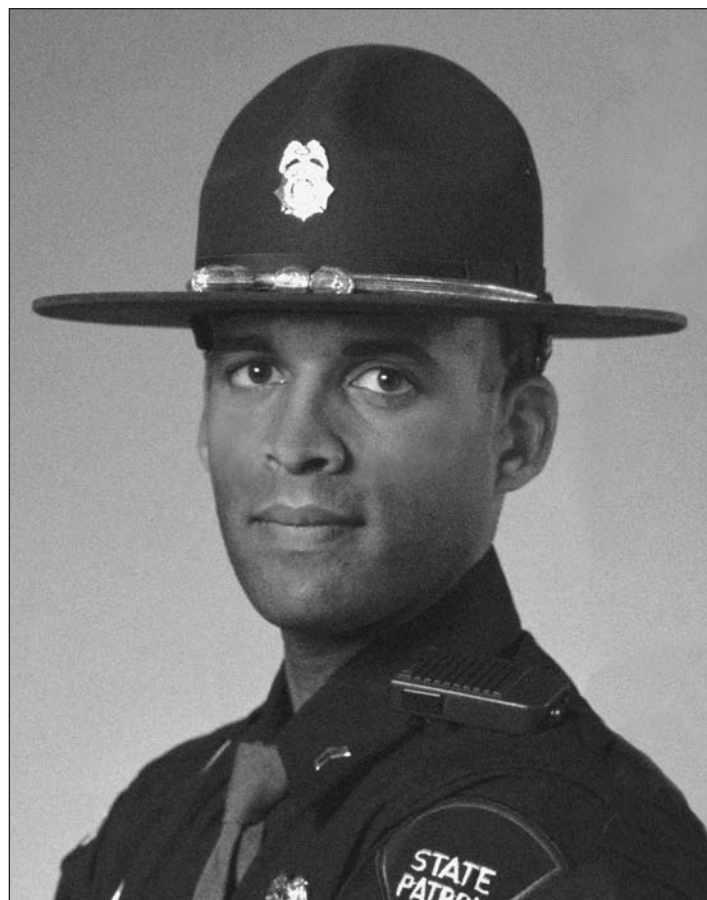


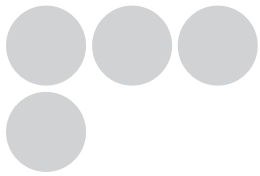
Officer **Survival Guide**

TEN TIPS & TACTICS TO TOUGHEN YOUR TRAINING



FROM THE EDITORS OF

POLICE[®]
THE LAW ENFORCEMENT MAGAZINE



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Keep it Simple

IN COMBAT, THE BEST SURVIVAL SKILL IS ONE THAT YOU CAN EXECUTE EASILY UNDER STRESS.

Dave Spaulding



As a 25-year veteran of law enforcement, I have become somewhat distressed when I read articles about officer survival that needlessly complicate the matter. Since such situations are going to occur in an environment of high stress, it is essential that tactics and techniques employed be simple to execute. Thus, survival techniques need to follow the “Simple Is Good” (SIG) principle.

Understand that your ability to respond to a life-threatening event is complicated by a diminished capability to make complex decisions and/or movements. While many tactics and techniques look great on paper or in the controlled environment of the training center, many have not worked well in the field. When looking at any new tactic or technique, you need to apply a “Three S Test” to determine if it is valid.

The Three S Test

First, is the technique or tactic *simple* to perform? If it cannot be mastered and performed within the time constraints of the training environment, it will certainly be forgotten in the stress of the street.

Second, does the tactic or technique make *sense*? If it just does not jibe with your personal and professional life experience, ask the instructor for more information. If the instructor cannot make it “click” with what you know is street reality, then your antenna should go up.

Finally, is the tactic or technique *street proven*? If the instructor cannot give you at least one real world example of the technique working in a high-stress environment, then be very leery of being a guinea pig.

Winning Ways

It’s not unusual for us to become so enamored with a particular technique that we forget our ultimate goal, winning. And that’s defined not just by survival, but exiting the incident without harm. Becoming so focused on completing overly complex techniques could result in an inability to save ourselves from harm.

Remember, most police officers do not practice their survival skills once they leave the training environment. Any repetition that they get is on the job. Walking into a gunfight and trying to execute a technique that has never been fully understood, let alone practiced, is likely to result in tragedy.

Training Doctrines

Much debate that affects individual officer survival comes from the defensive shooting arena. There are a lot of people out there trying to make a living out of firearms training, and all of them are trying to offer something unique.



As a graduate of many of these schools, I have no problem with their variety. I always go into these programs with an open mind, wanting to learn something new.

However, let's be honest, there are only so many ways to shoot a gun. The shooting technique that delivers the gun to the target quickest, with little wasted motion is probably best. Courses that insist you stand a certain way, hold the gun a certain way, use your sights, don't use your sights, and/or use a particular gun—regardless of the situation—are unlikely to pass your “Three S Test.”

The goal of any survival-oriented training is to win the confrontation without harm. What technique is used to accomplish this is secondary. What is important is that it is simple and effective most of the time. Nothing is absolute.

I personally don't care if you carry a 1911 style .45; a double-action/single-action, high-capacity 9mm; or a .357 magnum revolver as long as you can hit with it, reliably, under stress. You want to use the Weaver Stance? Terrific. The Isosceles? Outstanding. I don't care as long as it is effective for you and your particular body style. Do you want to use a flash front sight picture? Excellent idea. What, you believe that point shooting is the answer? Good for you. They both have their place; maybe we need to understand both. To my way of thinking, all of the above pass the “Three S Test.”

Two in the Chest?

Debate in the training arena is a good thing, unless it becomes so heated that the message to the student is lost in all the hype to show who is right. For example, everyone agrees that multiple rounds to the high chest area is the best location to shoot when trying to induce rapid incapacitation. But what if the suspect is wearing body armor? If a suspect has absorbed two or three rounds to the chest with no visual affect, it is unlikely that two or three more are going to help. The answer is an alternative aiming point.

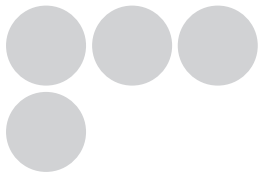
For years I have heard the phrase, “Two in the chest, one in the head, guarantees they're really dead.” Unfortunately, it has been shown over and over again that due to the mobility of the head that it is hard to hit in a fluid situation like a gunfight. Additionally, the brain is well armored by the skull, making the point of entry for any handgun round quite small. This situation led one very famous firearms instructor to remark, “Two in the chest, one in the eye, is guaranteed to run you dry.”

Many informed instructors are calling for shots to the pelvis as an alternative to the head. It is felt that the pelvis is a larger target and produces an extremely painful wound. If the pelvis can be broken, movement would be seriously hindered if not stopped. Critics, however, advise that the pelvic shot does not stop ambulation, and even if it does, the downed suspects are not incapacitated as they can still shoot.

What is the answer in the interest of simplicity? I cannot give a definitive answer, but it would seem to me the best response is to shoot whatever you can. I once saw a suspect shot in the knee drop like a sack of rocks and howl in pain. I'm not saying that knee shots are the answer, but there are a lot of alternative target areas to the head and chest that can down a subject. The SIG answer here is to shoot for the center of whatever is available.



Simple techniques leave you ready for anything, like concealed firearms or this knife masquerading as a pen.



Practical training is the key. What good is an advanced technique if you can't remember it when you need it?

Keeping It Real

Training (or I should say improper training) can be a genuine handicap to survival, when it should be the answer. Where many firearms instructors get the ideas for some of their programs is beyond me.

For example, one agency I know of uses a drill where its officers run up to a table where they find a semi-automatic pistol in pieces. The gun must be assembled, loaded and then fired on multiple targets (which are facing them this whole time) in a given time frame.

When I was asked to do this, I ran to the table, pulled my back-up gun and solved the problem. I was told this was not “allowed” and was asked to do it again. Once the drill was restarted, I turned and ran away, zigzagging, as I went.

When I was asked why I had done this I responded “Well, zigzagging makes you harder to hit.” This is not what the range officer wanted to hear. He wanted to know why I did not put the pistol together and fire. To this I responded, “If I am ever in a gunfight, with multiple suspects and my gun comes apart, I am going to use my back-up gun. If I don't have a back-up, I am going to run away, zigzagging as I go because that will make me harder to hit.”

I realize the disassembled gun drill was probably fun to do, and there is nothing wrong with training being fun. But at the same time, training must be done to bring about a needed goal, which in this case is winning. Putting together a gun under fire does not pass the “Three S Test,” and it does not follow the SIG principle. Does carrying a second gun pass the “Three S Test?” You bet. It's also a perfect example of following the SIG principle.

To win on the streets, you must be aware, willing, have the best equipment possible, know how to use it, seek all the training you can, know how to use that training under stress, and know what is relevant and what is B.S. You need to keep it simple, and that is the SIG principle. ☯

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Improving the Odds

WHEN THE NUMBERS AREN'T IN YOUR FAVOR, YOU HAVE TO RELY ON COVER, MOVEMENT, AND TACTICS.

Michael T. Rayburn



In this training scenario, the officer is at a disadvantage because he can't draw his weapon until the bad guys make their moves.

Perhaps it's because of the enduring movie icon of the Old West shootout, perhaps it's because we tend to think of all fights as a one-on-one battle, but for some reason, most officers have a vision of a gunfight as being one shooter against another. The reality of such incidents is much different and even deadlier. An alarming number of police gunfights involve more than one bad guy against a single cop.

It's hard to imagine a worse predicament than being outnumbered and outgunned in a street fight. But there are things you can do and maneuvers that you can practice that will increase the chances of your survival.

Take Cover

In any gunfight, your first priority is to find cover. Statistics show that 95 percent of officers who reach cover during an officer-involved shooting survive the fight. This is even more critical when you're outnumbered. If you have good, solid cover and your attackers don't, you've evened the odds a bit.

Unfortunately, we don't think about cover until we desperately need it and, by then, it's probably too late to find it. This is especially true when you consider that real gunfights are short-lived—as often are their participants.

The average gunfight lasts seven seconds or less. That's not a lot of time to find cover, and it's even less when you consider that the actual exchange of rounds lasts for approximately 2.5 to 3.5 seconds. How much cover can you move to in 2.5 seconds? Unless you're within one or two steps of that cover, it's going to be difficult for you to locate and move to it under stress. Still, you must make the effort. It's your best bet for survival.

