

# The Misc. Survivalism Firearms FAQ

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**Safety first and always! Start [here](#), if you do not know how to handle a particular gun safely. I would also encourage you to take an NRA sponsored "hands on" safety course--ask about this at ranges and gun shops in your area.**

The firearms FAQ was a long time in the making. The reason is that there is much disagreement on survival firearms. Any post of a decided opinion was met by hordes of detractors and discussions degenerated into minute debate on the merits of this mechanism or that bullet. It was Alan T. Hagan who first had the idea of laying out the general features and drawbacks of a weapon, without comparisons to other weapons you could use. These comparisons were the sources for much of the tedious debate, and by eliminating them, Alan was able to post firearm information without stirring up a hornet's nest of armchair ballisticians, retired commandos and deer poaching Bubbas. I have followed his lead in preparing the following. This does not mean I am without opinions. My tastes are decidedly 12 gauge, in an all-around firearm. I have tremendous respect for .308 and 6.5x55 precision rifles, and deprecate the pistol as a nice thing to have when you can't carry a gun. If I had to treat a pistol as something to be relied upon, I would prefer a large one. These are opinions based on how things have struck me in practical experience and examination of others' results. I state them to be done with the matter. What follows is as objective as I can make it. Each firearm type is described in a fixed format that includes:

The type of firearm discussed.

Its main uses.

Popular brands, where similar arms are offered by various makers.

Synopsis of its uses and strengths.

Synopsis of its drawbacks and quirks.

Name or initials of the reviewer (internet "handles" are okay).

It is my hope and intention that this format will be used by other people contributing reviews to this FAQ. Though it may come as a surprise, to some people who know that my idea of a good time is a day at the range, I do not know enough about some guns to review them adequately. Here other people ought pitch in and write up the pieces they know about. This will move the ground of discussion toward describing what is good about your favorite guns and away from what is wrong with mine, and will, I think, provide a more useful resource to the inexperienced--who formerly walked into the middle of debates on minutiae, filled with unfamiliar terms like kinetic, MOA, controlled round feed and dram equivalent.

## [Other Articles](#)

As comments came in on the developing FAQ, it became clear that gun reviews would not, by themselves, meet every reader's needs. I received requests to include information on selecting the right ammunition for various purposes; for fitting gun stocks to smaller or larger shooters; firearms

particularly suitable for women, and other topics best met by broader essays. It has seemed to me that some articles on basic marksmanship would be useful to many readers. A piece on firearms storage probably would be well received in this litigious age, and likewise something on self defense laws. Handloading is certainly a relevant art to survivalism. I expect these essays, grouped under the heading of "[Broadly Speaking](#)," to become popular and important additions to the FAQ--as people contribute them. I have no intention of contributing all these myself. And I do not suppose I have mentioned all the areas that would be good to cover. If you have something to offer that is not a gun review, submit it for this section. Please bear in mind that a FAQ attempts to address *frequently asked* questions, and avoid arcane and obscure areas of your subject.

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Beta Release, the M.S Firearms FAQ. Comments solicited on the plan and execution of this document. Reviews solicited for various firearms. Articles wanted on all aspects of survival shooting. [nothome@concentric.net](mailto:nothome@concentric.net) ([Chuck Marsh](#)). =====

## 12 Gauge Pump Shotgun

Hunting, personal defense, target shooting at clay pigeons.

Popular brands include Remington, Mossberg, Winchester, Browning, Ithaca

A powerful and versatile weapon. A standby for sport hunting and very popular for home defense. Well proven as a police weapon, and the most common long gun carried in police cars. Also well proven as a military security and special purpose weapon. Reliable under adverse field conditions and adaptable to a wide variety of ammunition, from light loads of small shot, suitable for small game and lightly built birds such as dove and quail, up to heavy buckshot and slug loads, capable of killing any animal in the Americas.

The shotgun's principal drawback is its limited useful range, 35-50 yards with shot loads and 100-125 yards with slugs. The ammunition is heavy, about ten to the pound, and more fragile and less water resistant than centerfire rifle cartridges. Some people find the recoil of a 12 gauge objectionable; most can overcome this with practice. A particularly useful kind of practice for this purpose is dry firing with "snap cap" dummy cartridges. An essential point in operating the pump gun is you must not be gentle. The slide must be **SLAMMED** fully to the rear and **SLAMMED** fully forward to close. Gentle operation may result in "short cycling" and a jammed gun. This is particularly likely when operating the gun under pressure and in a hurry--at the very times when a jammed gun would be the worst kind of news. Therefore you should get habituated to operating it roughly, so your habits will not lead to misfortune. You will not break it. The action is designed to contain the rather considerable shock of firing shotshells, and nothing you can do to it by slamming it open and shut is going to come close to the shock loads imposed by, say, a magnum load of 00 buckshot.

--Chuck Marsh

## .38 Special Snubnosed Revolver

Personal defense; concealed carry.

