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**Let’s Look At How Brandishing Affects You And Everyone Around You**

1. bran·dish

[ˈbrandiSH]

VERB

To wave or flourish (something, especially a weapon) as a threat or in anger or excitement.

You’ve gotten in a verbal altercation with a stranger.  Things have got hot and he’s looking like he may assault you.  This is a precariously dangerous place to be in as a concealed carrier.

A.)  **If you have power to stop or de-escalate, do it.**

It doesn’t matter how foolish you look or what people say about you – you have a moral obligation to de-escalate because you’re armed with a firearm and you don’t know if the other guy is.

More importantly, if he doesn’t back down – in many states you are perfectly allowed to defend yourself accordingly.  That is, however, after all other options have been exhausted.  Failing to do this will leave you open to both criminal *and* civil prosecution.

While you may never see the inside of a jail cell, your concealed carry pistol will be forfeited for at least the duration of the investigation and the court proceedings.  If found guilty, you will effectively lose all rights to bear arms, serve significant jail time, and be ordered to pay costs associated with the case, the victim’s family, etc.  You will also end up spending tens of thousands of dollars on defense attorneys – if you don’t expect to simply lay down under that legal bus heading your way.

B.)  **Brandishing your firearm is not an immediate “win” to any altercation**.

If anything, you’ve just informed the other person that you’re reckless enough to show your firearm.  Worst of all, if he is armed – you just presented yourself as a threat.  And this doesn’t extend to just him – anyone in the field of view can independently determine that your careless display constitutes a logical, lethal threat to their well-being.  And they’d be right.  If you can’t be counted on to know the law and act lawfully with your firearm then it’s reasonable to say you’re woefully ignorant of the rest of that process — all of which could draw those surrounding you and your “foe” into that conflict.

Before considering “defensive display” or anything of the sort, put yourself both in the shoes of the person you’re dealing with and those in the near vicinity.  How would you feel if you saw two people arguing and one of them draws or brandishes a firearm?  You’d likely be scared – rightfully so.  You would feel your life is danger.  You would try to move your family and close friends away from the potential hot spot.  You immediately don’t trust the reasoning and rationale of the person doing the brandishing.

Each person you see is a witness in this event.  Your actions will be judged by the full extent of the law.  Whatever you do – do it with clear intent and communication.  Don’t brandish your concealed carry pistol.

## When is the right time to draw your concealed carry handgun?

The answer to this is revealed through training and practice. The biggest point of failure in a defensive gun use situation is you. The gun can fail, the rounds can squib, all sorts of things can go wrong — but if you have the right defensive mentality, these are not going to be the things that get you hurt or killed. You will.

Sounds heavy? Reality can be pretty heavy at times.

When drawing your concealed carry handgun, these questions ought to have already been answered:

* Is your life being directly threatened?
* Can you leave the situation without any loss of life?
* Do you know what is directly in front of and behind your opponent?
* Is deadly force acceptable in this situation?

[Deadly force](http://www.usacarry.com/self-defense-shooting-disparate-force/) is generally authorized when you feel your life is under an **immediate, inescapable threat**. For states that have “Stand Your Ground” and “Castle Doctrine” laws on the books, you are given a pretty broad allowance to determine what constitutes a serious threat to your life. Namely, you do not have a duty to retreat when confronted by force or the threat of force.

This puts the ball safely on your side of the court but it’s up to you to determine how best to serve that proverbial ball back.

Even though you may live in a state that allows you to intercede on behalf of a victim of a violent felony (Arizona, Texas), it may not be in your best interest to do so. You are not altogether obliged to place your life at severe risk for the benefit of someone else. That is a decision. And if you make that decision, there will be consequences — legal and otherwise.

This also brings us to a very important point: you need an attorney on speed dial.

