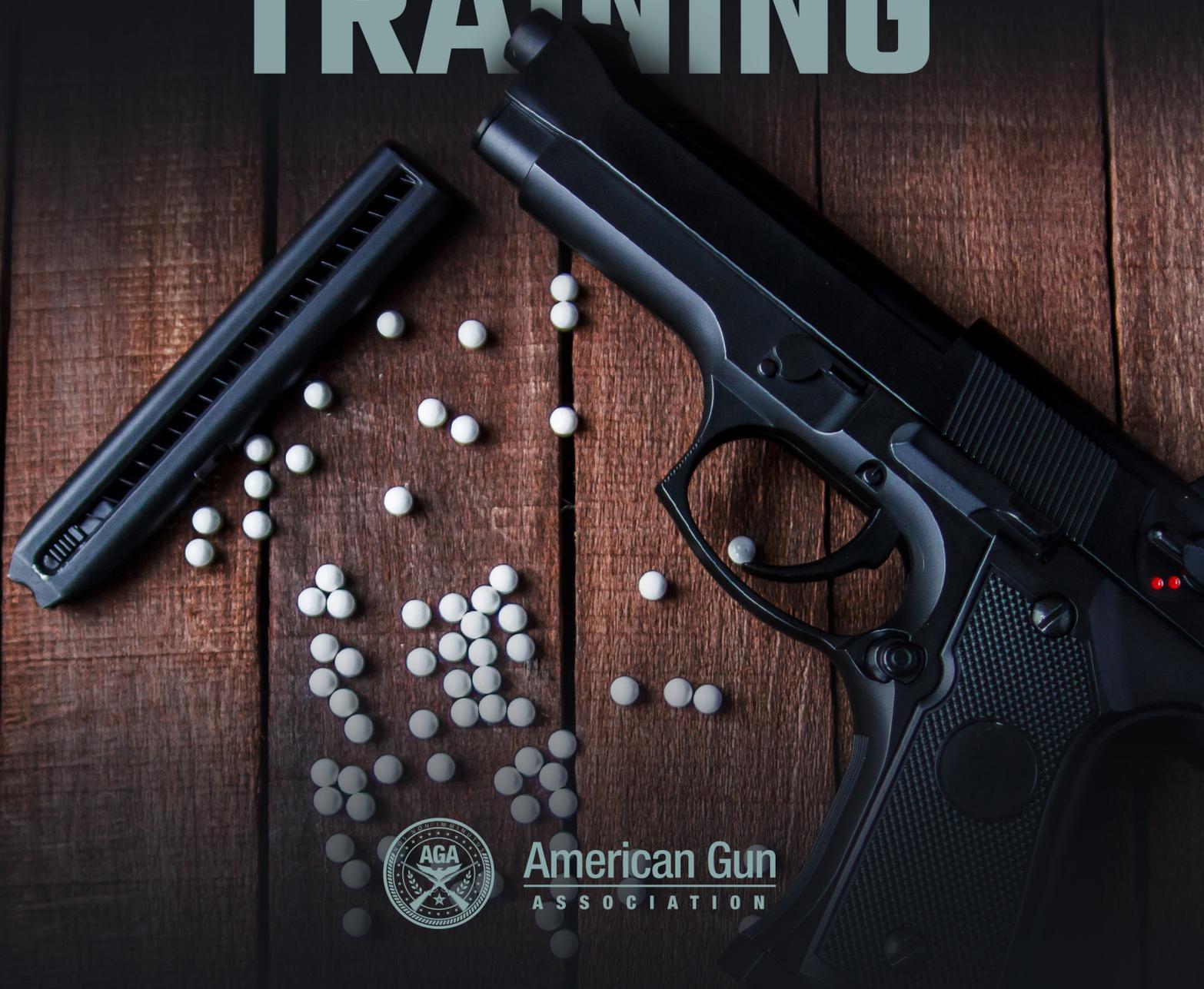


USING AIRSOFT GUNS
TO SUPPLEMENT YOUR
FIREARMS
TRAINING



American Gun
ASSOCIATION

USING AIRSOFT GUNS TO SUPPLEMENT YOUR FIREARMS TRAINING

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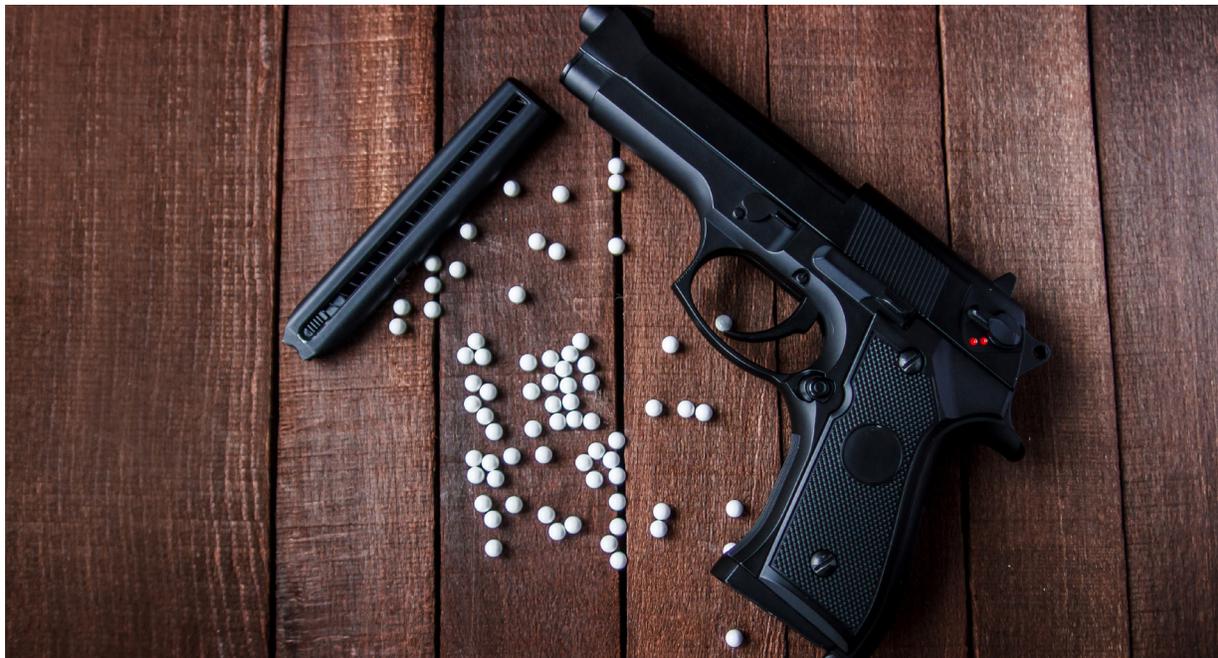
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Introduction to Using Airsoft Guns to Supplement Your Firearms Training



Welcome to *Using Airsoft Guns to Supplement Your Firearms Training* - an online course exclusive to American Gun Association members!

While designed as a follow-up to our Handguns 101 course, *Using Airsoft Guns to Supplement Your Firearms Training* won't only focus on handguns.

As such, it's not entirely necessary for you to complete that prior course. We do, of course, still recommend you do so, as there's a wealth of information for beginners, intermediates, and experts alike.

However, our intention for this course is to help you learn a valuable training skill - one that can not only supplement your firearm

training, but help you progress without spending a lot of money.

The end-goal is for you to walk away with a better understanding of why you might want to include airsoft training in your existing regime, the tools you could and should use, the limitations of this method, and how to properly integrate it.

Using Airsoft Guns to Supplement Your Firearms Training is designed to go into greater detail than any other single resource available online. By taking an in-depth look into all these areas of study, we hope to better equip those exercising their Second Amendment rights to further their skills in a cost-effective and accessible manner.