Of course, cover won't always be available. Studies show that cover is rarely available in officer-involved shootings. The reason is simple: 95 percent of street gun battles between police and bad guys take place at distances of less than 21 feet. That's close but most are even closer, with 75 percent at 10 feet or less and well over 50 percent at five feet or less.

In such close quarter combat, moving to cover may not be an option. But movement is still critical to your survival. So the issue becomes how to move.

Going for Your Gun

The FBI and a number of other organizations have done a lot of research into what actually happens during

an officer involved in a gunfight. One common factor is that a lot of officers (and suspects) are shot in their gun hands, gun arms, and gun sides (“strong sides”) of their bodies.

This is not much of a surprise. The first tendency of anyone faced with a threat is to focus in on the source of the threat.

In a gunfight, the source of the threat is the opponent’s gun. And because the combatants are looking at each other’s guns, it’s only natural that they tend to shoot each other in the gun hand or gun side.

Since officers involved in gunfights are commonly shot on their gun sides, it only makes sense that you should try to protect that side of your body so that you can fight back.

You do this by moving laterally to your gun side. If you are a right-handed shooter, move to your right. If you are a left-handed shooter, move to your left. By doing this you are able to somewhat protect your gun side by using your body as a shield for your shooting hand and gun side so that it will be protected and you are able to shoot back. Of course, using your body as a shield is only a good idea if you are wearing body armor and your opponents are armed with handguns or shotguns.

Protecting your gun hand is critical to your survival. Yes, you’ve been trained to shoot with your off hand. But look at this realistically. You’re probably a much better shot with your strong hand and, if you’re in a short, sharp firefight with a group of thugs, your survival is going to depend on your shooting skills. The longer you can keep your weapon in your gun hand, the better.

Moving Target

Remember to move as you return fire. By moving laterally you accomplish several things.

First, you decrease the lag time caused by the action vs. reaction phenomenon. For the most part we have to react to a suspect’s action and this puts us at a disadvantage. The suspect(s) goes for a weapon and we react by drawing our weapon. We are caught at a disadvantage because we are playing catch up to the suspect’s action. We turn this around by creating some action of our own forcing the suspect(s) to play catch up to us.

One advantage that we can use against the bad guys is movement. A moving target is harder to hit, and most criminals don’t practice their marksmanship against moving targets.

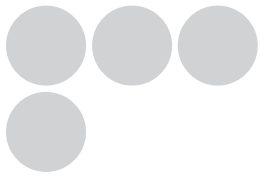
The FBI interviewed cop killers and discovered that 54 percent of them had practiced with their weapons at least once a month. Yet 74 percent of the offenders interviewed stated their firearms practice was informal and at various locations. What this means is that very few offenders have had any formal firearms training. Even fewer have had any formal training that involved shooting at a moving target.



By making a lateral move, the outgunned officer has put two of the “thugs” in a cross fire. The man in the sunglasses is blocking the fire of the man behind him.



The man with the knife is the officer’s most immediate threat because he’s closest. But while the officer shoots the knife-wielding “thug,” he’s going to take fire from the gunman on the left. Regardless, most experts say your best move is to shoot the closest threat first, then target the gunman.



What to Do If You Are Outnumbered

No action will guarantee your survival if you end up facing multiple assailants in a gunfight. But these moves and accurate shooting might make the difference.

- Move to Cover
- Shield Your Gun Hand
- Make Lateral Moves
- Tangle the Bad Guys in Cross fire
- Shoot the Closest Thug First
- Shoot the Attackers on Your Gun Side Next
- Shoot Each Adversary Once and Move to the Next
- Go Back and Shoot Them Again if Necessary

Cross Fire

By moving you become harder to hit. You also can create temporary cover even when there is no cover available.

When facing multiple assailants, it is highly unlikely that they will be standing abreast of one another in a straight line like a line of targets. Two or three assailants will more than likely be standing apart from each other in a staggered configuration.

By moving laterally you use the suspects' positions against them and place them in each other's lines of fire. This provides you with some temporary cover because the suspects behind the one closest to you will be forced to hold their fire until they can get a shot at you or they will shoot their accomplice in the back. Either way it works to your benefit.

Target Selection

Now that we've looked at cover and movement, it's time to discuss who to shoot first and how to do it.

You want to shoot the assailant closest to you first. That person poses the greatest threat to you because he or she is the closest. Someone who is 5 feet away from you obviously poses more of a threat than someone who is 15 feet away. Remember the FBI statistics on distances? Shoot the closest one to you first and move out of the kill zone.

Once you have fired on the closest threat, then you need to move on to the closest threat to your gun side so you can protect your ability to fight back and keep yourself in this gun battle.

By shooting the person closest to your strong side, you not only take out the closest attacker, you also gain added protection for your gun. If you are a right-handed shooter facing three assailants and you start shooting from left to right, you leave the gun side of your body exposed for too long of a period of time to the assailant on the right. The longer your gun side is exposed, the higher the probability of you receiving a disabling injury to your shooting side.

Fire one round into each adversary and then move on to the next. Although firing multiple rounds into your adversaries is the best way to quickly incapacitate them, you are outnumbered and outgunned, and you can't concentrate too much attention on any one target. You have to "put a hurting" on these guys as quickly as you can. If you need to, you can quickly return and place additional shots into any adversary who continues to remain a threat.

Exercise

As with anything we do you need to practice survival tactics for multiple assailant assaults.

First, get your hands on some replica guns and get two or three of your fellow officers to act as bad guys. Set up a scenario and play it out from all angles. As you move, study the role players' actions and see how they react to your movements as you put them into a cross fire.

Next, head out to the range and place targets at varying distances from you and from each other. As you move to protect your gun side, see what angles you can shoot from and still place an effective shot into the target.

We need to prepare ourselves and plan for a possible attack by multiple assailants. Gang members travel in a group; that's why they call it a "gang." Train hard and practice for the day when you may be forced to face multiple assailants. ☯

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Improvised Weapons

WHEN YOU'RE IN A TIGHT SPOT AND NEED TO USE SELF-DEFENSE, THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX.

Steve Albrecht



In a pinch, you have many more options available to you than just your pistol, baton, and OC. For example, your radio can be used as an impact weapon.

Any discussion about weapons starts with the obvious reality that at any police call or field contact, there is at least one gun already on the scene: yours. How you retain that weapon and keep prying hands off of it is critical to your survival. And if we factor in that many officers carry some type of backup gun into the field, there is a distinct possibility that two or more guns will be available to both cops and crooks in any given encounter.

It's time to think outside the box—way outside the box. Armed with your usual belt, slung with police flotsam and jetsam, you hit the field confident you have a tool, a weapon, or a device fit for all occasions. But a gun can't solve all your problems. In close-quarter fights, when the suspect is right on top of you, you need to improvise and come up with practical non-firearm weapons, besides the usual pepper spray, impact weapon, or flashlight swung blindly in the dark.

The trick to street survival is to dislodge the suspect from his current line of thinking. It's suggested in baseball that hitting is all about timing and pitching is all about disrupting that timing. For us, skin-saving success demands that we surprise our foes first by disrupting their thought processes, and then by outwitting them.

Drawing your baton or impact weapon in a fight with a suspect may be exactly what he expects you to do. Using the takeaway maneuvers he's perfected in prison, he could disarm you when you expect him to give up or comply.

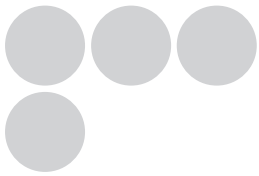
But if we go back to that same pending fight scenario and, instead of drawing your baton or pepper spray, you “execute a front snap kick” at the suspect's left kneecap (thereby sending it into outer space), the fight's over. He zigs, you zag. Here's how you describe your actions in your report later: “As the suspect took a combative stance and prepared to fight me, I executed a front snap kick, aimed at his lower left leg.” What you did was not what he expected you to do; that's the important point.

Years ago, a colleague stopped a guy late at night for a traffic violation. As he walked up to the car, the violator jumped out, confronted him, and said, “I'm gonna kick your ass!” Not missing a beat, the cop said, “Hey! It's a good thing I'm into that!” The violator's mouth hung open in that “Huh?” pose as his original thought process was “stopped.” By the time Mr. Fighter got his wits back, he was handcuffed, frisked, and unceremoniously set on the curb. Now that, folks, is an excellent example of upsetting a crook's timing.

Expand Your Arsenal

The common thinking in police work is that the use of force is a “continuum,” meaning we're not required to go through each step; we can leap ahead as necessary. As such, we're commonly taught that if the suspect uses his fists, we use our impact or chemical weapons. If he pulls a knife, we pull our gun, and so forth. While this may work, where is the “outside-the-box” thinking in most use-of-force policies?

Crooks can carry or transport zip guns, pipe bombs, stun guns, box cutters, small and large knives, daggers, blades, saps, throwing stars, pager guns, claw hammers, or steel pipes. They can use these any time during an encounter with us, without any thought to our use-of-force “rules of engagement.” Free from the boundaries of polite society, they can slash and cut and chop and strike at will.



Improvised weapons are available to the bad guys as well. Savvy officers should always be aware of common tools and other implements that people with bad intent can transform into deadly objects.

Since we can't carry a pipe wrench or a ball-peen hammer into the field, we have to find creative ways to use the other tools of our trade, namely, our brains, bodies, and the gear from our belts or duty bags.

Aim for Soft Spots

During fights and wrestling matches with suspects, cops' hands and fists can get bruised, broken, and twisted. Your elbows are tougher and, in close quarters, they work better and faster, especially when aimed at a suspect's temple, jaw, or rib cage.

In close quarters, as you struggle to gain control and you feel an unknown hand on your firearm, switch from grabbing and pulling (which is tiring, especially under stress) to a battering ram mentality. Your forehead, his nose. You can do the math there. Your report should say it all: "At that point, I felt the suspect's hands gripping my duty weapon. Fearing I would be disarmed and killed, I . . ."

Grab a Pen and Notepad

During field interview stops, many officers jot down a suspect's information on their notepads and transfer it to the "official" FI slip later. But in using this method, they miss a chance to use an improvised weapon: their hard-edged, leather- or Kevlar-covered ticket book. Keeping your FI slips in your ticket book gives you the chance to block, strike, or jab with it. Good targets include the suspect's throat, temple, and nose. Or if he is reaching for a weapon, bring the ticket book down hard across his wrists or hands.

