

**SURVIVAL**

**SHOTGUN**



**THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO  
EXTREME SELF DEFENSE**



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense



Copyright 2012 Solutions From Science

## Photo Credits:

Shotgun sequence  
<http://people.rit.edu/andpph/exhibit-3.html>

Mossberg  
[www.mossberg.com](http://www.mossberg.com)

Remington 870  
Jmajonis at the English language Wikipedia

Benelli Super Nova Tactical  
[www.impactguns.com](http://www.impactguns.com)

Winchester SXP Tactical  
[www.winchesterguns.com](http://www.winchesterguns.com)

Mossberg 930 Tactical  
[www.cabelas.com](http://www.cabelas.com)

FN SLP Tactical  
[www.fnhusa.com](http://www.fnhusa.com)

Streamlight® TLR-3 Compact Rail-Mounted Tactical Light  
[www.cabelas.com](http://www.cabelas.com)

ProMag Flip-Up AR-15 Sight  
[www.cabelas.com](http://www.cabelas.com)





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

## CONTENTS

THE SHOTGUN SHELL – HEART OF THE SHOTGUN .....	4
WHAT IS THIS GAUGE THING? .....	6
GAUGE ALONE IS NOT THE WHOLE PICTURE .....	8
SHOTGUN TYPES .....	9
CHARACTERSTICS OF A GOOD HOME DEFENSE SHOTGUN .....	11
PUMP ACTION HOME DEFENSE SHOTGUNS .....	13
OTHER PUMP ACTION BRANDS .....	15
AUTOLOADING TACTICAL SHOTGUNS .....	17
ACCESSORIES .....	20
AMMUNITION .....	24
SUMMARY .....	27



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

A SHOTGUN SHOULD BE A VALUABLE PART of your home defense arsenal. While there are tasks better suited to rifles and pistols, you'll find that the bulk of home defense can be easily handled by that most versatile and handy weapon – the common shotgun. Shotguns are ubiquitous in America – most families that own a firearm, have a shotgun of some sort and, in many cases, a shotgun is the only type of firearm they possess.

Shotguns are smooth bore firearms, meaning they have no lands or grooves in the barrel. They are directly descended by smooth bore muskets and, more specifically, shorter versions of these muskets with flared barrel ends called blunderbusses. A blunderbuss was nothing more than a smooth bore, short barrel weapon that fired ball shot (to great effect) originally used for close quarters combat.

Shotguns make excellent home defense weapons due to the fact that they have a good shot spread, are easy to use, are very reliable, and (last but not least) are excellent man stoppers. A shotgun is capable of producing close range stopping power unequalled by most pistols and exceeding that of many rifles. Shotguns are decidedly low-tech firearms that have withstood the test of time and are inexpensive when compared to rifles or even pistols.

As stated earlier, most American households already possess a shotgun of some sort, but it's important to ensure that it's suitable for a home defense application. Due to their design, the vast majority of shotguns in the hands of the American people are only suited to clay pigeon shooting or bird hunting. Modifying the gun you already own is often not worth it due to the fact that shotguns are so cheap to begin with. So how do you select the right weapon for the job? Before you rush to the store, you need to educate yourself a little on the characteristics and types of action that these weapons have so you can make an intelligent, informed choice.

### THE SHOTGUN SHELL – HEART OF THE SHOTGUN

When discussing rifles, one is apt to immediately launch into a discussion as to the actual characteristics of the rifle: its operating system, the pistol grips, or the scope. However, with the shotgun, the most unique part is the shell (not bullet) that it fires. A shotgun shell is what makes a shotgun, a shotgun – it's the plastic hulled





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense



shell that contains a loading of shot (small pellets, discussed in depth later) or a slug (a single lead projectile), some wadding, and some powder. The shotgun's shell is what makes it so versatile when compared to rifles. Consider that a typical AR pattern rifle can fire only a handful of different bullets of varying weights. All of these bullets will have more or less the same effect upon the target. Some will travel more slowly than others, being heavier. Others yet will have a flatter trajectory. However, at the end of the day, they will all accomplish the exact same goal – to punch a single, neat hole in the target.

The shotgun shell of a given shotgun can be tailored to whatever you want to do with it. A shotgun can be used to kill or wound – to be precise or imprecise, depending on what shells you put in it. A shot gun can fire buckshot, slugs, birdshot, rock salt, rubber pellets, bean bags, flechettes, sabots, and much, much more. This is what makes it among the most versatile firearms on the planet. No other weapons system has this much flexibility.



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense



### WHAT IS THIS GAUGE THING?

The caliber of the weapon where it pertains to rifles and pistols is expressed in decimal inches or millimeters. Most people are familiar with such common calibers as .308 Winchester, .223 Remington, 9mm Parabellum, etc. Terms like Glock 40 and Colt .45 are commonly understood in our culture – and also, most people inherently get that a 40 caliber bullet is smaller than a 45 caliber one. The caliber nomenclature and cataloging system for rifles and pistols is fairly intuitive.