As we've said before, our Second Amendment rights come with the personal obligation to exercise them responsibly.

This is the freedom and duty of every American citizen, whether by birth or legal immigration. Completing courses such as those provided to our members is just one of many invaluable ways to ensure you are a responsible gun owner.

After all, part of being a responsible gun owner is to learn, practice, and advance the necessary skills for safe, sane firearms use. Using airsoft guns to supplement your regular firearms training is one of the many ways to do so, hence the creation of this course.

However, it bears pointing out that no matter how in-depth and invaluable any resource is, it simply isn't possible to include every single aspect, variant, and take on any given subject.

To attempt to do so would not only make this a prohibitively lengthy course, but would also make it somewhat outdated quicker than it could be compiled. This is due to the nature of advancing equipment, techniques, and studies.

One alternative is to give every possible aspect, variant, and take on "using airsoft guns to supplement your firearms training" only the most cursory of mentions, resorting to ambiguity in the attempt to remain relevant. This would greatly undermine the value of this course, which is why we eschewed such a route in favor of the existing layout.

While we, as mentioned, designed this course to go into greater detail than any other

single resource currently available online, we narrowed our scope slightly to preserve accessibility.

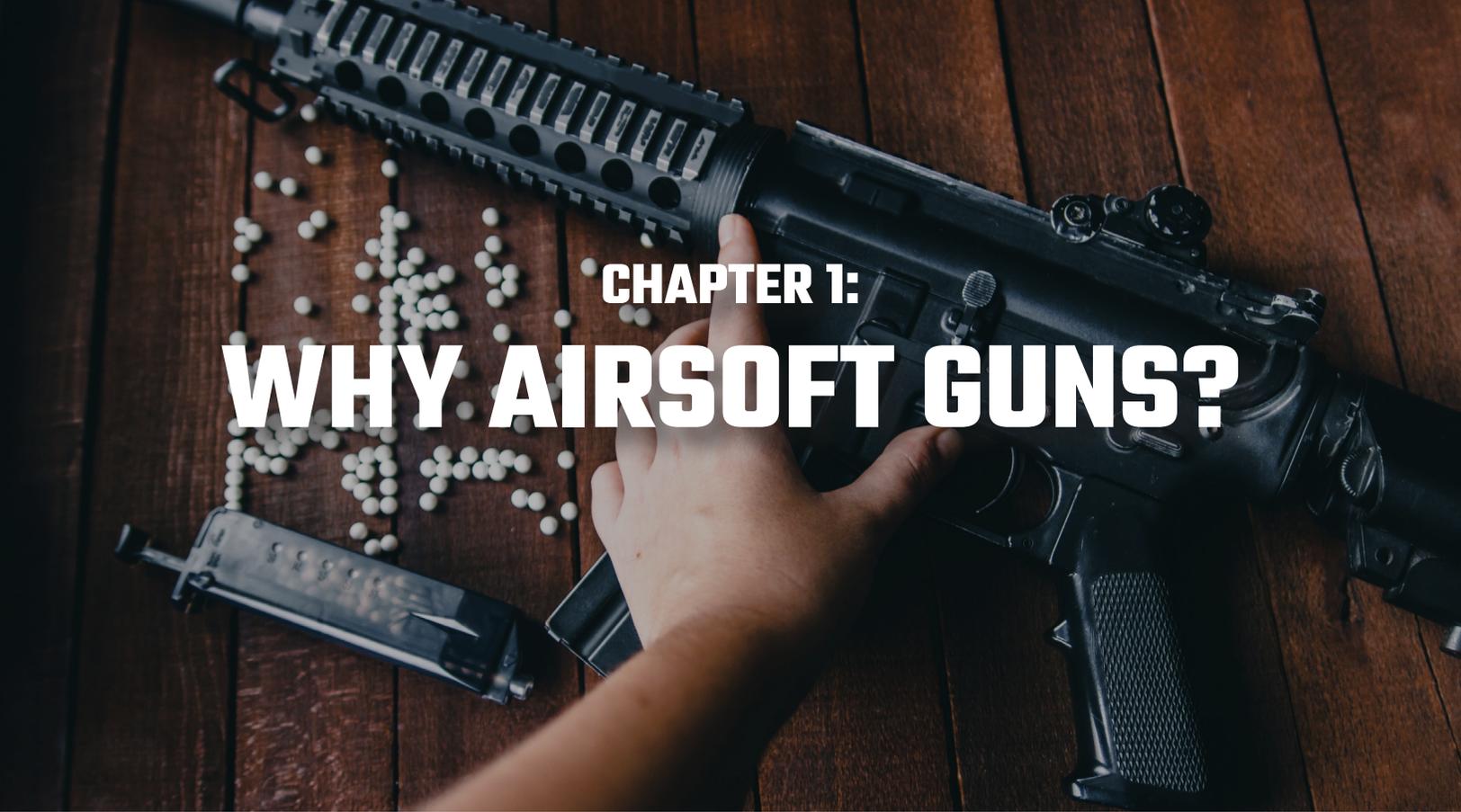
Instead of lengthy essays covering (or attempting to cover) every single possible angle, we focused this course on only the most valuable information.

Gun owners of every skill level will be able to approach this course. Without the need for using an actual firearm and ammunition, we feel the course will be fully applicable even for those readers who have not yet purchased their first handgun.

This accounts for the possibility that you might decide against doing so, for whatever reason. As such, you might find this and our previously mentioned Handguns 101 course especially informative.

Those with existing skills will, we trust, find this course no less invaluable. As the very name suggests, this is not a course on how to replace any of the training you already received and are receiving; it is intended to act as a supplement.

As proud gun owners constantly seeking to advance our own skills, we invite you to use this course to do the same.



CHAPTER 1: WHY AIRSOFT GUNS?

Whether you're brand new to the use of firearms or you're already a grizzled veteran, training is absolutely essential. But not just any training - training that comes from a reliable, competent source.

As much as the guy you just met at the range or your self-proclaimed firearms expert cousin/friend/neighbor might be enthusiastic about imparting their wisdom, they aren't always a reliable tutor.

The same goes for those so-called "YouTube experts," who - even if they are real experts - can only do so much from the other side of a camera.

Which...to be fair, might have you asking how much you can learn from an online course such as *Using Airsoft Guns to Supplement Your Firearms*

Training. The difference is we aren't seeking to provide training.

Instead, we're hoping to help you understand and apply your existing training better without needing to pepper your tutor with questions. Fittingly, this first chapter will attempt to answer a few of the questions you probably already have.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF AIRSOFT TRAINING

Maybe you already have a pretty good idea of why you might want to include airsoft training in your learning. If so, this brief section will summarize the relevant reasons covered in the remainder of the chapter.

However, we do hope you'll not skip over Chapter One completely.

This first section can act as a good TL;DR version when skimming over the course for your first read, but it remains nothing more than a summary.

The rest of this chapter will go into more detail, providing some valuable information that - even if you're already familiar with it - is always worth revisiting.

So, what are the basic principles of airsoft training?

First, using an airsoft gun to supplement your firearms training is cost-efficient.

Second, airsoft training is time-efficient.

Third, it balances out one of the

inherent weaknesses of dry-fire training.

Fourth, it's safer than dry-fire training (to an extent).

The four basic principles ensure that, when done correctly, airsoft training is both accessible and effective as a supplement to traditional training methods. Let's take a look at them in more detail!

COST-EFFICIENCY

Something we've come to appreciate over the course of being gun owners - and, of course, networking with dozens (if not hundreds) of professionals - is that live fire training very quickly becomes very expensive. Consider the fact most professionals will spend three or four sessions at the range. In the case of law enforcement

and military personnel, these are over and above their professional training sessions.

That's three or four personal training sessions per week, and might include paying for time at a commercial range rather than using their work facilities. For those of us who don't have the luxury of using a shooting range at work, training like the professionals means always using a commercial range.

