



HOME SECURITY & HOME DEFENSE FUNDAMENTALS

EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK,
CONCEALED CARRY AND HOME DEFENSE FUNDAMENTALS



■ According to FBI statistics, burglars enter the front door of homes 34% of the time, and back or screen doors 22% of the time. The most common method of breaching the door? A good, swift kick. To test the security effectiveness of locks and doors, Consumer Reports has established a standard test, using a 100-pound battering ram capable of delivering varying degrees of force to the door. In a test conducted by the DIY Network's show *Deconstruction*®, a variety of door locks were tested to determine how long it would take to breach the door using the average strength of a kick. When testing a standard deadbolt and strike plate with standard length screws, the door was breached after just two impacts of the battering ram, at just 60 joules per "kick." When tested using the same dead bolt, but a reinforced strikeplate (\$10 – \$15) and three-inch screws, the door was breached only after 13 impacts, at an average of 160 joules each, which equates to more than 17-times the force required to breach the standard door and lock.

INTRODUCTION

Students of self-defense can spend hours or days studying and training on methods of staying safe in public, including perfecting the skills of situational awareness and the use of a handgun in self-defense. Yet those same individuals can exhibit sloppy and unsafe behavior when it comes to securing the one place where we should feel safe, namely our homes. One reason for this disparity may simply be that when we're in our homes, our places of sanctuary, it becomes easy to slip back into "condition white" and to believe that nothing bad can occur. Another reason may be that it's more difficult to quantify the dangers of a home invasion when compared to the risks of other crimes of violence. While the FBI maintains detailed crime data in their Uniform Crime Report (the source for most media reports on violent crime) including the crime of burglary, they do not differentiate between burglaries that

occur in empty homes versus occupied homes. If a violent crime occurred during a home invasion, the FBI would categorize the crime under two headings such as burglary and rape, but with no separate category of "home invasion," it's impossible to determine, nationally or locally, just how common these "hot burglaries" are using the FBI data alone. Suffice to say, taking personal responsibility for our own safety, and the safety of our families, cannot stop at the front door.

This guide is your introduction to a number of incredibly important topics that can not only help to protect your home and possessions, these topics may save your life or the life of a loved one. However, this guide is just an introduction to these topics and contains just a small percentage of the full content of our book, *Concealed Carry and Home Defense Fundamentals*, which is available through the USCCA on-line store. To purchase your copy today, visit www.USCCA.com/store.

HOME SECURITY

When evaluating the security of your home, we suggest putting yourself in the mind of the criminal who wants to gain access to your home, and conduct a thorough inspection, inside and out. You should start from the outside of the home and make a methodical, 360-degree inspection starting from the ground up. During your inspection, you'll need to ask yourself the types of questions we've posed on the Home Security Inspection Checklist below. The more honest you can be in your assessment, the better!

Making Your Home More Secure

Once you've completed the checklist, it's time to look at methods to make your home more secure. In the recommendations which follow, we've offered a variety of solutions costing just a few dollars at the low-end, to several thousand dollars at the high-end. The great news is that even the lowest cost solutions will dramatically decrease the probability that your home will be subject to a burglary or home invasion.

Windows

- Replace any plastic locks with metal locks (about \$2.50 each), and add a bar stop to each window (\$20).
- Treat the inside of windows with a plastic window treatment (the type of treatment used to insulate the windows), which will dramatically increase the effort required to break through the window (about \$6.50 per square foot).
- If you're serious about window security, invest in replacement casement windows with a reinforced hinge, metal locks, and a protective laminate that's baked into the window (about \$350 per window).

■ *Many of today's legal theories originated with Sir Edward Coke (1552—1634), Chief Justice of England from 1613—1616. Coke's "Institutes of the Lawes of England" are in part, the foundation of today's Castle Doctrine, where Coke famously wrote, "an Englishman's home is his castle." Coke's work was also used to establish a defendant's "right to silence," which evolved to become the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. constitution, and the Miranda warning, which reminds us of this right.*



Doors

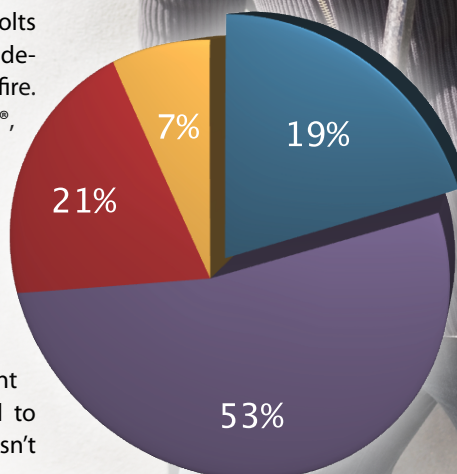
- Replace any doors that are not steel or solid core, including the door interior to the garage. Choose a door that doesn't contain clear windows that would allow a person outside the home to see in; instead, add your own hotel-style peephole (\$6 – \$11).
- All exterior doors should have a deadbolt and/or a throw-over type lock (about \$15).
- Replace standard strike plates with reinforced strike plates, and use extra deep screws (at least three-inches long) which will anchor into the wall stud, rather than just the door frame (\$12—\$15).
- If you're serious about door security, invest in a high-security lock (\$180 or more), which defeats criminal's ability to use a "bump key" to pick the lock. High security locks use a unique pin configuration and hardened cylinders, which require 30—40 minutes to defeat, even for a trained locksmith.
- If you're really serious about door security, invest in a solid steel door from Master Security (from \$500 to several thousand dollars), which have five built-in deadbolts and an anti-pick lock. Master Security doors are designed to stop sledgehammer blows and even gunfire. In a test on the DIY Network's show *Deconstruction*®, four sledgehammer armed testers failed to breach the door even after ten minutes of repeated blows.

