



Doug Larson

# POCKET CARRY PRIMER

*Carrying a gun in the pocket may seem easy, but there is a technique to it. Make sure your guns, gear and tactics are right before you just drop a gun into your pocket.*

## Tips and tactics for this deep-cover carry mode.



**CCW Breakways'** Pants can make pocket draws easier. If the holster comes out on the gun, flick it away with the support hand, kept behind the muzzle.

**E**very once in a while a story makes the news or circulates around the internet of a gun discharging unintentionally, causing injury when holstered or stuck in a pocket. It probably happens more often than we know. A shirttail, pocket edge or even the folded-over edge of a holster can easily get caught between the trigger guard and the trigger. This is one reason why top instructors train students to holster guns slowly and deliberately instead of rushing the job.

Pocket carry has a lot of appeal. It might sound easy to just drop the gun in the pocket and pull it out when it's needed, but it isn't. Actually, it is one of the most difficult carry locations from which to draw, especially under time constraints and stress. Often the pocket opening is not large enough to smoothly withdraw a gun, and the gun can snag on the pocket material, slowing down the whole process or actually stripping the gun out of the hand. This is going to leave you with a very empty feeling as you watch the gun go tumbling to the ground while the bad guy launches bullets at you.

### Equipment

Fortunately, enough knowledgeable people have recognized the problems with pocket carry and have devised equipment to help. Most important is the pocket holster.

There are many designs for pocket holsters, but all are variations on a theme. For



examples, check out Galco, Simply Rugged and DeSantis. To work properly, the holster must hold the gun in position so every time you reach for it it's where you expect it to be. When you go for the grip, you shouldn't find yourself holding the muzzle instead.

Next, the holster has to release the gun so it slides easily out when drawn. For this reason, the inside of a good holster has a smooth finish. At the same time, the holster must stay in the pocket. It's embarrassing, and worse, to point your defensive tool but not be able to use it because it's still inside of its container. And a good holster will also cover the trigger so the trigger finger — or anything else — cannot get to it when it's not supposed to and cause an unintentional discharge.

You may not think a belt is important. After all, it just holds up your pants. But it's actually very important when carrying iron in your pocket. And the heavier the gun, the more important it is. A sturdy and stiff gun belt keeps your pants from sagging, which can signal to others you are carrying something.

## Made Right

Speaking of pants, if you want to pocket carry, you may need to change your wardrobe. Tight fitting pants or jackets just don't lend themselves well to pocket carry. The gun can cause bulges and it's harder to draw from a tight pocket. So look for clothing with plenty of room.

Some clothing makers have addressed the problems associated with pocket carry and have designed trousers to help. Concealed Cargo makes pants with huge pockets large enough to carry a full-size Ruger Super Redhawk without bulging. I've seen it work effectively on the firing line at Gunsite.

Another clothing maker, CCW Breakaways, makes casual pants and jeans that don't look military- or police-like. And the front pockets are designed to hold the gun toward the inside of the leg so it prints less. Additionally, the front pockets have a broad invisible opening at the top; the pants look normal until the wearer inserts his hand, grips the gun and then smartly cants his wrist outward, snapping open the top of the pocket. This makes withdrawing the gun much easier and faster.

Don't forget spare ammunition. If you carry a revolver, get a speed loader or two and carry them. A round speed loader dropping all cartridges into the cylinder at once is nice, but it's pretty bulky. Flexible strips of polymer holding rounds together are flat and easier to carry. Check out Quick Strips for examples.