During a traffic accident report or a crime case report, you may have your metal report box already in hand. Like your ticket book, it's an effective blocking or striking weapon, or as a last resort, a thrown-in-his-face distraction device to buy you some unholstering time.

Think about what you're holding in your hand during nearly any enforcement activity: your pen. It's one of the fastest-drawn weapons at your disposal. To say it makes for a good defensive weapon is an understatement. In a life-threatening encounter, aim for the suspect's eyes and finish the fight. A crook would do it to you if he could.

Radio Control

In these days of the \$1,500 electric brick strapped to your belt (a.k.a. your radio), too many officers have picked up bad habits when it comes to their portable use. One bad habit is carrying or transmitting with the radio in your gun hand. Another bad habit is looking at the radio instead of the crook as you speak. If you don't have a lapel mike, focus on holding your radio at eye level and in your non-gun hand, looking at the suspect, not the speaker mesh. If you need to use this hard object, you want it in your dominant hand—and you want to see an attack coming.



Choose your target wisely (not body mass or well-muscled areas) and hammer away with this two-pound impact weapon when necessary. "He kept his radio in good working order" is not a good quote for your tombstone.

Give 'Em the Boot

There is often an equipment paradox with police boots. In days of old, we wore hard-toed shoes, which were lousy for running but great for striking suspects' shinbones, kneecaps, or other hard and soft parts of their bodies if they hit the ground near you. Today's police boots are soft-toed and light as a feather, which makes them great for foot pursuits, but not so great for foot strikes.

Instead of a hard kick, consider using the edges of your boots to scrape down along the suspect's shins. Light boots also make it easier to lift your leg to hit the nerves in the suspect's upper outer thigh with multiple knee strikes.



Fights for survival can get really vicious, and you may be forced to stab an assailant with a pen or slash at him with your heavy, edged clipboard. As demonstrated on the fruits above, these everyday items can be extremely effective weapons.

Swing Low

With most kicks or impact weapon strikes, the song playing in your head should be, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." In the heat of the moment, it's easy to swing from an upright position and hit buffed-out shoulders, meaty biceps, or squat-hardened thighs. Aim low and strike the Achilles' tendon, the back of the knee, the shin, or the calf. Lots of "yoked up" convicts have scrawny legs. Don't waste your energy on big targets. Hit low, and then keep going.

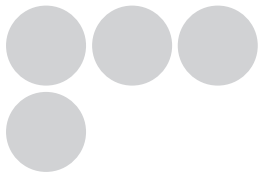
There are two keys to using improvised weapons in the field: Be ready to explicitly clarify in your report that you took "reasonable" steps, following your use-of-force model, to save yourself from great bodily injury or death. And think outside the box, away from the always-bladed field interview stance, the carefully swung baton, or the accurately aimed pepper spray. These usual ways don't always work when faced with a fighter bent on hurting you at all costs. Faced with the stress of survival, follow the advice of Baltimore baseballer Wee Willie Keeler and "Hit 'em where they ain't [looking]." 🎯



Newer, lightweight police boots are not as effective for kicking as the steel-toe variety. Aim for soft targets.

Steve Albrecht retired after 15 years with the San Diego (Calif.) Police Department, where he had worked as a fulltime officer, reserve sergeant, and Domestic Violence Unit investigator. His most recent book, "Surviving Street Patrol," is available from Paladin Press.

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Make a Chance

A WELL-THROWN PUNCH TO THE HEAD CAN HELP YOU GAIN CONTROL OF A SUSPECT OR ESCAPE A VIOLENT ATTACK.

Joel A. Johnston



A straight punch, as demonstrated by the author, focuses a great amount of force in a small area, and is a very effective technique for stunning and gaining control over a subject.

Having studied Shotokan karate for many years under the tutelage of two very experienced and very wise “seniors,” I always remember, and have often reflected on, the words of Yutaka Yaguchi (8th Dan, Japan Karate Association, and former All-Japan Kumite champion). Yaguchi tells his students that the secret to winning is to “make a chance.”

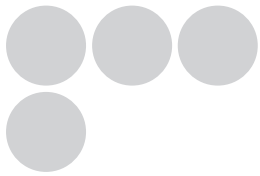
Many karate students never fully understand this concept. But you, as a police officer and someone who may have to defend your own life, better understand the concept—even if you’ve never heard the expression. “Making a chance,” simply means you must create an opportunity to either control your opponent or to escape his or her attack. Doing so almost always involves striking your opponent. And that usually involves some kind of punch.

Political Concerns

Using fists to deliver impact comes naturally to most people. Even untrained people who are attacked will almost always instinctively punch at their assailant in an effort to protect themselves.

We are all familiar with the carefully choreographed Hollywood movie scenes that repeatedly show the graphic face punch. Because of this image and the playground fights of their youth, people have a genuine belief that they can win the fight or end the confrontation by striking to the head. And in many cases this is true.

Unfortunately, punching in law enforcement, particularly to the head, suffers from several drawbacks unrelated to technique.



Some of the major drawbacks to punching a suspect in the face are that it may not look good to the public, it leaves visible injuries, and could result in legal complications.

First, there's the issue of political correctness. Law enforcement professionals have been made to believe that punching is not socially acceptable, that it is somehow unfair for police officers to engage in this type of behavior even when being physically attacked themselves because it simply doesn't look good.

Second, when punches are landed to the head, they tend to leave visible injuries—contusions, lacerations, and inflammation, just to name a few. Law enforcement officers then go through a second tier of “political correctness,” as lawyers, journalists, and other Monday-morning quarterbacks examine these injuries from their sheltered, sterile environments and automatically assume police brutality. Photographs are taken, internal complaints are lodged, lawsuits are filed, and arguments to avoid criminal culpability are advanced. All this happens without anyone even examining what behavior on the part of the subject may have precipitated the action.

Busted Hands

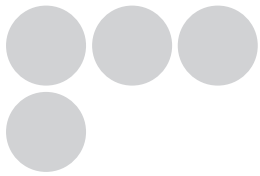
All political correctness aside, the most important concern that you should have when it's necessary to throw a punch at a suspect's head is your own survival. Ironically, that punch may endanger you as much as it helps you gain an advantage.

The fact is that when punches are landed to the head, the hand of the person throwing the punches is likely to suffer damage. The small bones of the hand—carpals, metacarpals and phalanges—do not stand up very well against the large cranial bones of the head.

I have seen numerous officers over the years appear with casts on their dominant hands after having been involved in a confrontation where they threw a punch. Fortunately, they usually prevailed in the confrontation, but ended up on “light duties” or Worker's Compensation for six to eight weeks while their “boxer's fracture” healed.

In worse cases, I have heard of officers contracting serious infections that started in their punching hands and moved up their arms because they cut their punching hands on subjects' teeth or cranial bones. Direct contact in this manner can result in the transfer of blood-borne pathogens, including hepatitis and HIV.

Disease aside there's a still more immediate potential danger in punching a suspect. If you disable your dominant hand with a punch and the confrontation escalates from that point, it may be difficult or impossible for you to access other force options that may become necessary (OC, baton, firearm, etc.). Talk about winning the battle, but losing the war.



A strong knee strike to the lower thigh will definitely get a subject's attention and help you gain control of the situation.



A backhand brachial stun to the side of the neck can be just as effective as a punch to the face.

The Advantages

So why punch at all?

Well, punching to the head *can* be extremely effective if done correctly. And, if done with the correct intent, in the appropriate context, it can be easily justified. Remember, punches directed specifically to the head are legitimate combative techniques taught in American boxing, kickboxing, karate, jiu-jitsu, kung fu, tae kwon do, and many other martial arts disciplines.

In law enforcement, the intent of punching to the head or of delivering any type of impact must be to “make a chance,” to create a window of opportunity to gain control of a violent subject or to escape from a violent subject. An effective punch to the head might achieve these goals in the shortest possible time frame.

Punching to the head is often done because it happens to be the most opportune target to achieve the desired result. But distance, body position, and the subject's actions frequently dictate the availability of targets.

Gross Motor Skill

Another reason punching is so effective is that it comes easily, naturally, and often instinctively. People, generally, have been socialized to punch to the head, through sports, news, movies, television, and observing “real life” fights.

Further, punching is a “gross” motor skill that requires very little training. We know through research, that gross motor skills are the ones that persist in times of stress.

People are always making a fist or performing a clenching action, whether knocking on a door, carrying a shopping bag, riding a bicycle, lifting weights, or driving a car. Your hand is always clenching, and it doesn't take much to throw that clenched fist at a target. So another reason to use a punch is that it's simple to execute, and that goes a long way when your body is responding to the stress of a violent confrontation.

And because it's simple, we know that a small amount of training can create an effective punch. Yes, it's true that martial artists will train for many years to “perfect” their punches, but this goes beyond the scope of what is required in a real street confrontation.

Most people hold the belief that an effective punch to the head will lead quickly to the end of the confrontation. And this is often true.

For law enforcement professionals, ending the confrontation as quickly as possible is an important goal. Remember, the longer a confrontation goes on the greater the chance of injury to all involved.

Alternative Impact

Taking the pitfalls associated with punching into account, do the potential benefits outweigh them? Are there alternatives to punches to the head that are as easy to deliver and as potentially effective?

The answer to the first question is: sometimes, yes. Sometimes the punch to the head is the best alternative at the moment, given the available time to respond, proximity to the subject, body position, the subject's actions, target availability, and your training.

The answer to the second question is: yes. However, and let's be clear about this, the alternatives are no more "justified" than punches. The concepts of reasonableness and proportionality play the same role in determining the appropriate use of force. The primary reason for employing the alternatives is for self-preservation.

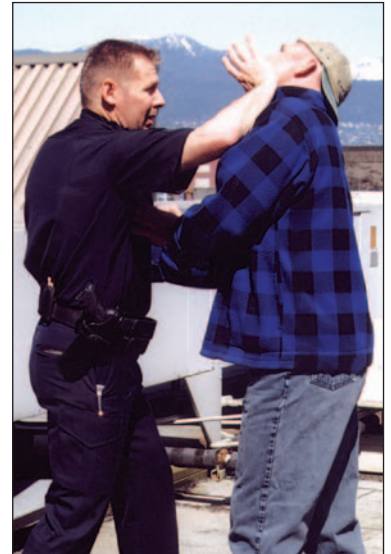
Open handed strikes, such as palm heel strikes, wrist strikes, and brachial stuns to the head or side of the neck can be extremely effective and much safer for the striker. An additional benefit of these types of strikes is that they tend not to leave visible injury, although the concussive force can be equal to, or greater than, that of a punch.

