



## Intro to Concealed Carry – Part 2

### What should you do after you receive your permit?

Simply taking a permit class, does not make one a skilled shooter. Neither does spending time at your local range shooting paper targets while standing completely still in the perfect shooting stance. While taking a quality concealed carry permit class and spending time practicing marksmanship fundamentals are certainly things you should do to build a proper foundation, there is a great deal more to preparing an individual to be a responsibly armed citizen.

### Pistol Handling 101 – Taking a class beyond your permit class

Physical skills, and mechanical manipulations of the firearm are an obvious focus area the armed citizen should seek out. There are many classes available that will teach foundational skills necessary for utilizing the handgun for defensive purposes.



An in-depth description and application of marksmanship fundamentals (stance, grip, sight picture, trigger press) will be a mainstay of any beginning level handgun class. While this content is also taught in the typical permit class, in a beginning handgun class, much of this will be taught on the range, with gun in hand and the shooter will be sending many more rounds down range. This class will be a foundation in building proper “muscle-memory”, allowing the shooter to more naturally, accurately and quickly perform basic marksmanship tasks.

Another crucial skill to learn during a handgun class, is drawing the handgun from the holster. This should be done with and without a concealment garment. The draw stroke will be broken down to simple steps allow the shooter to efficiently draw the handgun, starting out with a proper grip, and then presenting the handgun to the target with a proper sight picture in place at the end of the draw stroke.

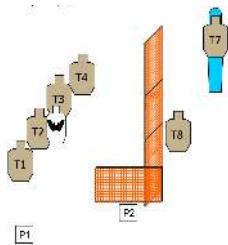
Balance of speed and accuracy is important to any shooter. “You can never miss fast enough to make up for poor accuracy”, is a phrase commonly said in firearms instruction circles. The shooter should learn to shoot only as fast as they can in order to make effective “hits” on the target they are shooting at. This means depending on the distance and size of the target, the shooter will fire in faster or slower succession. Given same size targets, the shooter will typically shoot slower at a longer distance in order to maintain the same level of accuracy as they would have if they were shooting faster at a close distance.



One of the more important concepts in defensive shooting is minimizing the chances of being shot by the assailant. How to approach shooting around a barrier should be a mainstay of any introductory pistol class. The instructor will use the language, “shooting from behind cover and concealment”. While both are barriers from vision typically, the difference between the two is that cover will stop a bullet, while concealment only blocks the line of sight of the assailant.

Towards the end of a basic pistol course, and definitely in an intermediate pistol course, shooting while moving will be addressed. Obviously, this topic is only addressed once the instructor has established good safety practices amongst the students. Every time you bring in more complexity to the shooting situation, more safety considerations need to be made. The basic techniques for shooting while moving are structured around minimizing the deviation of the sight picture while the shooter is in motion. Shooters will start off slow, maybe only taking one step, then as the course of fire progresses, more steps, and maybe change in direction will be introduced and the student will learn how to adapt to a more dynamic environment.

### **Competition: Advantages beyond the paper target range**



Competition is a great tool to help build skills typical paper target ranges do not allow. Drawing from the holster, shooting while moving, shooting from cover/concealment and, transitioning across multiple targets and ranges are all skills competition allows which most ranges that are not designated as “tactical ranges” do not allow.

Competition also allows the shooter to practice those skills under simulated stress. All of your shots are timed, missed shots count against your score. Adrenaline starts to pump and the shooter’s heart rate increases. All of this is good, because it allows the shooter to get an idea of how they may perform under stress. While this simulated stress is very mild compared to the stress of a life or death defensive situation, it is still useful help the shooter understand their performance. Mistakes will be made; plans will be forgotten and errant shots might not hit the target. Competition is designed to test the skills of those participating. It also is designed for individuals to learn where they need to improve.





IDPA and USPSA are great places to start. Local matches are usually advertised on their websites. Furthermore, the people who run and compete in these matches are often extremely friendly, helpful and encouraging, most especially to the new shooters who are just starting out.

### **Dry-Fire Practice: Build up muscle memory**

You do not always need to fire live ammunition in order to get practice in. This is where dry-fire practice comes in to play. Dry-fire is simply



practicing handgun manipulations without any ammunition present. All of the competition masters, special forces operators and police S.W.A.T. team members spend a great deal of time in dry-fire practice. This gives you most all of the manipulation ability of the firearm without the bang and recoil. Dry-fire is a tool to build up familiarity with your firearm and create consistent muscle memory (more properly termed myelination) allowing the mechanical manipulations you need to make with your handgun nearly automatic.

First rule of dry-fire practice... there must be no ammunition present. In fact, it is good to unload and clear your firearm (both visually and physically checking that the firearm is clear) and then go to a separate room to perform the dry-fire practice.



Without the bang and the recoil of live ammunition, you are free to focus purposefully on maintaining proper grip, sight picture and trigger control and eliminate the possible “flinch” that is commonly seen in beginner shooters. Perform the same trigger pull 30 minutes a day, for one month, maintaining a good sight picture all the way through a proper trigger squeeze; then go to the range and try shooting again. You will be amazed at how much more precise your aim will be and how much of the flinch you will have eliminated.



You can also practice drawing the firearm from the holster to presentation, moving through out a room while maintaining a good sight picture, positioning around cover/concealment



and many other tasks you might not be able to practice at the shooting range. Dry-fire is the number one thing you can do to improve your pistol handling skills after you have taken a class and learned a proper foundation from which to practice.

### **Non-shooting skills: Wait, I thought we were talking about guns?**

Concealed carry is not limited to shooting. There are many skill sets a responsibly armed individual should seek to learn that are every bit as important, and many can be used more often than a pistol.



First aid and CPR are two of the most useful and lifesaving skills a person can learn. There are many times outside of the defensive realm these can be important. Discovering a coworker who is having a heart attack, witnessing an automobile crash or seeing one's child fall down a flight of stairs, all of these are examples of a situation where having some basic training in first aid or CPR can be crucial while waiting for first responders to arrive.



Another example becoming increasingly visible in the public consciousness, which requires a skilled and prepared individual, is the active killer event. Mass shootings, mass stabbings and terrorist events are an unfortunate reality of our world today. While a pistol would serve you well in the initial moments of the attack to defend yourself and others, what to do once the shooting stops is of paramount importance. Do you carry and know how to use a tourniquet? Can you help a victim keep calm and apply pressure to stop the bleeding from a wound? Do you have the skills to quickly assess basic injuries?



The point here is, pistol skills are not the only lifesaving skills you need to be prepared for. A great first step would be to call your local firehouse and talk with first responders about what educational resources there are in your area. Talk to your concealed carry instructor, they also will have an idea where to seek guidance. Vendors like Dark Angel Medical have brought back lessons learned from battlefields overseas and applied them to civilian and law enforcement kits that are small enough to carry around in a pocket. Get trained. This could save the life of yourself or a loved one.