Exterior

- Add exterior lights to all sides of the house, including the sides not containing doors. If you're concerned about electricity costs, put them on a motion detector circuit. Additional lights throughout the front and back yard will encourage a potential criminal to move further down the street to find a house that isn't so well lit.
- As much as you might love the bushes and trees that have been growing around your house for years, if they're overgrown, they're going to provide cover for someone trying to break into your house, or lying in wait for you while you approach the door. Trim all bushes at least four-feet from the house, and trim any tree branch that blocks the view to your windows or doors.
- Place new alarm company signs at all doors, and stickers on all first floor windows.

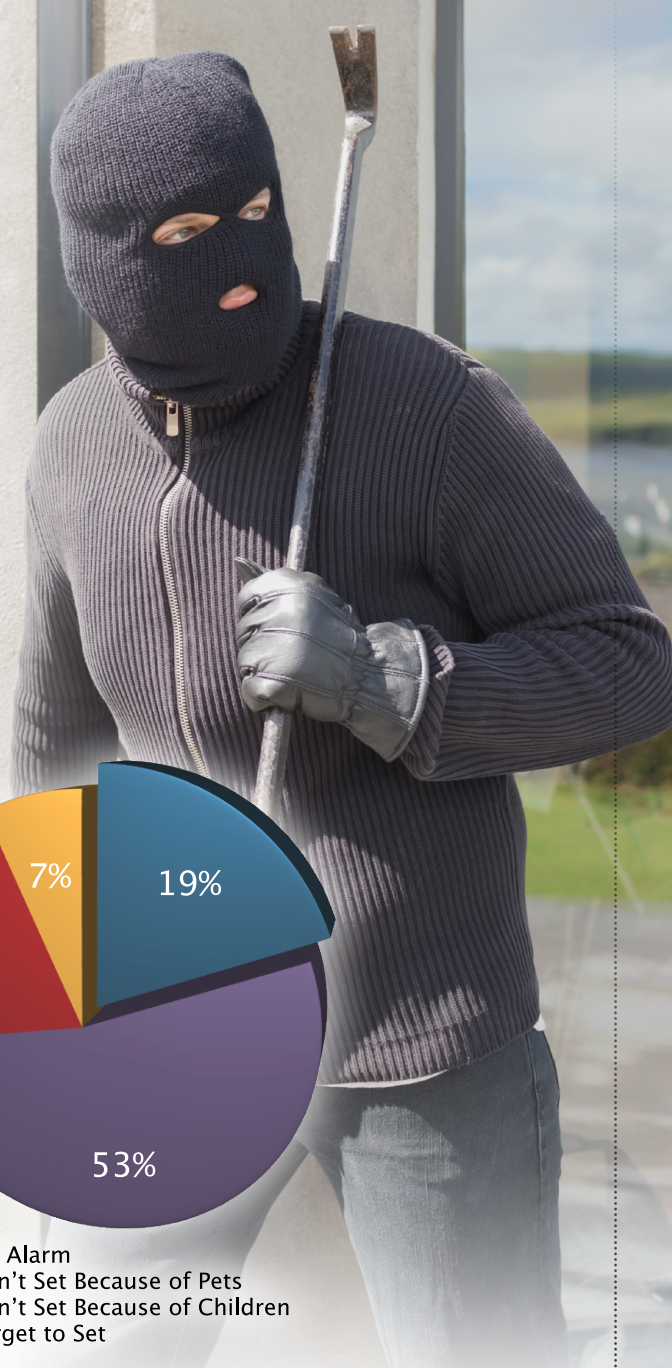
Burglar Alarm

The first step in effectively using a burglar alarm, is to get the alarm. The second step is to set it, religiously. Insurance company surveys have shown that 60%—81% of people who have burglar alarms fail to set them when at home, or even when on vacation. The number one excuse (53%) for failing to set the alarm is because the homeowner leaves pets indoors, however, alarm manufacturers now offer "pet immune" motion detectors. By combining an infrared scanner with a motion detector, the systems are able to differentiate between the heat of a pet, and the heat of an intruder. In addition to



- Set Alarm
- Don't Set Because of Pets
- Don't Set Because of Children
- Forget to Set

the new "pet immune" features, security systems themselves have evolved from clunky systems requiring hard wiring at doors and windows (and slow law enforcement responses as alarm companies initiated "call backs" to determine if the alarm was an actual emergency or a false alarm), to state of the art systems like something out of a spy novel. Two-way systems are now available from companies such as Alarm-Force®, which immediately opens a live channel between the home and the monitoring service when the alarm goes off. This allows the customer service agent to immediately differentiate between an actual emergency and a false alarm. Systems are also available with "glass break" detectors, which are more effective than simple window monitors that only sound if the window is opened (but wouldn't sound if the window was broken). The detectors are even tuned to differentiate between the sound of a broken window, and the sound of a broken drinking glass.





HOME SECURITY INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Windows:

Identify all windows that are on the ground level that could potentially allow a home invader to fit through. Never mind determining if it would be *easy* for the home invader to do so; they've been known to do some pretty unorthodox things to gain entry to a home.

Do they lock properly?

Are they locked?

Does anything block the view of the window from the outside such as a tree or shrubs?

