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SHOTGUN ACCESSORIES

With a vast amount of accessories available for the most popular models it can be quite easy to overindulge in this area with some very useless add-ons that just make a weapon for home defense impractical with extra weight and bulk. That being said, you will find the most useful accessories described below that will be a benefit for your home defense usage.

SLING

A shotgun necessity—a full length firearm shouldn't be without one. The sling isn't just for carrying your weapon, it provides added stability when aiming and added security for weapon retention if you wrap a section around your wrist, making it much more difficult for an attacker to gain possession of your gun. Don't go cheap and low-quality for

a sling! Remember its providing added stability and security so the material, swivels and other hardware should be as high-quality as you can get.

WEAPON LIGHT

A mounted light is vital for a home defense shotgun. You need a weapon mounted light—not a flashlight fashioned to your gun in some impractical kind of way. Using a shotgun for home defense you will definitely want to be set-up for dark encounters. Those criminal minded people (or threatening wildlife) tend to favor the nighttime to implement their bad deeds so you should be ready to make use of artificial lighting that works in unity with your weapon. There is much research and development put into tactical lighting and you want to be knowledgeable about the benefits of the expertly developed illumination for firearms. The weapon mounted light (or at least the type you want to get) has a pressure switch, or paddle switch, that are quick and easy to operate. In tense situations you want to be able to turn on and off your light with the least amount of hassle. Although you're able to see better in dark or poorly lit environments with your light on, you don't want your target to know where you are all the time. Pressure pad type switches are triggered by pressure on and off the fore

end of the gun. It may take a bit of practice to get used to the right pressure to use, but it won't take long to able to subconsciously turn on and off your tactical light with ease.

Mounting the light happens in one of two ways: a mounting bracket manufactured for specific gun models is installed on the forward part of the magazine in which the light will mount onto; or a picatinny rail (remember that the Remington Versa Max Tactical shotgun came with this) can be permanently mounted on the magazine tube of the gun and a light can be mounted onto that (as well as many other accessories.) The picatinny rail has the added benefit of a quick release lever that facilitates the removal of the light, which can come in handy if you find you target is no longer a threat (or maybe wasn't a real threat to begin with) and you can quickly have use of a light without aiming your weapon.

SHELL HOLDER

Since most guns are not magazine fed, the shells usually have to be carried around loose and loaded one at a time, unless you have a shell holder. They are typically molded plastic racks that mount to the stock of the gun (the opposite side to where you would mount your cheek) or on the side of the receiver opposite to the rejection port. You will be able to hold another 4-6 shells in a holder which means you can be stocked with 12-16 rounds - all on your weapon.

Shell holders are also valuable to be able to carry different ammunition. While you may regularly only need 00 buck shots within the close quarters of your home, you may be in a situation where your target is 100 yards away making it a shot for a slug. So, being well prepared, your shell holder is holding slug shots for the unlikely event that you need to be prepared for a distant shot.

SIGHTS

In home defense preparation, sights aren't always the number one thought of accessory as they are for those distant shots that aren't really needed inside a house. Considering that it is always better to eliminate a threat from as far away as possible, sights are useful to have if you're in a situation that warrants some fine tuning to hit the target. There are two possible sighting systems for use on a tactical shotgun:

IRON SIGHTS—A front post sight that is designed for easy target acquisition and works with a rear sight that can usually be adjusted for elevation and windage.

HOLOGRAPHIC SIGHTS—The 'top-dog' of shotgun sighting systems, this is the superior sight that provides a wide field of view and a red ring to assist in quickly zoning in on your target. The top-quality models can cost as much as the gun itself, so

it may be a bit of an overindulgence to some.

AMMUNITION

As described earlier, the versatility of a shotgun is greatly influenced by the shell. Knowing about the effects of the various types of ammunition will provide you with the information to best prepare your home for threats. Basically, there are just two types of ammunition to choose from: slugs and shots. However, within each of those two categories, there are a varied and extensive list of options. Basic details about each are described below.

SLUGS: Not going to be the top choice but it is advisable to have some on hand for certain situations. Slugs have incredible knock down power at close range and can extend the range of a shot out about 100 yards in the right conditions, so you don't have to switch weapons. The couple of drawbacks to be aware of: they can dangerously over-penetrate, especially at close range—could travel clear through the target and walls, furniture, or anything else in its immediate path; requires a more accurate aim due to the reduced spread of the slug, which is more difficult for some in high-stress situations.