Then shotguns come along, and the term gauge is bandied about; to add further confusion, the smaller the number of the gauge, the larger the bore of the weapon – directly opposite from pistols and rifles. A 20 gauge shotgun is in fact much smaller in bore size (the inside diameter of the barrel) than a 12 gauge shotgun. There are far fewer gauges available for shotguns than there are calibers for rifles and pistols, so at least that helps to keep it simple. There are really only two or three gauges out of them all that are in common usage, with the most common of all being 12 gauge. In fact, when most people think shotgun, they think 12 gauge!

So what does the number 12 in “12 gauge” correspond to in that case? The gauge number is labeled as 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. Thus, a 12 gauge shotgun has the diameter of a lead ball that weighs 1/12<sup>th</sup> of a pound – or .729 inches in diameter. This system of measurement is a direct descendant of the way cannons used to be measured – once upon a time, cannons were classed as 12 pounders, 24 pounders, etc. rather than by caliber. This has been mostly done away with and replaced with bore size in millimeters (such as 155mm, 105 mm, 88mm). Clearly, this system of nomenclature is much more arcane than caliber, which can be easier to understand.

The following are shotgun gauges in common usage, from smallest to largest:

**.410:** Yes, we just finished saying that shotgun bore sizes were expressed in terms of gauge, but here's



6



*.410 Shotgun*



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

the one exception - .410 bore. The .410 is the smallest commonly available shotgun shell, and it's usually favored by young shooters because of its forgiving nature and low recoil. It's an extremely popular shell size and while a .410 shotgun is perfectly capable of killing in the right hands, it essentially has no home defense application. Sure, a .410 is better than no weapon at all, but it's really not appropriate for this use. It lacks the power of its larger caliber siblings, and the shotguns that fire it are not usually tactically oriented. .410 shotgun shells are available in both shot and slug versions and are most suitable for fowl and small rodents. Even though it is low recoil and light, you should resist the urge to use a .410 to equip members of your family (such as a pre-teen or a female). A .22 rifle is more suitable for defensive purposes than this gun.

**28 Gauge:** Larger in size than its little .410 brother, but far less common, the 28 gauge is another fowl and rodent gun that has no defensive application whatsoever. It carries a light, low recoil round that mostly has sporting applications.

**20 Gauge:** An extremely popular gauge in which many suitable defensive shotguns are chambered, the 20 gauge is far lighter on recoil than a 12 gauge, yet still packs a decent punch. Many people within the firearms community feel that the 20 gauge is an excellent weapon for teens and wives, and it is available in buckshot loads, bird loads, and slugs. While the sheer number of lethal and non-lethal rounds available in 12 gauge are not available in 20 gauge, there is still a fair selection of ammunition available. The downside with this gauge is that it simply does not have as much of a selection available as the 12 gauge, whether that be in the guns, the ammo, or the accessories.

**16 Gauge:** Thought of as a great compromise between the lightness and low recoil of a 20 gauge and the power of a 12 gauge, the 16 gauge was popular during the first



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, primarily as an upland bird gun. It is generally unsuitable for use as a home defense weapon due to the low availability of the shells and the fact that most guns that fire it are single shot weapons.

**12 Gauge:** Comprising over 50% of all shotgun shells sold in the United States (with the other half being 20 gauge and .410), the 12 gauge is the shotgun of choice for home defense use. Adopted by militaries, police departments, and private citizens for over a century, your quest for an available, versatile, and capable shotgun round ends here. Unless you have a compelling reason to choose another shotgun round, stick with the 12 gauge. More weapons, rounds, and accessories are available for 12 gauge shotguns than any other type of shotgun – combined.

**10 Gauge:** Bigger than a 12 gauge but not necessarily more powerful (it depends on the load), 10 gauge used to be quite a bit more popular than it is today. 10 gauge shotguns are quite a bit bulkier than their 12 gauge counterparts and, while a formidable weapon, few of these guns are directly applicable to home defense scenarios.

## GAUGE ALONE IS NOT THE WHOLE PICTURE

Another common area of confusion with shotgun shells is that not only are they different in gauge, they are also different in length, usually expressed in inches. This length happens to refer to the length of the fired case – not the unfired case! This is important to know because when you purchase a home defense shotgun, you want to make sure it can accept all available shell lengths (some of the older shotguns accept only the shorter ones). Where it pertains to 12 gauge shotguns (henceforth the only type referred to), the common lengths available are:

- 2¾" - The oldest and most popular length of 12 gauge shotgun shell, it is available in an expansive combination of loads for bird, shot, and slugs.
- 3" – Once referred to as magnum loads (before 3 1/2" came out), these are longer, more powerful, and contain more shot than 2¾" loads. There are many available loadings for this size.
- 3½" – The largest 12 gauge shotgun shell available. This one kicks hard, contains lots of shot, and also has a wide selection.

