

Pros & Cons:

OFF-BODY CARRY



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Off-body carry is an extremely popular option, especially among women and individuals confined to wheelchairs. It seems like a perfect balance of convenience and security, but unfortunately it's not always that simple.

That convenience comes at a price. First and foremost, when a sidearm isn't attached to your person, it is far more difficult to defend from a grabbing attack or otherwise know its exact status at all times. Along those lines, it's a lot harder to steal a firearm from a quality concealed inside-the-waistband holster than it is for someone to grab a shoulder bag or purse. Perhaps most importantly, the chances of a child or other unauthorized person getting hold of a gun that is attached to your belt are far lower than the chances of a child or unauthorized person accessing a handgun in a purse or shoulder bag.

Off-body carry is the right tool for some situations, but no one tool is right for every job. Before you decide to carry your firearm in a purse, backpack or other off-body system, you need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages inherent in not keeping your gun on your person as they relate to your specific situation.

By Ed Combs
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PROS

CONVENIENCE

Whether the “experts” like it or not, off-body carry is to ladies what pocket carry is to men: danged convenient. Many men evolve from a full-sized .45 in an inside-the-waistband holster to a .380 micro in a pocket sleeve for the same reason many ladies slowly drop the corset holster from the rotation in favor of a device that safely secures a pistol or revolver in a purse.

COMFORT

For many women and some men, a shoulder bag is a reality of daily life. They're already going to be carrying it, so why not use it to carry a sidearm as well? Skipping the entire IWB/OWB/appendix/pocket debacle and just adding one small addition to a bag that you'll already be carrying anyway is one of the biggest selling points of off-body carry.

TOTAL CONCEALABILITY

With some rare exceptions, it's hard to get a gun more concealed than zipped up in a purse or day planner. There are no “printing” bulges, no accidental exposure while reaching for a can on the top shelf and no possibility of a thigh or ankle holster slipping too far down. If it's in the bag, it's away from prying eyes.

LARGER GUNS

Unless we're talking about a little clutch for a night at the opera, if you elect to carry off-body, you will be able to carry a larger firearm than otherwise might have been reasonable. Not only does carrying that full-sized Glock 17 become a real possibility, so does easy carry of emergency medical gear, additional magazines and other force options like pepper spray.

ALLOWS FOR CARRY IN ALL KINDS OF CLOTHING

Let's all be honest: It doesn't get much tougher than trying to carry at the beach or in the middle of the summer heat. Off-body carry — when properly executed and attended to — is one of the ways that women and men can carry effective personal firearms without wearing cover garments that might draw unwanted attention.

CONS

LESS SECURE

When a pistol or revolver isn't affixed to you or in your pocket, it is fundamentally less secure than it otherwise could be. Carrying a gun in a bag, purse or day planner is convenient, but it's a lot easier to lose track of your gun than when it's secured in a holster on your person.

HARDER TO ACCESS

A trained shooter can access a concealed handgun from an inside-the-waistband holster in less than a second, but accessing a handgun from an off-body carry platform involves more than reaching for your waistband and is therefore often a lot more difficult.

SLOWER DRAW

Drawing from an off-body system is usually a lot slower as well. Clearing a cover garment and getting your gun out and up from the waistline is almost always faster than unzipping, unsnapping or ripping the hook-and-loop closure on an off-body platform, making for a longer lag between knowing you need to be holding a gun and holding that gun.

