classes in basic reloading skills.

When reloading the following basic rules should be followed:

- ▶ Have a full understanding of the reloading process before you commence.
- ▶ Always wear eye protection when reloading.
- ▶ Do not smoke whilst reloading.
- ▶ Store powder & primers out of the reach of children.
- ▶ Develop a set routine and do not rush.
- ▶ Do not use propellant powder unless its identity is known.
- ▶ Do not exceed loads recommended for the firearm being used.
- ▶ Keep the reloading area neat and tidy, promptly clean up any spilled powder or primers.
- ▶ Pay attention to detail when setting scales, powder throwers and seating depths.

## SAFETY

44. Safety with handguns is of paramount importance. There are three locations where handguns are handled these are:
- ▶ At home
  - ▶ Travelling to and from the range
  - ▶ At the range

In the introduction you were taught the three laws of gun control, if these three laws are obeyed at all times whilst handling handguns the safety of yourself and others will be guaranteed.

45. **Safety at home.**
- ▶ All firearms stored at your home should be stored in accord with current legislative requirements.
  - ▶ Handguns must be stored in an approved steel safe.
  - ▶ Ammunition must be stored in a separate locked container.
  - ▶ Children must not have access to the handguns or access to the safe at any time.
  - ▶ Handguns should never be loaded with live ammunition at home.

- ▶ On every occasion that a handgun is removed from the safe for any reason whatsoever the handgun should be proved and made safe as previously discussed.
- ▶ At no time should firearms be handled whilst under the influence of alcohol or any other drug.

46. **Travelling to and from the range**

- ▶ When transporting a handgun it should be stored in either a box or a pistol case, this serves both purposes of protecting the handgun and making the contents not readily visible.
- ▶ When transporting the handgun you should travel directly to and from the range, do not stop off to do some shopping on the way. In the circumstances that the car is stolen so will your handguns also be stolen.
- ▶ Whilst travelling the boot of your vehicle is the most secure area, the handguns are not readily visible in this area.
- ▶ If you must stop en-route for fuel or refreshments ensure that the vehicle is locked and remains in sight at all times.

47. **At the range**

Shooting on a SSAA range is conducted under the watchful eye of a Range Officer (RO). When entering a range always identify the RO and make your presence known to him/her. The RO is responsible for the safe conduct of activities on the range and will issue commands to shooters as required to achieve safe and coordinated range operations. The RO will be heard to issue a very important call that must be obeyed IMMEDIATELY - "CEASE FIRE". This means that you are to stop firing and lower your handgun, render it safe and put it down in plain view on the firing bench.

Other rules for shooting at a range are:

- ▶ Always wear both eye and ear protection whilst on the range.
- ▶ The firearms should remain in its box or cover until it can be removed in either a designated safety area or on the line under the control of a Range Officer.
- ▶ All Range Officer commands must be obeyed immediately
- ▶ During and after the loading process the handgun must remain pointed down range at all times unless holstered.
- ▶ At all times whilst not engaging a target the finger must remain off the trigger.
- ▶ Never let the muzzle of the handgun point in any direction that would let a round exit the range area or clear the backstop.
- ▶ Be aware of the muzzle direction in relation to your feet and ground surface (concrete can cause splatter).

- ▶ Whilst not on the firing line handguns should only be handled in designated safety areas.
- ▶ Load the handgun only whilst under the control of a Range Officer.
- ▶ Do not leave any handguns unattended at any time.
- ▶ If you have any doubts at any time as to what to do, either holster the handgun or point it in a safe direction and seek assistance from a Range Officer.
- ▶ When laying firearms down the cylinder must be open in the case of a revolver or the magazines removed and the slide locked back in the case of a semi-automatic pistol.
- ▶ Whilst clearing malfunctions ensure that the muzzle remains pointed down range in a safe direction.
- ▶ Never look down the barrel if checking for a stuck projectile.

## **PRACTICAL COMPONENT**

48. During this component of the training the student will be required to handle firearms. As there has been most likely a number of breaks prior to this session the instructor must again instruct students that **NO LIVE AMMUNITION** is to be introduced to the training environment until the last component involving live fire commences.

49. Students will be continually assessed throughout this session as to their knowledge of safety and gun handling skills. A breach of safety during this component of the course will result in immediate ejection from the course and students being classified as being not yet competent and subsequently having to re-attend the course.

Prior to commencement of the live fire sequence all students must obtain and wear appropriate eye and ear protection.