Is there anything outside the house that could potentially be used as a step stool to climb through the window? While home invaders aren't likely to carry their own ladder or step stool, they *will* take advantage of anything you've left outside that will make their job easier.

Do you have alarm company stickers on your windows? New, fresh looking stickers—not stickers that look like they were put on by the previous occupant.

Do your windows have plastic or metal locks?

If you have standard hung windows, do you have a secondary security device, such as a bar stop?

If you have casement windows, do you have standard or reinforced hinges?

Do the windows have a protective laminate applied to the inside of the window, or baked inside? In other words, will your windows be shattered with a single blow, or are they designed to withstand repeated blows?

On the first floor, what's in front of the windows? For example, are they blocked by a table or other barrier that a home invader would need to climb over, or is the area wide open?

Doors:

What is the quality and strength of the front, back, side, and interior garage doors? It's natural to focus on the strength of your *front* door, but criminals will focus on whichever door is the weakest.

What's the general appearance of the door? Does it look new, or is it old, faded, and looking primed for a good kick?

Are the hinges on the outside or inside?

Do you have an ability to see who is at the door without them seeing you?

Do you use a deadbolt, chain lock, or throw-over lock?

How long are the screws that are used to mount the strike plate? You'll actually need to unscrew the screws to answer this question.

Lights:

Is your house well lit, or poorly lit on all sides? How about the adjoining neighbors' houses? Criminals will not only look for dark homes, they'll look for dark homes, *surrounded* by dark homes.

General Appearance:

How close are trees or shrubs to your home? Is there anything that a criminal can hide behind while trying to enter a window or door?

Do you have burglar alarm signs (in new condition) at all entry points?

Alarm:

Do you have a security alarm, and do you set it? (Homes that have alarms are *three times* less likely to be burglarized.)

Is it connected to an alarm service?

Do you have motion detectors, glass break sensors, and sensors on the windows?



■ As mentioned, FBI statistics confirm that about 56% of home entries are through the front door or back door, and those same statistics show that first floor windows are the next favored entry point at about 23%. In another Deconstruction® test, five different types of windows with varying security mechanisms were tested to determine how well they'd withstand a determined home invader or burglar. The testers discovered that a standard hung window with a single lock could be breached in less than a minute by breaking the lock, or in seconds by breaking the glass. Same for a basic casement window. By adding a bar stop (\$20) and a plastic window treatment (\$6.50 per square foot) to the standard hung window; or reinforced hinges to the casement window, the time to breach the window was increased dramatically. For real security, consider upgrading to high-security casement windows with reinforced hinges and metal locks, which also come with a protective laminate that's baked directly into the glass. Even after repeated strikes with a crowbar, the window failed to break during the Deconstruction® test. The cost? About \$375 per window. The peace of mind? Priceless.

■ Home security systems have evolved from clunky systems requiring hard wiring at doors and windows, and slow law enforcement responses as alarm companies initiated "call backs" to determine if the alarm was an actual emergency or a false alarm, to state of the art systems like something out of a spy novel. Two-way systems are now available from companies such as AlarmForce®, which immediately opens a live channel between the home and the monitoring service when the alarm goes off. This allows the customer service agent to immediately differentiate between an actual emergency and a false alarm. Systems are also available with "glass break" detectors, which are more effective than simple window monitors that only sound if the window is opened. The detectors are even tuned to differentiate between the sound of a broken window, and a broken glass. For pet owners, ADT® and other manufacturers now offer "pet immune" motion detectors. By combining an infrared scanner with the motion detector, the systems are able to differentiate between the heat of a pet, and the heat of an intruder.



■ *If you saw this individual coming in through your bedroom window, would you have a plan on how to deal with the situation? Since the potential burglar has not yet entered your home, what are your rights when it comes to defending your home with force? If you're not sure, we have the answers in *Concealed Carry and Home Defense Fundamentals*, available through the USCCA on-line store.*



HOME DEFENSE

In addition to taking steps to better secure our homes, we'll also need to take steps to plan for what to do if all of our security measures fail, and we still find ourselves in the middle of a home invasion. While you don't necessarily need to draw a floor layout of your home as part of your home invasion plan, you should at least *have* a plan and discuss it with everyone in your household, including your children. Think of this as no different than discussing a plan in case of fire, tornado, hurricane, or earthquake. When discussing a home invasion plan with the family, we'd suggest reviewing the checklist items on the following page, and ensuring that all family members are aware of how to dial 911, and all age-appropriate family members are aware of the location of the home defense firearm and how to use it. Plan a route for all family members to head to the most secure areas of the home, and include in the plan who will get the phone and dial 911, who will access the defensive firearm, and who will assist loved ones.

In addition to planning for actively defending the home, we also suggest that you plan for retreat or escape, even if you're not legally obligated to do so. For example, if you needed to quickly retreat from a room or from the home, what are the options? What rooms are the safest, and what doors are the closest? If you exit the house, in which direction do you run to find the closest neighbor? You can include older children as active participants in the plan by assigning them with simple tasks that can help keep themselves and their siblings safe. For example, their tasks could include:

- Get out of the house and find a neighbor, and ask the neighbor to call 911.
- Get the younger kids into the same bedroom, and close and barricade the door.

We suggest two or three small points for each child, such as, "If something bad happens, your job is to get out of the house, get to a neighbor, and have him or her call 911. Then your job is done."

