

Women's Holsters

Concealed-Carry Equipment for Women

Holster makers are responding to the growing number of women carrying concealed firearms with a wide variety of holster options designed specifically for ladies.

Firearms being the great equalizer they are, it should come as no surprise the fastest growth in concealed-carry permits is among women. There are also a plethora of firearm training courses and programs offered specifically for women to provide a more comfortable and supportive learning environment.

Of course, having a concealed-carry permit isn't going to do anyone much good if you don't actually carry a gun, and the most important factor that separates carrying a gun or leaving it at home is comfort. It is not only important to choose the right gun, but also the right holster. Thankfully, manufacturers are increasingly catering to the needs of women, who are shaped and dress differently than men.

Purse Holsters. Arguably, the most comfortable way for many women to carry a gun is in a purse. This offers great concealment, is not affected as much by clothing choice and can still provide fast access. This is how some women prefer to carry, but it does have some drawbacks. You must remain constantly aware of your purse



to maintain fast access as well as to prevent theft or access by unauthorized persons, especially curious children. It will also not do to simply toss a gun in with keys and other items.

Numerous manufacturers offer different models of purse holsters in various styles, colors and sizes. Leather purses in all colors and patterns feature a fairly standard main area with multiple compartments, but the real benefit is a gun can be stored inside a separate, side-loading zippered compartment in an internal holster with a thumb break. When the purse is carried over the shoulder, this places the gun easily within reach for both right- and left-handed draw, and the zipper includes a locking mechanism for added security. Just don't get too comfortable and forget the gun is in the purse if you happen to go into the restricted area of an airport.

Belt Holsters. Hip carry for many women can be a challenge, but Blackhawk!, Safariland, Flashbang and Bianchi produce a line of holsters comfortably designed for women, who tend to wear the gun higher on their hips. Many of these models are designed to ride close to the body for concealment, but allow the holster to angle outward when drawing. The **Model 329 from Safariland** is a belt holster featuring a very low cut opening in the front, so the gun can clear the holster without having to raise it too far.

Safariland's model 6378 **ALS Paddle Holster** features level 1 retention, with the holster automatically locking the gun in place and releasing it only via a thumb button release, which can be done very quickly with a little practice. Several **Bianchi** paddle holsters for women also feature a slight offset to increase comfort and are available in standard and retention styles. Paddle holsters are known for their ease of use and the ability to remove or replace them with minimal effort, especially when one goes someplace like the post office that does not allow legal carry of firearms.



Inside-the-waistband holsters for women will require a full draw, which can be difficult if the gun is riding high on the hip. **N82 Tactical Holsters**, however, are a very popular and comfortable choice, as they feature a thick leather pad between the gun and the body and provide excellent concealment along with a fast draw.

Alternative Carry. One of the best and most comfortable methods of carry for women was designed by Lisa Looper called the [Flashbang](#) holster. Lisa did not like the lack of comfort in wearing holsters designed for men. She designed the *Flashbang* to be worn attached to the middle of the bra (the bridge) and tucked under the cup of the bra on your support hand side. The *Flashbang* holster is made out of Kydex™ so that the pistol can easily be accessed by pulling out the shirt and pulling down on the grip of the pistol. The *Flashbang* can be worn as either a 'high carry' or a 'low carry.' High carry, puts the pistol almost all the way up in your bra, whereas the low carry, has the gun hanging below. Both are proper carries, it will depend on your particular breast size/body type and type of pistol. Women have remarked on how comfortable this holster feels. You can feel it is there, but it is not poking or pinching. Since Lisa developed this platform, she has also added several other models to the line for various applications. The holsters are available for most pistol models. www.FlashbangHolsters.com



Many women may also find other types of carry to be more comfortable and offer additional versatility with various types of clothing. Pocket holsters are a favorite of some, but they require large front pockets and a somewhat loose fit, both of which are not commonly found in women's fashion. Belly band holsters offer great comfort and outstanding concealment. This elastic fabric band is secured with hook-and-loop fasteners and is adjustable. It features leather pockets to hold firearms, extra ammunition and other accessories like a knife, pepper spray or a cell phone, and it is ambidextrous.