Popular brands include Colt, Smith and Wesson, Taurus, Ruger

Small, easy to carry and simple to operate, this gun appeals to the minimalist philosophy. The ".38 snub" has been for a long time a popular backup and undercover weapon for police, and a convenient option for those officers who routinely patrol a desk. Sometimes it is characterized as the smallest gun you ought consider for self defense.

This gun is difficult to shoot well. Its recoil is abrupt. The double-action trigger makes trigger control something of a challenge, and the sight radius is very short. These factors have led to a myth that the type is inherently inaccurate, but this is perfectly false. With sufficient practice, you can achieve very good combat accuracy. Police writer Massad Ayoob once demonstrated this by using a Colt Detective Special to hit a silhouette target six times out of six--at one hundred yards! The short barrel leads to some loss of velocity, and there have been many episodes where the .38 snub showed less stopping power than was desired. But it often proves good enough to save your life in a pinch, and since a small sidearm is chosen as an alternative to not carrying any kind of gun, its merits are obvious.

--Chuck Marsh

## **The H&KP7M8**

Personal defense pistol

The British-owned, German firm of Heckler and Koch is imported into the USA by H&K of Sterling, Va.

Specifications:

Caliber: 9mmX19(Luger)

Capacity: 8 rounds

Barrel Length: 4.13"

Overall Length: 6.73"

Weight: 1.75lbs (empty)

Sight Radius: 5.83" Sights: Adjustable rear

Grips: plastic

Finish: Blue or nickel

Operating System: Recoil-operated; retarded inertia slide

Grip Angle: 110 degrees

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The firing mechanism of the P7M8 is unique. This means it is not a weapon one can just pick up and fire, though it is remarkably easy to learn to use. However, using only the P7M8 tends to change the learning curve (or re-learning curve) of using other handguns which do not use the P7M8's unique cocking mechanism.

The P7 is available in seven models, which range from being set up for ambidextrous use to either fully left- or righthanded use. The most common is model 1, which is truly ambidextrous.

The P7's unique cocking system operates by a grip cocking lever. To cock the P7 requires roughly 14lbs of pressure on the grip cocking lever. However, to keep the weapon cocked takes only only 1lb of continuous pressure.

Releasing the grip cocking lever decocks the P7, thus making it one of the safest weapons available. The grip cocking lever system also avoids the heavy double action trigger pull found on traditional DA/SA handguns. Thus, even the first shot requires only a 2.5lb trigger pull -- the factory standard -- in contrast to the heavy double action pull of traditional DA/SA systems (like Glocks, for example). With the P7 cocked, it is in the SA mode, which allows for greater ease (and speed) of use without any loss of safety.

The P7 has a fixed, polygonally rifled barrel, which means it creates less bullet deformation. It further works to form a tighter seal with the gas recoil system which, in turn, slightly improves the gun's accuracy. This barrel configuration also makes for an increased muzzle velocity. IMHO, it is still just as

easy to clean the P7 as more traditional barrels.

Another feature is the P7's specially designed chamber which is fluted and has an integral extractor, no extractor is needed. Extraction, though rarely needed, is quite simple on the P7.

The main drawback with the P7 is that the area over the trigger guard tends to get hot after running more than a couple of mags through it at a high rate of firing speed. In real life, I have found that the gun was not designed for repeated, many-shot, rapid fire. But that is not, IMO, a real problem as I view all handguns as defensive weapons and as such are not really designed for long strings of fire.

After over 10 years of heavy use, my P7 has needed only one repair -- the replacement of a gasket on the piston. H&K performed this service at no charge and while they were at it, replaced all other seals and lightened the trigger pull to 1.75 lbs. While my P7 continued to fire accurately with this worn gasket, I did notice that the trigger had gotten a bit heavier.

One of the P7's biggest selling points for years has been its claim of producing very little felt recoil. The problem with measuring felt recoil is that it always a very subjective measurement. Furthermore, it often begs the question of how to accurately assess the felt recoil of different calibers and different firing systems.

Despite the problems of measuring something as subjective as felt recoil, the P7 has been rated quite highly in multiple surveys as having very little felt recoil. These multiple surveys were all of women shooters -- my guess on this is that felt recoil is thought to be more of an issue for women. In the surveys cited by H&K and by Guns and Ammo, which included both rank novices and experts, over 95% of those in the survey found the P7 to have less felt recoil than various 9mm including Rugers (though, IMHO, what gun would not?), Glocks, Sigs, and Brownings.

Indeed, in a late 1997 poll of the top women shooters (both target shooters and instructors) found that 6 out of the 8 interviewed used the P7 as their personal carry weapon. (Handgunner magazine)

My personal experience with P7 is that it is very lightweight, great for concealed carry, easy to use and maintain -- and a powerhouse of a 9mm. It can handle very hot loads, has almost no felt recoil, and is incredibly accurate. Though it is a pricey handgun, the H&KP7M8's advantages and ability to withstand heavy use make it a very sound and reasonable choice for a survival situation.