Finally, it's important to discuss what *not* to do in the event of a home invasion. For example, if everyone in the family is in the same part of the house, then it is not necessary, prudent, or smart to "clear rooms" looking for the intruder. In addition, it's extremely important to discuss what to do if a family member is coming home late or unexpectedly, and how to communicate it if a guest will be in the home. The use of a family "code word" or "challenge and reply" can avoid tragedy if your teenage son or daughter has decided to sneak a significant other into the house for a late night rendezvous, or if your spouse has gotten up for a late night snack.

THE HOME DEFENSE CHECKLIST

- Are the front and back lights on?
- Is the alarm on?
- Are all doors locked
(including deadbolt and/or throw-over lock)?
- Is the home defense firearm in its proper location and is it loaded? (Keep in mind that you'll need to follow federal and state safe storage laws.)
- Where is the phone and how do I dial 911
(in the dark, with a head full of cobwebs)?
- If the home is invaded, what room do we move to?
- If we need to exit the home, which neighbor's house do we go to?
- What commands do we give?
- How do I identify a friend from a foe?
- What's a family code word to identify whom and where you are?
- How do we inform our family that we'll be coming home late, or that a guest will be in the home?
- Does each family member know how to dial 911?
- Does each age-appropriate family member know how to use the home defense firearm?
- What do we do when the police arrive?



■ *This semi-auto Benelli shotgun is a favorite of police departments around the world. Whether loaded with 00, 000 or slug loads, a home defense shotgun can have incredible stopping power when compared with a relatively low-powered handgun.*

HOME DEFENSE FIREARM FUNDAMENTALS

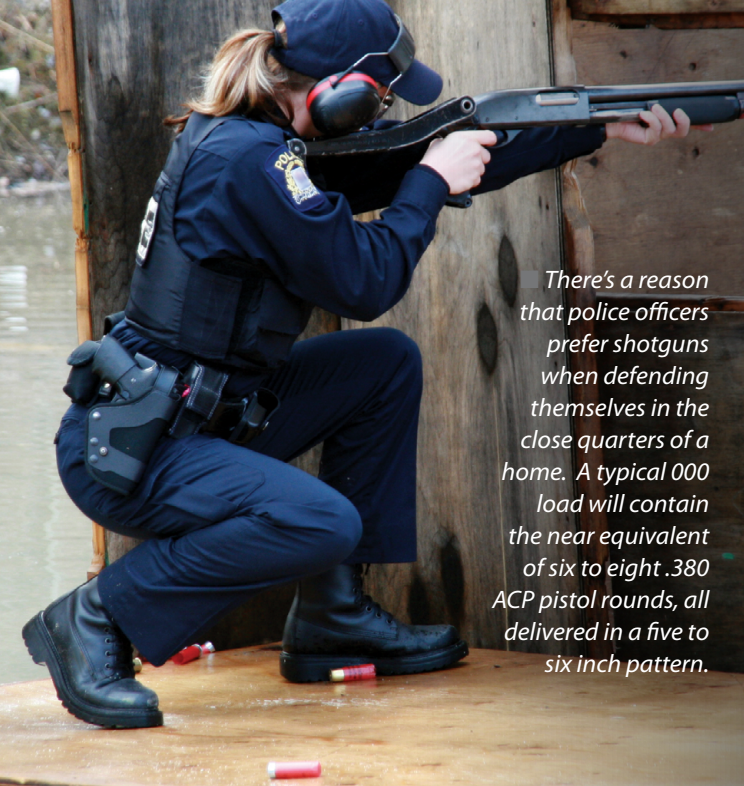
We're often asked by individuals who are interested in purchasing their first home-defense gun, "What gun should I buy?" The short answer is, no single gun is right for all individuals, or all situations. Before you can pick out a gun that works for you, we suggest that you start by gaining familiarity with the major categories of guns, and begin to build your knowledge of firearm safety and operation, before ever stepping into a gun shop. The truth is, if you make the gun shop your first stop, you'll most likely leave with a gun that was right for *them*, rather than one that's right for *you*. We'll start here by talking about the two major options when it comes to home-defense guns, which include both long guns and handguns. The category of "long guns" is further subdivided into rifles and shotguns. Legally, a firearm is categorized as a long gun if it fits certain length and other criteria, but functionally, you can think of a long gun as being a gun that

is fired two-handed from the shoulder, while sighting down the length of the barrel. Handguns, on the other hand, are "hand" sized, and are fired by extending the firearm in front of the shooter (one-handed or two-handed), and are aimed by using the firearm's sights, or by "point shooting." Although rifles and shotguns have a number of functional and design differences, the most significant difference is that rifles shoot a single projectile at a time (a bullet) and have "rifled" bores (spiral grooves cut into the barrel which cause the bullet to spin, stabilizing it in flight). Shotguns, on the other hand, have smooth bores, and are designed to shoot multiple projectiles (referred to as "shot") with a single pull of a trigger.

Shotgun "sizes" are measured in **gauge** (see the blue box) with the most common gauges being 12-gauge and 20-gauge, while rifle and handgun "sizes" are measured in **caliber** which is a simple measurement of the diameter of the barrel/projectile. We'll review both shotgun and rifle options next.



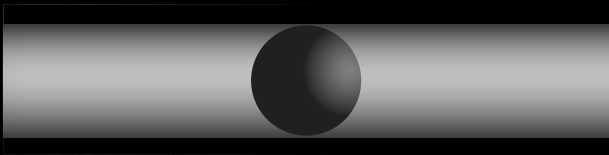
■ *While far less powerful than the most common deer hunting rounds, the Remington .223 is a good compromise between stopping power, and the number of rounds that can be carried in a relatively small package.*



There's a reason that police officers prefer shotguns when defending themselves in the close quarters of a home. A typical 000 load will contain the near equivalent of six to eight .380 ACP pistol rounds, all delivered in a five to six inch pattern.

