

Revolver Reloading

Revolvers can be slower to load than a semi-auto pistol. Fast and consistent revolver reloads take the dexterity of both hands and do involve some intricate movements. Focus on doing the reloads as smoothly and efficiently as possible, adding speed as your confidence improves. Speed though, should be the ultimate goal when you reload a defensive firearm.

Outside of your safe or a museum, an empty gun is worthless. As your technique progresses, you should be pushing the speed in training so that you can find that balance of speed and precision that you will need to prevail in an encounter. You will never know how fast you can move if you're afraid to fail in training.

There are two different methods of tactically reloading a revolver: a speedloader and a speed strip.



SPEED LOADER



SPEED STRIP

The cylindrical speed loader is the faster method when compared to speed strips or fumbling a few rounds in your hand to insert individual cartridges into the chambers of the cylinder. The downside is that speed loaders do not conceal as easily as a speed strip.



As a trained shooter realizes that they're empty, the revolver should be brought down to diaphragm level. For a right-handed shooter, the right thumb engages the cylinder release (fig 1) while the left hand wraps around the frame of the revolver. The middle and ring fingers push the cylinder out of the frame (fig 2). The revolver should then be inverted with the left hand (fig 3). The left thumb pushes down on the ejector rod (fig 4), which usually drops the spent cartridge cases from the cylinder chambers (fig 5).



The right hand can then sweep or pluck any remaining casings out of the way while the left hand maintains control of the pistol. In the event that there are stuck casings, the right hand can also tap the ejector rod firmly, dislodging any remaining cases.

After ensuring that the cylinder is free of empty casings, the left hand then rotates the muzzle toward the ground while ensuring that the middle and ring fingers maintain control of the cylinder so that it doesn't rotate during the reload. The right hand then accesses the speed

loader from a pouch or pocket and lines up the cartridges with the empty cylinder holes, pushing them in all the way and seating the cartridges fully before releasing the speed loader from the cartridges (fig 6 blue). The empty speed loader then falls out of the way.



For left-handed shooters, switch the revolver to the right hand, and reload like a right-handed shooter. It takes a little longer, but the cylinder release and the cylinder itself are not optimized for lefties.

Finally, the right hand grips the revolver and the cylinder is closed by the left hand. The shooter must decide whether they need to re-engage or take another appropriate action.

Competition shooters average between two to three seconds on this reload; initially your times will be longer. If you can consistently get the reload accomplished in under four seconds, you are doing fine. It is always important to strive for excellence, not mediocrity.

A speed strip is a thin polymer band with recessed cutouts that allow a certain number of cartridges to be lined up in a row. This makes for a flat, compact reload that tucks away easily in a pocket. However, it's a slower reloading method.

The shooter replicates the same motions as used for the speed loader when breaking open the cylinder and emptying the spent cases. Two cartridges at a time are lined up with the empty cylinder chambers, the shooter then inserts the cartridges and peels the strip away from the rims (fig 6 red). The shooter then rotates the cylinder with the thumb and fingers of the left hand to expose another two holes at a time and repeats.



The strip can also be used to top off a partially shot cylinder by keeping the muzzle pointed to the ground and pushing halfway on the ejector rod, this exposes the cartridges and allows the shooter to pluck the expended ones free, which exposes the empty holes so the shooter can then reload, using the strip. While not practical in the strictest sense, it is an efficient way to top off administratively after a gunfight.

Reloading a revolver demands sweat equity and hard work. Make sure you use your snap caps/dummy rounds and practice. Practice will strengthen your skills and commit this procedure to muscle memory. You must be diligent in your training to make certain you prevail in a stressful defensive situation.

