

[If You Choose To Carry A Gun For Self-Defense, Proper Training Is Essential](#)

In the wake of the mass shooting at a Texas church, many Americans are wrestling with the decision to carry a gun for self-defense. Here are the factors you should consider as you make that decision.



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Some folks are amazed when they hear about a private citizen taking up arms to defend those who can't, won't, or have lost the ability to defend themselves against the evil side of our society. I am proud to know there are people out there who have the heart to make a difference. But how can we stay vigilant as citizens who are just out and about doing our own thing?

One major decision that people must make is whether to carry a gun for self-defense. Are you going to carry a gun? This is a huge responsibility. If you make the choice to be armed, you must first get the requisite licensing to make you legal, which means learning, understanding, and following the myriad federal and state laws that govern the carrying of a weapon in your area. You must know when and where you are legally authorized to carry a firearm and when the discharge of deadly force is legally justified.

Once you have made the choice to carry a firearm, no matter the reason, get training. If your only firearms education is what the state requires before it issues a carry permit, I can tell you beyond the shadow of a doubt you don't have enough training. Get involved with your local shooting range and take advantage of specialized classes where you will learn to carry a firearm responsibly. Consider enrolling in specialized courses that will teach you the skills and the mindset you need to be effective in a real-world scenario. Not only will you be guaranteed to learn something, you will be around others who have the same passion and sense of civic responsibility that you have.

Many of the friends I now highly value are those I met through the shooting sports and education. The education and training opportunities offered by local gun ranges are essential. Our local Nashville indoor range, for example, offers concealed carry classes, marksmanship classes, home defense classes with a mock house set up, as well as family firearm training classes. I especially appreciate the family classes in which your entire family can participate in the training process. Not only do you get to spend time with your loved ones, your entire family can be prepared with the same skills and have a plan that allows you all to understand and work to protect each other as a unit.

I personally carry a gun as often as I can. In the state of Tennessee where I live, our laws are made to protect the gun owner rather than the criminal. As a result, most places I frequent are gun friendly or at the very least allow guns to be carried on the premises. If there are places that won't allow for legal carry, simply avoid these businesses at all costs. It sounds simple enough to leave your firearm in your vehicle while you scamper in to get a cup of coffee, but this is when times will go bad. The better decision is to use the drive-through or find a different coffee places that respects your right to carry.

After you attain the level of training that makes you more comfortable with concealed carry, move on to real world scenario-based training. Being put into controlled situations under the stress of a class setting will build your confidence. Ensure you are using realistic scenarios based on working in and around your vehicle, home protection settings, even scenarios based on your work environment. Get training that teaches you where and when you should use your vehicle for cover or concealment. Two things will happen with this training. First, your confidence in your ability to effectively respond will grow. Second, you will want to do more and more of this type of training, which will make you even more effective. Scenario training will allow you to further understand what your opponents might be thinking and how you can outmaneuver them or possibly avoid them completely.

Mental rehearsals are also key to success in an armed encounter, or in avoiding this encounter in the first place. Close your eyes and think through the situation that you see yourself in and ask yourself how will you handle that situation? What can you do to avoid that situation? If there isn't the possibility of egress or avoidance, how will you maneuver to have a tactical advantage? You need to think through every possible scenario that might come up in your daily routine. Once you have perfected your technique, you will be able to walk into your house, a restaurant, or your place of worship and quickly decide how and where you should be positioned, as well as how you can react to a threat in your vicinity.

There are so many things to think about when you carry a firearm. How to conceal well so that no one knows you are carrying? Where are the exits in the building you are in? How do I keep from putting my back to the door? What will others do if I have to draw my gun? How do I notify law enforcement that I am a legal concealed carrying citizen during a real world situation?

You must also be aware of your surroundings at all times. If you are a member of a church, you should be aware that they might already have an armed security team. If they do, you should inform them that you are also a concealed carrier, or better yet become part of their team. If you are a member of a congregation that doesn't have a security team, this is a prime opportunity for you to start making a difference by volunteering your services. This is a huge responsibility, so don't take it lightly. Along with carrying concealed comes the responsibility of knowing first aid techniques and having the equipment necessary to treat any victims as well.

The cost of vigilance is increased responsibility. If you choose to exercise your God-given right to defend yourself and your family by carrying a weapon, you must take the time to learn the laws in your area and to consistently train to maximize your ability to effectively respond to any threats that may materialize. In the end it will all be worth it. Helping others will make a difference in your life and the lives of your family, friends, and people in your community.

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