DEFINING GAUGE

Unlike the unit of measurement used for bullets (caliber), shotgun sizes are measured in gauge. The gauge of a barrel is equal to the number of solid spheres of lead, each having the same diameter as the barrel, that would in total weigh a pound. For example, a solid sphere of lead weighing exactly 1/12th of a pound, would fit perfectly into the barrel of a 12 gauge, and a sphere of lead weighing 1/20th of a pound would fit perfectly into the barrel of a 20 gauge. A .410 shotgun is the exception, which is actually a caliber measurement (the barrel is 41/100ths of an inch in diameter).



12 Gauge

Lead Ball with a Perfect Fit = 1/12th Pound

HOME DEFENSE SHOTGUNS

Conventional wisdom is that a shotgun is the best firearm for home defense when compared to a pistol or rifle, but that “wisdom” is usually based upon the incorrect theory that you can’t miss with a shotgun since they create a “pattern” of shot, rather than a single hole. At 20 to 30 yards that matters, but at seven feet, a shotgun pattern will typically be no larger than a baseball, and at 21 feet, it will typically be no larger than a basketball. That means that shotguns still require deliberate aiming, and that shooting from the hip or selecting a shotgun with just a pistol grip and no buttstock might result in a missed shot. Where shotguns do give us an edge is in the load that they deliver.

At close quarters, even #6 or #7 shot loads will stop or disable an attacker, and 00 or 000 buckshot will fire the near equivalent of six to eight .380 pistol rounds, all delivered within that baseball sized pattern. Shotguns, like any long gun, also give







us a much longer sight radius (the distance between the rear sight and the front sight), aiding in accuracy. If upgrading an existing shotgun for a home defense gun, we recommend that you upgrade the sights to a ghost ring or consider a TruGlo™ front sight; and many tactical shotguns can also be mounted with red dot scopes for easier point shooting, giving you the ability to look at your attacker, not the front sight. Surefire also offers mounted lights via replacement forends for Remington, Benelli, Mossberg, and Winchester models, which provide both a pressure sensitive pad for momentary activation, or a constant on/off switch. Options for home defense shotguns range from your granddaddy’s old side-by-side, to autoloaders like the Benelli M4 on the previous page.

Reliability counts more than the action you choose, but any multi-shell shotgun has advantages over single- or double-barrels. If buying new, we recommend a 12 gauge with an 18-inch barrel and ghost ring sights or a red dot scope.

ROUND	DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERISTICS
Federal Low-Recoil 000 Buckshot	Contains eight .36 caliber pellets, weighing between 70 and 72 grains apiece.	The low recoil aspect allows a rapid recovery between shots, and with eight .36 caliber pellets, it's the near equivalent of delivering eight .380 ACPs all in one shot.
Hornady TAP-FPD 00 Buckshot	Designed for both pump and semi-autos, it provides very tight patterns with eight .33 caliber pellets.	TAP-FPD (For Personal Defense) buckshot is designed with home defense in mind and provides the tightest pattern on the market.

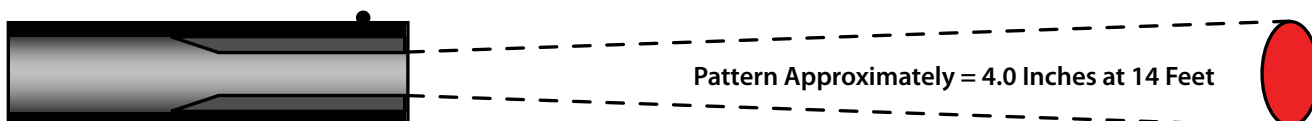
IN THE TABLE ABOVE, we've recommended two low recoil buckshot loads which are appropriate if you have at least two to three layers of drywall between yourself (the defender) and any loved ones or neighbors. Otherwise, we'd recommend backing up to a #4 load or smaller. Steer clear of magnum loads—you're delivering those pellets tens of feet, not hundreds.



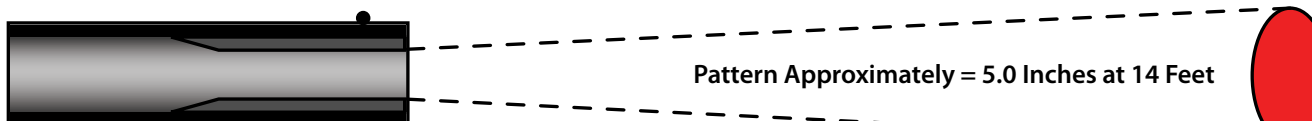
Lead Shot Size	7 ½	6	5	BB	00	000
Diameter (Inches)	.095	.11	.12	.18	.33	.36
# Per Ounce	350	225	170	50	8	6
Actual Size						

SHOT SIZE

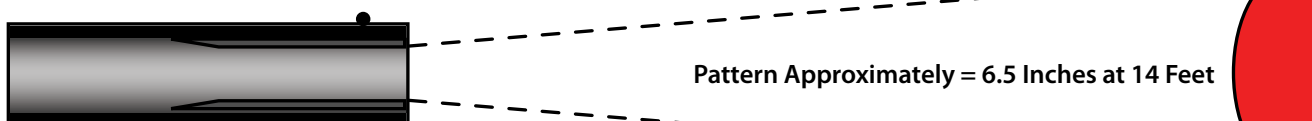
Shot size ranges from #12 at .05 inches in diameter through 000 (pronounced “triple-ought”) at .36 inches in diameter. For home defense, anything from #6 on up is up for the task, but our choice would be a 00 or 000 low-recoil load, which contains six to eight pellets, just smaller than a .380 ACP, and similar in weight to a .25 to .32ACP (at between 54 and 72 grains).