Johannah Bradley

## 1911 Pattern Single Action Semiautomatic Pistol, .45 ACP Caliber

Personal defense; target shooting; hunting (where permitted).

Popular brands include Colt, Springfield, Kimber; many other producers, including parts contractors, custom pistolsmiths, and government arsenals in several countries including Norway, China and Argentina.

Some regard this as the finest defensive pistol ever made. It is certainly among the most blooded, serving as the preferred standard sidearm of the US military from before the First World War to the nineteen-eighties. It is popular among gun-knowlegeable police officers, on forces that permit single-action automatics. In the civilian realm it has been popularized by Jeff Cooper and others, as a self defense weapon, and it serves as the foundation for many target pistols used in IPSC and bullseye shooting. It is sometimes used as a hunting weapon, but does not satisfy the rules in all areas. It has been

used successfully on deer. Its particular virtues are reliability, a reasonable amount of power and a short, light trigger pull that is conducive to good shot placement.

Its more vociferous proponents would have us believe that nothing whatever has been learned about pistol design since 1911, which was a long time ago. In particular, the design and arrangement of the safeties is open to question. You must release the thumb safety to shoot; some would prefer a gun that fires simply by pulling the trigger. The thumb safety locks shut the slide, meaning you must release the safety when unloading. The grip safety must be squeezed or the gun will not fire. The grip safety is there to prevent the gun from firing when not held in the hand, and serves as a backup to the thumb safety. Ergonomically simpler solutions to the safety problem are offered on most pistols of newer design.

--Chuck Marsh

## Glock semi-automatic pistols.

Personal defense: concealed and open carry. Limited hunting use.

Glocks are made by Glock of Austria and imported through Georgia. They are very popular in the US, with the company's sales exceeding 60% of the total law enforcement market share and a significant fraction of sales to private citizens.

These are pistols of a design known as the "safe-action." Rather than having an external safety lever or switch like most other pistols, the Glock has three internal safeties whose action is built entirely into the trigger. What this means is that the gun will not go off if dropped or the trigger is brushed from the side, but it WILL discharge if the trigger is pulled while there is a live round in the chamber. There is an obvious disadvantage in that there is little room for forgiveness if the safety rule regarding finger-off-the-trigger is violated, but there is also the advantage of the weapon being immediately ready for use once a round is chambered.

There are three main body sizes of Glocks: Full-sized, mid-sized, and compact. There are offerings in 9mm, .40S&W, and 357 SIG in all three sizes. In addition, there are .45acp and 10mm variants that are built either full-sized or compact. The full-sized 10mm offering (the model 20) is unique in the Glock line in that it appears to have been intended for the sport-hunting market rather than the defensive and law-enforcement market. With hot loads, it is legal for deer in a number of states.

There is also a long-slide variant in 9mm and .40 S&W, but IMHO this is of little defensive utility. While it has a longer sight radius and better resulting accuracy, the added length inhibits concealment and makes a fast draw more difficult.

Of the various models of pistols available, Glocks are widely considered to be the most reliable in action and the most forgiving of poor maintenance. However, many shooters dislike the lack of an external safety. There is also a widely-held belief that the Glock trigger, while being easier than a double-action trigger, is not nearly as clean and precise as a good single-action trigger. They are generally extremely reliable with factory ammunition including the jacketed-hollowpoint loads that are popular for personal defense, but for safety reasons care should be taken to avoid the use of unjacketed lead bullets in the factory standard polygonal barrel.

--Mike Medintz

## Military Surplus Mauser Bolt Action Rifles

Hunting, personal defense, target shooting

Popular brands include Mauser and a variety of contractors and government arsenals, in many lands.

System Mauser was famous the world over as the preeminent battle rifle design, and it held this position from the turn of the century into the nineteen-fifties. It is reliable, extremely durable, and usefully accurate. Surplus examples are available in a bewildering variety of calibers, barrel lengths and models. The Mauser 98 is usually regarded as the best of the breed, and the basic 98 action has served as the foundation for a number of hunting rifles and target rifles, as well as fighting arms. A famed virtue of the Mauser is "controlled round feed," which means the cartridge is held to the bolt by the extractor from the time it is fed from the magazine until it is ejected. The real advantages of this are debatable. Many successful rifles do not use this technique, but aficionados see it as a strength of the type.

The Mausers, and all bolt action military rifles, were made obsolete by the shift in military emphasis from precision rifle fire to rapid fire toward an area. The lower powered, shorter range, faster shooting "assault rifle" is now the favored military rifle. So Mausers are cheaply available, and as useful as they ever were, to the person interested in firing well aimed and deliberate shots. A surplus Mauser should be checked for accurate bore condition, safe mechanical condition, and correct headspace, by a gunsmith familiar with the type. (Headspace is the difference between cartridge size and chamber size. If it is excessive the cartridge may burst open on firing. This is not safe.) Another point to consider is that many of the Mausers are chambered for cartridges not readily available in the US. For example, the Swedish 96 Mausers fire 6.5x55 mm SE, a truly excellent cartridge, but not something K-Mart is likely to have.

