

## ***Concealed Carry Holster Selection***

As important as it is to select the proper pistol for concealed carry, all of its positive qualities are worthless if it's locked away in a strong box somewhere when you need it. After going through all of the time and expense to obtain a carry permit and pistol, some often choose to leave their personal protection pistol at home. The No. 1 reason given is that the handgun feels uncomfortable to carry.

Buying a defensive handgun can be a pricey proposition. Hundreds of dollars are spent in acquiring the items needed. It's a real temptation to save a few bucks by spending less money on the little details, like the holster. But don't forget what a "detail" is. *A detail is something that goes unnoticed when it is present but it is greatly missed when absent.* Having the properly fitted holster for your pistol is exactly that kind of important detail.

One way to look at a concealed carry holster is to think of it as a shock absorber. Ever ride in a vehicle with bad shocks? It only takes a few minutes for your body to start complaining about every bump and pothole in the road. The hard, heavy, angular shape of a handgun moves against the soft tissues of the body in much the same way. No matter where you place the gun against yourself, the nerve endings in that area are going to complain to the brain if a protective barrier is not in place to provide some relief. A pistol in a poor-fitting holster will wobble, sag, and shift around just like a rock caught in your shoe. The irritation is maddening until you remove the source, which in this case is the gun.

Too often the pistol is blamed for the discomfort. It's judged to be too large or heavy for the job. This expensive pistol is left at home, sold at a loss, or replaced with a smaller and harder to shoot defensive handgun. This is unfortunate; far too often, a simple and relatively inexpensive holster upgrade would have solved the problem. Since the variety of concealment holsters on the market is almost as diverse as the defensive handguns they carry, it's helpful to have some guidelines when shopping for one. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

Aside from being comfortable, a good concealed carry holster will exhibit a few more important qualities. A portion of the holster will completely cover and protect the trigger from contact with outside objects, including a trigger finger. A properly designed holster will retain the pistol until you intentionally draw it. Both the pistol and holster will stay where you place them until you purposefully change their position. This staying-put quality will increase carry comfort and ensure the grip is oriented properly when you need to draw the pistol.

In most states, for both legal and practical reasons, a holster system needs to keep a concealed firearm out of sight at all times. Two schools of thought come into play when dealing with the issue of handgun "printing," or identification by other people. One approach is to pick a gun and holster combination that fits the wardrobe you already have. This is the strategy "pocket pistols" were designed for. The other option is to change what you wear to fit the gun. For example, a duty-sized pistol can be concealed, but it will probably take an inside-the-waist-band (IWB) holster, a heavy belt, and a cover garment to do so. Both approaches are valid. Usually the size of the gun will help to clarify which support wardrobe and holster will serve best.

Most carry systems can be divided into these two categories. On-the-body carry holsters include belt holsters, bra, ankle, shoulder and bellyband models. The primary advantages of literally having a gun on your person include gun security and accessibility. You're in control of the gun at all times and you can access it very quickly. The disadvantages of on-the-body carry

include the physical discomfort the gun can cause. In addition, there is a greater possibility the gun will be seen by someone else due to a “wardrobe malfunction.”

Off-the-body carry allows the gun to be with you without being against you. These holster systems include specially designed purses, backpacks, messenger bags and even day planners. The advantage of this arrangement is the freedom to dress how you like and the ability to divest yourself of your firearm without exposing it. When the gun is in a bag, the chances of the gun being spotted are much lower and the person carrying it can enjoy a much greater range of motion. The downside of an off-the-body carry system is that it is likely to increase the amount of time needed to access the gun in an emergency. Remember, if an off-the-body rig leaves your body completely, it must be secured in a locking container to prevent unauthorized access. This is a major drawback of off-body carry. While you must always be diligent in protection of your pistol, it is much harder to always be in control of the pistol when it is not secured on your body.

There is no “correct” carry configuration because people conduct their daily lives in such different ways. The perfect holster for someone who walks a warehouse floor may be downright painful for someone who types at a computer for 10-hour stretches. An ideal carry arrangement for someone who works indoors may be next to useless for someone who pulls a paycheck in the great outdoors. Taking the time to examine how you spend most of your waking hours each day can help in deciding which system is the best fit for you.

Don’t expect a \$10 nylon holster to provide a practical and comfortable carry solution for an \$800 defensive handgun. A good rule of thumb is planning to spend around 10-15 percent of what you paid for the handgun to purchase a trustworthy everyday carry holster. You also need a belt that will support the weight of the gun. Look for a quality manufacturer who provides holsters made specifically for your gun. A well-fitted holster will provide years of comfortable use. If the pistol you have is feeling like it’s the wrong gun for you, take another look at the holster you have and try at least two more models before you give up.

Materials make the difference. You need a security holster made with polymer and leather. You need a holster that is fitted to your gun model, not a cheap nylon one-size-fits-all model. Look at brands like Safariland for OWB [www.Safariland.com](http://www.Safariland.com) Nate<sup>2</sup> makes excellent and very comfortable IWB holsters. [www.N8<sup>2</sup>Tactical.com](http://www.N82Tactical.com) Check [www.FlashbangStore.com](http://www.FlashbangStore.com) for women’s concealment holsters.

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