If you are ever placed into a situation where you need to use your gun to protect your life, your property, or the lives of people around you, you need to be able to consult an attorney quickly. You don’t have to get a pre-paid legal service or any special kind of CCW insurance — though both exist and have their [advantages and disadvantages](http://www.usacarry.com/do-you-need-concealed-carry-insurance/). You just need to ensure you have appropriate legal counsel in the event you need to deal with the aftermath.

## Brandishing Versus Self-Defense: What’s The Difference?

When confronting a potentially hostile situation, you may feel compelled to draw your handgun to hopefully dissuade your attackers from pressing on. That could be a very costly mistake. The biggest advantage of being a concealed carrier is that no one knows you are armed with a handgun. If those fools are dumb enough to press their luck on you, why communicate that you have the means of neutralizing them? That’s a trump card in your back pocket.

Your job is to do everything in your power to de-escalate the scenario before it comes to that point. If that means leaving or getting someone else to leave, do it.

When you pull your handgun, you are instantly able to be charged with [brandishing a weapon](http://www.usacarry.com/what-does-brandishing-mean/). Different districts and state laws apply and even if the situation ends amicably with all parties going their separate directions, you could still be charged. Moreover, if you’re facing off against someone else who is also legally armed, he or she can interpret that action as justifiable use of force on his behalf.

Don’t feed fuel to the fire. Keep your gun holstered until you have every intention of using it — and not a single moment before.

MIND SET

While we’re a community devoted to the self-defense aspects of concealed carry, let’s not forget one thing: shooting is fun. Even training for self-defense or tactical shooting can be enjoyable: a day at the range getting some exercise and honing your skills is a good thing, and watching yourself improve can be a source of great personal satisfaction. However, as we’ve discussed there’s a lot more to this than marksmanship, or [**having the right gear**](http://www.usacarry.com/drawing-handgun-self-defense/).

This is going to be one of those articles. Today we’ll be talking about mindset, and the role it plays in self-defense.  To keep things organized, we’ll be breaking it up into three parts:

* **Getting Prepared**
* **Dealing with an Incident in Progress**
* **Handling the Aftermath**

**Getting Prepared:**

* First and foremost, check your ego at the door. Self-defense and preparedness are about ensuring that you’ll be able to deal with trouble when it comes looking for you, not so you can go looking for it. The goal is staying safe, not becoming a hardened street fighting badass. There’s a world of difference between a self-defense shooting and a gunfight—[**one that will matter if things go to court**](http://www.usacarry.com/drawing-handgun-self-defense/).
* Learn to understand the role of self-defense in your life. Like we’ve said, it’s not about looking for trouble. It’s about [**practicing situational awareness**](http://www.usacarry.com/situational-awareness/), understanding the signs of trouble and learning to avoid them, and being prepared for the most likely emergencies.
* Be careful with “what-ifs?”. This is one of the most dangerous mental traps, and among the easiest to fall into. Some what-ifs are good: “what if our home is invaded?”, “what if we get hit with a hurricane?”, “what if we have a car accident?”. However, it’s easy to get trapped in the world of fantasy “what-ifs?”: “What if a drug cartel assaults our neighborhood?”, “what if a clan of ninjas puts out a hit on me?”, etc. Stay realistic for your circumstances—and if you’re really worried about a clan of ninjas, it’s time to consider some lifestyle changes.
* Sit down with yourself and whatever higher power you put faith in and consider the moral aspects of self-defense with a handgun. Any firearm is a lethal weapon, and should only be used when the situation calls for such. In adopting the CCW lifestyle, you’re taking on this moral burden. Ask yourself the hard questions: am I willing to take a life in self-defense? Under what circumstances will I do so? Can I live with the fallout of that? I can’t give you the answers, but I can tell you that you should look for them.

**Dealing with Trouble**

* When an emergency hits, you’ll be dealing with both the emergency and your own [fight or flight response](https://www.psychologistworld.com/stress/fightflight.php), albeit dialed up to 11. This automatic reflex is designed to allow your body to deal with emergencies, but [due to its mechanics really impedes rational thought and higher reasoning](http://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/emotions/fear2.htm).
* As such, when your adrenaline is flowing, you won’t rise to the occasion so much as fall back on your training. Make sure you’ve [**drilled, practiced, and trained**](http://www.usacarry.com/training-shoot-stress/) until you can’t do it wrong.
* Do your best to keep your situational awareness running, even in an emergency. It’s always likely there’s another injury/wounded person/attacker/etc.