--Chuck Marsh

## The Lee - Enfield .303 rifle

The Lee Enfield rifle was designed by James Paris Lee in the 1879, and adopted by Great Britain in 1903, IIRC. It continued in service in the England, Canada and Australia until the 1950's, and well into the 1960's in India. There are a lot of this rifles on the market right now, I suppose that the Commonwealth countries have abandoned bolt guns even as reserve weapons.

There are several variations of the Lee-Enfield, the most common are the Number 1 Mark III, and the Number 4. The No. 1 was used until the late 30's when the No. 4 was adopted. The No. 4 was made until the middle 1950's. It's easy to tell the two apart - the No. 1 has a more rounded receiver, and the rear sight is located at the rear of the barrel. The wood goes all the way to the end of the barrel, and there are two big metal ears to protect the front sight. The No. 4 has the rear sight on the receiver and the end of the barrel is exposed. The sight protection is smaller as well. The No. 5 is a shortened lightened version of the no. 4. It is easily identified by the larger area of barrel exposed and cone shaped flash hider. All .303 Enfield rifles have 10 shot detachable magazines. Parts are not interchangeable between the no. 1 and no 4, except the possibly magazines. Parts for the no. 4 and no. 5 are interchangeable.

Ammunition Both of these rifles use the .303 British cartridge. It's a good big game cartridge with a bit more power than a 30-30. The .303 has seen a lot of use among Commonwealth target shooters and hunters. Federal, Winchester and Remington sell 150 and 180 grain loads commercially. Th 150 grain bullets generally move out at about 2600 fps, and the 180 grain loads move at about 2400 fps. The 150 grain load is a good deer cartridge, within 200 fps of the .308 Winchester, and the 180 is a decent elk load. Availability varies, depending on the area. Near Seattle, I can find .303 in most Big-Five and Fred

Meyer's. K-Mart and Wal-Mart? Maybe not.

Surplus ammo is available, and it's fine for practice. A note of caution, though: most surplus ammo is corrosive. The salts in these older priming compounds corrode steel. In addition, the salts are not soluble in regular commercial gun cleaner, so use the water based army surplus stuff or hot soapy water to clean up after shooting surplus ammo. By the way, those surplus shells are not reloadable with standard reloading gear, because of the primer they use. I have seen some reloadable non-corrosive ammo is available at low prices, mostly from Belmont.

## Reloading

Bullets: Sierra, Speer and Hornady all make .311-.312 bullets. Bullet weights range from 90 grain handgun bullets (for the 32 HR magnum) to .312 diameter 180 grain hunting bullets. 125 gr. Bullets for the 7.62 x 39 will also work. Rumor has it that 200 or 220 grain roundnose hunting bullets are available, but I haven't been able to find any in catalogs. Lee and others also make moulds so you can cast your own. With that variety of bullet, you can reload for just about any situation. .303 Brass is generally available as well, and takes standard large rifle primers.

## Overall Review

Since these rifles are heavy (nearly 9 pounds), and fire a relatively mild cartridge, the recoil is fairly soft. The bolt on the Lee is quite smooth and has a shorter amount to turn than many other bolt rifles. That makes additional shots very quick. Since it has a 10 round magazine, that gives you ten quick shots before reloading.

Reloading the Lee is easy. There are three ways to reload the Lee: you can press individual rounds into the magazine; load 5 rounds at a time off stripper clips; or keep a loaded magazine handy.

In case you've never seen them, stripper clips are the 1900's answer to speed loading. They are small strips of metal, just large enough to hold 5 shells. You put them in a slot in the receiver and push the top cartridge down and the rounds slide off the clip and into the magazine. Stripper clips are much faster than reloading by hand, but can be a bit tricky to use. A hint: alternate the cartridge rims so that they're staggered. Since a magazine runs from \$10 to \$20US, and stripper clips can be found for as low as 50 cents, they're quite a deal, and much lighter to carry.

A few word of caution: - Headspace can vary on all surplus rifles due to poor barreling or heavy use - have any surplus checked out by a good gunsmith. Out of specification headspace can be easy to fix on a No. 4 (replace the bolt head), but not on a No 1.

- Clean the barrel and then look in it with good bore light. The gold stripes in the rifling are bullet jacket deposits - clean the bore until they're gone. If you see little sparkly spots, the bore has seen some pitting from corrosive ammo. This may affect accuracy to a degree. It's hard to tell how much til you shoot it, but the more pitting, generally the less accurate the rifle.

- I ordered one of the "collector grade" Lithgow (that's Australian) rifles from a major importer. The finish was fine, but the receiver was from 1907 enfield gun, some of the screws were stripped, part numbers didn't match, etc. On the positive side, they took it right back - full refund. I've noticed they're still running the ad, though. Remember, a rebuilt rifle is not collectible, so Caveat Emptor.