Never fire a longer shotgun shell than what is marked on the barrel and remember that shorter is perfectly acceptable (e.g. a 2¾" shell fired from a 3" chambered gun). Biggest is not always best - the massive recoil of a 3½" shotgun shell makes it





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

hard to accurately place follow up shots. Additionally, most shotguns have tubular magazines (discussed in depth later), and thus the shells are stacked end to end. It's simple math; fewer 3½" shells will fit inside of a given tubular magazine than 2¾" shells. For home defense purposes, stick to 3" chambered 12 gauge shotguns and expect to fire mostly 2¾" loads.

## SHOTGUN TYPES

As if the discussion on gauge and shot length wasn't confusing enough, the term "shotgun" in and of itself is an ambiguous, general term. It's like the term "car." There are sports cars, family cars, station wagons, racing cars – you name it. Similarly, with shotguns, there are many types. The most common shotgun types are:

**Over and Under:** This is a shotgun with two equal length barrels, one of which is on top of the other. Sometimes this type has two triggers; sometimes there is only one trigger that is pulled back further to fire the second round. These are sporting

guns intended for skeet shooting and completely inappropriate for home defense.



*Over and Under*

**Side by Side:** with two equal length barrels and a firing mechanism similar to the over and under, this is sometimes known as a "coach gun." While side by side shotguns saw combat in the Old West and the Civil War, they are increasingly uncommon today and there are far better choices for home defense weapons than this type of shotgun.

**Single Shot:** Many long-barrel bird guns are manufactured in this manner, usually with a hammer for cocking. Primarily a trap shooting gun, this is not a home defense weapon unless you have absolutely nothing else at hand.



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

**Pump Action:** A single-barreled shotgun that sports a tubular magazine under the barrel, the pump is the most versatile, reliable, and ubiquitous shotgun on the planet. If you get one type of gun for home defense, it should be a pump action shotgun. Due to the pump mechanism (which is a moveable fore end that's worked back and forth to both chamber a new round and expend the empty one), pump actions are a great blend of firepower and fast follow up shots. Pump action has some extremely valuable advantages over any other type of shotgun action. They:

- Can chamber all sorts of shells, some of which would not reliably cycle in autoloaders, such as less than lethal rounds.
- Are extremely fast cycling between rounds. In some cases, depending on the shooter, they can be as fast as an autoloader.
- Give the user the ability to reload the weapon with one hand, while keeping the weapon pointed at the target with the other, due to the open feeding port on the bottom of the gun.

A pump action shotgun has one other marked advantage over just about every

other type out there – its cheap. For home defense purposes, a pump action shotgun can be purchased for around \$400 – and that's for a respectable name brand model.

Side by Side



Pump Action





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

**Autoloader:** Autoloaders are usually gas operated semi-automatic shotguns that fire one round for every one pull of the trigger until the magazine is expended. Some of these models, such as the Saiga 12 (discussed later), offer a box type magazine, but most of them have the same tubular magazines as pump guns.

The gas operation of an autoloader is accomplished when the shell is fired. Some of the excess gas from firing is routed back towards the bolt, pushing the bolt back and cycling another round. On the plus side, a 12 gauge autoloader can launch a staggering amount of lead downrange in short order; on the negative side, autoloaders are expensive, costing upwards of \$1000, yet firing the exact same projectile as its pump action brethren. Additionally, assuming they have tubular magazines (which most autoloaders do), they reload at exactly the same rate as pump action guns do – one shell at a time, underneath the gun, just forward of the trigger.

Reliability really isn't a factor anymore. Autoloading shotguns have been around for decades and their operating systems are time tested, proven, and reliable. Buy one with confidence, but only if you feel you absolutely need to have the capacity to fire semi-automatically.

There are several other types of shotgun actions not listed here because they are wholly inappropriate for home defense use, namely bolt action and lever action.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD HOME DEFENSE SHOTGUN

Much discussion time has been spent on what not to buy in a home defense shotgun – now its time to discuss the ideal layout and feature set for a good home defense shotgun. Here are some basic features the gun should have:

**18 ½" barrel:** The shortest possible barrel allowed by law in a shotgun is 18" long, but, for safety's sake, manufacturers produce them in 18.5" lengths. The safety referred to here is legal safety – an 18" barrel on a shotgun that has no stock and only a pistol grip runs dangerously close to the definition of a short barreled shotgun, a legal term describing a controlled and illegal (without a special permit) type of shotgun. Possessing a short barreled shotgun without the requisite permit is a great way to spend lots of quality time in federal prison, so it's advisable never to shorten the barrel of any shotgun from what originally came from the factory. Most shotguns have interchangeable barrels– if you have a 20" barrel on a shotgun,



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense



you can always buy an 18.5" one and simply put it on. This is safer than cutting the barrel. An 18.5" barrel represents an excellent balance between a good close-quarters weapon and accuracy.