**In the Aftermath**

* Call emergency services, first and foremost.
* **Render first aid as needed.** If you’re seriously wounded and relief hasn’t arrived, treat yourself first so that you can better help others.
* Try to remember that you’re not thinking clearly. Even when things calm down, the aftermath of fight or flight is still there. If injured, listen to the medical professionals when they arrive. If you’ve been involved, [**cooperate with the police and keep your mouth shut until your attorney gets there**](http://www.usacarry.com/general-legal-considerations-use-firearms-self-defense/).
* When the dust—both immediate and legal—finally settles, take care of yourself. [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml) comes in many forms and has many causes. If you or those you care about suggest there might be a problem, get the help you need. There’s no shame in it—it’s part of protecting yourself and your family.

There’s a lot more that could be said, and we’ll be discussing some of the particulars in future articles. Until then, please email me with your thoughts or questions and stay safe out there.

6 Important Considerations Before You Carry Concealed

## 1. Be Prepared to Carry Everyday

There’s a huge likelihood you’ll never need to draw your gun to defend your life or your family.  In the small chance that it does happen, you’re going to need your concealed carry handgun.  Making the choice to be an everyday concealed carrier means you’re taking responsibility for that likelihood.  It’s not always convenient or fun.  It means being responsible, acting especially mature, and being observant of your surroundings.  The rewards are well worth it, though.

## 2. Make Concealed Carry Part of Your Lifestyle

If you’re ready to become a concealed carrier, you’re ready to develop the training mentality that you’ll take with you for the rest of your life.  A concealed carry lifestyle incorporates [**situational awareness**](http://www.usacarry.com/situational-awareness/), a basic knowledge of the law, and a respect for others and yourself.  The vast majority of an estimated 12 million concealed carriers are good, law-abiding, decent people.   There’s a reason for that — when you don’t know who else has a gun, it pays to be polite.  That can also be a lifestyle adjustment for some.

## 3. Know When to Hold’em and Know When to Fold’em

Some places just [won’t allow concealed carriers in](http://www.usacarry.com/ccw-anti-gun-businesses-dealing-opposition/).  For whatever reason, there’s a lot of bunk information out there and some people are just adverse to even seeing a gun.  The reality check is that if it’s not you carrying, it’d just be armed criminals and police.  But this argument may not stick with everyone — and it doesn’t have to.  Concealed carry means keeping it concealed and not drawing attention to your firearm.  Don’t worry about idle gun politics being bantered about the coffee shop.  Focus on doing what you do best: being a responsible gun owner. But always make sure you are carrying legally and don’t carry into places that are off limits.

## 4. Stand Up For Your Rights

The Second Amendment is your right.  In order to make the most of it, you need to understand how the law works.  It doesn’t mean you have to go to law school or even hire a bunch of high-priced attorneys.  Taking a concealed carry class and learning a bit about how your state views the Second can go a long way to saving you hassle down the road.

## 5. Silent Ambassador For Concealed Carry

Wherever you go with your concealed carry handgun, you are a silent ambassador of the [gun community](http://www.usacarry.com/forums/).  If called upon, you’ll demonstrate exactly why citizens can and should be armed.  Conversely, if you’re going out in town and getting falling down drunk and waving your pistol about — that’s going to send a pretty clear message, too.  So, a strong consideration before becoming a concealed carrier is whether or not you’re prepared to act accordingly.

## 6. Lifetime Training Mentality

Concealed carriers are constantly learning more.  They’re learning more about the law, about good habits, and bad habits to avoid.  They’re educating themselves on new carry styles and techniques, ways to be safe around kids and family, and better situational awareness.  It doesn’t happen overnight.  It happens one day at a time.  The longer you carry, the more you’ll discover about yourself, about your gun, and how the two apply to the rest of the world.  A concealed carry permit is just the entrance ticket to a lifetime of learning opportunity.