Specific Models No 1 Mark III and Mark III\* This is the original rifle - all were made in Britain, India or

Australia. Dates of manufacture vary depending on the country, ranging from 1907 to as late as the 20's (?) in England to as late as the 60's in India. Australia used the gun thru the end of WWII. The rear sight is the typical open military sight, mounted on the rear of the barrel. Sights are adjustable for elevation only on the Mark III\*, some of the early Mark III rifles may have windage adjustable rear sights.

I don't have one of the No. 1 rifles (currently!), but they are relatively inexpensive. Prices range from 90 - \$199 depending on the condition. The 90-\$100 rifles are generally pretty beat, but I've seen good ones at Big-5 at that price. Check out the barrel before you buy, and see if the seller will give you a refund if you're not satisfied.

The No 4 Mark I and II This is the improved for WWII version of the rifle. This is the improved version of the rifle, with a stronger action. Many of these rifles have a receiver peep sight. It's better than the sight on the No. 1. These rifles were made in the US, Canada, and England. The Canadian and US are supposed to be the best. Prices run to \$150 for a shooter, more for a collector rifle.

I've had a few of these. They are pretty nice, but many were used hard, so check them out before you buy. Post WWII dated rifles would be best, thought some of the re-finished rifles are nice.

No 5. And No. 4 "Tanker ": I'd avoid the No 5. Not too many were made, so the collector value is high. They are also supposed to have a problem holding zero. In addition, the lighter weight means they kick pretty hard. There are some fake no 5 rifles out there. The Enfield FAQ will tell you how to tell the difference.

If you have to have a shorter lighter Enfield, the Tanker rifles might be a good way to go. They are regular No 4 rifles that importers have cut down to carbine length. Don't pay a collector price for them, since they're not collectable.

No 2A This is the Indian rifle in 7.62 NATO. They are basically a No 1 Mark III\* with parts changed to use the .308. They're supposed to be made from stronger steel than the No 1, but who knows. They're distinguishable by the square bottomed magazine.

I've heard it said that it's difficult to find one with good headspace. The action also wasn't designed for a high intensity cartridge like the .308, supposedly it lacks the proper venting, etc. Bear in mind, this is all 3rd person - I haven't owned one. Check out the web links or rec.guns for more info.

The 2A rifle does have some advantages. The magazine is 12 rounds. Replacements magazines are very hard to find, but it does use FAL stripper clips. .308 ammo is readily available. Having been made in the 60's, the 2A's haven't seen a lot of use, and the price is definitely right at around \$120. Hey, it's your call, but definitely have a gunsmith check it out if you buy one.

Other:

Mounting a scope - Bolt on scope mounts are available for about \$40 (US - 1998) in Shotgun News, etc. These mounts place the scope right above the receiver, so you won't be able to use stripper clips, but you can use a standard rifle scope.

Sporter stocks are available form Cabella's, or thru Shotgun News.

References:



## *Bolt Action Rifles* (Frank DeHaas)

The Enfield FAQ: <http://www.recguns.com/IIID2a11a.html>

The Enfield Research Page: <http://www.uidaho.edu/~stratton/en-page.html>

-- a Review for Misc.Survivalism by Pat T.

## **.22LR Target Pistols**

Target shooting, small game hunting, limited usefulness for self defense

Popular brands include Browning, Ruger, Smith and Wesson, Colt, Hammerli

I am talking here about the commonplace 10-shot semi-automatic used in club matches. This kind of pistol is designed in every detail to be easy to shoot straight--good grip, sights and trigger, and minimal recoil. Apart from its obvious use, putting small holes very close together on paper targets, this is a good foraging weapon. It can be carried conveniently on the belt and used on small game targets of opportunity. As a self-defense weapon it is hampered by the small size and low power of its bullet. This is somewhat compensated by the ease and speed with which multiple hits may be achieved on man-size targets. Multiple hits would likely be required. For survival purposes it is noteworthy that the .22LR cartridge is compact to store, inexpensive to buy, light to carry, and widely available.

The average .22 will jam on occasion. This tendency can be reduced by keeping the pistol's action very clean, and *lightly* oiled with a non-gumming lubricant such as Break Free CLP (tm). Jamming problems may be reduced further by using top quality ammunition. Many jams result from cartridges that are dimensionally imperfect, or incorrectly charged. Although it may be self-evident, the sort of .22LR ammunition that sells at minimal cost is also manufactured that way. Select a cartridge with the traditional rounded bullet profile; many pistols will not feed reliably with truncated cone type bullets. If defensive use is anticipated, you should avoid hollowpoint bullets--they may lack sufficient penetration on a human adversary.

--Chuck Marsh

## **SIG-Sauer Pistols**

Personal defense, hunting uses depend on caliber, and game laws in your area.