Prices vary depending on the nature and location of the range, as well as the length of your sessions (not always applicable).

For example, a range might charge \$249 per person for a year's membership (plus a once-off administration fee, usually about \$49) and waiver single session fees.

Lifetime membership would also waive range usage fees, but charge around \$2,400 once-off.

If you aren't a member of the range - for example, because you're traveling - you might pay \$20 for a day pass instead. (Please bear in mind these are rough averages based on range fees as of March 2020.)

On top of the range fees, you still need to pay for your ammunition. Another thing we've found to be almost universally true among the pros is that at minimum, they fire 100 rounds per session. Many of them fire 300+.

Not all of us are trying to reach quite the same level of expertise, of course. But even assuming you stick to only 200 rounds per week, that already adds up to more than \$3,200 a year (using the average price-per-round for 9mm handgun ammunition in March 2020). With more sessions, more rounds, and/or more expensive ammunition, the price quickly climbs much higher.

For argument's sake, let's say you're able to supplement your live fire training with dry-firing at home and at the range.

You still need to put in at least one live fire session at the range every week if you want to become highly competent with your firearm. Using the same average price-per-round figure and assuming 100 shots per session, that's still in excess of \$1,600 a year.



But airsoft pellets are a lot cheaper. Using the cheapest tin of .177 cal (4mm) hollow-point pellets we could find on Amazon.com, 200 shots per week adds up to about \$180 a year plus shipping.

Four sessions per week at 250 shots per session (a full tin of the aforementioned pellets) will only cost about \$880 a year, again excluding shipping.

That's about 6% of the cost for firing the same number of 9mm rounds a year. And if you're doing live fire training at a range where you pay \$20 per day, 4 sessions a week would set you back almost \$4,200 a year.

With just one pay-per-session a week, that drops down to \$1,040. You'd still be advised to become a yearly member, though.

All told, 100 shots per session at a range where you're paying membership fees will still cost you nearly \$1,000 a year at one session every second week.

Three sessions of airsoft training a week, shooting a full tin of pellets every session, will cost another \$660 a year (again, minus shipping). And you likely aren't going to be using a full tin every session, so the costs are going to be even lower.

Compare that to nearly \$7,000 for four sessions per week, 100 rounds per session, with live firing, and you can see just how cost-effective using airsoft guns to supplement your firearms training is.

Bear in mind, you'll still be spending

a fair bit on gas for your airsoft gun. But even so, it's still going to be a fraction of the cost compared to pure live fire training.

Another way airsoft training makes things a lot cheaper is you won't be firing your actual gun as often, which means less wear-and-tear. While you should still have your firearm serviced professionally as often as necessary, you'll find with less use, those services are going to be fewer and further between.

Then there's the reduced cost of replacement parts. Not that the parts will be cheaper, of course, just that - once again - you'll be forking out for them less often.

Considering a handgun barrel could easily cost \$200+ and might need replacing after a few thousand rounds, that's another massive savings made by using airsoft guns to supplement your firearms training.

Finally, something most people don't even consider, is the fact you'll be spending less money on gas. After all, you won't need to travel to and from the range for an airsoft session. And of course, you'll be putting your vehicle through less wear-and-tear too, which translates to even more savings.

TIME-EFFICIENCY

In business, you'll often hear the saying "time is money."

We won't be thinking of it in quite the same terms, but the underlying point remains relevant: time is a valuable

resource. And unlike money, there's no way to regain lost time.

There's no denying that reloading an airsoft gun is time-consuming. But the same can be said for charging a magazine with fresh rounds. And with some of the more sophisticated airsoft gun models (a topic we'll cover in Chapter Two), you can prepare several magazines in advance to practice reloading too.

So even if you're not spending less time reloading an airsoft gun than you would with your firearm, you're not spending more time either.

Where, then, does the time-efficiency come into play?

Consider how long it takes you to get to the range for live fire training. You might want or need to head home first, change out of your work clothes, retrieve your firearm, and then sit in traffic - again - to get there.

Then you've got to sign in as a member or pay a day's range usage fee if you're visiting. There's the possibility you'll need to wait for a lane to open up (especially if you're not a member). Only then can you get started on your session - and once it's over, you still need to get back home. All that travel and waiting is time-consuming.

But with airsoft training, you can get started within a few minutes of getting home. You'll still need to travel from work, of course, and you might decide to get changed.

But at least you don't need a special

venue for airsoft training!

You can easily set up a space in your backyard or garage. It could even be the same area you use for dry-firing (we'll cover this more in the next section). There's no need to sign in, wait for a lane to open up, or travel back home again afterward.

At the end of the session, all you need to do is close it properly, put your airsoft gun away (possibly do some cleaning and recharge the magazines again), and go about your usual daily routine.

How much time do you think using an airsoft gun to supplement your firearms training will save you? It could easily be an extra hour a day, possibly more.

BALANCING OUT AN INHERENT WEAKNESS OF DRY-FIRING

For those who aren't familiar with dry-firing, this is the practice of firing your gun without any ammunition loaded. While this can be considered even cheaper than using airsoft guns to supplement your firearms training, it still involves putting your gun through stress.

Dry-firing also has a number of shortcomings, especially if you're hoping to shoot on a professional level. Like airsoft training, it should be considered supplementary.

In Chapter Four, we'll talk about dry-firing in more detail, as airsoft firing isn't going to be replacing it entirely



either. But for now, let's focus on one of its more subtle limitations - one often overlooked, but which airsoft training can balance out.

We're talking about shot accountability.

While dry-firing has many, many positive aspects, there's simply no 100% reliable way to ensure your "shot" truly "landed" where you were aiming. You have to rely entirely on your ability to eyeball even the most subtle of deviations from your exact target.

Deviations which might seem negligible when using a paper target at a relatively short distance, but which could end up being the difference between putting an

attacker down from a greater distance or having their weapon used against you.

So what is shot accountability?

Well, if you haven't guessed as much already, it's a visible mark on your target, showing you exactly where your shot landed. This is usually a hole or indentation in your target material.

Dry-firing won't give you that kind of shot accountability.

But using an airsoft gun and pellets will.

Whether you're using plastic BB pellets or the metal variant (such as the hollow-point hunting pellets we used for our cost calculations earlier),

an airsoft gun will propel it with enough velocity to make a visible mark on your target.

Of course, how much of a mark is made will vary depending on your target material, distance, and velocity. But you'll still have a visual representation of your ability to shoot on-target without needing to rely entirely on your ability to eyeball the most subtle deviation imaginable.

AIRSOFT FIRING SAFETY VS. DRY-FIRING SAFETY

Again, we'll be discussing the more practical and in-depth aspects of airsoft and dry-firing safety in Chapter Four. But as it's an important principle here, it's worth taking a quick look at how airsoft training can be safer than dry-firing.

When dry-firing, you're using a real firearm. And while you should be taking all the usual gun safety rules into consideration, as well as making doubly sure your firearm is well and truly unloaded before starting a dry-firing session, accidents do happen. And often, it's because someone figured they'd take just "one more shot" after reloading, or they forgot to clear the chambered round.

Such accidents can be fatal.

Even when they're not, they're almost always highly destructive. If you're lucky, the only thing that gets destroyed is your target (and possibly the wall behind it). Just a little less lucky and you obliterate a valuable object and/or injure someone.

To be perfectly clear, an airsoft gun can still wreak considerable damage. I've heard stories of people successfully wounding an attacker with an airsoft gun, at least enough to dissuade the assailant from continuing.

And of course, if you've ever been shot with an airsoft gun as a kid, you know how much even the cheap ones hurt from a fair distance.

So you still need to follow every gun safety rule when handling an airsoft gun. Just because you might think of it as a toy doesn't mean you can start slacking. Practicing firearm safety, no matter the type of gun, is never an option - it's an absolute necessity.