Remember, since most pump action and autoloading shotguns have tubular magazines that are affixed under the barrel, as the barrel grows in length, so too does the length of the tubular magazine. For this reason, 18.5" barrels are usually limited to 6 or 7 rounds while 20" and longer barrels can accommodate up to 9 rounds.

**Pump Action or Autoloader:** Your ideal home defense shotgun is a pump action or autoloader, depending on your budget and your need to fire semi-automatically. Either one is a great choice.

**3" Chamber:** While the bulk of the rounds you will most likely be firing are 2¾" rounds, you'll want a shotgun that has a 3" chamber for maximum versatility, just in case 2¾" rounds go out of vogue in the future (unlikely, but possible). Most modern tactical shotguns are chambered as such – some older models that you may have already acquired will accept only 2¾" rounds.

**Cylinder Bore:** This refers to the makeup of the interior of the barrel and whether it has a choke or not. Most tactical shotguns will have cylinder bore barrels (i.e. no choke). What exactly is a choke? Quite simply, a choke is a slight restriction in the barrel diameter designed to force the shot pattern together, creating a tighter spread. In most hunting applications, you want a relatively tight and even spread, shrinking the shot size down to something the size of what you are hunting. This results in more shot pellets hitting their target rather than scattering uselessly about. In a home defense weapon, however, you don't want a choke at all. You want the greatest possible spread on the shot so that you have the best chance of hitting your target.

There is a misconception afoot that shotguns don't need to be aimed, that a single shot fired in the general direction of a person will automatically hit him since the pattern of the shot is so wide. In fact, at 25 feet, a 12 gauge, choke-less shotgun firing buck shot will produce a spread of only 8-10." While that is far less accurate than a rifle that will produce only a single hole, it is still a pretty small circle and you could conceivably miss. You don't need a choke to further compress this circle into something smaller. Get a shotgun without a choke. Incidentally, this is the primary reason why the bird gun you already own is unsuitable for defensive use – check the barrel for a marking as to whether it has a choke or not. Most 22-24" and longer barrels designed for bird and game hunting have chokes. Some of these are removable with a special wrench, but others are cast into the barrel.





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

**Plastic or Polymer Furniture:** If you think furniture is only something you have in your living room, then you're mistaken. Where it pertains to a firearm, furniture is the type of material that the stock and fore end are made of. In the past, this used to be wood (a calling card for a hunting gun); today, a good tactical gun for home defense usually has black polymer stocks. Polymer has two clear advantages over wood – first of all, it's much stronger and can take a ton of abuse; secondly, it is matte in color and doesn't reflect.

**Parkerized Finish:** Parkerization is a firearm metal finishing process that results in a matte black finish that is extremely durable and non reflective. It's the norm for tactical weapons of all kinds and should be your choice for a home defense shotgun.

The above qualities represent the best features required in a home defense shotgun. There are several fine shotguns that fill this role right out of the box and are commercially available without modification for a reasonable price.

## PUMP ACTION HOME DEFENSE SHOTGUNS

**Mossberg 500 and 590 Series:** The Mossberg 500 series is a quality shotgun that has been around for close to 50 years. These hammerless pump action repeaters are extremely simple in design and are time tested shotguns that have served with most branches of the U.S. military as well as countless police forces. The 590 differs from the 500 only in that the end plate design on the tubular magazine is different, allowing a longer tubular magazine. Basic features for this weapon are:

- 18.5 inch barrel
- Available with or without pistol grip
- Parkerized finish
- Accepts 3" magnum shells
- When using 2¾" shells, Model 500/590 holds 5 shells in the magazine plus one in the chamber (18.5" barrel); some models hold 8 shells in the magazine plus one in the chamber (20" barrel).
- Ambidextrous thumb operated safety
- Synthetic polymer stock



Mossberg 535 ATS™

The great part about these shotguns is the fact that they are among the larg-



13

# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

Mossberg 590



est number of shotguns produced and are in wide circulation. Therefore, there are plenty of inexpensive used ones available, as well as a massive aftermarket for parts and accessories.

**Remington 870 Series:** The Remington 870 series of shotguns are legendary and have seen as much tough use under combat and law enforcement conditions as the Mossbergs have. Think of the Remington vs. Mossberg choice as a Ford vs. Chevy choice. Both are reliable and dependable guns with similar features that you can't go wrong with. Basic features of the 870 Express Tactical are:

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

Remington's 870 has also had decades of street time with which to become a mature design, and the current offerings are excellent shotguns that have stood the test of time. Untold thousands of user installable upgrade parts are available for Remington's popular 870 series.

Remington 870 Marine Magnum





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

### OTHER PUMP ACTION BRANDS

Certainly Remington's 870 and Mossberg's 500/590 series aren't the only two models of pump action shotguns, but heed the following warning carefully: *You must have a compelling reason to look beyond these two brands and models before considering something else.* Why? Simple – these two shotguns comprise something along the lines of 75-80% of the market share for tactical pump action shotguns. The reason for this is that they work, plain and simple, and there are tons of aftermarket parts for these guns.