## Practical Tips for 4 Unusual Handgun Concerns

**1. Bathroom Protocol while Carrying Your Gun**

What do you do when you have to use a public restroom and you are carrying your licensed concealed handgun? Well, for one thing don’t drop your gun or mag into the toilet bowl when deciding on your solution and maneuver.

While this is a delicate and somewhat embarrassing topic to even bring up, it is a practical carry problem we must address. Since we all have to do it and frequently, if not a few times each day… visit the Throne Room. Now if we are out and about in public places when carrying our gun, this could be quite a balancing act with safety issues and potential legal problem. I guess avoiding the visit is best if we can when in public, but sometimes we cannot do that. One of the most legally-dangerous places to handle a handgun is in a public Throne Room because we are probably rushed to answer the call by Mom Nature, under some stress with our juggling act, and in an unfamiliar environment where it is easy to make a dangerous mistake with legal implications. Maybe you read about the lady carrying concealed with a license in Tampa recently. While in the bathroom stall her gun slipped out of her IWB holster and hit the floor, discharging a ricochet round which hit the lady in the next stall. She has a minor injury and charges are pending with the State Attorney’s Office as a negligent discharge, etc. Also, a Missouri House Speaker’s aide left his loaded gun in its IWB holster on top of the toilet-seat-protector dispenser in the Capitol’s public bathroom, but it was found quickly without any problems.

Realistically these things occur so practically what do we do when carrying our gun and we must go to the bathroom? Not forget it and handle it safely for certain. Maybe you have not thought of this or experienced it… yet. It is difficult for quite a few folks to multitask and balance several tasks successfully at the same time. Situational awareness and focusing are very key. How we carry is also a consideration, like In-the-Waistband (IWB) or Outside-the-Waistband (OWB) on a belt. Some carry methods are more accommodating than others when trying to accomplish this chore. Some carry methods might immediately resolve it, like shoulder-holster, ankle, or pocket carry. I cannot go into all the possible methods and hardware involved and their pros and cons here, so I will assume you are carrying on your belt either IWB or OWB. Remember, it is important to always have a secure holster with proper retention so your gun does not fall out of it. We need to secure and protect our gun where ever we are, even when seated in the public bathroom. Also, use the bathroom before you leave to delay the inevitable in public, if possible. Here are just a few possible alternatives and suggestions each with pros and cons for you to weigh for your Throne Room visit. SAFETY FIRST ALWAYS. Your call on the best method!

1. keep your pants down with holster and gun attached to the belt **no lower than your knees and calf area**; do not let them touch the (dirty public) floor. If your pants are around your ankles, folks looking for an empty stall could bend over to check availability and see your gun.
2. put your pants **around your ankles, take off your gun and holster, and lay/cradle them inside your pants**; your gun will be protected from sight by others, easily available, and more comfortable; some bacteria risk from any low-level touching of the floor since your gun will weigh down your pants.
3. put your pants with holster and gun attached to the belt **at knee level and tighten your belt** so it will be snug around your knees to hold your gun and holster in place.
4. place your gun in the holster on the **back of the toilet tank lid**; do this only if the lid is flat and your rig will not slid off; some public bathrooms do not have tank lids; be careful since you may forget and leave your rig behind. Focus and situational awareness.
5. **fold your holster and gun still on the belt over** to the inside of your pants; this can hold it in place if you have the proper retention holster; it also hides it from view of those looking under the stall door for an empty throne; not for full-size and some other guns.
6. **hang your holster with gun inside on the hook on the back of the stall door** (NOT by the trigger guard and NOT only the gun); might be possible with a strong cord you carry with you in your pocket for this very problem.
7. **use a store shopping tote (canvas) bag and place your gun inside** and lay it near you on the floor, with your foot holding it securely down and/or you holding on to the strap handles; could hang the tote bag on the stall door hook if secure; NOT the best option, buy an option if you carefully do it; could use double or triple-bagged plastic store bags, but be careful.
8. use a strong **lanyard clip** and clip it to your skeleton hammer and **hang it around your neck**; this is NOT the best option but suggested to me by a reader; certainly do NOT clip the lanyard to your trigger guard; might use a variation of this and drill/punch small hole in holster and thread lanyard there and hang around your neck; USE CAUTION with this method… or ANY of these methods. SAFETY FIRST ALWAYS! Do you use another safer and better method?