And it also helps develop gun safety muscle memory, which is always a major plus. In fact, it should be part of your reason for using airsoft guns to supplement your firearms training in the first place.

But with that admonishment out of the way, using an airsoft gun is still safer than dry-firing. After all, there's no chance of live ammunition being accidentally fired.

You won't even be able to fire a "blank," which can be just as fatal. That's how Brandon Lee died - the aspiring actor was accidentally shot with a blank on set while filming *The Crow*.

The point is, even when accidents do occur while using an airsoft gun (and it really isn't a matter of "if," but "when"), they won't be as bad as a dry-firing accident. Your buddy might get bruised or even have a pellet embedded in their flesh, but unless you manage to shoot them through the eye or windpipe, they're highly unlikely to die.

STOP THINKING OF AIRSOFT GUNS PURELY AS TOYS

In the previous section, we pointed out that even if you do think of



airsoft guns as toys, you should treat them as you would any firearm. To close off this chapter and lead into Chapter Two: Introduction to Airsoft Equipment, we have a final piece of fundamental advice.

Stop thinking of airsoft guns as toys. Besides the fact they can do considerable damage and airsoft training can help make gun safety an instinctive default, they're tools for enhancing your shooting skills. Not just yours, though. You might not be aware of the fact, but law enforcement has been using airsoft training since at least 2011. Military forces, not only in the US but elsewhere in the world as well, have been doing the same since at least 2012.

In fact, in 2018, the US Coast Guard

formally adopted the SIG-branded P229 airsoft pistol to train new recruits.

The caveat here is it's typically only used by law enforcement and military forces as a means for training new recruits. Once the fresh faces are a little less green, they move onto using real firearms and ammunition.

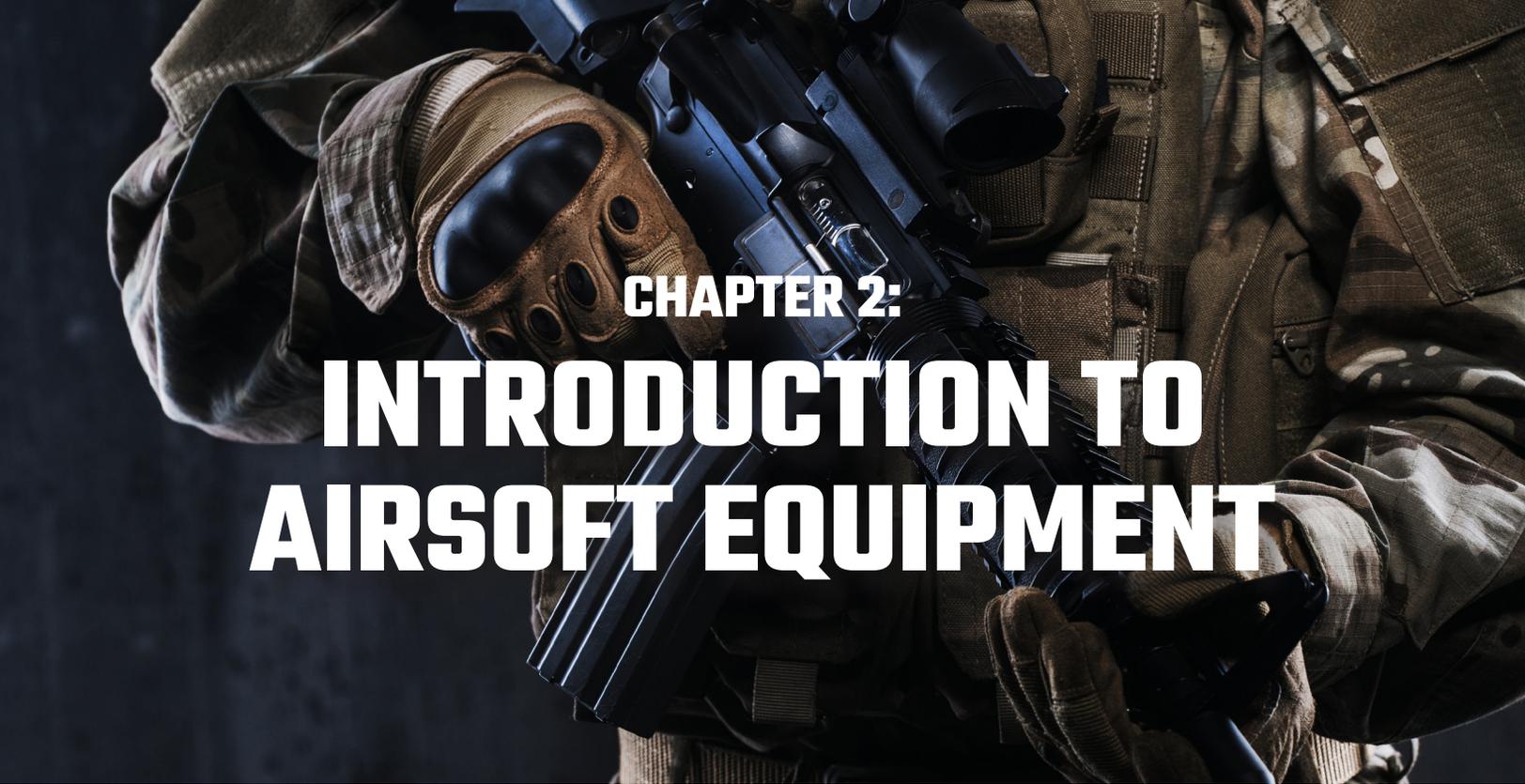
But the airsoft training period, reportedly, made the advancement of necessary skills a fair bit quicker. Not to mention it's a lot cheaper for Uncle Sam to fund, as we've already covered.

Let's bring our focus back down from aspirations of becoming a true professional to simply becoming a highly competent shooter capable of self-defense when the need arises.

And let's bear in mind your pocket probably isn't nearly deep enough to undergo as rigorous a training regime. Airsoft training isn't going to be an introductory phase that precedes making your first handgun purchase. If you're already a gun owner, it's very much too late for that anyway.

But airsoft training will make the transition between complete beginner to relatively intermediate a lot easier, cheaper, and safer for you. And with persistence, it can do the same for going from intermediate to expert - so long as you remember it's a supplement, not a replacement.





CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION TO AIRSOFT EQUIPMENT

Now that you know exactly why you want to use airsoft guns as a supplement to your firearms training, it's time to start talking about how to do so. This is the focus for the remainder of this course.

In this chapter, we'll continue our final point from the end of Chapter One: that airsoft guns aren't merely toys.

To be fair, the cheap ones aren't ever going to be anything other than a toy. But the type of airsoft guns and related equipment you'll be using are far more sophisticated than that. You can still teach your kid how to shoot using one, but I wouldn't put one in their hands as a toy. That's what the cheap stuff is for.

Moving on, while airsoft equipment is cheaper than real firearm equipment, it's still going to involve some starting and running costs.

Some of these costs were already mentioned - pellets and gas canisters. We also gave some brief attention to shipping (if you're ordering online; gas and parking fees if you're visiting a brick-and-mortar store).

But the most important piece of equipment hasn't been touched on yet: your airsoft gun.

THE THREE TYPES OF AIRSOFT GUNS

Speaking in general terms, there are three basic types of airsoft guns you can choose from, and each have their own pros and cons.

Usually, we might say the type of airsoft gun you choose depends on your intended use. But considering the point of this course is to show you how you can use airsoft guns to supplement your firearms training, it's pretty clear one of these variants is superior to the others.

However, that isn't an excuse for glossing over the other two types. While it's unlikely you'll use either of them, there's still a slim possibility you might want to anyway. And giving you a quick overview of all three types will help you better understand why we recommend the third type specifically.