Full Choke



Modified Choke



Improved Cylinder

SHOTGUN CHOKES

A shotgun’s choke constricts the end of the barrel to one degree or another, which affects the pattern size (the total area hit by the pellets). The tighter the choke, the tighter the pattern. Other things that can affect the pattern size are the length of barrel, shot size, and the composition of the shot, such as lead, steel, tungsten composites, etc. The pattern will open up twice the size at twice the distance, for example a pattern of 3 inches at 7 feet, will be 6 inches at 14 feet. For home defense, we’d recommend a modified or improved cylinder choke.

.223 Remington

Best known as the standard NATO round for light rifles, it has a velocity more than triple the .22LR.

Bullet Weight: 40 Grains

Muzzle Velocity: 3330 FPS

Caliber

Caliber is a measurement of the diameter of the bullet (not the casing). The caliber designation has nothing to do with the round's power, it only defines how big of a hole it will make (see example below).

Bullet Weight

The bullet's weight is indicated in grains. There are 7,000 grains in a pound, and bullet weights range from about 40 grains to 230 grains or more.

Case Volume

The relative volume of the case is a good indication of how much propellant the round has. The greater the volume, the more propellant. The more propellant, the faster the bullet will leave the barrel.

.22 INCH



that the AR-15 stock is made from black plastic and composite materials, doesn't mean that it's any more powerful than the average hunting rifle with a wooden stock. In fact, the AR-15, chambered in the Remington .223, is considered too light a caliber to be legal in many states for deer hunting, with less than half of the kinetic energy as the .30-06 (pronounced "thirty-ought-six"), the most common deer hunting round on the market. The attractiveness of the AR-15 for someone considering a firearm for home defense (or just for plinking), is the same thing that continues to attract the U.S. military to the M16 more than forty years after it was first adopted as its standard light rifle, and that's the rifle's utter reliability; its low recoil and light weight; and its almost unlimited ability to be customized with hundreds of accessories. However, as reliable and ubiquitous as the AR-15 is considered today, it wasn't always that way.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE AR-15

The brainchild of Eugene Stoner, chief engineer at the Armalite Division of Fairchild Engine and Airplane Corporation, the AR-15 (AR stands for "Armalite Rifle"), was conceived as a short range, light-weight replacement to the M14 (the U.S. Military's standard battle rifle from 1959 to 1970), after statistics from World War II and the Korean War confirmed that most combat occurred at far less than 100

yards, and that the heavy M14, weighing in at 12.75 pounds and firing the powerful .308 round, could prove unwieldy for the average infantryman. Although the U.S. Army first tested the AR-15 during a set of trials in 1959, it was actually the U.S. Air Force that first adopted the rifle in 1962 with an initial order of 8,500 rifles, designating the new rifle the M16. During their tests, the Air Force found that 43 percent of testers were able to qualify as "experts" with the AR-15, while only 22 percent of testers on the M14 were able to do so.

They also found that the AR-15 had a failure rate of

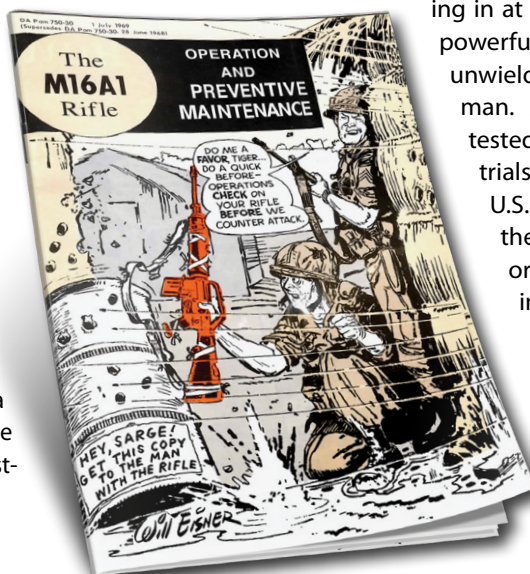
just 2.5 rounds per 1,000 rounds fired, compared to the M14, which experienced a failure rate of 16 per 1,000. U.S. Special Forces operating in Vietnam soon followed suit, ordering 85,000 by 1963, with more than 1,000 destined for the South Vietnamese Army. In 1963, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara suspended production of the M14 rifle, and in 1966, concluded that the AR-15/M16 was to be the new, standard issue rifle for the U.S. Military.

HOME DEFENSE RIFLES

A close second to the home defense shotgun, is the home defense rifle, more specifically, a modern sporting rifle such as the AR-15. As mentioned, rifle "sizes" are measured in caliber (the same has handguns) rather than gauge. Caliber is a measurement of the diameter of the firearm's barrel/projectile, but "caliber" only tells part of the story as explained below. The "pros" of a rifle for home defense (in particular, the AR-15) are that they typically have a lower recoil than a shotgun (in the case of the AR-15, a dramatically lower recoil), which leads to more control, more precise shot placement, and faster follow-on shots if required.