Of course, there are other pump action brands out there that are appropriate for tactical use, but none of them enjoy quite the same combination of following, features, and widespread use as the big two above.

**Benelli Nova Tactical:** Benelli is an Italian brand that is among the best built and designed shotgun in the world. Their Benelli M4 semi-automatic shotgun is currently in use with the US Marines as their main shotgun (discussed later). They are lesser known in the field of pump action shotguns, but they do make the respectable Nova Tactical. If you absolutely must have something other than a Remington or Mossberg, take a look at this model. Features are:

- Parkerized finish
- 18½" barrel
- 4 shot tubular magazine (plus 1 in the chamber – gives 5 total)
- Accepts 3½" magnum shells

The Benelli Nova is a great gun, there's no doubt about it, but it has far fewer aftermarket parts available. Also, for the price (about the same as a Remington 870



*Benelli Super Nova Tactical*

or Mossberg 590), you would have to have a really good reason to want to buy it over the other two models.

**Winchester SXP Tactical:** Winchester makes plenty of shotguns; however, in the past, their focus has been on sporting guns, and thus their tactical line took a back seat to Remington and Mossberg, who dominated the tactical shotgun scene.



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

Winchester SXP Tactical



Nevertheless, the Winchester SXP Tactical is a respectable gun for home defense, although it does suffer from a lack of aftermarket parts. Features are:

- Parkerized finish
- 18 ½" barrel
- 5 shot tubular magazine (plus 1 in the chamber – gives 6 total)
- Accepts 3" magnum shells
- Black synthetic furniture

**The Discount Specials:** There are a slew of tactical looking shotguns out there that are in fact Remington and Mossberg clones. In many cases, they are indistinguishable from the aforementioned brands unless you read the writing on the gun. Most of these are made in places like Turkey, China, and other far off reaches. Most of them are decent guns, but the only reason you'd buy them is price and price alone. Most of the time, they cost half as much as a Remington or Mossberg, but you get what you pay for. Discount Pump Action 12 gauge brands are names like:

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

**Miscellany:** You may have noticed that there are some shotguns out there that are definitely pump action 12 gauges that weren't mentioned here. Names like Browning and several other big firearms manufacturers also make shotguns. They aren't for tactical use, however. If you are looking for a combination bird gun / home defense shotgun (a bad, bad combination), perhaps take a look at those brands.



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

In summary, the pump action tactical shotgun market is dominated by two perfectly good guns – the Remington 870 series and the Mossberg 500/590 series. There is really no reason to consider any other choice than these two, unless budget is a major concern. Even then, these same models can be found on the used market for good prices, so it makes sense to shop around and get the right model the first time.

## AUTOLOADING TACTICAL SHOTGUNS

If the pump action shotgun market is dominated by two major players, the auto-loading shotgun market most definitely isn't. There is a wide array of choices in this segment and they are all excellent shotguns for home defense use. Consider that an autoloading shotgun will cost at least double what its pump action counterpart will – sometimes triple if you consider some of the more exotic foreign brands. These autoloaders won't hold any more shells than their pump action siblings, and sometimes they even hold less. The only thing they really do well over and above the pumps is that they fire rapidly. You may want that feature, so it's a valid concern – just be aware that you will pay for it.

**Remington Model 1100 TAC 4:** This is an excellent autoloader made by Remington that has all the features you'd expect from a pump action tactical gun except on an autoloader platform. The downside with this gun is that it only comes in a 22" barrel length, which is frankly a bit much for use as a home defense gun. On the other hand, it carries a full 8 shots within. This versatile gun is going on 40 years of service and is a great choice for an autoloader.



*Remington Model 1100 TAC 4*

**Remington VersaMax Tactical:** A relatively new offering from Remington, this autoloader is a sleek, futuristic looking tactical gun that holds eight rounds total (one in the chamber, 7 in the magazine) and some excellent tactical accessories already included, such as a picatinny rail (discussed later). The weapon also accepts up to 3" shells. However, this weapon is a new design and at least \$300 more than its nearest competition.



*Remington VersaMax Tactical*



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

**Mossberg 930 Tactical:** This is a great gun choice. The barrel length is a short 18½", yet it still has a 7+1 round capacity. The Mossberg 930 is a light, fast firing and reliable weapon that comes equipped with excellent sights and a pistol grip. These shotguns are reasonably priced as well – at least \$500 cheaper based on

*Mossberg 930 Tactical*



MSRP than the Remington VersaMax Tactical.

**Benelli M4:** Easily among the best autoloading tactical shotguns in the world, the Benelli M4 serves as the United States Marine Corps official shotgun (designated the M1014). This is a dual-piston, auto-regulating design that is reliable and will fire any shell and keep on cycling. Though these weapons cost serious money (Over \$1700 MSRP, usually), they also come equipped with rails, sights, and an excellent warranty. They are available in camo or Parkerized finish and 18½" barrel lengths for maximum maneuverability. On the downside, this weapon only holds 4+1

*Benelli M4*



rounds – five total, although aftermarket extension tubes are available.