SPRING ACTION

Spring action airsoft guns are easily the most accessible variant on the market. Not only are they easy to find, but they also tend to be incredibly cheap.

In fact, you can find many of them in the toy section of most stores for as little as \$4. Even the most expensive spring action airsoft gun isn't likely to come with a price tag of more than \$100 - if even as high as that. However, this kind of accessibility comes at a heavy price of a different

kind.

There's a reason spring action airsoft guns are found among children's toys: they are children's toys. And when it comes to using airsoft guns to supplement your firearms training, the spring action variant is little more than useless.

They're cheaply made and aren't going to feel anything like holding a real gun. To be fair, there's an intangible yet fundamental difference to holding a real firearm and even the best airsoft replica, but that difference is entirely palpable with spring action ones.

That alone makes them unsuitable as a supplementary firearms training tool. However, the one advantage to spring action airsoft guns that outweighs the considerable disadvantages is they're incredibly easy to use.

All you need to do is pull the spring into place (it'll make an audible click), take aim, and squeeze the trigger. The spring will be released and propel your pellet.

But this ease of use is exactly what makes them little more than a toy. And as a result of the rudimentary firing system, the firing rate is far too slow to be of any real use when it comes to training. You need to stop and pull the spring back, cocking it into place, before every single shot. While you could be generous and consider a spring action airsoft gun an entry-level tool, we'd argue that's being too generous. If you're serious about improving your gun skills, leave



the spring action airsoft guns to the kids playing Cops and Robbers.

AUTOMATIC ELECTRIC GUNS (AEGS)

Even though it's the second type of airsoft gun, automatic electric guns (AEGs) are several steps up in terms of sophistication and practical use. AEGs are a far more compatible option. Instead of a rudimentary spring action that needs to be engaged between shots, AEGs use a rechargeable battery to provide firing power.

This battery powers the airsoft gun's motor mechanism, which in turn triggers a series of gears that release its piston. The piston acts as a firing pin and its momentum, the way primer does in a real gun, propelling the pellet or BB.

This results in a high velocity and firing rate that isn't interrupted by needing to reset the firing mechanisms before every shot. In fact, it's this exact reason that makes AEGs the most popular option for most airsoft games and mock-battles.

Even more, AEGs tend to be the airsoft gun of choice for the law enforcement and military recruit training we talked about in Chapter One. A big part of this is the fact high-end AEG models are made to be almost exact replicas of the real thing - including feel.

However, while AEGs are a very suitable choice of airsoft weaponry for supplementing your live fire training, they still aren't the best. The biggest issue with AEGs is the trigger pull. With a real gun, you get a "wall effect" when pulling the trigger. AEGs don't have that same kind of "break," which can cause problems when transitioning back to your firearm. And if you're also practicing dry-firing, then this lack can potentially cause you to regress on your trigger control, albeit only slightly.

Nevertheless, AEGs make a great entry-level tool for using airsoft guns to supplement your firearms training. If you properly compensate for the lack of trigger control, you could possibly go all the way with one of the high-end models.

GAS-PROPELLED AIRSOFT GUNS

By far the best choice is to use a gas-propelled airsoft gun.

As the name states, these rely on a small gas canister to provide the propellant. These are typically housed in the magazine chamber (at least, that's the case for handgun models). So even though you'll be reloading during your airsoft training sessions, you won't necessarily be doing so in the same way you would with your real firearm.

This is pretty much the only disadvantage gas airsoft guns have, at least in terms of building muscle memory. And it's exactly why airsoft training is only meant to be supplementary, not replace actual training or even dry-firing. Another disadvantage is those tiny gas canisters become fairly expensive to replace, especially as you might find yourself using one or more every session.

However, this also depends on the type of gas you're using - something we'll cover in the next section. And even shooting huge quantities, with multiple sessions a week and using the most expensive gas, is still a lot cheaper than live firing.

Moving on to better topics, the biggest advantage gas airsoft guns have over the spring action and AEG variants is realism.

Replica models are near-perfect cones of the real thing. This depends on the quality, of course, which pushes the

price up. But they're still a lot cheaper than a real firearm and can often be easier to get your hands on.

When using a high-quality gas airsoft gun, the difference is mostly going to come down to blow-back. However, not all models have the blow-back feature, and those that do are more expensive - but again, it's worth the extra cost.

The blow-back feature comes as close to replicating recoil as you can expect from anything that isn't a real gun. Gas airsoft guns are still easier to fire than the real thing, of course. But aside from that (and the reloading and recoil issues), they can be hyper-realistic - to the point where most jurisdictions made it mandatory to add a noticeably orange tip to the barrel to differentiate between a gas airsoft gun and a real firearm.

If you've been a gun owner for some time already, you likely have a few accessories for your preferred firearm. As another major benefit, most (if not all) of those accessories can be used with your gas airsoft gun replica. All told, even if you're an absolute beginner and haven't purchased your first handgun yet, we recommend spending some extra cash to get yourself a gas airsoft gun rather than

either of the alternatives. Not only can this make your final decision a lot easier, but it will also provide a reliable (albeit still rudimentary) self-defense weapon.

AIRSOFT GAS

If you decide to start with a high-end AEG, then this section won't be immediately applicable.

However, we don't recommend skipping over it. If you're serious about improving your firearm skills with airsoft training, you'll be upgrading to a gas model sooner or later. It's worth having this knowledge in mind in advance, even if you still need to refer back to it when you do upgrade.

As with airsoft gun types, airsoft gas comes in three basic variants. One of them is a cheap, "unofficial" workaround, while the other two are more conventional. All three are worth considering.

CARBON DIOXIDE

Carbon Dioxide (CO2) gas canisters are probably the most commonly used option for airsoft guns. This isn't necessarily because it works better than the other variants - just that it's



the most convenient and accessible, as a general rule.

There are a few caveats to that accessibility, however.

First, depending on the airsoft gun model you're using (and, to a lesser extent, its manufacturer), CO2 cartridges typically only last between 50 and 100 shots. This means you could easily end up needing to "reload" at least twice per airsoft training session.

Second, unless you know how to refill the gas cartridges safely yourself, you'll need to order full ones online or purchase them from a specialty trader. This is a little more expensive than the "unofficial" workaround we'll be covering last, but still makes CO2 the most accessible option.

Additionally, there's another small workaround worth mentioning. Empty, reusable CO2 airsoft gas cartridges are found online for relatively cheap. So if you do know how to refill them properly, you could simply buy a large canister of CO2 and keep yourself stocked up.

As long as you have the proper equipment for refilling the cartridges, all you need to worry about is remembering to get your big canister topped up from time to time.

This also makes CO2 slightly cheaper than it would be relying on full canisters. Unfortunately, there's no viable workaround for the limited number of shots you get.

GREEN GAS

While the most expensive option per canister, green gas is a firm favorite among airsoft enthusiasts. It's also going to be the best choice for you when using airsoft guns to supplement your firearms training.

The basic reason for this is, even though a canister of green gas can cost between 10 and 15 times more than the same amount of CO2, it'll also last you between 15 and 20 times longer. Whereas the typical CO2 cartridge is only good for 50 to 100 shots, a green gas cartridge can see you through 1,500 to 2,000 shots.

Once again, however, this depends on the make and model of the airsoft gun you're using. This is largely due to magazine capacity (in the case of airsoft guns, how big a canister of gas you need to use), but also how easy it is to insert the cartridge.

Some of the cheaper models especially can be a little tricky and you'll lose some gas while reloading. This will generally be a negligible amount, however, especially as you get more adept at it.

PROPANE AND SILICONE OIL

The third (and final) option we'll introduce can be a dirt-cheap alternative to CO2 and Green Gas. It's also the "unofficial" workaround we mentioned.