Unfortunately, these techniques are not as instinctive as the punch and require more training to implement effectively and naturally. Essentially, because of the life-long socialization process, people have to be trained to overcome their first instinct, which is to throw a punch.

There are many other striking techniques and factors that can be as, or more, effective than punches to the head. These include, but are not limited to, head butts; forearm strikes; elbow strikes; knee strikes; and kicks, all to various target areas. The effects of these techniques are dependent upon distance, reaction time, body position, subject actions, target availability, training, and other factors.

Again we must examine the purpose of the strike, be it a punch, kick, or other form of blow. The purpose must always be to create an opportunity to gain control of a violent person or to get away from that person. Strikes that are delivered with the intent to punish or to deliberately injure without purpose are not legitimate control tactics or defensive tactics. But it is unrealistic to believe that a violent, assaultive, or highly resistive individual can be effectively controlled, or evaded, without first momentarily "stunning" them, without "making a chance."

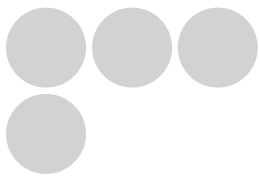
To initially engage this type of subject with wrestling, grappling, or "takedown" techniques, is to invite injury upon yourself. These types of techniques are considered to be "follow-up control" techniques, and should always be employed after sufficiently stunning the subject (unless your goal is to escape). When dealing with this type of behavior, strike first, and then employ sound follow-up control or disengagement tactics. "Make a chance." ☯



A palm strike to the lower jaw packs all the power of a fist strike, pushes the subject away from you, and is safer for your hand.

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Shooting on the Move

LEARN TO WORK WITH, NOT AGAINST, YOUR INSTINCTS.

Michael T. Rayburn



When caught in the open during an officer-involved shooting, knowing how to move to cover can make the difference between winning and losing.

According to FBI statistics, almost 95 percent of officer-involved shootings (OISs) occur at 21 feet or less, with approximately 75 percent occurring at 10 feet or less. It is also a fact that well over half of all OISs occur at 5 feet or less. With this being said, how much actual cover can there be between you and the felon who is trying to take your life?

In the vast majority of OISs, there is no cover available to the officer. Or if there is cover available, oftentimes the officer hasn't been trained in the mechanics of properly moving to cover. Since the majority of OISs are up close and personal, with no cover available, movement becomes an essential element in any gunfight.

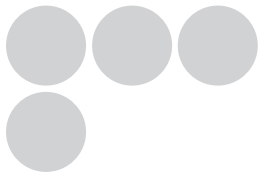
But how do you move properly? Some practitioners or self-proclaimed experts in firearms tactics and training would have you contorting your body this way and that. Others would have you walking as if your legs were made of rubber. Others still would have you performing the old "stomp and drag." I don't think any of these methods applies when you're in a fight for your life.

Don't Relearn How to Walk

The only way to move in a gunfight is to move exactly the way you're going to move in a gunfight. Sound confusing? That's because so many "experts" in the field of firearms tactics and training make the issue much more complicated than it needs to be. Some of these so-called law enforcement experts have never even walked a day in our shoes, let alone had to deal with the dregs of society that we deal with on a daily basis. Yet we tout these people as experts because they've come up with some type of tactic and named it after themselves. I'm automatically suspicious of any tactic named after the person said to have invented it.

As far as I'm concerned, fancy tactics are unnecessary. It is natural and instinctive for us to walk and run with our feet shoulder width apart. We've been doing this since we were small toddlers. Why all of a sudden when you put a gun in your hand should you have to learn how to walk all over again? Because some "expert" says so?

OISs are rapid, traumatic events that happen so suddenly a large percentage of officers involved in them say they were caught off guard. When this happens you fall victim to the action vs. reaction phenomenon, playing catch up to



The author demonstrates the isosceles stance that is the natural instinct of most shooters when they are under fire.

the suspect's actions. The way to turn this around to your advantage is to move and move quickly. This forces the bad guy to play catch up to *your* action, *your* movement.

When you're involved in a shooting you're going to want to move or run as quickly as you can from point A to point B to avoid getting killed. It's that simple. With little time to react, your body will respond by moving and running the same way you've been doing it all your life, with your feet shoulder width apart. Why would you want to fight this perfectly effective instinctive response? If I find myself in a gunfight, you certainly won't find me stomping and dragging my way across the room so slowly that my adversary can run right up on me and take me out at close range.

Nationally, the average hit ratio for law enforcement officers, standing static shooting at a paper target, is 90-plus percent. Yet when an officer becomes involved in an OIS our hit ratio is somewhere around 12 to 18 percent. Obviously, some of the loss in accuracy can be attributed to stress and the fact that, in most cases, the officer is firing second in reaction to a shooter. But a large percentage of the difference can be attributed to the fact that an officer's instinctive reactions, in most cases, directly oppose the way he or she has been trained.

Since your body is most likely to react a certain way when threatened, why not go with it and practice using these same techniques so you'll be better prepared when the time comes?

Know Your Instincts

Anyone's first instinct is to run with feet shoulder width apart. The easiest way to find shoulder width when training is to put your feet together as if you were standing at attention. Now spread your toes out as far as they will go followed by your heels. That will be shoulder width for you. Maintain this distance during training because this will be how you will walk or run during a real shooting incident.

Besides having your feet shoulder width apart, there are a couple of other instinctive reactions you'll have when you become involved in a fight for your life and your fight/flight reaction kicks in.

Your knees will bend slightly and you'll bend slightly forward at the waist. This is due to the fact that your body is subconsciously getting prepared to fight. You are bracing yourself for any type of impact and preparing yourself to react.

During an OIS, you'll also automatically protect your windpipe by lowering your chin. You can't fight if you can't breathe. Years of evolution have taught us to protect our windpipes so that we can have the air we need to fight—or, in some cases, to flee. Your brain will automatically lower your chin when it recognizes the body is being threatened.

Don't forget to do the same in training.



If a subject starts a gun-battle when you are in the open, move quickly to cover in a natural gait. Keep your feet shoulder width apart and run as you would under any other circumstance.

The Triangle Stance

Another natural instinctive reaction you'll have during a gunfight is locking your arms and wrists straight out in front of you. Some people argue about using this, the isosceles stance, versus the Weaver stance, which unrealistically involves bending the elbows. Every officer I've ever spoken with who has been involved in a shooting has told me that they used an isosceles stance. Some of these officers were never trained in the use of an isosceles stance, but when they became involved in a gunfight they automatically went into this position. We have instincts for a reason.

The interview stance is another bone of contention among firearms instructors. The interview stance, where your gun side is bladed away from a subject you're talking to, is a good sound officer survival tactic. This tactic should be used when interviewing subjects—but only then. It is meant to protect your firearm from a surprise gun-grab attempt by the person you are interviewing. That's it, nothing more. It is not a shooting stance.

Practice in Position

In most cases officers are trained in some type of static line sighted shooting—not shooting on the move. When the shooting starts you're going to want to move and move quickly. If this is the case, then why not train that way all the time? Every time you go to the range you should be practicing shooting on the move. Is it more time consuming? Yes, it is, which means it's more costly. But nowhere near as costly as it would be to replace a fallen or injured officer.

When you're at the range, forget the Weaver stance or whatever other stance you've been trained in. If you're not going to use it under the stress of an actual OIS, then don't waste your time training with it.

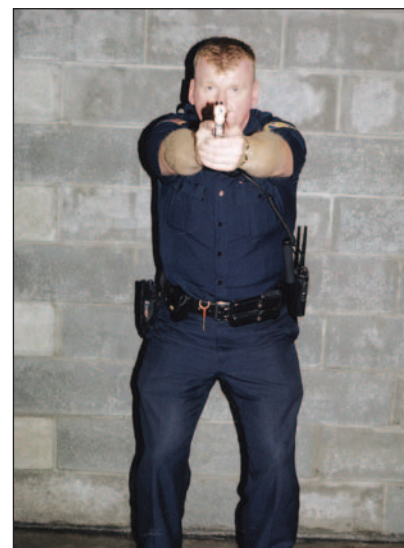
From the position your body instinctively takes, you can walk backward, forward, and side-to-side with ease. Start off slowly at first and dry fire it a few times to get the feel for it. For safety reasons you should always be training with a partner. Take advantage of this situation and have your training partner take hold of your collar as you move. This way you don't have to worry about falling. Not that you would, because you're walking the same way you always walk: naturally and instinctively.

The trick, and there really isn't a trick to it, is to maintain a solid shooting platform with your upper body as you move. Keep your arms and wrists locked out straight and focus on your target. Start off slowly taking small steps and advance yourself up to moving quickly. But maintain that solid shooting platform with your upper body. You not only want to move during a gunfight, but also to shoot accurately while doing it. If you maintain a solid shooting platform with your body you'll be able to do this.

While you should always be thinking about cover and using it properly, when there is no cover available the next best thing is to move. By moving you accomplish several things. First, and most importantly, by moving you can make yourself a more distant target to hit. Since 95 percent of OISs occur at 21 feet or less, moving out of the kill zone will greatly enhance your survival. By moving you are also cutting down on the action vs. reaction time lapse and you are making yourself a much harder target to hit.

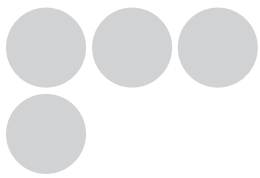
The FBI has interviewed a number of cop killers and discovered that very few have had any type of formal firearms training. Which means that even fewer, if any at all, have had any type of training in shooting at a moving target.

If you're still not convinced you should be moving in a gunfight, consider this last statistic. Almost 95 percent of officers who are able to reach cover in a shooting survive the incident. If you're still not convinced, grab your training partner and head out to the range and try this tactic. After a few rounds you'll convince yourself of how vital moving while shooting is to your survival on the street. ☯



Train to react instinctively. Here, the author's feet are shoulder width apart, and his shooting stance is the isosceles position that most handgun shooters revert to in combat.