**FN SLP Tactical:** Another great autoloading shotgun, the FN SLP sits at a similar price point to the Benelli M4. It's a super fast firing machine that's made by Fabrique Nationale (FN), a company that makes most of the heavy weapons used by the U.S. military. These 18½" shotguns are chambered for 3" rounds and will hold a respectable 6+1.

*FN SLP Tactical*





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

**Saiga 12:** Completely different than anything you've ever seen, the Saiga 12, at first glance, looks like an AK47 type rifle rather than a shotgun. This means that it uses a box type magazine, which has some serious advantages over the tubular magazine used in basically every other shotgun – one can rapidly reload and unload this weapon. The Saiga 12 is an extremely reliable Russian made shotgun that has a great price point (about \$800 MSRP) and has many advantages over a typical shotgun design. Consider the benefits of this model:

- Extremely reliable and proven operating system directly derived from the AK pattern of rifles
- Familiar ergonomics for AK shooters
- Strong visual deterrent
- Ability to accept 10 round magazines as standard and 20 round drums optionally. No other shotgun even comes close.
- Magazines can be reloaded quicker than any other tubular magazine shotgun.

The Saiga 12 can throw some serious lead downrange and, because of its magazine size, can do something that most machine guns can barely do – discharge 10 rounds of 00 Buckshot in about 3 seconds. When you consider that

*Saiga*



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

each shell holds about 9 .33 caliber pellets, you can see that the Saiga 12 throws a wall of lead at any potential intruder.

## ACCESSORIES

So you've selected the ideal shotgun for home defense, bought it, and now you've got it home for the first time. What now? Shotguns rarely come ready to go right out of the box with everything you need. There are some key accessories you need to think about purchasing that will help you use the weapon as a true home defense tool.

However, a word of caution about accessorizing: don't get carried away with some of the aftermarket gear available for these weapons. There are enough bells and whistles available that can turn your light, maneuverable shotgun into a heavy, hard to control weapon that gets snagged on everything in your home. Go simple if at all possible. However, there are some essentials:

**Sling:** No full length firearm is complete without a sling. Not only is a sling handy for carrying the shotgun, it also helps steady it when aiming – this is important on a shotgun when you're firing slugs at targets 100 yards away. A sling also gives you a modicum of weapon retention, meaning you can keep a piece of it wrapped around your wrist to ensure an attacker doesn't surprise you and yank the weapon away. Resist the urge to go cheap on the sling – the sling, swivels, and associated hardware should be just as good quality as the shotgun itself.

**Weapon Light:** One of the most important features of a home defense shotgun is a weapon mounted light. If you just said, "I already have a flashlight," then you aren't considering that with a pump shotgun, you need one hand to work the pump and the other to hold the gun and pull the trigger. Unless you plan on carrying a flashlight in your teeth, you need a weapon mounted light.





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

Tactical illumination is a science all to itself and an entire guide could be written about it. It's not just for night time shooting either; consider that if you are chasing an assailant into a barn or outbuilding even during a sunny day, the second you enter a darkened room without a weapon light, your eyes will take precious seconds to adjust – seconds the attacker could use to surprise you. A good tactical weapon light is a robust, waterproof, billet aluminum-bodied LED light that is in the 150+ lumen range for intensity. LED technology has resulted in lights that are small, powerful, light, and use very little battery power.

It's vitally important to purchase a light meant to be mounted to a weapon for one primary reason: the switch. Most weapons mounted lights have pressure switches or paddle switches that are extremely light and quick to operate. With a tactical light, at times you might need to shut it off just as fast as you turn it on. Remember, you might illuminate your target, but as soon as you do, he too also knows where you are. It's imperative that you have the ability to shut it off quickly. Pressure pad type switches mount to the fore end of the shotgun and require very little pressure to turn on the light; when you move your hand ever so slightly off the fore end, it shuts off. With some practice, you can almost will the light to turn on and off. Don't duct tape a flashlight to the weapon – it's not nearly the same thing.

Tactical lights attach to the weapon in two different ways. In the first method, the flashlight manufacturer usually sells a bracket that is specific to the firearm you purchased (hopefully, you purchased a shotgun with a strong aftermarket). This will usually clamp to the forward part of the magazine tube and be more or less permanently installed, requiring tools to remove.

*Picatinny Rail*



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense



The second method used to mount the light (and other accessories) is a picatinny rail. A picatinny rail is a grooved rail originally developed by the military to facilitate the rapid mounting and dismounting of various accessories. These rails usually permanently mount to the magazine tube of the shotgun. The flashlight then usually mounts to the rail using a quick release bracket that can dismount the light with a flick of a lever. There are some advantages with this method, most notably that the light is mounted on the weapon securely until you need it to be dismounted – at that point you can remove it quickly. Why would you want to do this? Simply put, if your target ceases to become a threat (or, after further discovery, wasn't a threat in the first place), you don't want to keep a firearm pointed at someone, but you still may require illumination. Versatility is the name of the game.