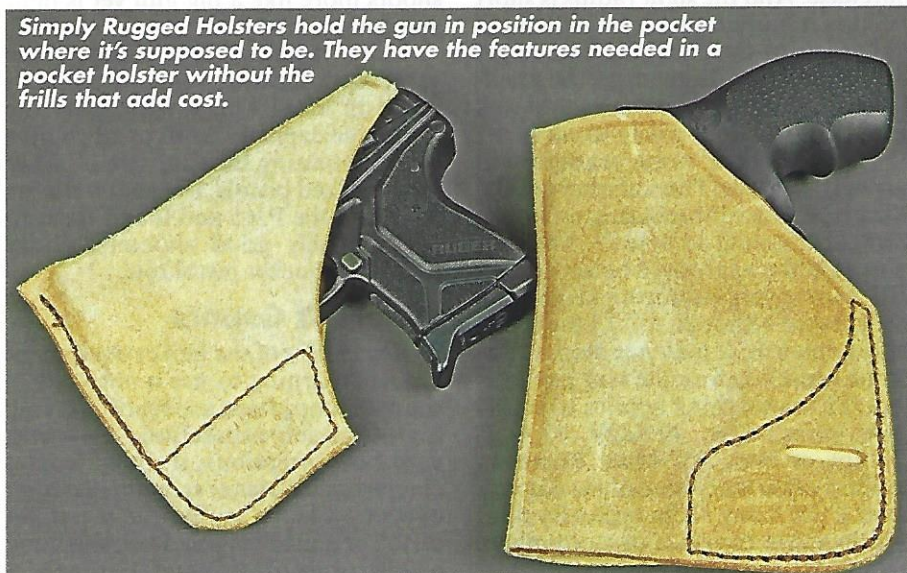


Several holster makers like Galco, DeSantis and Simply Rugged make holsters designed for pocket carry. Guns can be small, medium or even large and can include revolvers and semi-automatics.

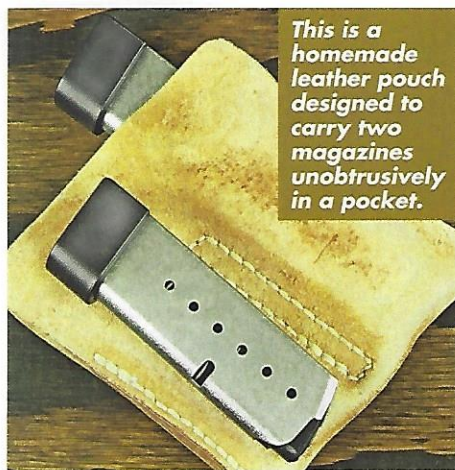
A sturdy gun belt is required even if carrying a gun in a pocket. Ultimate Carry Belts are offered by Blade-Tech and can be cut by the user for any size up to 50 inches.



Simply Rugged Holsters hold the gun in position in the pocket where it's supposed to be. They have the features needed in a pocket holster without the frills that add cost.







*This is a homemade leather pouch designed to carry two magazines unobtrusively in a pocket.*

**A great pocket carry option is the Kahr PM9, a striker fired polymer lightweight semi-automatic.**



**Even with the extended 7-round magazine, the PM9 can be comfortably carried in a pocket.**



If you carry a semi-automatic you must carry at least one spare magazine. Magazines are one of the most common causes of malfunctions in semi-autos, so have a spare for this reason alone. And the more spares you carry, the better. No one ever complains of having too much ammunition in a gunfight. Magazines are flat so they conceal easily, but get a pouch to carry them. This keeps them in place where you want them and keeps them cleaner than they would be if they were just rolling around in your pocket.

## The Gun

Small, lightweight guns are easy to carry and hide, but they are much harder to shoot comfortably and accurately. The grip can be very small with no place for all the fingers to find purchase. And the sight radius is short making it more difficult to get a good sight picture. So, resist the urge to get the smallest gun. Instead, get the smallest and lightest gun you can shoot well and then figure out a way to carry it.

Here is where some readers will strongly disagree: The common self-defense handgun calibers just aren't much good at stopping an assault. The goal is to stop the aggressive behavior, not kill when trying to stop an attack. So, realize that although a .22 Long Rifle bullet can kill, it may not stop a felonious assault before the bad guy kills you. The same thing applies to a .380 ACP, 9mm Luger, .40 S&W, .45 ACP, .38 Spl. or even .357 Mag. These six calibers cause more immediate damage than a .22 Long Rifle typically does and increase the odds of stopping an assault faster.