Along these same lines, *5.11 Tactical* offers a **Women's Holster Shirt** designed to snugly fit the entire torso like sports attire. It features two under-the-arm pockets ideal for small- and medium-size handguns. The advantage here is the shirt will not shift position as you move and the weight of the gun is very evenly distributed. An inner neoprene and terrycloth layer cushions the gun and increases comfort.



Ankle holsters are yet another viable option, especially when wearing long pants with a straight, or preferably flared, leg. They can offer ideal concealment. *Galco's Ankle Glove* features a wide elastic band with a sheepskin lining for comfort and an optional calf strap for added retention. Not to be outdone, *DeSantis Gunhide* is now producing the **Thigh High Holster**, which allows women wearing a skirt or dress to carry a small handgun concealed on the inside of the thigh. Neoprene construction offers comfort, and twin garter straps ensure

the gun and holster stay in place.

Comfortable concealed carry for both men and women is vitally important and involves a combination of holster selection and proper attire. It is encouraging to see manufacturers address the specific needs of women in this regard.

Other equipment for women is improving also. While it's been gradual, there are less hand-me-down firearms and gear but there is still much inappropriate, ill-fitting firearms finding their way into hands of novices. There is more to shooting than just pressing the trigger. Students are pleased to learn about ammunition and ballistics; also curious about differences between pistol actions such as revolvers and semi-automatics, as well as how many makes and models from which to make a choice.

While getting started may be a little daunting, you first must learn and strictly adhere to the firearm safety rules. Just as we were taught at a young age to look both ways before crossing a street, not inserting anything into an electrical outlet and not placing our hands into fire, we also need to add firearm safety rules to your mindset. Be vigilant in your observation of these rules – never let anyone attempt to dissuade you and do not associate with anyone not exhibiting respect for firearm safety – no matter whom or how authoritative this person professes to be.

- **ALWAYS point the firearm in a safe direction.**
- **ALWAYS keep your finger off the trigger until you have realized your sight picture and are ready to shoot.**
- **ALWAYS keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.**
- **ALWAYS be sure of your target and what is beyond.**



Use the best equipment you can afford. This is an activity and tools that can save a life. Using cheap gear can be dangerous and it will detract from your training and performance. Poor equipment can create improper gun handling, instill bad habits as well as become a constant source of distraction.

Your equipment should fit you and your use of your pistol. If you are starting out, you should be performing more training and practicing than carrying. Invest in clothing that will aid in your learning. If you plan to carry, consider the wide variety of options carefully, and make your choice according to what will work for your daily lifestyle. Guns and gear are like shoes. Accept that you will likely end up with more than one gear array. No single outfit works for all occasions.

Your gear includes your pistol, your holster, its ammunition loading devices (magazines, speedloaders, etc.), ammunition retaining pouch, the ammunition itself and the belt from which it all is suspended. If you aren't sure what to do, consult a professional trainer. Do not rely on the clerk at a store whose job it is to sell you what is available in the store.

It's all about how it fits— especially the pistol. Many new shooters have a firearm which was chosen for her or by her with faulty advice. Often, a handgun or long gun that felt good in the store doesn't fit her properly. Even in instances where a gun was test fired before the purchase, she might not be working with a platform that will be truly compatible for her. Well-intentioned helpers hand a firearm to a new shooter, ask her to press the trigger and then eagerly ask how it felt. This in turn often leads to "false positives", because most new shooters aren't able to assess fit or the ability to manipulate the various controls.

While it is best to have an experienced trainer assess you and your potential firearm, here are some basics.