Built in Germany by Sauer and imported to the US by Sigarms, Exeter, New Hampshire.

The SIG-Sauer pistols are expensive, but find a ready market. The perfectionist actually saves money, because many custom gunsmith touches are done already. The trigger and sights are already good. Accuracy fitting is excellent. Uncomfortable corners and edges are already eliminated. The guns are collaborations between the Swiss Industrial Group and J.P. Sauer und Sohns, an old famous German armorer. Models range from small frame .380 to large frame .45 and .38 Super, with intermediately sized offerings in 9mm, .40 S&W and the .357 SIG cartridge.

All the SIG-Sauer pistols share a decocking safety that lowers the hammer without disabling the gun. The user may then fire a shot double action, with no need to first release a safety, or may elect to thumb cock the hammer. After the first shot the action cocks the hammer automatically, in the usual manner. This system is excellent if your habit is to carry with the chamber empty, loaded magazine inserted, for a smart tug on the slide will always result in a loaded chamber and a short light trigger. In American 'practical' terms a SIG is perfect for condition three (chamber empty, loaded magazine in place), or two

(chamber loaded and the hammer lowered), but has no condition one (no "cocked and locked.")

The SIGs are utilitarian in design and finish, rather than lovely, and at first, you look at the gun, then look at the price tag, and wonder what the Swiss and Germans have been smoking. The value you receive is, however, apparent when you go shooting. The gun is unusually accurate for a defensive model, the crisply responsive trigger contributing a great deal to this. The Von Stavenhagen type sights feature a white vertical bar on the rear sight and a white dot on the front sight. In poor light you 'dot the i' for a fast sight picture. The sights themselves are generously sized. Takedown for cleaning is logical and convenient, and there is scant opportunity to put things back together the wrong way.

I tried to enlist someone else to do this review, who has more experience with the brand, but she said all anyone really needs to know about the SIG is if you can afford a pistol from the top shelf you should have one. Editorial fairness and the desire for objectivity prevents me from endorsing this notion wholeheartedly, but certainly I would rank SIG among the very best. And yet, another has offered that he has heard SIG-Sauer pistols do not hold up well in use, compared to some other brands, though he praised the trigger. On this I have no further information--but would like some.

SIG has lately announced the "sig pro" line of pistols. These are intermediate sized models in .40 S&W and .357 SIG. They have polymer frames and will sell for somewhat less than the all metal SIGS. It appears the price point will compete directly with Glock. Unlike other polymer pistols, the grip panels are removable; two sizes will be offered now, with the possibility of more later.

--Chuck Marsh

## The 3030 Rifle FAQ

Hunting, personal defense

Winchester and Marlin divide the market for the lever action 30-30 rifles.

The oldest American smokeless powder cartridge is the venerable 30-30 Winchester. This cartridge was originally scheduled to be a black powder cartridge with a .30 caliber bullet, and 30 grains of black powder, but before production started, the new semi-smokeless powders invented in Europe became available, and Winchester used it as a sales ploy to enhance the new rifle. A gazillion of the Winchester Model 93 & 94 lever action rifles and the Marlin 336 lever action rifles have been sold in this country alone. Many of the older rifles will be marked .30WCF, (.30 Winchester Center Fire)

There are a number of bolt action and pump action rifles chambered for this cartridge as well, but this FAQ will deal with the care and feeding of the most popular rifles, the lever actions.

## Marlin VS Winchester

Depending on where you live, who your granddaddy was, and on which side of the mountain you live on, you will probably have an opinion as to which one is the best. I will give you the pluses and minus of each, and let you keep or change your opinion as you will. Save your flames... I'm writing this, not you... and if you have a different opinion, spend the time writing your own.

## Marlin

The Marlin 336, was also sold under the Monkey Wards (Western Field), Western Auto (Revelation), Sears (Ted Williams), KMart etc , labels. They came in several versions, from a short barreled "Trapper" model to a octagon barreled commemorative. Plain and fancy. Basic wood to checkered and engraved..

### The plus side to the Marlin 336:

**Strong!** This action is by far, stronger than the Winchester. The massive monoblock receiver has been used for other more powerful cartridge conversions, up to and including the 307 and 375 Winchester cartridges. A lengthened version is the base for the Marlin 1895 45-70.

**Low Maintainance.** The bolt is a rear locking plug of steel with minimum moving parts. The cartridge lifter and magazine cutoff are simple and low tech.

**Ease of Disassembly** To clean a 336, be sure the chamber and magazine is empty. Place the hammer on full cock. Remove the single screw that holds the lever to the receiver, and pull the lever straight down and out of the gun. Pull the bolt out of the back of the action. Your done. Assembly is just as easy. Just reverse the order. Period.