**2. Easy Access & Storage of Many Holsters & Mags**

How can you quickly recognize and easily access the variety of holsters in your inventory for the several guns you use?

Women love shoes and I very perceptively noticed that my wife has more than one pair. She has shoes on racks, on the floor in containers, and hanging from closet doors in see-through plastic and canvas storage containers. Then it hit me (she didn’t) maybe I could use one of her storage methods for my several holsters and magazines. I had my many holsters thrown together in a large trunk and my many, many mags in labeled plastic zip-lock bags. It is always a hassle when I change guns and look for a different holster for them. I get mixed up as which holster goes with which gun. Mags are not a problem because they are labeled for each gun in individual plastic bags, but the bags are all thrown together and storing the many bags is a pain. Well, I found a less than $10. sturdy, see-through over-the-door Shoe Storage Organizer for storing my holsters and even my mags. (Go to my website (bottom first page) to see the Honey-Can-Do Organizer.) I labeled each pocket with the name of the 1, 2, or 3 guns that fit in any particular holster. You do not need an individual pocket for each holster, since some fit multiple guns. I did the same thing for my many mags; matched the mags to the specific gun. Within each pocket for a gun’s mags, I numbered the bottom of each mag so I would know the newest from the oldest condition. The storage container and system work great. Hope it helps you.

## ****3. Easy & Quick Concealed Carry of Gun for Travel & Short Trips That Occur Spur-of-the-Moment****

This is a possible need, especially for travel out of the country to third-world countries with high threat levels. I believe that this carry method is definitely not for everyday carry. I hesitate to even mention it, but thought there could be a remote special use of this method. I saw a short video of it and thought it was an optional method, a very different and long-shot carry method, to consider for certain unique situations ONLY. I see some advantages, but more disadvantages, but still want to present it as an option. In essence, you put your gun inside a store’s dark (not white or clear) plastic bag to conceal it. Your hand is gripping the gun and your trigger finger is on the frame of the gun (not the trigger) and you carry it down by your side, like a package filled with something you just bought…. or after picking up after your pooch. These sights are common, do not usually draw attention to your gun, are usually accepted by most lay people, and if required you could shoot through the plastic bag. It could work for up-close combat, tactical encounters at less than 3 yards or so. Sadly, criminals might use this method, if not for a gun for a knife. Also, its use might subject you to suspicion, investigation, and subject to a search by observant law enforcement officers or those looking for something in particular at the moment. This method may not be practical and there are some disadvantages to think about. There may not even be instances where this method is needed, because use of a proper holster or pocket carry may suffice and be more safe. Inside the bag, your finger could easily slide off the frame onto the trigger; the controls and sights are obstructed; reloading and malfunction drills could be difficult; your range of motion is hampered; plastic bags rip easily and you may expose your gun’s muzzle; it may contribute to malfunctions and stoppages; and may make you look suspicious to some. Your call for a situation that might quickly arise. Be careful.