To determine your grip, ask if your hand is in the exact position it would be in if you were actually firing the gun. To try this with a pistol, first verify that it is pointed in a safe direction and completely unloaded. Now choose an aiming point, again in a safe direction. When your sights are not on target, your finger should be off the trigger alongside the frame of your pistol. This is called indexing. It should be straight, placed firmly above the trigger area.

Place the web of your firing hand as high up on the backstrap of the frame as possible – this puts your hand in the best position to mitigate recoil. You should have the remainder of your middle, ring and little fingers and thumb wrapped securely around the pistol grip – not so hard you're quivering with the effort, but firmly enough so someone can't come up and knock the gun out of your hand. This should be similar to a firm handshake or gripping a hammer.

Now, extend your firing arm and aim at the safe aiming point you selected earlier. Your forearm should be directly in line with the barrel of the pistol; it should not be angled to one side or the other, with the wrist bent or curled to accommodate your firing grip.

To refine your firing grip, first verify again the pistol is completely unloaded. Snap caps or dummy rounds are appropriate for use here. For a double-action trigger, see if you can get the index finger onto the trigger so the first crease of your finger is at least at the firing side edge of the trigger face. For a right eyed shooter, that would be the ridge edge of the trigger. For a left-eyed shooter, you would get the first crease of your left index finger against the left edge of the trigger.

For a single-action trigger, contact is at the middle of the first pad of the trigger finger. Now, see if you can get a right-angle bend on that finger. If so, extend your arm pointing the pistol at the same point you selected earlier and slowly and gradually press the trigger to the rear of the trigger guard, until you achieve the *click*, indicating activation of the hammer or firing pin. If your trigger finger is extended, without a distinct bend in the middle joint, or if your finger is forced through the trigger guard beyond that first pad, you may have an improperly fitting pistol.

With a proper fit, you should be able to press the trigger with smooth, consistent and controllable pressure. Your forearm should remain aligned with the barrel of the pistol – if you need to rotate your hand in order to press the trigger, your pistol does not fit. There should be no point through the trigger press that causes

you to hesitate, strain or foster an inability to overcome the resistance encountered during the pull. If you are able to achieve a smooth, continual trigger press, this pistol may fit. If not, the pistol does not fit, but there still may be hope. There are great parts and accessories with which we can customize the fit of firearms. Talk to a trainer and a gunsmith or a gun fitter.

Always hold it properly. You are in control of this tool. Just like kitchen knife or scissors, it will do what you want it to, and only what you want it to, if you handle it correctly. Maintaining a good firing grip is the first step in that control.

Whenever possible, hold your pistol with your firm “firing” grip. This keeps it under control at all times, minimizing the possibility of dropping or having it taken away. Maintaining a proper firing grip also helps train your hand and body to make this your natural grip. Think of handling your pistol like handling your favorite kitchen knife. You would not pick it up by the blade or hold it with anything but a firm grip. You take it by the handle and hold it securely, even when you’re not cutting. You pick it up, and put it down the same way. The same should be done with your pistol, regardless of whether or not you’re shooting. Your finger should be indexed straight along the frame when your sights are not on target.

Learn your tool. Take the time and learn your pistol. Read the owner’s manual. Understand what the different buttons and levers do. Practice flipping and pushing them and get a feel for their ergonomics and how much strength they require to manipulate. See if you can maintain a proper firing grip, while still accessing and operating these controls. Experiment with shifting your hand slightly around the pistol grip to see where you get the best leverage. Most importantly, get comfortable with the feel of the pistol in your hands.

You might be thinking none of this has anything to do with shooting. If so, you would be wrong, possibly dead wrong! All of these are fundamentals which, if not mastered can lead either to an accident or the inability to bring the firearm into use when needed. A poorly fitted firearm prevents consistent operation. Poor equipment fails at just the wrong time. A fault in one of these fundamentals can prevent the shooter from performing when she needs to perform. The better and sooner you address each of these areas, the more proficient a shooter you will become.