Mike Rayburn is a 17-year veteran of the Saratoga Springs (N.Y.) Police Department and is the author of two books: "Advanced Vehicle Stop Tactics" and "Advanced Patrol Tactics." Mike is also an adjunct instructor for the Smith & Wesson Academy in Springfield, Mass.



Rapid Reload

MAKE SURE YOU ALWAYS HAVE ENOUGH BULLETS IN YOUR GUN TO KEEP IT RUNNING.

Dave Spaulding



The author demonstrates the right grip for speed loader use.

You're on patrol when you hear the sudden sound of gunfire. You pull your patrol car around and move into the parking lot of a convenience store as a masked subject runs from the front door firing a handgun.

You bail from the driver's side door and take cover behind your engine block, as you exchange rounds with the suspect. Bullets are bouncing off the hood of your cruiser as you strain to get a visual on the suspect. As you peek over the hood, you notice him trying to flank you.

In an attempt to stop his aggression, you fire a round and then your gun goes "click." It is the loudest sound you've ever heard and you're convinced the suspect had to hear it, too. What do you do?

The obvious response is to reload your gun. Without bullets, a handgun is nothing more than an expensive paperweight. Reloading this paperweight with bullets quickly is a necessary skill.

There are those who say that gunfights, statistically, are over quickly and only a few rounds are fired, so why waste precious training time on reloading drills? Well, the obvious answer is that if the gun runs dry during a gunfight, the skill to refill it becomes essential.

When using a five- or six-shot revolver, reloading is more complex in that five or six chambers must be lined up with the bullets vs. the semiauto's one magazine with the magazine well, so revolver speed loading is a must.

To my way of thinking, reloading is one of the basic essentials of firearms training. It rates right up there with other required skills such as trigger control and making multiple shots. With this in mind, let's take a look at a few combat-reloading techniques.

Revolvers

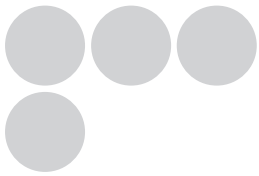
When I entered law enforcement in the mid-1970s, the speed loader was a fairly new device. In the academy, we were still instructed on how to load from dump pouches, which was a perilous endeavor at best.

The speed loader corrected this problem and made reloading the revolver a much simpler task. This device lets you load all of the revolver's chambers at once, giving the wheel gun a reloading capability similar to that of a semiauto pistol. Carrying a revolver for police service and not having at least two to three speed loaders to recharge it is, well, less than wise.

Shooting Hand Reload

The most common reloading technique for the revolver involves moving the gun to your support hand while using the thumb or finger of your shooting hand to open the cylinder release. For this technique, hold the cylinder itself open with your support hand. Use your shooting hand to remove the speed loader from its pouch and insert it into the cylinder, all rounds falling into place (hopefully) at once.

The biggest mistake many officers make with the speed loader is grabbing it from the pouch using the release knob to guide it into place. Not only is the smaller gripping surface hard to use when under stress, it's also more difficult to line up with the five or six chambers of the cylinder.



A much-improved method of speed loading the revolver involves grabbing the speed loader by its body with all five fingers and using those fingers as a guide into the cylinder.

When you do this, your fingertips will actually extend beyond the bottom edge of the speed loader, allowing them to slide past the rear of the cylinder, acting as a vehicle to line up the rounds with the given chambers. Once the bullets are in line, just release your grip on the speed loader, permitting gravity to drop it into place. At this point, any release button can be manipulated and the speed loader discarded.

Do not waste valuable time trying to retrieve the discarded speed loader. While this may sound obvious to most of us, what you do on the range will transfer to the street.

The reason for using your shooting hand is that many believe the stronger hand has greater dexterity and will be better able to line up the rounds.

Support Hand Reload

I admit there is a certain logic to strong-hand reloading, but many revolver shooters, especially those who compete with revolvers, have gotten used to loading their revolvers with their support hand. The reason for this is the same as for a pistol: The gun stays in the shooting hand, eliminating transfer time and making it ready to shoot much faster.

If you think about it, it does make sense. If we can train officers to reload with their support hand when using a pistol, then there is no reason that it cannot be done when using a revolver.

To load using your support hand, open the cylinder with the thumb or a finger on your shooting hand and rotate the cylinder open with your support hand. Use your trigger finger, which should be off the trigger anyway, to hold the cylinder open. Use your support hand to grip the speed loader as described above and drop it into place. Then use your support hand to rotate the cylinder into the gun so you can continue firing.

Pistols

Reloading a pistol is usually broken down into three categories: speed load, tactical load, and administrative load.

Administrative Reload

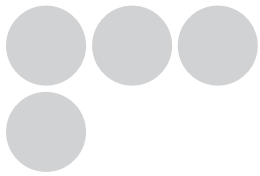
The administrative or “in-the-holster” reload is done without the gun ever leaving the safety of the holster. This comes in handy when you want to reload or top off a magazine. Eject the magazine from the gun while it remains in the holster and when you’re finished, just reinsert it from the rear and push until it locks in place. This is a range or locker room safety maneuver and it has no tactical validity on the street.

Speed Reload

The speed or fast reload is normally reserved for situations where the gun is empty or the need to reload is so overwhelming that trying to save a partially reloaded magazine should be ignored. When performing a fast re-



When using your shooting hand to hold a gun for speed loading, use your trigger finger to hold the cylinder open.



load, it is important to first make sure that you have a fresh magazine to replace the spent one. Dumping a magazine without making sure you have something to put in the gun may leave you with a fairly useless club.

It is critical, when using this technique, that you get the same grip on your spare magazine each and every time, much the same as drawing your firearm. The number one impediment to achieving this is the protective flap that is standard on all duty-style magazine pouches. A Velcro closure can be especially problematic.

While somewhat unorthodox, I have found that I can sidestep this problem by laying the magazine pouch sideways on my belt on the support side of my body with the magazine flaps pointing outward. I have put two plastic inserts under the snaps, so if I sweep my hand back in a “karate chop” fashion, I can keep my hand under the flap during the entire process. This action is similar to the arm action utilized to remove a magazine carried upright on the offside, but without a protective flap.

Once you remove the magazine, insert it into the magazine well of the pistol with your index finger pointed straight down the front end of the magazine body.

Having your finger in this position accomplishes two tasks: One, it lets your finger naturally guide the magazine into the magazine well. Second, you can use your index finger to flip off any “long rounds” protruding from the top of the magazine, which could hinder insertion.

The most reliable way to insert a magazine into a pistol is to lay the flat back of the magazine against the flat back of the magazine well. By doing so, you attain proper alignment and the magazine can be forcefully pushed into place.

To help keep the pistol in a consistent location when loading, I bring my shooting arm back so that my elbow is indexed against my torso. Doing this ensures that the pistol will be in a similar location each and every time.

Tactical Reload

Do a tactical, or slow, reload when you want to retain a partially loaded magazine for use at a later time—when it’s safe to do so. There are two ways that I suggest this be accomplished.

The first was developed by Clint Smith of Thunder Ranch and is accomplished by removing a fresh magazine from your magazine pouch and bringing it up to the pistol, just below the magazine well. Slide your index finger to the thumb side of the magazine, holding the fresh magazine between the index and middle fingers. This will allow you to drop the partially spent magazine into the web of your hand, between the thumb and index finger where the greatest level of dexterity is achieved. Once the used magazine is removed, rotate your hand over and push the fresh magazine into place.

An alternative method is even simpler. Remove the partially spent magazine into your support hand and drop it into the support side pocket. Immediately move your now-empty support hand to your magazine pouch and reload the pistol the same way as described in the above fast reload technique.

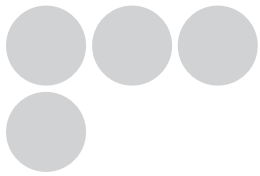
Whatever techniques you use, practicing reloading your service sidearm is a sound survival skill. It can be done in your own home without firing a shot and will go a long way toward keeping you alive if you are ever faced by that armed gunman running from a convenience store. ☯



If you index your shooting-side elbow against your torso when reloading, the magazine well will always be in the same general location for loading.

Lt. Dave Spaulding is a 27-year veteran of the Montgomery County (Ohio) Sheriff's Office. He is a member of the Police Advisory Board and the author of "Defensive Living" and "Handgun Combatives," both available from Looseleaf Law Publications (www.looseleaflaw.com).

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Disarming

FEW SURVIVAL SKILLS ARE MORE CRITICAL FOR POLICE OFFICERS THAN WEAPONS RETENTION.

Bob Bragg



With today's high-level retention holsters the perceived need for and frequency of weapons retention training seems to have waned. In fact, informal communications with trainers across the country indicate that they believe that providing an officer with a retention holster can have essentially the same effect on officer disarmings as training.

This information is, of course, a bean counter's dream. It says that all an agency needs to do is buy a piece of equipment, and it can do away with the expense and headache of weapons retention training. But is that really true?

Horror stories

You don't have to look far to see that police disarmings are still an important concern. The following are just a few recent examples of what can happen when the bad guy takes your gun.

In Fayette, Ala., a suspect being booked at the small town's police station grabbed an officer's gun and opened fire, killing two officers and a dispatcher before fleeing in a police car.

In Christianburg, Va., authorities say Officer Scott Allen Hylton, 43, died after being shot with his own gun by a man suspected of shoplifting. Minutes later, police fatally shot the suspect as he ran from a convenience store.

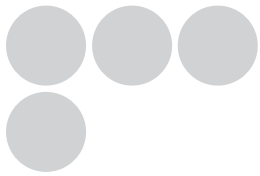
In San Antonio, Texas, a man disarmed and shot four officers with their own weapons. The attacker literally picked up one officer by his belt and actually ripped the entire belt and holster from the officer's waist.

If you need any evidence for why your agency should pay more attention to weapons retention training, use this little tidbit. Newspaper reports say the San Antonio Police Department has not specifically taught officers how to retain their weapons in at least four years.

Time Machine

Most police departments nationwide didn't start training their recruits and sworn officers how to protect their guns until the early '80s when law enforcement became widely aware of the staggering statistics regarding officer shootings. This is also the time that bullet-resistant vests started to be commonplace in policing and agencies drafted policies that required the vests to withstand the ammunition the officer carried because an officer might be shot with his or her own weapon.

