

Trigger Discipline

Part 2 in a multiple part series on the Safe and Proper use of your defensive tool

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FOAC News Letter

The cornerstone of all firearms training, no matter the context is safety. All Americans who exercise their 2A Rights must also exercise them responsibly; this begins with safe gun handling.

Many training organizations have various "Safety Rules" that if followed will prevent someone hurting themselves or someone else. A firearm is like a hammer or a chainsaw, it, on it's own, is incapable of inflicting harm. However, just like a hammer or a chainsaw, in the hands of a person who is ignorant, physically incapable, undisciplined, or criminally inclined, then that PERSON has the potential to pose danger to themselves or those around them.

Although it is good to know the parts and nomenclature and basic operations of your firearm, you don't have to be a junior gunsmith to be able to handle a gun safely. The 2 most important "gun parts" to know is the muzzle and the trigger. This article I will discuss the Trigger and Trigger Discipline.

99% of all guns that you will see in real life, in a movie, in a museum or on the range have a trigger. The trigger is the lever that is designed to be pressed by your trigger or index finger and facilitates the firing sequence. It is what makes the gun go "bang". All of the national training organizations have a safety rule to address this:

NRA: ALWAYS keep your finger off of the trigger until you are ready to shoot.

USCCA: keep your finger off of the trigger and outside the trigger guard until you are on target and made the decision to shoot.

I.C.E. Training: Keep your finger somewhere other than the trigger until you are ready to shoot.

Nowhere *in nature* do we pick up or handle an item or object while isolating our index finger from the rest of our digits. "Trigger Finger Discipline" is a learned skill and we, as responsible gun handlers must be "disciplined" to do it all of the time... every time. It takes practice to master this. The ONLY time we make physical contact with the trigger is when we want to make the gun go bang.

It is important to recognize that the majority of time that we are handling a firearm; cleaning it, putting it into a holster, admiring it, inspecting it, transporting it, putting it away, picking it up, presenting it from a holster, passing it to a friend, holding it at a ready position, loading it, unloading it, retrieving it from a lock box, clearing a malfunction, cocking it, de-cocking it.... your finger SHOULD BE somewhere OTHER than on the trigger.

I recommend finding a tactile index point on your firearm that you can consistently keep your trigger finger when not shooting. On a semi-auto pistol, most folks can feel the ridge where the slide and frame meet, or perhaps the bump where the backside of the take down lever protrudes from the frame. Perhaps feeling the cylinder of a revolver against the top of the trigger finger... Find that spot, that you can consistently "feel" so that you don't have to look where your finger is, you just know it is in the "safe" spot. Keep your finger there.... And move it to the trigger only when you are ready to shoot.

It is not enough to simply keep your finger off of the trigger. The trigger finger must be HIGH above the trigger guard. One of the body's natural reactions to a surprise stimulus or if you slip or lose your balance is that if you are holding something, you will likely clench your fists and "grasp" whatever you are holding. If that is a firearm, and your finger is near the trigger guard, you will likely slip the index finger into the guard and perhaps put your "booger hook on the bang switch". This could facilitate a negligent discharge with potentially life changing consequences.

So when do we ACTUALLY touch the trigger? When are we really "ready to shoot"?

We should ONLY touch the trigger when we have positively identified our target, we have made the conscience decision to put a hole or holes in said target, and we are in a shooting position. Until then, we are not truly ready to shoot. Too often in square range training we lose sight of the fact that we must positively identify our targets. We often get into a rhythm of administrative hole punching as we stare down our paper targets like Gary Cooper at High Noon. (younger folks may want to Google Gary Cooper, High Noon). The cognitive process of target identification is often dismissed or assumed. We, the law abiding armed American Citizen, do not get to pick when and where we are attacked by a violent criminal. Frankly if we KNEW we were going to get jacked up at the grocery store today... we wouldn't go to the grocery store. A Dynamic Critical Incident will likely be chaotic and confusing. We MUST learn to only touch the trigger once we have identified the attacker, we have made the choice to defend ourselves against it, and when we are in a shooting position.

Unfortunately this is a lot to consider when seconds count during an attack that we didn't start and could not get away from, but it is part of our duty as responsible gun owners to consider it. This should further emphasize the importance of training. Remember, the 2nd Amendment has 2 components: Armed and Well Regulated. Seek out training, learn to run your gun efficiently and intuitively.

Lastly, as I wrap up this installment, consider one more rule, "The Big Picture Rule". Every time you pick up your gun, consider this:

Recognize that YOU are in control of a firearm, if YOU use this firearm carelessly, ignorantly, or with malice, YOU have the potential to harm or kill yourself or someone else.

Act accordingly. Don't just be an armed American, be a responsibly armed American!

Stay armed, alert, safe, and be well regulated!