SHOT: The gem of the shotgun, hence the name. This is where the great versatility comes in for shotgun shells—there are literally thousands of choices available and it's important to have a general idea of what

they are capable of. The following table will help you understand the sizing of shot that classifies the most common shot sizes used:

| SHOT SIZE | PELLET DIAMETER | PELLET WEIGHT (GRAINS) |
|-----------|-----------------|------------------------|
| #4 Buck | .24 | 20.6 |
| #3 Buck | .25 | 23.4 |
| #2 Buck | .27 | 29.4 |
| #1 Buck | .30 | 40.0 |
| #0 Buck | .32 | 48.3 |
| #00 Buck | .33 | 53.8 |
| #000 Buck | .36 | 68.0 |

Here are the best loads for your home defense shells:

- #1 buck shot—.30 caliber pellets
~11 pellets per shell
- #0 buck shot—.32 caliber pellets
~9 pellets per shell
- #00 buck shot—.33 caliber pellets
~8 pellets per shell

Noticing that the number of pellets decrease as the size of each shell increases, be sure to keep in mind that less pellets that are shot at a target, the less chance there is for contact. A 0 or 1 buck is a great combination of stopping power and spread considering that 9 .32 caliber balls fired at the same time is a good amount of lead and power.

Describing the Gauge, Length of the Shell



Even if you haven't had any experience with a shotgun, you've probably heard the term "gauge", as it related to a shotgun, before in movies, TV shows or the news. The gauge refers to the bore size of the barrel, or in other words, the inside diameter of the barrel. Except the gauge number doesn't actually refer to the size of the bore itself, but the weight, in fractions of a pound, of a solid sphere of lead with the diameter of the sphere equal to the inside measurement of the barrel. So a 12 gauge has the barrel diameter that would fit a lead ball that weighs 1/12th of a pound (.729 inches in diameter).

It is confusing when you first hear it and it's the not in any way relatable to how rifles and pistols are measured, but there it is

nonetheless. The main fact to keep in mind is that the smaller the number of the gauge, the larger the bore of the weapon. So a 20 gauge shotgun is much smaller than a 12 gauge. Luckily, there are much less gauges of shotguns than there are calibers of rifles and pistols, and there are really only 2 or 3 gauges that are common with the most popular being a 12 gauge.

We've adopted this gauge measurement from the way cannons were classified, which had been described as 12 pounders or 24 pounders, rather than the caliber as other firearms are classified as today (ex. 155mm, 105mm, 88mm.)

Listing of the common shotgun gauges:

- **.410**—the odd one out in the shotgun line-up, it's measured in diameter instead of weight. This is the smallest option for a shotgun favored by younger shooters for its forgiving nature and low recoil (the spring back from the force when fired) and popular shell size. This is not the best for home defense use, even for young shooters. It's best suited as a small sporting shotgun for shooting at fowl and small game.
- **28 gauge**—probably the least used gauge. Has the same uses as the .410 for sporting purposes

- **20 Gauge**—packs a punch with a lighter spring back than a 12 Gauge. Suitable for a home defense application for the young/diffident user and still has a variety of shell options, although not as much as the 12 gauge.
- **16 Gauge**—the mid-point between the lighter feel and recoil of the 20 gauge and the power of the 12 gauge. This was more popular in the first half of the 20th century mainly as a bird gun. Not ideal as a home defense weapon due to the low selection of shells and because most designs are single shot guns.
- **12 Gauge**—The shotgun of choice for home defense needs. The majority of shell sales are for 12 gauge shotguns. This gauge has been the favorite for militaries, police departments and citizens for over a century. It has the most variety of gun styles, shell options and accessories. Henceforth, the information given will be in reference to the 12 gauge.
- **10 gauge**—although a bigger barrel, it's not necessarily a more powerful option and not as common now a days mainly due to its bulkiness and overall weight. Although these types of shotguns do have their purpose, they aren't appropriate as a weapon for the home.

LENGTH OF THE SHELL

The length of the shell is usually referred to in inches. It describes the length of the fired case—not the unfired case; this is important to be familiar with as you want to be sure the shotgun you have for home defense can accept all available shell lengths.

Common lengths for 12 gauge shells:

- **2 ¾”**—tried, tested, and true option; has been around the longest and has the most choice for combination of loads for buckshot and slugs
- **3”**—the ‘magnum load’ before the 3 ½” came out; longer more powerful load than the 2 ¾”; good selection of loadings
- **3 ½”**—the largest of the 12 gauge shell; powerful, contains a lot of shot and lots of selection for loads

It is very important to never use a longer shell than what is marked on the barrel, but a shorter shell is always acceptable. Bigger is not always better—the strong kick back from a 3 ½” shotgun shell makes it hard to properly make another shot right away.