So, get the most powerful chambering you can shoot accurately and comfortably and keep in mind with modern technology and manufacturing techniques, some pretty small handguns are now chambered in cartridges that would have required a full-size handgun several years ago.

For many years since the 1930s, the Walther PPK was more or less a standard for the pocket pistol because of its dimensions. The largest chambering though was the .380 ACP. But with modern technology, in the mid-1990s Kahr Arms introduced the K9 which is about the same size as a PPK, but chambered in the more powerful 9mm Luger cartridge. The K9 has since evolved into some polymer framed models, of which the PM9 is top of the line. It's a little gun that shoots more like a big gun yet is light and easy to carry.

More recently, SIG changed the game with its new P365, also chambered in 9mm Luger, increasing the magazine capacity to 10 or 12 rounds yet maintaining the slim size of other pocket-sized pistols. I've shot both the PM9 and the P365 and found them to be extremely good shooters, easily filling the pocket pistol role.

## Where It Counts

Regardless of the gun or equipment chosen, learning to use it correctly is the most important aspect of carrying a gun for self-protection. And with very rare exceptions, training from a competent instructor is required. Don't expect to learn to handle a pocket pistol, or any other gun, from watching a video or reading. Spend the time and

money to get good instruction. One place that has set the standard for competent training and offers pocket pistol classes is Gunsite Academy. Here are some things taught there.

As mentioned earlier, always use a holster to reduce the chances of an unintentional discharge. The proper way to put a gun in a pocket is to remove the holster from the pocket, carefully insert the gun in the holster while always pointing the muzzle in a safe direction, and then carefully put the holster and gun in the pocket as a unit. This may require the gun be transferred from one hand to the other, but there are techniques to safely do this, so get the training.

If you normally carry coins, keys or other objects in your pocket, move them to a different pocket. Do not carry anything in the pocket besides the gun and holster. You don't want something working its way into the trigger guard and causing the gun to fire before it is drawn. You will not enjoy the experience.

Carry your spare magazines where they can be accessed with your non-firing hand. That usually means on the opposite side of the body from your gun hand. And if you are carrying those spares in a pocket, use a pouch made for such use.

Drawing from the pocket is almost always slower than drawing from a belt holster. It's just faster to grip a gun carried on the belt than to insert one's hand into a pocket first. Withdrawing the gun from the pocket is also usually slower than clearing the gun from a belt holster. However, there is the possibility circumstances



or the actions of others around you may give you forewarning you may need to draw your gun, and if that happens, you may be able to cut the response time by inserting your hand in your pocket and acquiring a grip *before* you need to draw.

But you must practice the proper technique, the gun must not snag on anything and the holster must stay in the pocket. CCW Breakaways' pants can help make your draw faster because the pocket opening can be made bigger as you draw. You must practice doing it though, and this means many, many repetitions. We're talking hundreds, not 10 or 20.

And above all, when practicing for pocket carry, make sure the gun is unloaded. Check it several times and always point it in a safe direction even though you have unloaded it. Also keep your finger off the trigger until the gun is pointed at a safe target and you are ready to take your dry-fire practice shot. The target should be something that will safely stop a bullet, despite the fact you are practicing with an unloaded gun.

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Good training should prepare you to rapidly and automatically handle problems with your gun and equipment. For example, what do you do if the holster stays on the gun during the draw? The proper response is to flick the holster off the gun with your support hand, let the holster fall away and never put your hand — or any other body part — in front of the muzzle. A good instructor can show you how to do it, watch while you practice and make sure you are doing it right.