THE AR-15 PLATFORM

A favorite punching bag of the anti-gun movement, the semi-automatic AR-15 rifle is often referred to by the popular media as an "assault rifle" or a "machine gun." The AR-15 is neither of those things. While the AR-15 is tailored after the light rifle carried by American soldiers and Marines (the M16), that doesn't mean that the AR-15 is a machine gun (we should also note that the M16 isn't even a machine gun, since it's only capable of firing three-round bursts, rather than full automatic fire). Additionally, the fact





■ *Since the early days of the Vietnam War, the M16 has seen service in every military conflict including Iraq and Afghanistan. The M16's semi-automatic counterpart, the AR-15, is a trusted tool of police departments and responsibly armed citizens across the country.*

RELIABILITY PROBLEMS

While the Air Force trials in 1960 showed a failure rate of just 2.5 per 1,000 rounds fired, a series of small errors led to a much larger failure rate in the harsh conditions of Vietnam. Chief among the errors was the military's failure to provide adequate cleaning kits with the rifles, and a failure to provide adequate training on how to keep the rifles clean. By 1967 that error was corrected, and new rifles began to be shipped with more complete cleaning kits. In a nod to the average age of U.S. Soldiers and Marines in Vietnam, the military even went as far as commissioning Mad Magazine artist Will Eisner to create a comic book, explaining exactly how to properly maintain the M16 rifle in the field.

THE MODERN AR-15

While the early failures in Vietnam stuck with the AR-15's reputation for the next two decades, today, AR-15s are widely considered to be one of the most reliable platforms on the market. While AR-15s can be bought off-the-shelf fully configured, most aficionados prefer to order the upper, lower, and accessories separately, so that the rifle can be tailored specifically to the purchaser's needs. In that way, the AR-15 is really the "erector

set" of firearm platforms, with literally thousands of variations available from the base platforms. If you'd like to take the DIY approach, it's important to know that the AR-15's "lower" (the portion of the firearm containing the trigger control group) is what's actually considered the firearm, so you'll need to make that purchase through a licensed dealer. All other components can be picked up off the shelf to create an AR-15 all your own.

SUMMARY OF HOME DEFENSE FIREARM OPTIONS

In our opinion, shotguns offer a number of benefits over handguns or rifles when it comes to home-defense. First, shotguns tend to have a fairly simple manual of arms (which is a fancy way of saying they're simple to use). The long barrel (when compared to a handgun) offers better control and more accurate shot placement, and the "pattern" created by a shotgun blast is measured in inches, rather than in millimeters or fractions of an inch. While shotguns still require deliberate aiming, their larger pattern can result in a hit rather than a miss, for those times when you really can't afford a miss. Finally, shotgun pellets are far less likely to overpenetrate home walls when compared to handgun and rifle calibers.

Rail System

Most off the shelf AR-15s will come with the same type of plastic stocks seen since Vietnam, but replacing those with a rail system as seen here, allows any number of accessories to be attached, such as the pistol grip or red dot scope also shown here. Lights, lasers, etc., will also mount securely to this standardized rail system.

Folding Front Sight

This folding front sight allows the sight to be dropped out of the way when using a red dot scope, yet quickly raised if the battery in the scope fails. If installed correctly, the front and rear sight should line up exactly in the center of the scope, allowing what's referred to as "co-witnessing" of both sight systems.



Flash Suppressor or Compensator

Fixed to the end of the barrel, flash suppressors are intended to reduce the size of the "flash" that can occur as burning propellant leaves the barrel. That flash can be particularly irritating when firing in low light, since it can disrupt your night vision. Compensators look similar to suppressors, although rather than having horizontal channel cuts, they'll typically have angled holes, which will direct the dissipating gases in a direction opposite the rifle's natural muzzle rise.

Forward Pistol Grip

While the AR-15 can be fired like a traditional hunting rifle by placing the support hand under the forestock, that position can be a bit awkward if firing for an extended period of time at the range. A forward pistol grip, or the Angled Fore Grip from Magpul, can provide a more natural way of holding the rifle. Surefire also offers a number of pistol grip / tactical light combinations, which allows the operator to hold the rifle steady, and momentarily light up a scene by squeezing pressure pads integrated into the vertical grip.

Red Dot Scope

This red dot scope from Aimpoint is a non-magnifying scope, which provides a holographic red dot which appears to float in the middle of the scope. This allows the shooter to focus on the target with both eyes open, and simply place the red dot on target before pressing the trigger.