50. Safe handling of handguns.  
The instructor will demonstrate safety precautions for each of the four types of handguns, these being;

51. Revolver
- ▶ Hold revolver with master hand, ensuring that finger is outside the trigger guard.
  - ▶ Release cylinder catch and swing out cylinder.
  - ▶ Inspect cylinder chambers to ensure they are clear of rounds. If rounds present continue.
  - ▶ Transfer revolver to weak hand, point muzzle straight up and strike the ejector rod with the palm of the master hand.
  - ▶ Inspect cylinder chambers to ensure they are clear of rounds.

52. Semi-automatic pistol
- ▶ Hold pistol in master hand, ensuring that trigger figure is outside trigger guard
  - ▶ Ensure safety catch is in 'safe' position
  - ▶ Depress magazine release and remove magazine (inspect for live rounds)
  - ▶ With the muzzle pointed in a safe direction rack the slide, allow the cartridge to eject (if present)
  - ▶ Visually inspect chamber to ensure no round is present
  - ▶ Allow the slide to travel forward
  - ▶ For pistols with a magazine disconnect, insert the empty magazine
  - ▶ With the muzzle pointed in a safe direction fire the action (the definitive safety check)

*NOTE: Do not dry fire rimfire pistols as damage to the firing pin or hammer nose may result.*

53. Air pistol  
    Dependant upon the type and action.  
Single shot pistol  
    Dependant upon the type and action.

*NOTE: Do not dry fire air pistols as serious damage to the mechanism may result*

54. The instructor will stress that safety precautions must be carried out whenever the handgun is removed from:
- ▶ The safe
  - ▶ The gun bag/case at the range
  - ▶ When being handed to another person
  - ▶ When being received from another person
  - ▶ Prior to being loaded
  - ▶ At the conclusion of shooting
  - ▶ Prior to cleaning
  - ▶ When being lodged in the safe at home
  - ▶ If there is any doubt whatsoever as to the condition of the handgun
55. Students are then to display correct application of safety precautions on all four types of handguns

56. **Loading and unloading a handgun**

Using action proving dummy ammunition the instructor will then demonstrate correct loading and unloading techniques for all four types of handguns using appropriate safety precautions and displaying a high level of gun handling skills. Semi automatic pistols will be loaded to the condition where there is a round in the chamber and the action uncocked by means of a de-cocking lever or the safety catch applied. At the conclusion of the demonstration students are to demonstrate their knowledge in loading and unloading handguns.

*NOTE: This session is to be carried out in a live fire environment, all action proving dummy ammunition is to be inspected by the instructor and students prior to the commencement of the session. No live ammunition is to be present in the environment. The instructor is to repeat the following instruction.*

57. ***“For reasons of safety, from this point in time until the commencement of the live fire practise, no student or instructor is to have in their possession any live ammunition whatsoever. All students and instructors must check their pockets, bags and any other potential repositories where ammunition may be stored. If any student has any live ammunition with them I must now ask them to declare the presence of this ammunition and produce it for safe keeping.”***

58. Safe clearance of malfunctions

Malfunctions in handguns may be classified in one of the following areas:

- ▶ Failure to feed
- ▶ Failure to fire
- ▶ Failure to extract
- ▶ Failure to eject

59. In a revolver the failure to fire and failure to eject are the only potential malfunctions, these may be treated as follows;

60. Failure to fire: Initial action is to again action the trigger, this rotates the cylinder and brings a new round into position for firing.

*NOTE: Most failures to fire in revolvers can be traced to weak hammer springs or hammer springs that have been backed off to ease the trigger pull.*

61. Failure to eject: Failure to eject occurs in revolver when the ejection rod is not depressed in a forceful enough manner to remove the cases from the cylinder. It is common for the cartridge case to slip underneath the ejector

star when this occurs. To remedy this malfunction the ejector star must be fully depressed and the stuck cartridge case removed using a finger nail or small screwdriver.

62. In a semi-automatic pistol there are a variety of malfunctions that include
- ▶ 'Stove pipe'
  - ▶ Double feed
  - ▶ Failure to extract due to torn cartridge rim, stuck case or broken extractor
  - ▶ Failure to feed due to inappropriate projectile design
  - ▶ Failure to eject due to low powered ammunition, broken ejector
  - ▶ Failure to fire due to mechanical malfunction or round not properly chambered (disconnecter will not allow pistol to discharge)
63. There are many varied techniques for clearing the above malfunctions and instructors are to display such techniques as are appropriate whilst ensuring that appropriate safety procedures are followed. Of paramount importance whilst clearing malfunctions is that the finger must remain outside the trigger guard and the muzzle must be in a safe direction whilst clearing the handgun. Students are to be reminded that the hands must remain clear of the muzzle and ejection port in order to prevent injury in the advent of an unintentional discharge.