## ****4. Wall Anchors to Protect .22 Rimfire Gun’s Firing Pin & Chamber****

Snaps caps are the preferred way to protect your gun’s firing pin and chamber-wall edge, but if you have many guns you can go through them quickly like water. They wear easily and the rims crack and deteriorate quickly. They are caliber specific and can be for centerfire or rimfire guns. For example, you can buy a package of 5 in 9mm centerfire for about $15. Dummy rounds cost a little less and are about $9 for a 6-pack of .22LR rimfire. But there is a definite difference between snap caps and dummy rounds. Dummy rounds are used to practice safe handgun handling and are the exact size of regular rounds. They can be loaded into a magazine like regular ammo, used for loading, unloading of rounds and to test if the magazine is feeding properly, used in the chamber for safe storage of the gun, and can be used to test the extractor and cycling. But, they have no striking surface for the firing pin to impact. So, **dummy rounds should NOT be used for dry firing** your gun and for trigger control practice. In fact, most manufacturers state this on the back of the package and say to throw them away after 4-5 strikes because the head will be deformed. This can get expensive. Also, most are aluminum and are too hard for use other than mostly for test cycling. So, they have a use, but not for dry firing.

Most manufacturers and experts say centerfire guns do not even need to be used with snap caps. After many uses of the centerfire snap caps over much time, some even say they may lead to harm in some key parts of your gun. I have not experienced this myself. Most if not all “experts” say it is very important **for RIMFIRE guns (e.g. .22s) to definitely use snap caps when dry-firing them**. I agree with them. The Smith-Wesson website says that dry firing a .22 rimfire pistol or revolver is not recommended because it will damage your firing pin. I know that I would never dry fire a .22 gun nor even regularly a revolver that has a hammer-mounted firing pin. Snap caps are low-cost insurance for rimfire revolvers and pistols.

Here’s another option. Although relatively inexpensive, since you must use so many, consider using common, readily-available **wall anchors** in a size that fits your gun. For example, for .22LR rimfire pistols, I use #4- #6 7/8 inch wall anchors from Home Depot. About $4.99 for a bulk  package of 100 yellow anchors (see above image.) They fit perfectly in the chamber of any of my .22LR pistols. I do find that I must change the anchors out more frequently (due to rim cracks and breaks) than my more-expensive snap caps, but no cost concern. The repeated  absorption of all the firing pin energy takes its toll, but this is true with the plastic and spring snap caps as well. Will not using snap caps or anchors immediately destroy your gun? Probably not, but why take a chance for only $5. for 100 anchors or low-cost snap caps. Some use spent casings, but they do not seem to hold up as well and, again, a small price to pay for anchors.

## Recognizing Cover Versus Concealment

Concealment means the other person shouldn’t be able to see you.  Cover means that what you’re hiding behind can actually block incoming projectiles.  A curtain can be concealment but it cannot be cover.  Hiding behind a couch can be both cover and concealment.  Both only work if the other person does not see you.

## Immediately Moving To Cover

Too many training exercises emphasize advancing on a hostile target.  IPSC (International Practical Shooting Confederation) actually urges its participants to practice moving to cover.  A big mistake in a head-to-head gunfight is assuming the other person is going to flinch first.  Your job is to minimize your **target profile** (the area of your exposed body open to gunfire) first, neutralize target second.  Why is this?  Because concealed carry fights largely fall under the scope of “defensive operations”.  In offensive operations, you advance upon your target, moving from cover to cover, coordinating with other allied offensive participants.  The goal: **close with and destroy the enemy**.  That’s offensive operations.  In defensive operations, you should be more geared to moving out and away from trouble — not necessarily moving towards it.

## Pack A Spare Magazine

One is fun but two is \*whew\*.  When we train, we usually train to change magazines between shot groupings.  However, in the real world, a lot of concealed carriers make the mistake of trusting their lives to just one magazine.  It doesn’t matter if it’s a sub-compact with only 6 rounds or a beast with 12-17 rounds, a spare magazine can make all the difference in the world.  The best part is it’s easy to incorporate an additional magazine into our Everyday Carry rig.  Even if it’s just a back pocket, a jacket pocket, or a magazine carrier, bring that second magazine along for the ride.  If you ever find yourself needing it, you’ll be eternally thankful you did.