When many weapons retention systems began they were offered as a separate training block. This modular paradigm has continued for most force training formats over the years, probably due to the compartmentaliza-



tion of different levels of force. Many agencies separate baton training from other impact weapons (flashlights, radios, etc), control tactics from ground survival training, and firearms retention from firearms shooting training.

There are many good weapons retention training systems to choose from out there. But regardless of the system that you may adopt, it is imperative that you take the system into the “lab” and test it.

The equipment you carry—type of holsters, backup weapons, Tasers—may also have a dramatic effect on how much time you need to spend on weapons retention training.

The type of duty station is also a factor. Does the officer usually work alone or with a second officer? Do you carry a Taser, and if so, where is it carried? Are other weapons carried? Does your agency offer plainclothes or off-duty carry training? This is only a partial list of the things that should be considered when determining your need for weapons retention training.

Backup Guns

Backup guns should always be a consideration when designing a firearm retention and disarming system. The carry of backup or secondary guns has long been a subject of discussion, but mostly within the context of a gunfight and not necessarily a fight for a gun.

But if you need a reason to consider carrying a backup gun or to lobby your command staff to let you carry one, then consider that in most potentially fatal disarmings when officers lose their primary guns they are left with no easy and effective response. However, with an accessible backup gun, you have a much better chance of survival in such a grave situation.

Just remember, your backup gun must be readily accessible to be effective as a response to someone taking your duty weapon. Unfortunately, many carry methods for backup guns require both hands to access the weapon or position the gun in a place that is difficult to access when you are fending off an attacker.

The old adage that “a weapon is only as good as its availability” is even more crucial when someone is trying to take your primary gun away from you. If you cannot access and operate your backup gun while holding onto the assailant, your primary gun, or both, then your backup gun may be worthless.

Tasers

The Taser is a recent addition to the average patrol officer’s arsenal. Of course, Tasers have been around for decades, but they used to be a “special tool” issued only to special teams or to shift supervisors. Today, many agencies are pursuing the Taser-per-officer paradigm.

Now that the Taser is no longer thought of as a “special-use-only” weapon, it has become a useful backup weapon. Unfortunately, it’s also become a retention concern. If someone takes your Taser from you before you can draw your primary weapon, then you are in big trouble.

There are a variety of Taser holsters on the market—cross-draw, same-side carry or opposite-side carry—and all present concerns that must be addressed in firearms retention training and Taser retention training.

Long Guns

Officers have long had the option to carry a long gun, most notably a shotgun. However, with the welcome trend of arming officers with patrol rifles, you may now be more likely to carry a long gun on building searches or into other places where such a weapon may present a bad guy with an opportunity for a disarming attack.

Too often, trainers simply rely on transitioning to the handgun as a retention tactic, but this creates in the officer a false sense of security. If an attacker is able to close the distance and make contact, a battle for balance and the gun will quickly ensue. It is difficult (and goes against your reflexes) to draw your handgun when your balance is disrupted or you are falling to the ground. Simply put, if you carry a long gun, you need to learn long-gun retention tactics.

Essential Training

When training to fight off a disarming attack, you need to take into account the following factors: it’s usually a surprise attack, you and your attacker will be moving, you will need to deliver counter strikes to not only



Don Gulla and Gary Drake of Arrestling.com demonstrate the use of a collapsible baton in countering a weapons grab.



The more accessible a backup gun, the more useful it will be in fending off a disarming attack.

cause pain but also true dysfunction, and you will have to follow up once there is an apparent separation from the attacker and your gun. Your training should focus on both general fighting skills and weapons retention/disarming tactics.

Phil Messina, training consultant and retired New York City police officer, says the fight is not about your gun, it's about the individual who is trying to take your gun.

"From a tactical standpoint the biggest mistake seems to be that the officer tries to turn it into a contest over a gun, rather than a fight with a person who happens to be trying to take [his or her] gun," Messina says. "In the real world, it is likely that you will have to literally disable that person (at least temporarily) before you can realistically have sole control of your own gun. The officer often moves away, turning the fight into a tug of war, which usually goes to the stronger or bigger person, rather than moving in and winning the fight. Moving inward gives you multiple opportunities to retain your weapon, while moving away usually only gives you one."

Messina offers this advice to trainers: "Trainers have officers spend too much time practicing by sight and not enough time practicing blindfolded. Often the first indication that someone is trying to take your gun is feeling the attack rather than seeing it, so more work should be done blindfolded."

Ounce of Prevention

Although the ability to retain your firearm during a disarming attempt is extremely important, it's even more important to prevent the attack.

"By the time an assailant has grabbed onto an officer's weapon, that officer has already made several mistakes," says Jim Lindell, one of the world's leading authorities on weapons retention.

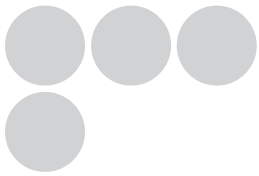
According to Lindell, the main point to remember is that "once an assailant has grabbed your weapon and you are struggling for control of it, your options are now limited, including your ability to shoot the assailant."

The best way to prevent someone disarming you is to not give them the chance. Your training should not only raise weapon awareness and teach proper distancing, but also appropriate weapons carry when the gun is deployed in uncertain environments. And don't forget to practice with your off-duty weapons as well.

Fitness and Winning

When some street hoodlum or crazed citizen tries to take your gun, you are involved in the fight of your life. You need to be physically fit to win such a fight.

Curtis J. Cope, California police consultant and longtime defensive tactics master instructor, says the follow-



ing about the recent disarming attack in Alabama. “I don’t know if physical fitness played any role in the story of an 18-year-old suspect who disarmed, shot, and killed two officers and a dispatcher. But I do know that, typically, law enforcement officers give up at least 10 years of youth to our attackers. That means that the attacker is often quicker in reflexes and probably stronger. Each officer and department must do everything that they can to make sure the officer is prepared for a confrontation that might happen tomorrow.”

Training

Probably the most efficient way to train for weapons retention training is to develop a set of movement patterns that are applicable to a wide variety of situations. This concept has been called “commonality of training” or “commonality of movement” and has the underlying premise that there is a contiguous or connected conditioning of movement patterns. Some agencies, such as the Texas Dept. of Public Safety, arrange their equipment (gun, baton, and OC) all placed next to each other, to take advantage of this concept.

But remember, your weapons retention training is only as good as you are able to adapt it to your total environment. If you attend a compartmentalized training program, be sure to take it home and work it into your current training regimen. ☉

Bob Bragg is director of instructor training at the Washington State Criminal Justice Academy in Seattle.

For more information on Lindell Weapon Retention Systems, contact Jim Lindell at the National Law Enforcement Training Center at (800) 445-0857.

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Combined Attack

RECOGNIZE WHEN TO WALK AWAY FROM A GROUP OF THUGS AND HOW TO FIGHT BACK WHEN YOU NEED TO.

Dave Spaulding



Is there really any reason to approach this situation alone? Whenever possible, practice avoidance.

Officers involved in confrontations with criminal suspect(s) are engaged by more than one person as much as 40 percent of the time, according to the FBI's latest statistics. This should not be surprising as criminals have a certain "wolf pack" mentality in which their nerve or courage is greater when in the company of other like-minded individuals. Criminals are well aware that officers patrol alone (with the exception of a few large cities) and that backup can be minutes away. A lot can happen in a few minutes.

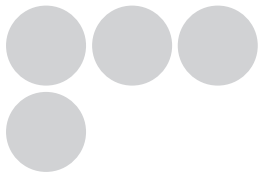
Law officers who face multiple (potential) opponents are in a perilous, if not deadly, situation. The proper response to multiple offender confrontations can be summed up as follows: avoid, evade, and counter.

Avoid and Evade

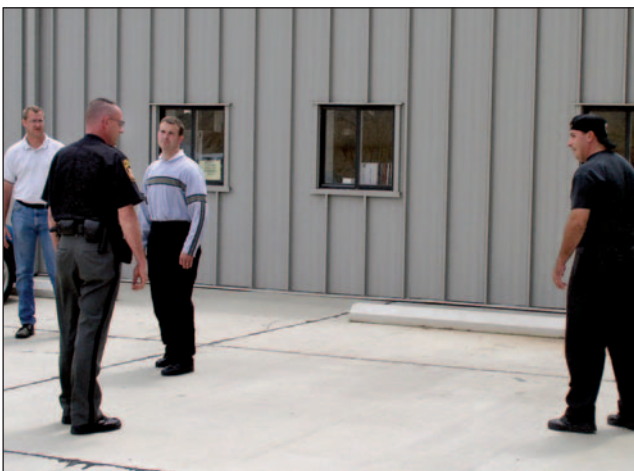
The best way to deal with multiple-offender situations is to avoid them completely. To do so, a high level of situational awareness is required, with the lone officer staying "switched on" to what is going on around him or her. Awareness can be compared to the common light switch. When it's turned on, you can easily see all that goes on around you and more easily make decisions and responses. When the light switch is off, it is dark, making decisions difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at. While officers should always have their awareness switched on whenever they are on duty, it is particularly critical when dealing with multiple offenders.

Avoiding situations involving multiple persons will be difficult while involved in police operations. This being said, however, officers can go a long way toward avoidance by gathering as much information as possible before placing themselves in such situations. Information is gathered from many sources and should not be ignored or "sloughed off." Dispatchers need to be made aware of the dangers involving multiple suspects and provide this information to patrol crews whenever possible.

If circumstances are such that a lone officer has entered a multiple person situation, the next step is to evade the problem. Evasion will normally take the form of disengagement. While many officers do not like the word "retreat," doing so is the wisest course of action when entering a situation where the officer's ability to prevail is in question. While this may bruise a few readers' egos, the probability of a lone officer prevailing against multiple offenders is certainly low, regardless of the officer's ability or level of training.



Multiple adversaries will not line up like targets on the range.



A group will spread out and try to flank a lone officer.

Don't Confuse Courage with Stupidity

I know an officer who placed himself in a very dangerous situation. He was on patrol when he noticed a lone male in an alley behind a local business. The alley was a dead end, so the only way for the suspect to leave was to travel past his position. He pulled his patrol car to the end of the alley, got out, and walked down the alley, confronting the suspect. About this time, an unseen aggressor stepped from the shadows and started to yell obscenities at the officer.