**Shell Holder:** The problem with most shotguns (Saiga 12 being the exception) is that they are not magazine fed weapons. The shells come packaged loose, are put in the shotgun one at a time, and must be reloaded one at a time. This makes the storing of ammunition on one's person challenging, unless you happen to like keeping a half dozen shells in your pocket, where they will be difficult to access in a high stress situation. Most shotguns usually have a 6-8 shot capacity, which isn't really a whole lot when you think about it. A prudent shooter would ensure that at least one reload is available readily, and the way to accomplish this is via a shell holder. These are usually molded plastic racks that mount either to the stock (opposite the side where you rest your cheek) or on the side of the receiver opposite the ejection port. Most of these holders accept 4-6 shells, clipped right to the side of the gun, and you just pop them off as you need them. The practical result of this is that you are carrying around a shotgun with 12-16 rounds close by, and that's comforting.

There is another reason why you might want a shell holder – to change the type of ammo you are firing. You might have the weapon preloaded with 00 buck only to find that your target is 100 yards away – slug territory. Keep slugs in your shell holder for just such an eventuality. For those who are so inclined, combination slings / bandoliers are sold which can hold upwards of 50 rounds. Usually nylon with elastic hoops, these can keep a vast amount of ammunition close at hand to handle almost any engagement. The downside with this is essentially weight, as 50 rounds of certain shotgun shells can weigh as much as the weapon. If you own acreage or could conceivably find yourself away from resupply, consider one of these rigs.

**Sights:** If you're scratching your head and wondering why a shotgun needs to have sights, consider the following: while a shotgun used solely inside a smaller





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

home probably doesn't need sights, it wouldn't hurt to have them. As previously stated, a 25 foot shot will yield a spread of about 8 inches or so, and while this is much larger than the single hole of a pistol or rifle bullet, it is still possible to miss the target. Will anyone miss his or her target at point blank range with a shotgun? Probably not! But not all home defense scenarios occur at point blank range. Consider that, tactically speaking, you want to eliminate the threat from as far away as possible. This is why the U.S. Army uses missiles and laser guided bombs instead of sending in the infantry. If you are aware of a threat that's 25-30 yards away, you will want a way to sight in and engage that target.

First and foremost, you won't be putting a scope on a shotgun unless you plan on hunting deer with slugs. A tactical shotgun really has one of two sighting systems:

**Iron Sights:** This is typically a prominent front post sight arrangement not unlike that which you will find on the front of a large revolver. This front post sight will be relatively thick for easy target acquisition and may even contain tritium for night use or some other luminescent insert. The rear sight may

*ProMag Flip-Up  
AR-15 Sight*



*EOTech HHS II Sight Combo*



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense



be a conventional vee type iron sight with rudimentary adjustments for windage (left and right) and elevation (up and down). You will never manipulate these on the fly – you will most likely set them once at a given range and leave them be. Alternately, a great rear sight to have is what's called a ghost ring. Ghost ring rear sights are nothing more than a steel hoop that you look through and center the front sight post on. Ghost rings provide rapid target acquisition and a generous field of view, meaning you won't be fixated on just the target, losing situational awareness.

**Holographic Sights:** Holographic style sights such as the Eotech series of sights represent the pinnacle of shotgun sighting systems. With their wide fields of view and ultra bright red ring that adjusts for parallax automatically, you'll have a hard time missing your target. The beauty of these sights is rapid target acquisition. Pick up the shotgun, place the red ring on the center mass of the target, and pull the trigger – you'll put that 8" spread right on the target's torso and that will be the end of the engagement. Transitioning to slugs will be a snap – an Eotech will allow you to easily engage targets out to 100 yards without breaking your stride. The downside here is that your Eotech may cost just as much as the shotgun itself.

## AMMUNITION

As stated earlier, shotguns are unique in the sense that they have the capability to accept a wide range of ammunition, more than any rifle or pistol. This is a double edged sword, however, as putting the wrong ammo in your home defense shotgun could seriously detract from its stopping power. Proper defensive loads need to be considered.

Essentially, if one accepts less than lethal rounds, shotguns can fire either shot or slugs. While slugs are all more or less the same – a massive piece of solid lead – there is such a range of shot available so as to boggle the





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

imagination, from pepper fine bird shot to massive double ought (00) buckshot. We'll take a look at each one.

**Slugs:** A slug, traditionally speaking, is just a solid ball of lead. As it fires out of the smooth, unrifled barrel of a shotgun, it essentially has the same characteristics as a musket firing a lead ball did 200 years ago – it is slow, inaccurate, and extremely short ranged. A slug takes the shotgun's strongest feature (the ability to spread out the damage into an 8" or larger circle) and reduces it back down into a rifle or pistol sized hit – except a slug doesn't have near the accuracy of a pistol or rifle.