Folding Rear Sight

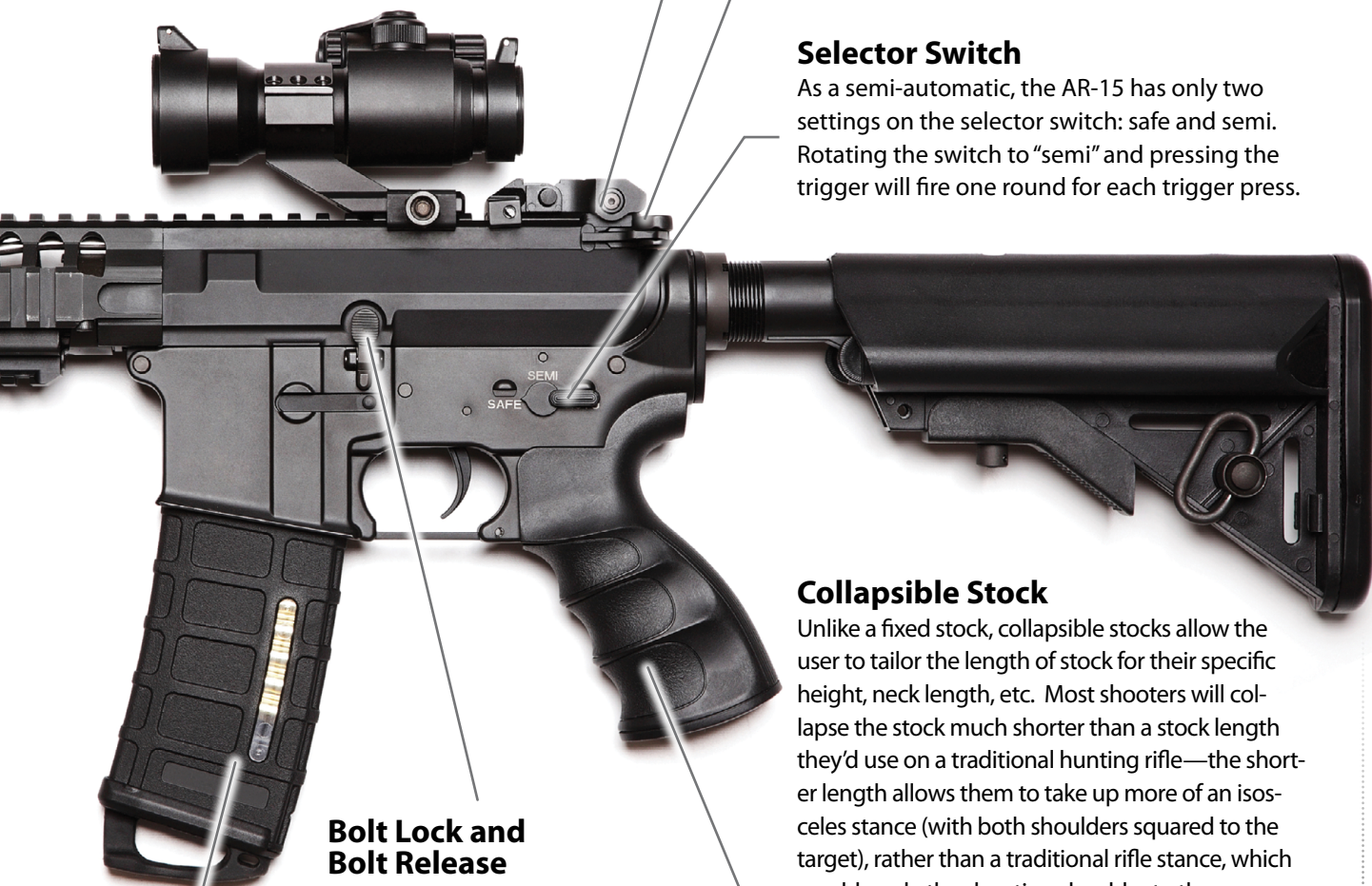
This folding front sight allows the sight to be dropped out of the way when using a red dot scope, yet quickly raised if the battery in the scope fails.

Charging Handle

Pulling the charging handle to the rear, retracts the bolt. Pressing the bolt lock when the charging handle is fully to the rear will lock the bolt back.

Selector Switch

As a semi-automatic, the AR-15 has only two settings on the selector switch: safe and semi. Rotating the switch to "semi" and pressing the trigger will fire one round for each trigger press.



Bolt Lock and Bolt Release

When the charging handle is pulled back (pulling the bolt back with it), pushing on the bottom of the bolt lock will lock the bolt to the rear. Pressing on the top of the bolt release will allow the bolt to travel forward.

Magazine

AR-15 magazines are traditionally made from steel, but plastic magazines like this one from Magpul are gaining in popularity. Personally, we're huge Magpul fans.

Collapsible Stock

Unlike a fixed stock, collapsible stocks allow the user to tailor the length of stock for their specific height, neck length, etc. Most shooters will collapse the stock much shorter than a stock length they'd use on a traditional hunting rifle—the shorter length allows them to take up more of an isosceles stance (with both shoulders squared to the target), rather than a traditional rifle stance, which would angle the shooting shoulder to the rear.

Pistol Grip

Like it sounds, the AR-15 pistol grip allows the shooter to take up a grip reminiscent of shooting a pistol, rather than a traditional rifle grip, which forces the hand back at an odd angle. Like all AR-15 accessories, pistol grips can be purchased in all shapes and sizes, including this example molded for the fingers.



To purchase a copy, visit www.USCCA.com/store.

SUMMARY

We hope this introduction to home defense and home security concepts was valuable, and we hope you can put this information to good use. If you're ready to learn more, our book, Concealed Carry and Home Defense Fundamentals contains the full contents of this guide, plus hundreds of other topics in seven chapters and dozens of topics, in more than 230 pages full of custom, full color images and illustrations.

ABOUT THE BOOK

The book is a complete guide to understanding conflict avoidance & situational awareness; home security and home defense; handgun, shotgun and AR-15 basics; shooting fundamentals; the physiology of violent encounters; the legal aspects of using deadly force (including knowing what to do in the aftermath); and a complete guide on gear, gadgets, and ongoing training. To purchase a copy, visit www.USCCA.com/store.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Martin is the Chief Instructor for the United States Concealed Carry Association, and is the author of the "Fundamental" series of firearms books, available through hundreds of USCCA Firearms Instructors nationwide, and through the USCCA on-line store, and as an interactive eBook. Michael is also a part time firefighter/EMT living in Woodbury Minnesota with his wife Sara, and two young sons, Jack and Sam. Michael is also an NRA-certified instructor; and is a member of the International Association of Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors (IALEFI) and is a graduate of the IALEFI Master Instructor course.





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