At this point, the proper response would have been for the officer to retreat—oh, excuse me, disengage—to his vehicle and avoid the confrontation until backup could arrive. Instead, by his own admission, he puffed out his chest and told both suspects, “Both you ****ers are going to jail!”

What happened next? Well, let's call it what it really was. They kicked his butt. He spent a week in the hospital while the suspects spent 30 days in jail. Not a good trade off. Like the sniper who must know that some shots just cannot be made, patrol officers need to know that there are situations in which they just cannot win. This would certainly be one of them.

Making the Best of a Bad Situation

If getting involved in a confrontation with multiple offenders turns out to be inevitable, the proper response is to counter the attack with as much violence of action as can be mustered. Multiple offenders facing a lone officer justifies rapid escalation on the force continuum. Don't be afraid to do so. This will not be a situation in which “only enough force to effect an arrest” will be appropriate.

Multiple offenders will likely cause serious physical harm to a lone officer, whether they intended to at the beginning

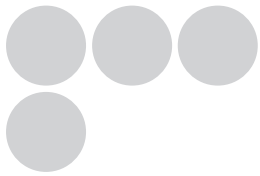
of a confrontation or not. Multiple suspects tend to draw power off of one another and, before they realize it, they have gone too far in their “little roughing up of the cop.” I have interviewed numerous officer assault suspects who told me they didn't intend to really harm the officer. It was just that “the situation got a little out of control.” This is not the time to find out whether or not the suspects are just going to have a little harmless fun at the officer's expense.

Dealing with multiple suspects will require a great deal of aggressive movement on the part of the officer, so being in good physical condition is certainly an asset. Regardless of what type of weapon(s) are involved, a moving target is hard to hit, so keep moving. Avoid the tendency to stand and fight.

Use Your Weapons

The use of any weapon will require a bit of time and space to deploy. Getting this time and space will require the lone officer to use aggressive hand-to-hand skills. This is not the time to try that nifty arm-bar takedown you learned in the gym. Moves like that are intended to gain compliance and take offenders into custody. This is a fight. And fighting requires strikes to the soft areas of the body.

Strikes to the face and neck can be very effective, even if they do not land solidly on flesh. Any time something is directed at the face area, there is an uncontrolled reflex to flinch and protect this region. Even if contact is not made with the eyes, this flinch may produce enough time for you to draw a better weapon.



Repelling a threat may very well require using a suspect as cover. Do whatever is necessary to protect yourself.



Be prepared to counter an attack by handling two suspects at once. Eliminate the danger as quickly as possible.

Remember, no one can strike something he cannot see. Move quickly and with full aggression. To deal with multiple attackers, you need to be in more than one place very quickly. You may very well need to deliver multiple blows on multiple persons within 1.5 seconds. A superior fighting attitude will win the day.

Using a baton can keep multiple suspects at bay, as long as they do not have a superior weapon like a firearm. An impact weapon is only as good as its reach and a gun nullifies this advantage. I interviewed an officer who fought off three suspects with his ASP expandable baton by “swinging the thing back and forth as fast and as hard as I could,” he said. “Oh yeah, I also screamed, yelled, and generally acted like a crazy man. It’s kinda’ interesting how suspects will give someone they think is crazy a wide berth.” Doing the unexpected can have fantastic results.

If firearms are involved, using cover may mean the difference between life and death. Taking note of possible cover, as well as escape routes prior to making contact, is a good idea when responding to any situation. Keep in mind that when dealing with multiple suspects the closest cover may be one of the suspects themselves.

Very seldom do potential attackers line up side by side like targets on the range. People who are preparing to attack separate and stagger themselves. Moving in such a way as to put the suspects in each other’s line of fire may delay their attack, or, as in the case of one situation I am aware of, result in one suspect actually shooting the other. This is certainly one way to reduce the odds against the lone officer.

Regardless of what counter response is chosen, do something! Even if your course of action turns out to be wrong, you have to do something. Just don’t stand there flat footed (no pun intended) and let your fate rest in the hands of a violent criminal offender who likely lacks the compassion that you possess. Never make the mistake of applying your thoughts or feelings to those of the criminal. Trust me, they are not the same. Stay alert, stay in shape, and practice with your personal weapons. Do the unexpected. And remember, constantly “check your 360.”

*Dave Spaulding is a lieutenant and 27-year veteran with the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office in Dayton, Ohio. He is a member of the **POLICE** Advisory Board and the author of “Defensive Living” and “Handgun Combatives,” both available from Looseleaf Law Publications (www.looseleaflaw.com).*

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Countering Canine Attacks

STREET THUGS ARE USING ATTACK DOGS ON POLICE, AND YOU NEED TO KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THEM.

Michael T. Rayburn

You and some fellow officers are serving a warrant on a drug dealer. As you enter the suspect's backyard, he unleashes his pit bull with the command, "Attack!" The powerful animal lunges toward you with fierce determination and snarling teeth.

You have no choice. You draw your service weapon and fire three rounds into the dog. Two find their mark in its chest cavity, while the third rips through one of its front legs. It takes a few more paces, collapses, and dies.

This is not a far-fetched scenario. Pit bulls, rottweilers, dobermans, and other attack dogs have become part of the street criminal's arsenal. They represent a real danger to law enforcement officers. And you need to know how to deal with them.

The first thing you need to realize is that you have to conquer your fear. A dog attack can be controlled, but if you panic and let fear take over and try to turn and run in an attempt to avoid a bite, a dog will run you down.

Now, don't get me wrong, there are times when turning and running is your best option. If the dog is half a block away and you're standing close to your patrol car, there's nothing wrong with jumping into your cruiser to avoid a bite or to avoid having to shoot the animal.

Unfortunately, you may not have the option of retreating. You may have to stand and fight.

Making a Stand

The first thing you have to realize is you're not dealing with a friendly, old puppy dog. Man's best friend is a wonderful creature, but it's also an animal. Worse, it's a predatory animal. That means that when a dog attacks, its instinct is that of a predator, and the way to prevent serious injury and even death is to acknowledge and respect that instinct.

Never turn your back on a predator in close quarters. If you turn and run, you become nothing more than prey. Instead, face the animal squarely and bend your knees to lower your center of gravity.

Once you're in position, start yelling at the animal as you face it. An attacking dog is expecting you to turn and run. When you face it and act aggressively toward it, you may scare it off. Unfortunately, a trained or determined animal will not be swayed by this tactic.

Regardless of whether the dog is a trained attack dog at the command of a bad guy, or a suddenly irritated and aggressive family pet, be careful about cornering or trapping it. Always give an animal a way out or a way to retreat. Trapping a dog in a corner and leaving him with no other option but to fight his way out is a sure way to get bitten.

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Stopping an Attacking Dog

- ✓ Lower your center of gravity by bending your knees.
- ✓ Yell at the dog.
- ✓ Spray it with OC.
- ✓ If you can do so safely, shoot the dog before it bites you.
- ✓ When you can't shoot the dog before it bites, control the attack by making the dog bite your weak side arm.
- ✓ Do everything you can to stay on your feet.
- ✓ Shoot the dog in the chest or shoulder until it releases you.

will get bitten as the dog tries to fight his way past you. Remember, even a dog that wasn't committed to the attack will fight to get away from you and the effects of the OC when trapped.

Also, keep in mind that just as OC spray does not work on all humans, it won't work on all canines. Dogs that have committed to an attack and trained or conditioned dogs won't be fazed by pepper spray any more than a human PCP user. Worse, even if a dog is susceptible to the pain of OC, it can cover a lot of ground before the spray has time to take effect.

Taking the Bite

As we've discussed, dogs are meat eaters and their instinct is to hunt and kill. A dog kills in the wild by grabbing its prey with a bite, pulling it down, and tearing out its throat. And that's exactly what an attacking dog will try to do to you. Your survival depends on using the dog's instinct against it.

First, face the animal squarely in a low-center-of-gravity stance with your knees slightly bent and your non-shooting arm extended. Most dogs will bite the body part that's closest to them unless they have been specifically trained to do otherwise. Even then, training has a hard time overriding the animal's instincts. By presenting the dog with your non-shooting arm to bite, you can take control of the attack.

If you find you have trapped a dog in a corner, keep facing the dog and slowly start to back away, giving it an escape route. This tactic will work on most dogs that are not committed to the attack but are instead reacting out of fear.

A determined animal who is on the attack and committed to the bite is another story. It's made up its mind to attack you and is actively charging you, and it won't back down.

OC Spray

A determined dog can only be deterred with force. Which means you need to decide between OC spray and deadly force. OC is sometimes a viable option, but its execution can be tricky and its results can be unpredictable.

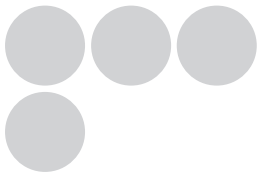
For example, if you do decide to use OC on a dog, it is imperative that you leave it an escape route. If you don't, then you



If a dog attacks you, try to offer the animal your non-shooting arm. While it might not be pleasant, this will leave your shooting hand free to use your gun.



While a dog's head might seem the best target, aim down and away from you at the dog's shoulder to avoid hitting your own arm.



When you are braced, draw your pistol and prepare yourself for the counterattack. Make sure you have a safe background for shooting before you fire any rounds toward the charging animal. If you do not have a safe background to shoot the dog as it's charging you, then you will have to take the bite.

Once the animal clamps down on your arm, you can turn to try and maneuver it into a better position for shooting. Just make sure you stay on your feet. In the case of a larger dog such as a 130-pound rottweiler, it will be very difficult for you to maneuver the animal. A dog has four legs and runs every day and a large dog is a strong dog, so it will be difficult to handle and turn.

When you don't have a safe background for shooting and cannot maneuver the animal, then you can shoot in a downward position using the ground as a safe backstop. Once the dog latches onto your non-shooting arm, raise your weapon up over the top of the dog and fire into it from a downward position angled out away from yourself, using the ground as your backstop.

Try to aim for the dog's shoulder. This will allow you to hit some of its major organs and blood vessels. At the very least you'll break its shoulder, which will lessen the dog's mobility and slow it down to give you a better shot.

You might think that a headshot is the way to go in this situation, but that can be a very bad option. Remember, the animal's head is latched onto your arm via its teeth. Further, the dog's head is going to be thrashing about in its attempt to drag you down, so there's a good chance you'll miss or your weapon will be knocked around. In addition, as you raise the weapon toward the animal's head, there is a chance it will let go of your non-shooting arm and latch onto your shooting arm or hand. And finally, just as with human targets, a dog's head is smaller than its body and therefore harder to hit.