**Ease of scope mounting:** The flat top, side eject is very suitable for mounting a scope. By using "see thru" scope mounts, you can use the iron sights, as well as the scope. If you are short necked, this may cause you to develop a bit of a stiff neck raising your head to use the scope. Many folks mount a 2X or 4X fixed power on a low Weaver type mount. If they get into heavy brush, or the scope gets damages, they simply remove the scope, and use the iron sights. Most Marlins since 1968 come drilled and tapped for scope mounts easily available just about anywheres... KMart etc.

**Ease of peep sight mounting** The flat sided receiver is perfect for mounting a peep sight, and since 1968, Marlin drills and taps each of their lever actions for a peep sight. A good Williams FP peep sight is probably the best modification a person can do to any lever rifle. It makes this rifle a snap to snap shoot, accurate and quick to pick up running game.

**Price.** The Marlin can usually be purchased for \$40-\$100 cheaper than the Winchester, new.

### The minus side to the Marlin 336

**Heavy** On the average, the Marlin weighs 1-2 pounds more than the Winchester. You have to pay for the extra strength somewhere. However, this does tend to make felt recoil a bit softer than the Winchester.

**Rougher action feel** The low end Marlins tend to be a bit rougher than the Winchester. The long solid bolt tends to drag a bit, but can be polished a bit to help. Unless you have handled an old ,well broken in Winchester, you will probably not notice the difference.

**Cast bullet shooting is SO-SO** with the standard modern Microgroove rifleing. Cast your bullets hard, and keep velocities below 1600fps with most bullets. I have shot several that would shoot well at 2,100 fps, and others that would not stay on paper at 1600 fps with the same bullet. I prefer a 120 lee at 1500fps

for small game, and a 175FP at 1600+- for larger game. Your mileage may vary.

**Factory Sights Suck** for anything over 100yds. However depending on your environment, this may not be a factor. Adding a good peep sight gets rid of this problem anyways.

**Sling swivels are not a normal factory accessory** However a number of after market swivels are available, and easily and quickly added.

## Winchester Mod 94

The Winchester 94, was also sold under the Monkey Wards (Western Field), Western Auto (Revelation), Sears (Ted Williams), KMart etc , labels. They came in several versions, from a short barreled "Trapper" model to a octagon barreled commemorative. Plain and fancy. Basic wood to checkered and engraved. Yup, just like the Marlin.

### The plus side of the Mod 94

**Light** A 94 weighs 1-2 pounds less than a Marlin 336, and seems to be a dream to carry in the field. However this is noticeable in increased felt recoil.

**Traditional looks.** The 94 is the "look" that others have tried to copy (except Marlin)

**Smooth** A well broken-in 94 is like glass sliding on glass. Some of the new guns are not finished so nicely, but are still very smooth.

**Cast bullets shoot quite nicely** up to factory levels in most guns. Your mileage may vary. Ive owned several that were tack drivers with cast, and others that had a hard time hitting the ground with cast. Bore condition in older 94s is very important. Lots of early 94s had shallow rifling, old corrosive primers and poor cleaning techniques have left their toll.

**Ease of peep sight mounting** The flat sided receiver is perfect for mounting a peep sight, and since the mid 60's, Winchester drills and taps each of their lever actions for a peep sight. A good Williams FP peep sight is probably the best modification a person can do to any lever rifle. It makes this rifle a snap to snap shoot, accurate and quick to pick up running game

**Granddaddy had one** This may be important to you. Your mileage may vary.

### The minus side of the Mod 94

**Fragile and Moderatly Weak action** The 94 is a bit fragile, and requires more TLC than the Marlin. The receiver will bulge under loads the Marlin sneers at. Granted, these are Way Over factory pressures, but....The action is heavily dependant on grasshopper springs and lots of small fragile parts.

**Fairly sensitive to debris and dirt.** Ive never seen a 94 jammed due to mang in the action, but I've seen a bunch that were loose or worn out due to poor maintainance. Tolerances seem to be tighter on cartridge lifter and magazine cutoff, and when dirt and sand get inside, wear is greatly accellerated.

**Take down is easy, reassembly can be a pain** Dissassembly is similar to the Marlin, but reassembly can be somewhat frustrating, getting the cartridge lifter and bolt pawls lined up correctly, particularly on an older, more worn rifle.

**A bitch to mount a scope** The top eject makes the use of special scope mounts mandatory. Some of these mounts place the scope of to the left side of the receiver, others require special mounting to the barrel, and long eye relief scopes to be used. A major pain in the butt, if you ever decide you need a scope.

**Factory Sights Suck** for anything over 100yds. However depending on your environment, this may not be a factor. Adding a good peep sight gets rid of this problem anyways.

**Sling swivels are not a normal factory accessory** However a number of after market swivels are available, and easily and quickly added

### ***This is why there are Fords and Chevys.***

You make up your own mind. Me, I own a number of Marlins, and no Winchester 94s, presently. I love the look and feel of a good old 94, but for a down and dirty everyday utility gun, I go with the Marlins.