What you're basically doing here is making your own Green Gas, albeit in a round-about fashion. You see,

what we didn't explain in the previous subsection is that Green Gas is simply propane mixed with silicone.

The silicone serves a couple purposes, the most immediately noticeable of which is the removal of the propane smell.

However, the more important reason for the silicone's presence is to act as a lubricant. Propane is a dry gas, so you can put your airsoft gun under a surprising amount of stress if you don't use the silicone oil after every session.

More to the point, there are a few advantages to the propane and silicone option.

First, as mentioned, it can be dirt-cheap. As with refilling CO2 cartridges yourself, all you need is a large canister of propane and a collection of empty airsoft gas cartridges. Depending on where you live, propane is often cheaper than CO2 and the cost of silicone oil won't off-set that advantage by much. Second, the need to lubricate your airsoft gun after every session can serve as good practice for lubricating your real firearm. You won't need to do so nearly as often as you will with your airsoft gun - in fact, you'll want to use only the smallest possible amount of lubricant on your firearms in winter.

But it can still be an invaluable lesson in how to correctly apply lube. Even though a good quality gas airsoft gun is fairly pricey, it's nowhere near as expensive to replace as a real firearm would be.

AMMUNITION

There are two basic types of ammunition you can use with airsoft guns: BBs and pellets.

To be frank, neither have any practical advantage over the other, provided you're only using high-quality ammunition. With that said, BBs are going to be a slightly safer option, in terms of how much damage they'll do if you accidentally shoot someone. For the most part, airsoft guns are rigged to use 6mm plastic BBs. This is a great option to use, as they're well and truly dirt-cheap.

Whereas the hollow-point hunting pellets we used for our cost calculations in Chapter One cost a little less than \$5 per tin of 250 pellets (the cheapest we could find on Amazon), a bag of 5,000 6mm competition-grade plastic BBs can cost as little as \$16 (as of March 2020).

While that's a little over thrice the cost of the hollow-point hunting pellets, it's also 20 times as much ammunition.

It's possible to find BBs for cheaper than that, but you'll want to stick to using those marked for professional airsoft sports use or as being competition-grade. While you might save a couple of bucks opting for the cheap stuff, it could end up costing you your airsoft gun.

This is because cheap BBs typically have seams, bubbles, dimples, and/or rough edges.

While fine for handing to your kid to play with when using their cheap spring action airsoft gun, they're wholly unsuitable for your use in supplementing your firearms training. These BBs have a higher-than-usual tendency to crack and/or burst during fire.

If that happens, they can (and most likely will) damage the inside of your airsoft gun. It might not be noticeable at first, but it will quickly become detrimental to your airsoft training. And when an accident eventually occurs, those rough edges, seams, bubbles, and dimples can make the impact more painful - especially if the

BB is cracked and bursts on impact. Imagine getting hit with tiny

fragments of very sharp shrapnel at a high velocity. Then do the right thing and get high-quality BBs instead. However, you might be forced to use metal pellets - if not the hollow-point hunting variety (which are great for self-defense too, by the way), then the ball-type. It all hinges on the make and model of your airsoft gun.

Be very sure to read the fine print for your airsoft gun before purchasing ammunition. While some models allow for multiple types of ammunition (making for great versatility), others can only be used with BBs or pellets, not both.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

If you already have a real firearm, then you should also have all the necessary safety equipment. But if you're planning on using a high-quality airsoft gun as an introductory foray into the world of gun ownership and usage, you'll need to get a few items.

Even though airsoft guns don't make nearly as much noise as discharging a real gun does, you'll still want to get some ear protection.

Not only will this save you the bother of needing to do so anyway when you later purchase your first firearm, but it will also help you get used to wearing them. Once again, it's all about building muscle memory.

Plus, if you have sensitive ears, a



whole session of airsoft training can still create enough noise to make the protection necessary. It's unlikely, but always better to be safe rather than sorry.

Finally, if you decide to start participating in mock-battles, ear protection is going to be a necessity anyway. Not only to protect your hearing, but also to avoid getting hit in the ear by a wayward (or badly aimed) projectile.

Another incredibly important piece of safety gear is eye protection. You don't need to get fancy here - a pair of good-quality construction glasses will do. As with the ear protection, you'll need this for using with your real firearm and in airsoft mock-battles. To finish, while not an absolute necessity for airsoft training by yourself, you might want to consider getting some padded gear. If you're even slightly considering joining a competitive airsoft team, then do yourself a massive favor by buying competition-level protection in advance.

Obviously, if you're going to be using airsoft guns to supplement your firearm training with a buddy, then the gear does become an absolute

necessity. When that accident eventually happens, you'll be glad of the padding!

TARGETS

You need something to shoot at, right? The options here are fairly simple. You can opt for paper targets and deal with picking up and disposing of the spent ammunition.

Or you can get a heavy-duty target trap (they usually retail at about \$80 to \$100), which still uses paper targets but will collect the spent ammunition and provide a safe backing for your target.

Another option is to use reactive or resetting traps.

While these can add some variance to an otherwise potentially repetitive activity, they can also be an unnecessary distraction when starting out. Still, the dynamic movement will be a boon to your training as you progress - though you're back to picking up spent ammunition after every session.

If you're going the paper target route (with or without a target trap), buy them in bulk or print your own.

As you're likely to be doing the same for dry-firing, make sure you use different target patterns for each kind of training. This helps to mentally segment each portion of your firearms training regime: dry-firing, airsoft, and live fire.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

You'll notice we didn't include a section on airsoft models.

There are a few reasons for this. First, airsoft guns have been developing at a rapid pace, so it's not going to be useful for us to list makes and models. Such a list could become obsolete within a few months (years at most) as the tools become more sophisticated.

Second, your choice in make and model is ultimately going to depend on the type of airsoft gun you buy and (more importantly) the real firearm you're training with. The whole idea behind splurging on a high-quality airsoft replica is so you can build muscle memory for using that firearm.

Finally, as mentioned several times already, your general rule of thumb is always going to be "get the highest quality you can afford." The better the quality, the better a clone it will be and, therefore, the more appropriate it is as a training supplement.

The remaining two chapters of this course will be a lot shorter than the first two. However, that doesn't mean they're any less important. Next, we'll be looking at the limitations of airsoft training in a little more detail than already discussed.



CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING THE LIMITATIONS OF AIRSOFT TRAINING

There are several reasons law enforcement and military forces only use airsoft training as an introductory phase.

The most obvious is officers and soldiers need to use real firearms in the line of duty. But what might not seem as immediately obvious is this also means they need to train with real firearms.

This underlying reason behind the obvious essentially summarizes every other reason airsoft guns are only used as a temporary training tool. It can be shortened even further, into a single word: limitations.

REALISM VS. GRITTY REALISM

In the first two chapters, we repeatedly mentioned high-quality airsoft guns (both AEG and gas) can be very realistic copies of real

firearms. When it comes to blow-back enabled gas airsoft guns in particular, they can even be near-perfect clones.

But barring some currently unimaginable advancement in their sophistication, even the best airsoft replica is no true replacement for training with a real firearm. It essentially comes down to a matter of realism vs. gritty realism.

When you're holding a real gun,

it feels like a real gun. There's no unconscious difference that separates the most realistic airsoft gun from the real thing.

Knowing how to handle a real gun requires being familiar with that intangible feeling. We know that sounds like a contradiction, but it's true. "Intangible" is probably the wrong word for what we're talking about. It's more of an inexplicable yet incredibly basic intuition.



Do yourself a favor. Put your real firearm and your airsoft replica in front of you, side-by-side. Close your eyes and have your buddy switch the two around a couple of times - just enough for you not to be sure which is which.

Then reach out, pick one up, and tell your buddy whether you're holding the real deal or the airsoft replica without opening your eyes.