Working Out

In the academy you were sprayed with OC to teach you that you can fight through its effects. So, too, you should experience a bite from a police K-9 to show you that you can fight through a dog attack. You need to learn that a dog attack can be controlled.

You need to train and be prepared for any possible attack and that includes a canine assault. Whether it's an intentional assault by a trained dog or a family pet that's gone bad, you need to know how to respond appropriately to this threat. You would never want to be forced to shoot someone's pet, but the threat from these animals is real and your response must be appropriate. ☉

Michael T. Rayburn is a 24-year veteran of Law Enforcement and the author of "Advanced Vehicle Stop Tactics" and "Advanced Patrol Tactics." The books and his video "Instinctive Point Shooting with Mike Rayburn" are available through www.calibrepress.com.

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Structure Searches

WHEN IT COMES TO SEARCHING BUILDINGS, THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A "SAFE" HOUSE.

Gerald W. Garner



Shortly before 6 a.m., a 39-year old patrolman was shot fatally during a burglary at a clothing store. With backup officers en route but not yet on the scene, the officer entered the structure alone, began a search, and got into a struggle with a male adult. The subject disarmed the officer and shot him with his own 38-caliber service weapon. The bullet passed through a gap on the side of the officer's vest and pierced his heart.

Early in the afternoon on the same day, sheriff's deputies were searching a home for two jail escapees. A deputy opened the door to a bedroom and was hit in the head and below his body armor with several revolver rounds. He died of his injuries.

Thousands of times a day in this country peace officers search homes, businesses, schools, and other structures for hidden offenders. Structure searches can turn into a high-risk assignment for the officers performing them. They are made all the more dangerous by the presence of one or more searching errors that can lead to unnecessary bloodshed.

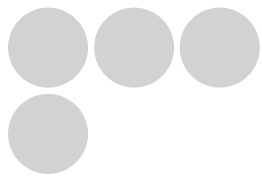
But none of these "fatal errors" has to happen. There are a number of effective steps that you can take to carry out this vital task safely. The first is to find out what you're dealing with.

Gather Information

Assembling as much information as possible before starting your search will make your efforts safer and more effective. Although you don't want to be paralyzed into inaction because you don't have every single question answered, you should attempt to answer the following, key queries:

What is the layout of the structure to be searched?

What do you know about the offender(s)?



Structure Searches Checklist

- ❑ Get as much information as possible before starting the search.
- ❑ Never enter the structure alone; have adequate help on hand.
- ❑ A sloppy approach or entry can prove fatal; execute both with caution.
- ❑ Search with one or more partners and coordinate your actions.
- ❑ Make good use of solid cover during the search process.
- ❑ Search in detail and repeat your search as many times as necessary.
- ❑ Do not make dangerous assumptions or let down your guard too soon.
- ❑ Use every piece of equipment at your disposal to make the search safer and more effective.
- ❑ Critique a completed search in order to do even better the next time.

- What crimes are known or suspected?
- Are there believed to be weapons involved? (A safe assumption is that deadly weapons are always a potential danger.)
- What was the apparent point of entry?
- Who else may be inside?
- What dangers may lurk outside the structure?
- What don't you know about the situation that could pose a danger?

Get Assistance

Once you've gathered as much information as possible about the task before you, make sure you have enough help to do the job right.

Structure searches are multiple officer jobs. Never start one alone. You should have a search partner with you at all times, with one or more officers remaining outside to watch for offenders who may dash from the building.

The size and configuration of the structure to be searched will help dictate how much help you'll need. Two officers inside and two outside (at diagonally opposite corners of the structure) may be adequate for the search of a residence. On the other hand, multiple two-officer search teams inside and half a dozen officers on watch outside may be necessary

for the proper search of a large, irregularly configured building.

Wait for adequate backup to arrive before beginning an interior search. Remain outside and behind cover until help arrives, even if doing so gives an offender an opportunity to flee. If you're unable to assemble enough help to adequately cover both the inside and outside, abandon the exterior and take your assistance inside. It is better to allow a flushed offender to escape than to endanger yourself by relying on insufficient searching help.

Make a Safe Approach and Entry

Don't wait until you're inside a structure to start looking for danger. Officers have been murdered by look-outs, getaway drivers, and burglars' backups that were positioned outside buildings. As you approach the scene, look for anything suspicious, such as vehicles parked where they shouldn't be. Use good cover tactics and stay alert for sudden threats.

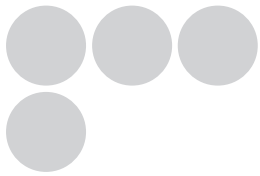
Once you and your search partner are ready to make entry, do so quickly. Never linger in a doorway or other opening. If possible, utilize an entry point other than the one apparently used by the offender. He may be waiting just inside.

Announcing your presence as "the police" is a decision to be made on a case-by-case basis. If you feel there is a good chance innocents are inside, such as residents or a cleaning crew, announcing yourself and then waiting a minute or two or before entering is probably a good idea. If you're fairly certain only bad guys are inside and they're likely already aware of your presence, an announcement may only endanger you and your partners. (But in the case of a K-9 deployment, an announcement should always precede the release of the dog.)

If you are entering via an inward-opening door, throw it open forcefully to reveal anyone concealed behind it. You and your partner should move rapidly through the opening, wrapping yourselves around the doorframe to minimize exposure. (Decide in advance who will go first to prevent a collision in the doorway.) Once you are inside, keep your back against the wall and scan visually for immediate threats with your weapon in hand. Move quickly to solid cover and start your search from there.

Coordinate with Partners

Stay in close touch by radio with all of the officers on the scene of a structure search. Remain in constant communication with your dispatcher, too. He or she may be able to feed you additional information, such as



Look for things out of the ordinary. For example, why is this sports car parked in the handicapped spot?



Use chalk or tape to mark areas already searched.

reports of additional interior alarms being tripped.

Poor coordination and communication can lead to fatal surprises, including officers shot by their peers in a case of mistaken identity. To prevent such a tragedy, it's important that everyone know where everyone else is and what is to happen next.

Once you're inside a structure, hand signals may be preferable to spoken commands. Realize, too, that a chattering radio can give away your position. Maintain good sound discipline even as you listen intently for giveaway noises from your adversary. It's a good idea to remain still and simply listen from time to time.

You and your search partners should make at least a preliminary "plan of attack" before entering a structure. Once inside, one officer at a time should move from one source of cover to another while the other provides cover. Then reverse the roles. Continue the "move, search, and cover" routine until the operation is complete. This is not the place for freelance searching by anyone. Neither member of the team should leave the other's sight.

Think Cover

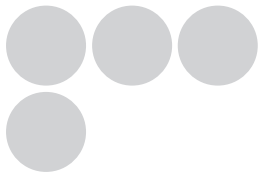
Don't forget that cover is relative. A barrier that might stop a low-velocity handgun round isn't much help if you're under fire from a rifle-wielding attacker. You want the best cover you can access quickly. The best cover in the world won't be of much help if it is 100 yards away and you are under fire. Inside a structure, heavy furniture may be the best cover you can anticipate.

Once you find good cover, use it carefully. Keep covered what you don't want to lose. Expose as little of yourself as possible when you look from behind cover. Peek quick and low, and try to avoid looking twice from exactly the same place. "Think cover" throughout a building search. Next to your search partner, cover is your best friend.

Pay Attention to Positioning

Everything you learned about safe positioning in your officer survival training is applicable during a structure search. Stay alert for surprises. Be conscious of the location of every member of the search team. Have an escape route in mind in case a quick retreat becomes necessary. Don't pass by unsecured doors or hallways. Pay special attention to closets, storage areas, attics, basements, and crawl spaces. Be prepared to search anywhere a human body—including a small and flexible one—might be concealed.

With a multiple-story structure, consider starting at the top and working down floor by floor to permit an of-



fender to be flushed out rather than trapped in a position he must defend. You may need to post officers on each floor to prevent an offender from back-tracking via stairs or elevators into an area already cleared. On a large structure, you might use chalk or bits of tape to mark doors and areas already covered.

Do not stand directly in front of a door you are about to open. Don't move into another officer's potential line of fire or otherwise block his vision. And never put a potential threat behind you.

Avoid Complacency

Complacency and carelessness can kill you. So can making a dangerous assumption. These come in various shapes and sizes, but can include the following:

"Cornered crooks will surrender."

"All burglar alarms are false."

"If the bad guy was here, he's already left the building."

"Police search dogs are infallible."

The only safe assumption to make about a structure search is that it is a potentially dangerous undertaking. It is deserving of your full attention and your best survival skills.

Apathy can be one of your deadliest enemies during a structure search. Don't allow it to creep into your subconscious or dictate your actions. Stay sharp. Be on the lookout for the next threat to appear without warning. If you sniff out one offender, carefully secure and search him. Then, remove him under guard and resume your search for the next one, even if you believe he was alone. Do not lower your level of alertness until you are absolutely certain that the search is over and the danger has passed. If you feel you may have missed a hidden offender, repeat the search as many times as necessary until you feel comfortable that the place really is clean.

Take Your Time

Hurrying a structure search can have fatal consequences. You have not saved time if you or another officer has to return and do it again because the first effort was sloppy or incomplete. A safe structure search demands your full attention as a street-savvy professional, and that means taking the time to do it right.


You don't want a hidden offender to later escape because you rushed past his hiding place. And you certainly do not want to give him the opportunity to attack you or your search partner because you got careless in an effort to save time. That next call can wait until you finish doing the job right.

Critique Performance

When the operation is over and the area secured, discuss with your search partners what went well, what was learned, and what might have been done better.

Then, critique your own handling of the challenge. What would you like to do differently next time? You may even be able to learn things from a captured offender. Where was he hiding? Did he hear or see the searchers? When? Were they vulnerable to him?

Take all of the information you gather into account for planning your next search. Practice what you have learned. It just may help to save your life the next time out.

Stay safe by always looking out for the next threat, communicating with your search partners, and critiquing yourself honestly when the search is done so as to get better (and safer) for the next one. 

*Gerald W. Garner, a member of the **POLICE** Advisory Board, is a 34-year veteran of law enforcement. He has authored six books on law enforcement topics.*

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