This is not to say that if you own a Winchester, you should run out and trade it off. The Winchester is a fine rifle, and a 100 yrs have proven it to be reliable, accurate enough for most uses, and a nice handy gun to have around.

## **The 30-30 Cartridge**

The 30-30 comes in two normal factory loadings. The 150gr flat nose soft point and the 170gr round or flat nose soft point. Neither loading holds a candle to any of the .30 caliber center fire cartridges, such as the 308, 300 Savage, 30-06 etc.

Most 150gr factory loads run under 2,200 FPS

Most 170gr factory loads run under 2,100 fps and closer to 1,800 fps

*Yes I know what they claim, but I have access to a chronograph....ok?*

Careful handloads can get the 150FP up to about 2400fps but it is a low pressure round at best.

***At best, the range of the 30-30 in the average mans hand is about 175 yds,*** for clean kills on deer sized game. The flat point does a great job of breaking bone and mashing organs even before expansion occurs.

My own personal favorite handload uses the Sierra 125gr JHP at about 2,600 FPS. A great deer load on our western blacktails, and a dandy varmint load as well. Unbelievably accurate in both Marlins and

Winchesters. The 30-30 is well suited to cast bullet loads, from the 100gr to the 180gr FP. Jacketed loads are easily duplicated with cast bullet loads.

Millions of deer are taken every year with this cartridge, and it equally good as a man stopper.

Many law enforcement agencies in years past have used the 30-30 as a very successful round against criminals. Ballistically somewhat equivalent to the 7.62X39, the 30-30 uses a much heavier bullet that penetrates better and mushrooms quite nicely. No Level II or lower vest is capable of stopping this round, and a level III will cause a tremendous amount of blunt trauma at the impact point, usually causing heart failure on a center of mass shot. Its a good, moderately low recoiling round in a womans hand, and will do a fine job of keeping the boogers out of your hair.

## Misc

Most lever action 30-30 hold 6 rounds in the magazine, and one in the chamber. Reloading is moderately quick, but will never beat a box magazine change. If you expect to be in heavy combat, this is not the rifle for you. However, they are mighty hard to beat for everyday, knock around utility use. Short, light, hard hitting, generally rugged and handy. Factory ammunition is quite inexpensive, and if you check Walmart and KMart etc after hunting season, you can get Great prices on ammo. Nearly every mom and pop store in America carries 3030 ammo, and it will generally be easy to find.

Handloading this cartridge is a snap, it takes very little powder, and you can share some of the same powders with your handgun ammo, saving on having to stock lots of different powders. Cast bullets may be cast directly from wheelweights, and will perform quite well, and VERY economically. Adding a LEE Loader and a mold to your BoB allows you to reload this cartridge with minimal equipment.

**NOTE** Only flat point or round nose bullets should be used in a lever action. In the tube magazine, the point of one bullet is up against the primer of the next round. A chain fire is possible, and while it may not kill you, will probably blow off your forend hand, and ruin your day. If you must shoot pointed bullets, only keep one in the mag, and one in the chamber!!! You can reload a single round very quickly, and the chances of you needing multiple shots is pretty small. Don't take the chance. A dear friend of mine did, once, and now has a really nice hook where his left hand used to be.

## Safety

Most lever actions depend on the operator for safety. The new Marlins use a crossbolt safety to block the hammer (more lawyer stuff), but most lever guns have what is called a half-cock notch. The hammer is pulled back about half way, and the sear drops into this deep notch in the hammer. The trigger will not fire the rifle in this position. Most of the time.

I have seen some very worn Winchesters that were so worn out that the hammer would fall from this notch when the trigger was pulled. The gun **USUALLY** would not fire but witnessed a very close call once when it did. Walking through heavy brush has been known to rake the hammer to full cock.... real scary when you finally notice it.

The **only truly safe way to carry a loaded lever action**, with one up the spout, is to put the hammer on

half-cock, and lower the lever a bit. enough to get your finger under it. To fire quickly, simply remove your finger, squeeze the lever, and cock the hammer. Most of the time, keeping the chamber empty is the safest way to go, but... your mileage may vary depending on the hostility of your environment at the moment.

## Conclusions

Do not feel undergunned if all you have is a lever action 30-30. The rifle is not a combat piece, but can give good duty if called upon to fight off the boogers. The round is hard hitting, more than accurate, if you do your part, and rate of fire is pretty good. Having 7 rounds on call that will do the job out to 175 yrds or more, and do it cheaply and not beat you up, while doing very good double duty as a hunting rifle is really all that is required. Yes a "black gun" with lots of 30rd mags handy may be more macho, but in reality may not be as practical. The .223 is a lousy deer cartridge, and blows the snot out of small game. You must have an appetite for bone, hair and guts in your food if you expect to use one for small game. The same holds true for the 308. Neither cartridge in a semi auto will function with cast loads.

**A good solid lever action 30-30, equipped with a good peepsight, a decent sling, and maybe a low power scope is really hard to beat for an all around, general duty utility weapon.**

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