The Complete Guide to Home Self Defense Guns: Our Top 5

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Jim Cabela, Professional Hunter

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Would a standard shotgun do? What about a basic revolver? We break down the types of firearms you should consider.

By Richard Douglas

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Text is the complete guide to home defense guns. In this depth guide, you'll learn:

- What to look for in a home defense gun
- The pros/cons with each firearm type
- What's the best home defense gun for you

... And much more

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It depends on you and your needs. More specifically, it boils down to your proficiency (or comfort) with your firearm. For example, if all you do is practice with a pistol, then that's the right gun for you. Likewise, if you practice only with a shotgun, then that's your best home defense weapon. Why do that?

Below, When the stressful home invasion occurs, you won't have time to think. You'll only have time to act. So choosing a gun that you're proficient with will help you respond faster, saving time and your life.

That said, here's the complete breakdown of each firearm type with pros, cons, best use, and even recommendations.

Rifles

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Rifles

Pros

- Lethal
- Very accurate (longer sight radius)
- Low recoil (depending on your caliber)
- Large magazine (30 rounds)
- Highly modifiable
- Designed to engage multiple targets

Cons

- Expensive
- Unclear (without looking special)
- Easier to disarm (due to barrel size)
- Over-penetration (bits more than the intended target)
- Decreased maneuverability (could be moved in small spaces)

Best Uses

If you want an edge over your intruders, then get a rifle.

It has a longer magazine, more accurate, and incapacitates quickly. You can take an army with a rifle. In fact, that's how a veteran took out a three man armed robbery. That's why I highly recommend a rifle if you can afford one(I'm 12 gives you the Response necessary to overpower your intruder(s).

Recommendation

Remington 870: A reliable, tough, and very popular pump-action shotgun. It's affordable, clean operation, all-up that's perfect for home defense. Bonus tip: Stress on some game-changing accessories like an AR-15 optic, pistol grip, and extended magazine to make it a beast of a home defense.

Shotguns

Shotguns are usually recommended for home defense. It's great at short-range, scary, and very reliable. Here's the breakdown:

Pros

- Affordable
- Doesn't jam
- Great stopping power (depending on gauge)
- Racking sound scares intruders
- Works great in low light
- Weapon of choice for wild animals and zombies (just kidding)

Cons

- Heavier
- Strong recoil
- Shorter magazine (4 rounds)
- Slow reloads
- Short range use only
- Not precise (can hit bitmaffes due to spread)
- Needs to be aimed (at home defense range)
- Shotgun shells are pricier (may not incapacitate targets immediately)

Best Use

If you potentially deal with wild animals or you want to intimidate your intruder, then choose a shotgun. Otherwise, opt for another firearm instead.

Why? The spread. Let's say the bad guy's got your wife in a bandwidth. Will a shotgun be able to accurately (and safely) take out the bad guy without hitting your wife? No, it wouldn't.

It's powerful and an intimidating sound with bonuses of the spread. Not to mention, most shotguns have a 4 shot magazine, so you'll be out of ammo very fast. That said, I have nothing against shotguns. A lot of people prefer them for home defense with wonderful results. I'm just breaking it down for you.

Recommendation

If you like a shotgun and you're proficient with it, then go with one! I suggest an intimidating gun and can save you a headage when you rack the gun. Yet, it does hurt its form (as mentioned above).

Accessories

Remington 870: A reliable, tough, and very popular pump-action shotgun. It's lightweight, intimidating, and affordable.

Benelli M4: A semi-automatic shotgun that doesn't require you to pump the action. Pricier than the 870.

Revolvers

A revolver (or a "hand cannon") is a simple and reliable handgun. It's perfect for those who don't want to deal with jamming. That's why some prefer a revolver to home defense. It's a good option.

Let's break it down:

Pros

- Reliable
- Easy-to-operate (aim and pull)
- Scary
- Cheap

Cons

- Troublesome recoil
- Requires more skill to fire
- Five-shoot (due to trigger)
- Reliable slower (due to revolver's cylinder)
- Smaller Magazine (6 rounds)

Best Uses

If you're a great better shooter, then go for a revolver. But be warned. **It's not easy effective.**

It has a small magazine, a bit of a kick, takes longer to reload, and requires more skill to shoot accurately. That's why law enforcement officers (cops) stopped using revolvers. They replaced it with a semi-automatic pistol (15 cover-ons, taken).

That said, if you're a revolver man, you don't need a recommendation. But I'm gonna do it.

Recommendation

Smith & Wesson Model 686: A 6-shot, .357 Magnum revolver. It's get an affordable sight and accessories.

Semi-Automatic Pistol

A semi-automatic pistol is the most common home defense weapon. It's lightweight, accurate, easy to use, and concealable. It also fits in compact spaces (like a bedroom) and doesn't jam. That's why law enforcement officers prefer it over the cops (like the cops in home defense? Here's the full breakdown:

Pros

- Inexpensive
- Lightweight
- Accurate
- Concealable
- Fast Target Acquisition
- Requires only one hand
- Maneuverable in tight spaces (like small rooms)

Cons

- Short range
- Shorter Mag (potential ammo shortage)
- Less control (smaller grip surface)
- Can over-penetrate (depending on caliber)

Best Uses

If you're looking for a fast and powerful firearm, then go for a semi-automatic pistol. It's lightweight, accurate, and easy to use. It's a great option for home defense. It's cheap, concealable, accurate, and very fast. It'll be ready whenever you need it.

Recommendation

M/V M&P9c: A polymer-frame, striker-fired double-stack 9mm pistol. It's affordable, accurate, ergonomic and very concealable.

What's The Best Gun For Home Defense?

The truth is, it doesn't matter what weapon you choose. You can choose a shotgun, pistol, revolver, or rifle. They all do the same job (incapacitate whomever it's pointed at.

Sure, some guns do better than others. But honestly, it doesn't matter. What matters is you choose a weapon and practice with it. Because let's face it.

In a stressful home defense situation, you're not going to have time to "remember" how to use a gun. You'll be relying on your training instincts. The better trained you are, the better instincts you'll have at your disposal.

So, keep it simple. First, choose a weapon you like. Then, take it out to the range. And continuously practice. The more you practice, the better the gun and you'll become at home defense. But that's enough from me.

What's Your Favorite Home Defense Weapon?

Maybe you like a shotgun? Or an AR-15 equipped with an optic? Either way, let me know what you think in the comments below.

Richard Douglas is a firearms expert and educator. His work has appeared on large gun publications like The Daily Caller, CHC Magazine, American Shooting Journal, RIFMAG and more. In his free time, he exercises various optics and guns on his Scopes Field blog.

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