We're willing to bet that indescribable difference tipped you off pretty accurately.

RECOIL

There's a big reason we advocate opting for an airsoft gun with the blow-back feature. As covered in the first chapter where we mentioned it as an advantage over dry-firing, this feature replicates recoil.

But it's by no means a perfect replica. Airsoft blow-back is so subtle compared to recoil that you might end up questioning why you ever bothered spending the extra cash to get the feature.



Here's why: airsoft training is a transitional step up from dry-firing, not a replacement for it or live fire training.

During your dry-firing sessions, you're building muscle memory that doesn't register any sort of recoil whatsoever. This can be massively advantageous to you when it comes to handling recoil. But if you're careless, it can also lead to not compensating for recoil at all, resulting in wide shots.

Blow-back during airsoft training helps to hedge your bets against that happening. By introducing just a little bit of recoil (comparatively speaking),

you force yourself to make sure you're properly compensating. The shot accountability and added safety of airsoft training works in your favor here too. You can immediately see if that blow-back is causing any deviation in your aim, especially with rapid-fire.

And even if that small "recoil" is throwing you off by a fair bit, you're not putting anyone (or anything) in any real danger while simultaneously identifying a critical area of necessary improvement.

RELOADING

With most airsoft models, no matter what type you're using, you won't be able to practice reloading in the true sense. While you'll still need to replace spent ammunition during a session - and, possibly, a gas cartridge - the motions won't be exactly the same as reloading a real firearm.

This is one of those areas where dry-firing has the advantage (the other being gritty realism). With dry-firing, you can use dummy magazines to simulate reloading.



NOISE

Here's another limitation you might not have realized, but one we already highlighted: the difference in noise levels.

Undoubtedly, airsoft training will prepare you for handling the sound of an actual discharge a lot better than dry-firing ever will. Dry-firing is almost completely silent - and you shouldn't be hearing anything other than a "click" and your action sliding back into place when pulling the trigger.

With airsoft guns, there's at least a little more noise. AEGs and gas models can be especially loud. But it's still not the same as hearing a real gun discharge. It's the same as holding a real gun: there's a marked difference you can't quite explain. Once you get used to the sound of either, even a car backfiring is obviously different to the sound of a gunshot.

And knowing how to remain calm and continue shooting on-target in the midst of all that noise is crucial to

safe, responsible, and effective gun use.

It can take months, even years to get truly used to the sound, but if you never use your gun at the range before you need to use it defensively, you're probably going to soil your pants and/or panic after that first shot. At least, more so than you would with proper live fire training.

RESPONSIBILITY

This sort of falls under the whole "intangible difference" aspect, but it neatly summarizes the entirety of the realism vs. gritty realism argument. When you're holding a firearm, the knowledge that it's real and that pulling the trigger will unleash deadly force causes you to act more responsibly. Not necessarily in terms of observing gun safety rules - you should be doing so with an airsoft gun anyway.

But, once again, it's an indescribable shift in subconscious thought. You'll probably hesitate to discharge your firearm in situations where you wouldn't give a second thought to

blasting away with your airsoft rifle. Because beyond the obvious considerations of lethal force vs. severe bruising, part of your brain is calculating how much pulling that trigger will cost you.

Think about it. When you fire your airsoft gun in self-defense, you're using less than a single cent's worth of gas to eject a projectile that didn't cost much more than that.

And unless using an airsoft gun can reasonably (or legally, which isn't always the same thing) be considered unnecessary force, it's far less likely you'll find yourself paying legal bills. But when you fire a real gun, you're discharging a projectile that costs more than you'll probably spend on BBs for an entire week's airsoft training. More to the point, there can be very real legal repercussions beyond the simple matter of financial cost.

You need to train with a real gun to properly appreciate this level of responsibility. And that includes risk assessment - knowing within a few seconds whether pulling the trigger will cost more or less than not pulling the trigger.

This, perhaps more so than any of the other limitations covered in this chapter, is why airsoft guns are only a supplementary tool. They will never truly replace live fire training.





CHAPTER 4:

HOW AIRSOFT GUNS FIT INTO FIREARMS TRAINING

Over the past three chapters, we've been preparing you for this final lesson: how to use airsoft guns to supplement your training. This might seem like a short chapter, but we promise it won't be anticlimatic.

While we won't include absolutely everything you need to know for firearms training, we will cover everything relevant to how airsoft guns fit into that regime.

FIREARM SAFETY 101

First, let's do a quick recap of gun safety rules. As we stressed several times already in this course, these are the same no matter what type of gun you're using.

1. Never let your firearm point

toward something you don't intend to shoot. Consider shooting something to destroy it entirely, even if it won't realistically be able to do so.

2. Other than your primary self-defense weapon, your firearms should always be unloaded unless you're using them. Even with your primary self-defense weapon, it should only be safely and securely stored while loaded if you have a relatively high level of competence as judged by a reliable tutor.
3. Even if you're 100% certain the firearm is unloaded, treat it as if it were loaded.
4. Never place your finger on the trigger until you're ready to

fire. Do not rely on any safety mechanisms to prevent an accident if you accidentally squeeze the trigger.

5. Always be as aware as possible of what's behind your target and what your target is exactly.
6. You should aim to know your firearm better than the back of your hand.
7. Always ensure your firearm is operable and safe to use before doing so.
8. Never make any upgrades, modifications, or other alterations to your firearm. For airsoft guns, make sure any real firearm accessories (such as a scope or laser sight) are compatible before

using it.

9. Only use the correct ammunition type, as prescribed by the manufacturer for your exact model.
10. If your firearm fails to discharge, wait 30 seconds before carefully removing the problematic ammunition round. For airsoft guns, this could mean a faulty gas cartridge.
11. Always use the appropriate safety gear, especially ear and eye protection.
12. Never handle any firearm while under the influence of any substance likely to impair your physical and mental state.

If there's one thing you should memorize in this course, it's these rules. Repeat them like a mantra if you need to, but make sure you have them in mind every time you're anywhere near a firearm.

AIRSOFT TRAINING SAFETY

Now we can get into the specifics of airsoft training safety.

This primarily has to do with where, when, and how you practice with your airsoft gun.

We won't be covering competition and mock-battle training and participation, as these might have additional safety rules. The organizers will ensure all relevant safety information is readily available to

you.

If you've already been practicing dry-firing, then you'll be glad to know there aren't any additional steps to be taken for transitioning to airsoft training.

However, this might serve as a brief revision for you, though there are additional safety rules not applicable for airsoft use and therefore not included below.

1. Select a designated area for dry-firing and/or airsoft training. This should preferably be outside, against a backdrop that's capable of absorbing or stopping a bullet if you accidentally fire your real gun.
2. Use designated target patterns for each type of firearms training: one for dry-firing, a different one for airsoft guns, and a third type for live fire. For the latter, this

will largely be dependent on what your range offers, so be sure not to replicate their design when choosing your dry-firing and airsoft targets.

3. Never allow any ammunition to enter your designated area with you, other than your airsoft ammunition. This is the only ammunition that should ever be in this area. No other ammunition should be within sight, including in your pockets.
4. A dry-firing session should never last more than 15 minutes, which is a good limit when starting airsoft training as well. You can slowly increase your airsoft session duration as you progress, but never do so with dry-firing. This allows you to maintain the highest possible level of concentration during your training sessions at home.





- Remember to include an extra 10 to 15 minutes at the start and end of your sessions when setting a schedule for yourself. This allows for preparing your firearms, yourself, and your designated area, as well as closing the session properly.
- If you're combining your dry-fire and airsoft session, end it by setting your firearm aside and telling yourself (out loud) that the session is over and you will not be practicing again today. Once you're 100% in that mindset, you may remove yourself and your firearms from the area, clean and reload them as appropriate, then store them.
- Never, ever allow yourself to take "just one more shot" after ending a session. This is the number one reason for accidents, especially with dry-firing.

designated area as well as where you store your firearms. If you are planning on combining dry-fire sessions with airsoft training, however, we recommend using the full set of dry-fire safety rules. You can find these in our Handguns 101 course.