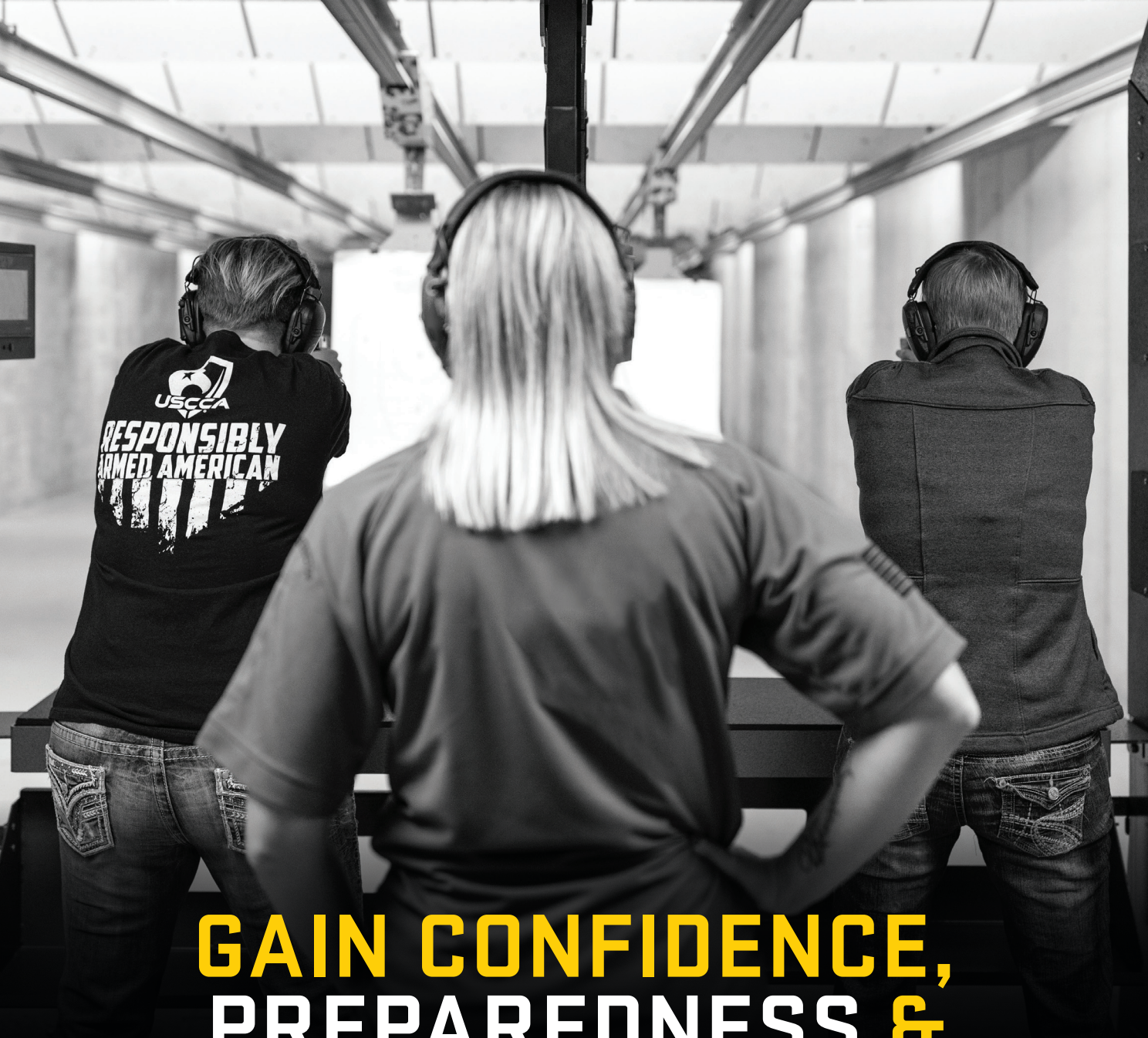
HIGHER POTENTIAL FOR THEFT

It's a lot easier for someone to steal your bag or day planner than it is for them to steal your pants. Even if a thief isn't necessarily targeting you for your firearm, it's a lot more common for carriers to lose their guns to theft when those guns are carried off-body rather than on-body.

NOT NECESSARILY ALWAYS UNDER YOUR DIRECT CONTROL

Even when it is secured in a proper purse or bag carry system, a firearm is a lot easier for unauthorized hands to access. If you elect to carry in an off-body system, you need to be extremely vigilant, especially when it comes to children poking around in your belongings.





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