## Aim For Center Mass

“I don’t want to kill the person, just neutralize them.”  That’s a nice sentiment to have but in an actual life and death scenario, you want to aim for center mass.  Why?  It’s usually the biggest visible target.  That means if you’re off an inch or three to the left or right, you’re probably still on target.  Aiming for extremities like the head, neck, arms or legs only complicate issues way past the event itself.  And if you’re cautious about taking a human life — that’s not a bad thing.  But please do regard your own life as at least equally important if not more so.  Aim center mass and aim to put the threat away.

## Firearm Safety Always Applies

The [basics of firearm safety](http://www.usacarry.com/nras-three-safety-rules/) — **treat every weapon as if it is loaded**, **keep your finger off the trigger until you’re ready to fire**, **know what’s in front of and behind your intended target**, and **never point your weapon at anything you do not intend to destroy**.  These basic rules apply in virtually every situation you’ll encounter.  If you’re not sure what’s in front of or behind your target, don’t shoot.  If you don’t know where your enemy is, keep your finger off the trigger.

## Avoid These Signs and Hints That Suggest You Are Carrying A Concealed Handgun

We patriotic and law-abiding citizens that are licensed to carry concealed handguns for self defense do not want to tip off the bad guys and gals that we are carrying a hidden gun. It is a tactical advantage for us good folks to not readily display our hidden guns nor to even hint or indicate in any way that we may be carrying. If we do, it could be a matter of life or death for us; or perhaps a fine or maybe arrest. Most first-time concealed gun carriers (CGC) are very nervous and even paranoid about carrying their gun in public. They don’t want to make any rookie mistakes or have a negligent discharge. They are cautious and wary of what others’ actions might be, feel everyone is looking at them, and know for sure others know they are carrying. These suspicious feelings and uneasiness about “getting made” or making an obvious carry mistake eventually disappear and CGC get more comfortable carrying. Some even say you have to first “get the Wally Walk under your belt.”  What is the ***“Wally Walk?”*** What are some typical carry mistakes?

I remember the first time I heard the term “Wally Walk” and did not know what in the world folks were talking about. Well the “Wally Walk” is viewed by some as a right of passage for those who just recently got their Concealed Carry license or permit to carry a concealed handgun. The newly-licensed CGC puts on their concealed carry gun and holster with their cover garment and goes outside with them for the very first time. Their first trip carrying is to visit Wal Mart to walk around and shop for at least 30 minutes. The goal is to be calm, cool, interact casually with others in the store, not reveal your concealed carry gun, not draw attention to it, and not make any carry mistakes… to see if anyone notices it or mentions it The concept and term are even defined in the Urban Dictionary.

So below are my **TOP 11 SIGNALS THAT HINT THAT YOU MAY BE CARRYING A CONCEALED HANDGUN:**

**1. Constantly touching or feeling the concealed gun** through the cover garment to ensure its presence – this draws attention to it and you; may involve sub-consciously resting your hand on the gun;

**2. Having your arm very close to your body** on the side where your gun is located to protect, stabilize, guard, and help hide the gun;

**3. Instinctively turning away** or shifting the gun-side of your body to the opposite side when meeting someone or being approached by someone directly in front of you;

**4. Quick adjustment** with your hand in a circular motion to reorient the gun and move the barrel downward, after or while walking, after descending stairs, after stepping upwards, or after some gun motion or position movement;

**5. Having a shorter walking stride** on the side where your gun is holstered in your pocket or in the waistband or outside the waistband because of restricted leg/side movement; may include noticeable uncomfortable walk because weapons are hidden in boots or shoes or causing discomfort and a shorter gait;

**6. Coat, jacket, vest, or cover garment fits unevenly** with garment side with gun or pocket with gun sagging, swinging, and hanging lower than other side due to weight of gun;

**7. Steadying or bracing** the gun with your hand when walking (especially fast), exercising, or running;

**8. Cover garment opening or appearance does not match climate season or weather**, e.g. shirt, coat, vest, jacket or cover garment is buttoned, zipped, or closed to help conceal gun in hot, humid, southern weather… or is wide open and not zipped to allow quick draw and access in cold, freezing, blowing snow northern weather;