Recommendation for home defense usage: use 3” chambered 12 gauge shotgun and mostly use 2 ¾” loads.

The Valuable Nature of A Shotgun



The shotgun is probably the most common element of a home defense plan. While rifles and pistols have their place, most households that are prepared for the necessity to protect their home and loved ones have at least one shotgun as part of their weapons collection or their only weapon is a shotgun. They gain their popularity as a household weapon from the versatility of the ammunition, the ease-of-use and the fact that they are effective man-stoppers, specifically in the close quarters of a house.

The low-tech nature of a shotgun design and

the low cost, when compared to rifles or pistols, adds to their appeal and the manufacturing of this type of firearm is a great indication of its practical use and widespread availability. With so many options to choose from you can be sure that there are many of them that are not appropriate for use in home defense. Many of the shotguns are used in various sporting applications and are not the ideal choice to have in the event of a threat on your home and family.



As an example, the birding gun you may already have or thinking of getting as a multi-purpose sporting/home defense gun will have a choke which is great for hitting your target in sport but practically useless when it comes to defensive situations. As well, the barrel of a birding gun is generally a 22-24" barrel (and longer) and is geared to hunters who have to time to line up their shot, which is not usually how it plays out when you are dealing with a defensive situation in your home.

Ensure that you have the right type of shotgun for the defense of your home by going through these basic, yet important, details about shotgun characteristics and actions. You will be well informed by the end of this book about what you need and don't need for your home defense weapon and will also be in a better position to investigate any topics further for your self-sufficiency and security.

THE SHOTGUN SHELL

The most important feature of a shotgun is the shell: a plastic hull that contains small pellets (shot) or a lead ball (slug), wadding, and powder. Depending what's in the shell you can aim to kill or wound, be exact or broad, hit a distant target or plan for close-up. A shotgun is useful in various scenarios where the different firing options are ideal. A shotgun can fire flechettes, birdshot, rock salt, rubber pellets, bean bags, sabots, buckshot or slugs. This is not even a complete list but just an indication of the wide-ranging shot options for a shotgun. For use in home defense, shells that contain slugs and buckshot will be discussed in more detail in the section on ammunition.



TYPES OF SHOTGUNS

There isn't just one shotgun with different gauges to choose from and different shells to load, there are also different shotgun styles to choose from. Below are the styles that are good to be aware of their qualities when you're thinking of your home defense supply. This does not cover the full line of shotgun styles but definitely the main ones and it will cover the general knowledge you should have as a gun owner.

▶ **Over and Under**—has 2 equal length barrels, one on top of the other; can have two triggers to shoot from each barrel or have one trigger that is pulled back farther to fire the second round; excellent

choice for skeet shoot; not a good choice for home defense

- ▶ **Side by side**—has two equal length barrels with trigger similar to set up of over and under; aka “coach gun” ; had their glory in the Old West and Civil War but have not been a popular shotgun style for many years and not appropriate as a home defense gun.
- ▶ **Single Shot**—common as a long-barreled bird gun; not so helpful when looking to intimidate a threat to your home or loved ones.
- ▶ **Pump Action**—single barrel shotgun that is equipped with a tubular magazine under the barrel; the perfect shotgun style for home defense; the pump mechanism is a moveable

fore end that's worked back and forth to place a new round in place and expel the empty one; a superior mix of firepower and fast follow-up; can chamber all sorts of shells like the ones that wouldn't reliably cycle in autoloaders (less than lethal rounds); fast cycling between rounds—the better skilled the shooter, the quicker the follow-up shot; able to reload with one hand while keeping gun on target thanks to the open feeding port at the bottom of the gun; economical option even for a respectable brand name in comparison to other styles

- ▶ **Autoloader**—gas operated semi-automatic; fires one round every time the trigger is pulled until the magazine is empty; has tubular magazines with the few exceptions that have a box type magazine; when shell is fired the gas operation is accomplished, pushing the bolt down and cycling another round in place; one of the more expensive options without much of an increase in firepower or reloading speed than a pump action; although a newer style when compared to the

other options explained here, autoloaders are highly reliable and have sound operating systems so you can purchase with confidence if you feel the need for a semi-automatically firing weapon.