To counteract the inherent inaccuracy of slugs, many manufacturers have created what's called the "rifled slug." This slug has rifling cast into it so that as it travels down the barrel, it imparts a spin to the slug, making it somewhat more accurate. While not anywhere near the accuracy of a rifle, it still provides a respectable hit within 100 yards. Consider the pros and cons of using slugs as home defense loads:

### Pros:

- Massive slug that has incredible knock-down power at close range
- Extends the range of the shotgun, out to 50-100 yards in the right conditions, meaning you don't have to switch weapons if the threat is further away

### Cons:

- Will cut clean through a target at close range and keep on going through walls. Could dangerously over-penetrate.
- Reduces the spread of the shotgun, meaning you have to aim more accurately, which could be difficult in a high stress situation.

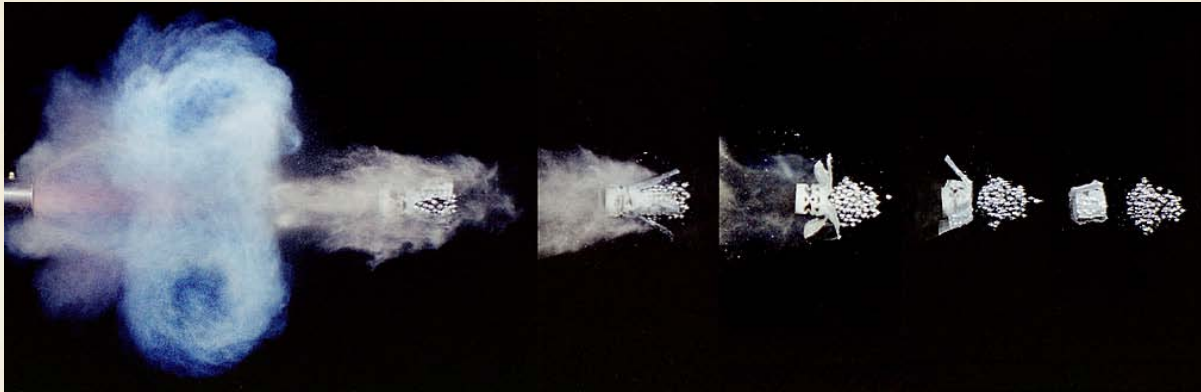
While it's advisable to always have a couple of slugs on hand just in case, stick with shot for home defense purposes.

**Shot:** This is where the shotgun really comes into its own. Shot is what shotguns are all about, as the name implies. First and foremost, there are literally thou-



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense



sands of kinds of shot available for shotguns, and using the wrong kind could get you killed. The FBI, as well as a host of firearms experts, recommends that the minimum penetration required to incapacitate an attacker is 12". Birdshot will not do this – not even close. You need something that fires a group of good sized lead balls, plain and simple.

To understand how shot is sized, take a glance at the following table:

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

Those shot sizes are the most common commercially available sizes, but be cognizant of the fact that *#1 buck shot is the smallest possible shot that penetrates 12"* (effectively killing) in typical shotgun engagement distances. This means you'll need to use #1 buck shot or larger to get the penetration you need to kill an attacker. Any smaller, and you risk losing valuable stopping power!





# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

For optimum home defense loads, the following are the most appropriate:

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

You can see from the list above that as the pellet size increases, the number of shot within the shell decreases. Be careful when going too large, as the fewer the pellets, the more you have to place your shots well. 0 or 1 buck is an excellent and powerful combination of stopping power and spread – consider that 9 .32 caliber balls being fired at the same time at one target is lots and lots of lead!

### SUMMARY

The tactical shotgun is alive and well. After over a century and a half as a defensive (and offensive) weapon, the shotgun has distinguished itself in every major war and campaign in recent history, and it's still going strong today. If you only have the money to purchase one weapon for home defense use, make it a pump action shotgun with a good sling, a tactical light, and load it up with #1 buck for a combination that's hard to beat. You'll have a versatile tool that is an absolute man



# SURVIVAL SHOTGUN

## The Ultimate Guide to Extreme Self Defense

stopper, but one that also won't over-penetrate your walls and put innocents in danger. As the price of rifle cartridges (brass and lead) increases, shotguns and shotgun shells remain an economical choice for defensive weapons that basically anyone in the family can use.

Purchasing and accessorizing your weapon is only the first step. You must become proficient in its use, and the best place to engage in realistic shotgun training is at outdoor ranges, specifically those that allow target engagement at the sort of close ranges that you would actually use a shotgun at – i.e., inside ten yards (oftentimes, inside ten feet). Practice the use of your shotgun in low light and high stress conditions, and you'll find that you'll become a formidable defender of your property and loved ones.