COMBINED SESSIONS

In the previous section, we alluded to combining dry-firing and airsoft training sessions. To ensure you do so in a safe, responsible manner, here's

how we suggest doing so.

Bear in mind other practitioners might have different approaches to combined sessions. This is merely the way we find works best for us.

Start with an abbreviated dry-firing session. Whereas your normal dry-firing session might last up to 15 minutes, keep it down to 5 or 10 minutes here. You can then switch to airsoft training, making sure to change targets as well.

When starting out, we recommend keeping the airsoft training part of these combined sessions down to 5 or 10 minutes too. This helps keep your focus as sharp as possible and prevents bad habits from creeping in and compromising your efforts to build positive muscle memory.

As you progress, you might choose to extend your airsoft training duration. Do so slowly, building your way up to as many as 200+ shots and alternate between shorter and longer sessions. Never give in to the temptation to increase your dry-firing duration!



We find it useful to have these rules printed out and posted in your

If you prefer, you can also close your sessions with another brief dry-firing. We recommend sandwiching your airsoft training with two 5-minute sessions of dry-firing if you do decide to go this route.

SESSION STRUCTURE

Whether doing combined sessions or focusing purely on using airsoft guns to supplement your firearms training, there's a simple session structure we find works best. This isn't merely based on our own experience, however - it's inspired by the way the professionals structure their sessions.

Especially as a beginner, you'll want to start by reviewing the absolute basics. Your first several sessions should be focused entirely on things like precision shooting (holding your target) and trigger control.

As you progress, your basics revisions can start giving way to practicing more advanced skills. However, don't stop going through the basics - this is something even the experts start every session with.

A good way to transition into more advanced techniques is to start with practicing your draw. Go slowly, making sure you're able to draw and shoot on-target with a relatively high level of accuracy (anything above 70% will do - 85% if you're something of a perfectionist).

As you find yourself hitting 90% accuracy, start speeding up until you've started dropping down to around 80% again.

Once you're able to draw to shoot with between 85% and 90% accuracy at a decent speed - fast enough to put down a dangerous assailant - work at maintaining this level of competency.

You don't need to shoot as fast as the Sundance Kid (remember that movie?) unless you're participating in quick-draw competition shooting. Remember to vary your distance from your target as well. Airsoft guns lose accuracy after a certain point (as well as when your gas cartridge starts approaching empty), so establish the furthest possible distance you can still match with your best speed and

accuracy ratio.

With this distance in mind, start switching between firing from close-range up to that same point. It's best to begin with expending at least one full load of ammunition before moving to the next distance point. But as you progress, start adding some dynamic movement to your sessions by constantly shifting your position in every direction while aiming to match your stationary best score.

At the end of the session, no matter its length and complexity, always spend some time reviewing the basics again. This is to help you pick up on any deviations that need attention, especially when it comes to trigger control and sight-focus (maintaining your target).

If you're doing a combined session and ending with dry-firing, then do the basics twice - first with your airsoft gun to benefit from its shot accountability, then again with your firearm.



Conclusion

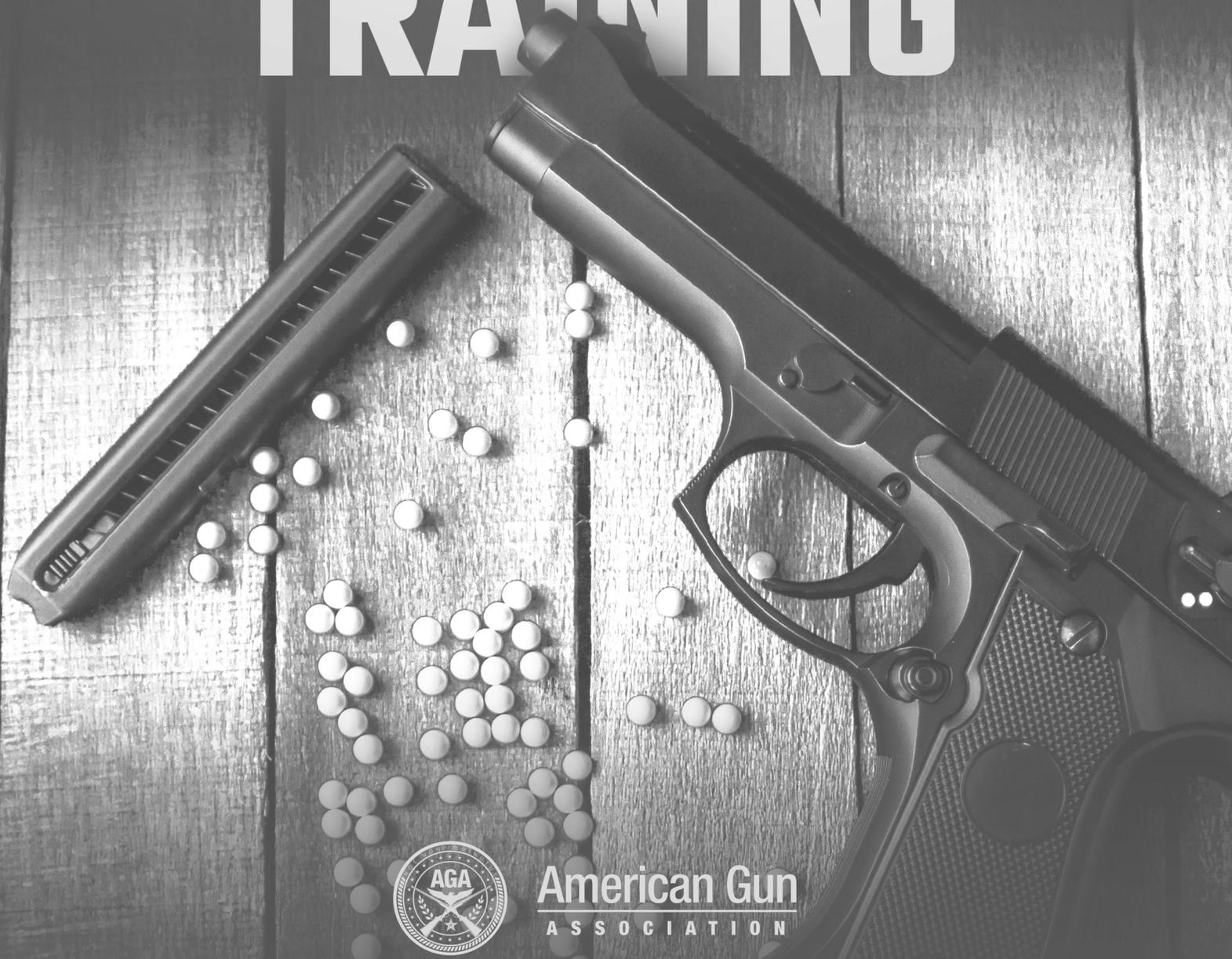
Congratulations on completing Using Airsoft Guns to Supplement Your Firearms Training!

We covered a lot of ground in this learning resource. However, that's one advantage an online course has over professional, face-to-face training - it's far easier to revise sections you're uncertain of!

With that said, and to repeat a point made at the beginning of this course, nothing can replace in-person training with a reliable, certified instructor. Just as airsoft guns are a supplement to live fire training, so is this course to live instruction.

Nevertheless, we trust you found it to meet or exceed your expectations and you will continue to find it a valuable resource, whether you're a new gun owner, prospective gun owner, or one of the "old-timers"!

USING AIRSOFT GUNS TO SUPPLEMENT YOUR FIREARMS TRAINING



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