FEATURES AND LAYOUT FOR A GOOD HOME DEFENSE SHOTGUN:

18 ½" BARREL: Shortest length shotgun allowed by law is 18" long, so to still keep it short but not dangerously close to the illegal (without a special difficult-to-obtain permit) short-barreled shotgun, manufacturers produce the 18 ½" length.

Most shotguns are equipped with interchangeable barrels. If you have a 20" barrel on a shotgun, you can still buy an 18.5" and use it for its appeal as a good close-quarters weapon and accuracy.

PUMP ACTION OR AUTOLOADER:

Depending on your desire to fire semi-automatically and how much you're willing to spend, either one of these styles are ideal for home defense. 3"

CHAMBER: To keep your options open, get a shotgun that has a 3" capacity chamber. You'll

likely be mostly firing 2 3/4" rounds, but since you can always fire a smaller round but never a larger round having a 3" chamber allows for greatest versatility.

NO CHOKE CYLINDER BORE: This concerns the design of the interior of the barrel and whether it has a choke or not. The choke creates a slight restriction in the barrel diameter to force the shot pattern together which creates a tighter spread. A choke is great for hunting when you're wanting to aim carefully and hit the target without having shot pellets scatter about uselessly.

Despite the misconception that a shot from a shotgun doesn't really need to be aimed—just point in the general direction of your target and the wide spread of a buck shot is bound to hit—there is really only about an 8-10" spread from a choke-less 12 gauge firing buck shot, which is certainly narrow enough to miss a target in a time of urgency. It is the wide shot that makes a shotgun an ideal choice for home defense when compared to a rifle so be sure to make your shot as wide as possible and opt out of a barrel with a choke.

PLASTIC OR POLYMER FURNITURE:

The stock and forend are called the furniture of the shotgun. In the past, this section used to be wood, but a good tactical gun of today usually uses black polymer for its furniture. Polymer is a much stronger construction than wood and so it can take quite a lot of abuse. Also, the appearance is matte in color and doesn't reflect.

PARKERIZATION: A finishing process on the metal that results in a matte black finish and non-reflective properties as well and making the weapon highly durable. Pretty much all shotguns have this process done.

With these few characteristics in mind you will be able to find yourself a suitable defense shotgun and be aware of what the different features are. There are several options available that will have all that you need—no modifications required—at a decent price.

PUMP ACTION HOME DEFENSE SHOTGUNS

MOSSBERG 500 AND 590 SERIES

Stood the test of time over the past 50 years as a top-quality shotgun serving the U.S military and countless police forces. A hammerless pump action repeater, these weapons from either series boast a simple design that lends

itself well to the high versatility of shells, accessories and parts. They are one of the top produced in the market, which means there are lots of used ones available for sale and great aftermarket parts.

FEATURES:

- Accepts 3" magnum shells
- 18.5" barrel holds 5 shells in the magazine + 1 in the chamber
- 20" barrel holds 8 shells in the magazine + 1 in the chamber
- Parkerized finish
- Synthetic polymer stock
- Comes with or without a pistol grip
- Ambidextrous thumb operated safety mechanism

REMINGTON 870 SERIES

Comparable to the Mossberg described above, these have also been favored for law enforcement and military uses. With a big selection in the 870 series the ideal home defense option is the 870 Express Tactical. There is a wide range of options in accessories and upgrade parts for this weapon.

FEATURES:

- 18.5" barrel
- 7 shot capacity with factory magazine tube extension
- Accepts 3" magnum shells
- Parkerized Finish
- Synthetic polymer stock

Mossberg's 500/590 series and Remington's 870 series really does give you as much option as you need to pick the best home defense shotgun. If you have a compelling reason to look beyond these two, even knowing that these two make up about 80% of the market share and are practical, reliable answers to your home defense needs, then we've listed the next best shotguns below:

BENELLI NOVA TACTICAL

Being one of the most solidly built and thoughtfully designed shotguns in the world, the Nova Tactical is a gem of Italy's Benelli's and makes our list due to its useful application in home defense. The drawbacks of this shotgun focus on the low amount of after market parts available and the higher price for virtually the same features and reliability of the other two.

FEATURES:

- 18.5" barrel
- Tubular magazine that holds 4 shots with 1 more in the chamber
- Accepts 3 ½ magnum shells.

WINCHESTER SXP TACTICAL

Not a real strong contender against Mossberg or Remington in the tactical shotgun market (they have focused on the sporting market) but the Winchester SXP Tactical is a decent option for home defense. Just be aware that there isn't much for aftermarket parts for this one.