Like so many other things gun related, there is a lot of bad information passed around by people who *think* they know what they are doing. Make sure the source of your information really does know what he or she is talking about before believing it. Seek out the truth and find a competent instructor. Then spend the time and money to get training. Then practice. Don't be the nimrod who thinks he knows what he is doing and learns the hard way he followed the wrong advice. 🗡️

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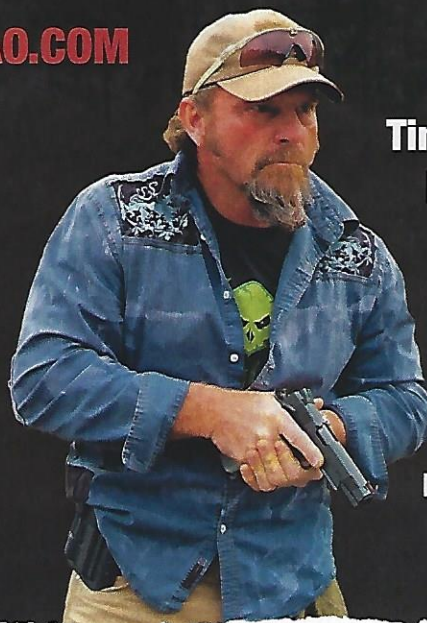
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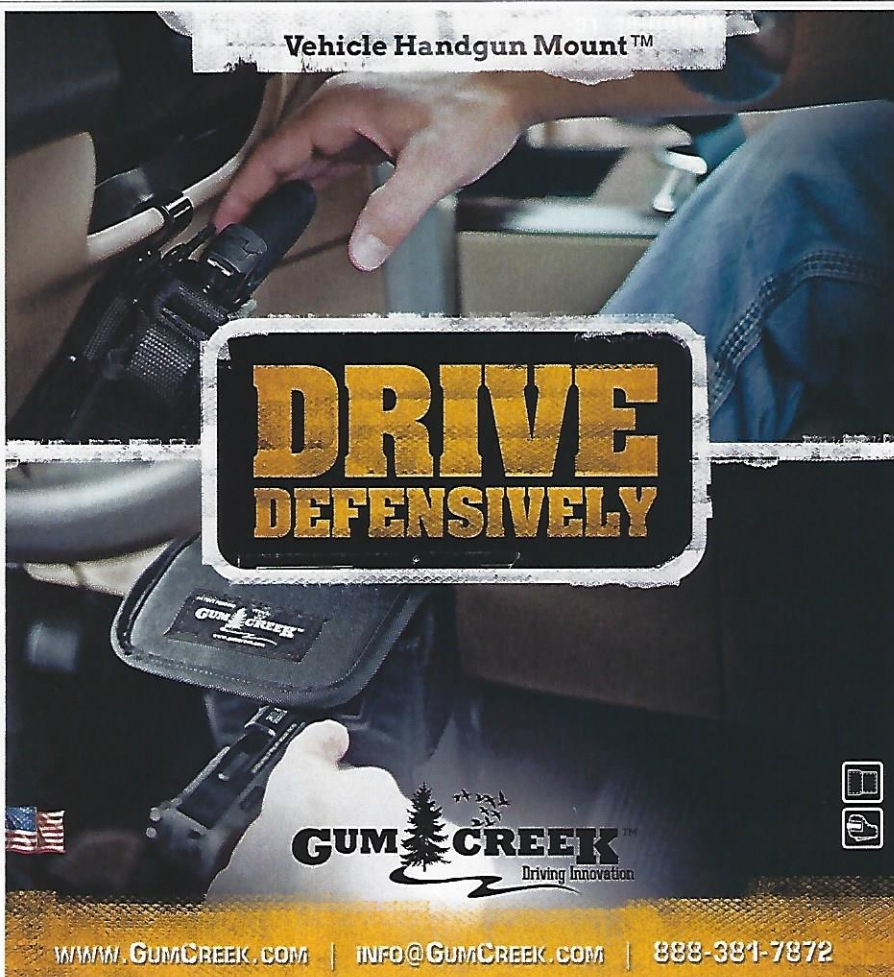
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