**On SSAA ranges** the RO must be advised of a malfunction involving 'stuck live rounds' before attempting to clear the firearm malfunction.

64. Clearance of malfunctions in air pistols and single shot pistols are dependant upon individual design.

### **Safety checks on handguns**

The instructor will explain and demonstrate the following safety checks to the students who will then carry out the checks themselves.

65. Revolver Safety Check  
Check and clear revolver, when clear close cylinder and check for function of hammer block. Do this in the following manner:
- ▶  cock the revolver
  - ▶  press trigger whilst holding hammer
  - ▶  release trigger and slowly lower hammer.
  - ▶
- The safety bar should rise to prevent hammer nose from striking where a round would be chambered (should not protrude through the recoil plate).

66. Semi-automatic Pistol Safety Check  
Check and clear pistol, when clear check:
- (a) Safety catch                      Action slide, engage safety catch, press trigger firmly then release trigger, disengage safety catch, hammer should not drop.
  - (b) Half-cock notch                  Cock hammer, hold hammer and press trigger, release trigger and slowly lower hammer, hammer should stop at half-cock notch.
  - (c) Disconnecter                      Cock hammer, move slide back approximately 1/8 inch (3 mm), press trigger

## LIVE FIRE EXERCISES

67. Prior to the commencement of live fire exercise all action proving dummy ammunition must be retrieved from students and removed from the training area prior to the introduction of live ammunition. At this stage of the training the emphasis is on safe gun handling and not accuracy.

It is recommended that during this phase of training students are restricted to calibres such as .22 Rimfire, .38 Special and 9 mm and are advised not to use heavy calibre handguns unless the student has previous experience with handguns.

68. **Phase # 1 - SINGLE ROUND LOADING/FIRING**  
Using a revolver the student is to carry out the safety precautions and upon the appropriate commands load and fire a single round at a target situated 5 metres away. The student is then to reload and fire 5 individual rounds at the same target. At the conclusion of the exercise the student is to carry out safety precautions again and render the handgun safe.

This exercise is to be repeated until the instructor is satisfied the student has displayed appropriate gun handling skills in this exercise.

The student then repeats the exercise using a semi-automatic pistol.

69. **Phase # 2 - MULTIPLE ROUND LOADING/FIRING**  
Using a revolver the student is to carry out safety precautions and upon the appropriate commands load and fire six rounds in their own time at a target 5 metres away. The student is then to reload with a further six

rounds and repeat the exercises. At the conclusion of the exercise the student is to carry out safety precautions and render the handgun safe.

This exercise is to be repeated until the instructor is satisfied the student has displayed appropriate gun handling skills.

The student then repeats the exercise using a semi-automatic pistol

70. **Phase # 3 - MULTIPLE ROUND FIRING WITH MALFUNCTIONS**

Using a semi-automatic pistol the student is to carry out safety precautions and upon the appropriate commands load a magazine supplied by the instructor and fire six individual rounds in their own time at a target 5 metres away. The student is then to reload with a further six rounds using another magazine supplied by the instructor and repeat the exercises. At the conclusion of the exercise the student is to carry out safety precautions and render the handgun safe.

This exercise is to be repeated until the instructor is satisfied the student has displayed appropriate gun handling skills.

**NOTE:**

The instructor will load a minimum of 4 action proving dummy rounds into the two magazines to simulate a failure to fire. The student is required to clear the malfunction using appropriate and safe gun handling skills.

71. **Phase # 4 - OFF-HAND SINGLE HAND FIRING**

Using a revolver the student is to carry out safety precautions and upon the appropriate commands load and fire six rounds in their own time using their master hand only at a target 5 metres away. The student is to then reload with a further six rounds and repeat the exercise. At the conclusion of the exercise the student is to carry out safety precautions and render the handgun safe.

This exercise is to be repeated until the instructor is satisfied the student has displayed appropriate gun handling skills.

The student then repeats the exercise using a semi-automatic pistol.

72. **Phase # 5 - REINFORCEMENT OF HANDLING SKILLS**

Using a revolver the student is to carry out safety precautions and upon the appropriate commands load and fire a single round at a target 5 metres away, the student is to then reload with a further single round and repeat the exercise, this exercise is to be repeated a further four times for

a total of six shots. At the conclusion of the exercise the student is to carry out safety precautions and render the handgun safe.

This exercise is to be repeated until the instructor is satisfied the student has displayed appropriate gun handling skills.

The student then repeats the exercise using a semi-automatic pistol, the pistol is to lock back after each shot is fired prior to being reloaded.