FEATURES:

- 18.5" barrel
- Accepts 3" magnum shells
- 5 shot tubular magazine + 1 in the chamber
- Parkerized finish
- Black synthetic furniture

DISCOUNT SHOTGUNS

As with most markets there are a wide range of cheap replicas of the name brands, so if you're really needing a cheap option then

you have lots of selection to pick from. You'll pretty much see clones of the Remington and Mossberg models, but obviously not up to the same standards as the quality brands. Most of these guns are coming from countries like China, Turkey and other distant places. Below is a list of company names that you'll find for discount pump-action 12 gauge shotguns:

- European American Armory (EAA)
- Harrington and Richardson (H&R)
- Weatherby Arms
- Maverick Arms
- Century Arms
- Savage Arms
- Charles Daly

You'll find several other options in the market for 12 gauge pump-action shotguns that aren't covered here. Although several of the other major manufacturers of firearms make 12 gauge pump action models, they aren't ideal when focused on options for home defense. The top choices are the Mossberg 500/590 series and the Remington 870 series and should be the ones you are considering. Certainly, if the price of a new purchase doesn't work for you there are a

several options for locating these models used and you will still get the exceptional benefits that these top home defense models provide. Although it is beneficial to have something for home defense as opposed to nothing, keep in mind that if at all possible this is an area that most consumers want the best, which is why the Remington and Mossberg models mentioned here dominate the market.

AUTOLOADING TACTICAL SHOTGUNS

If you find that the autoloading feature is the way you want to go, you will have much more top performing options to choose from. There are many manufacturers that have focused on this segment of the market so if you want lots of quality options to choose from you'll have no lack of that here.

These autoloaders are great at firing rapidly, which may be a priority for you, but besides that they have very little else that makes them better than pump action. The cost is at least twice as much as a pump-action counterpart and won't generally hold any more shells or have any additional accessories that you would find for the top 12-gauge pump-action models. You're paying a lot just for the ability

to fire more quickly, but if it's a feature you desire than here are some recommendations for you.

REMINGTON MODEL 1100 TAC 4

Another quality Remington product, this has all the same bells and whistles you'd get on the pump-action with the added benefit of rapid fire. Unfortunately, you can only get this with a 22" barrel, which can be a bit much when you're thinking of it for purposes of home defense. The bonus is that it carries 8 shots and has a positive track record for over 40 years of service.

REMINGTON VERSA MAX® TACTICAL

Unique design to this tactical autoloader that is one of the newer releases from Remington, but has already earned a good reputation. Barrel length of 22"; holds 8 rounds in the magazine and 1 in the chamber; accepts up to 3" shells, and comes with a picatinny rail (described in next section), forward barrel-clamp side rails and an extended magazine.

MOSSBERG 930 TACTICAL

This is a great choice at a great price for an autoloader. Has a barrel length of 18.5",

capacity of 7 rounds in the magazine and 1 in the chamber and sells for at least \$500 cheaper than the MSRP of the Remington Versa Max Tactical shotgun. Comes with excellent sights and a pistol grip and is well regarded as a light, fast firing and reliable weapon.

SAIGA 12

A Russian made firearm that has a great price point and a completely unique look for a shotgun. Its design looks more like a rifle and it uses a box type magazine, which is quicker and easier to reload and unload than the tubular type of magazine that is the norm for shotguns. The operating system is directly derived from the AK rifle pattern that is dependable and virtually trouble-free. The visual effect is another great benefit of this weapon as you would appear to be much more heavily armed (looking like a rifle) than you really are if you were handling one of these in a home defense situation. On top of having the quicker reload, you also have more capacity with a 10 round magazine and the availability of a 20 round drum, which completely surpasses any other shotgun.

IN CONCLUSION

The shotgun has a long history and has only gotten better through the years. A pump –action shotgun with a sling, tactical light and stocked with #1 buck is a must for your home defense preparation. A weapon is only as useful as the person using it, so don't just have a gun in your home get educated on the proper use of it and be sure to practice regularly as well as getting any members of your household familiar with the use of it. The best place to get real life practice is at outdoor ranges where you can engage in targets at the close ranges that you and your family members would be dealing with in the home. Also don't leave out the importance of dealing with your shotgun in different environments, like low lighting and high stress situations so when you need to protect yourself and your family you'll be confident and level-headed.