**9. Recognizable irregular-shaped bulge or mass is created** from holstered, concealed gun when extending/reaching with arms, bending down, kneeling, or sitting, or when body bends forward or backward from the waist;

**10. Having a shorter arm swing** on the side where your gun is located due to tendency to protect, stabilize, and guard the gun; and

**11. Cover garment design & style do not match**, e.g. extra long coat is mismatched and not compatible with other different-season clothing or garment styles, patterns, designs, colors, or trends when combined together; wild prints, patterns, and mismatched clothing attract un-necessary attention.

Well, I hope some of these ideas and physical signals that may hint that you are carrying a concealed gun help you to be more safe and have a peaceful and comfortable state of mind. Maybe you know other physical signs or hints that reveal you have a hidden handgun?

Continued Success!

## Straight Talk about Situational Awareness



Those of us in the US inhabit a fairly peaceful nation. [Crime has been dropping steadily for years](https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/crimestats) and we are, in general, safer than we’ve been in living memory.  And while that’s comforting, it doesn’t change the fact that [sometimes](http://www.usacarry.com/ccw-permit-holder-foils-burglary-attempt/) [trouble](http://www.usacarry.com/ccw-saves-family-from-attacker/) comes looking for you.  We’ve talked a lot on USA Carry about the weapons and tactics of personal defense, but now I’d like to take a look into how we might avoid trouble before it starts—or at least give ourselves the maximum amount of time to react to it.

## What is situational awareness?

The incredibly smart folks over at [Stratfor said it best](https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/practical-guide-situational-awareness): situational awareness is

“ being aware of one’s surroundings and identifying potential threats and dangerous situation.”

They also note that this is a mindset and world-view more than it is a skill, and like all mindsets it must be carefully and consciously cultivated.  The critical first step is a relaxed acceptance that bad things can happen. No denial, no rose-tinted glasses—but likewise no gloom and doom. Be stoic; evil exists and violence can happen. Accept that and move on.

From there: remember that you’re responsible for your own safety. [The cops bear no legal obligation to you as an individual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warren_v._District_of_Columbia), and [they’re in the main a reactive force](http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2015/12/police-response-times). When the balloon goes up, your actions will be what saves your life. Situational awareness allows you to recognize problems and respond to them quickly and effectively.

## Levels of Awareness

The best cognitive tool I know of for adopting a situational awareness mindset comes from the works of noted firearm guru Jeff Cooper. In his landmark book [Principles of Personal Defense](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1581604955/?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1581604955&linkCode=ur2&tag=usacarry-20&linkId=WKTE5WBCWTSYK7SA), Col. Cooper lays out the “color code” system, in which organizes mental states of alertness and awareness:

* **White:** unalert and unprepared, totally relaxed. This state should only be reached when secured in the privacy of one’s own home, if then.
* **Yellow:** relaxed but alert and well aware of one’s surroundings. This is the mindset Col. Cooper advises us to cultivate most of the time. You keep your eyes moving, gauge the mood/feel of your environment, and stay aware of any changes or developments.
* **Orange:** focused alert. Something specific has your attention and you are evaluating it as a potential threat. You’ll likely keep your weapon holstered, but you’ll be ready to respond if needed.
* **Red:** go time. This is your mental fight trigger: “If the threat does X I will shoot.”

The color code system is active rather than descriptive—i.e. you move consciously through the stages of alertness. Combined with some tactical positioning—stay aware of where the exits/fire alarms are, keep the room in your field of vision, etc—and you’ve got a powerful system for developing an aware mindset.

While I wrote this article for a CCW-oriented audience, much of the information presented here applies to everyone, armed or not. Situational awareness may thus serve another purpose; it could be a good way to begin a discussion about personal protection and safety with loved ones who are on the fence about firearms. Just be polite and avoid forcing the issue.

And as always, stay safe out there.