

Handgun Handling Training in 2026: Rationale, Equipment, Process, and Time Management



Geoff Davis, TC
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GUNSAFETY4U® ... exclusively NRA®



The Purpose of this Module...

... to provide “Best Practice” methods in Handgun Handling Training which can increase quality in BoPS and Pistol Instructor Classes. **Protect the value your Practice...**

We’ve included the Good, Bad, and Ugly that we have observed and encountered on our Journey as NRA Practitioners.

This is the fourth of 4 Modules.

Building Out Your Sustainable and (Exclusively NRA) Training Practice (Gen1)



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Growing a Sustainable NRA Training Practice (Gen2)



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Financial and Succession Planning in Your NRA Training Practice... The Future



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Why Focus on Handgun Handling Training?

- **Safety**
- Student and Instructor Candidate Confidence
- Skill Competence and Reduction of Frustration
- Range Etiquette
- Replication is Improved



Safety Depends on Safe, and Precise Gun Handling (It makes sense...)

2017 study of LEO Unintentional Discharges (UDs)*

Familiar (Routine Tasks) 59%

- 33.3% - Clearing
- 23.5% - Storing & Moving
- 17.3% – Holstering (in & out)
- 16.0% - Function Checks
- 9.9% - Maintenance

Unfamiliar (Non-dominant or new equipment or mods) 11%

- 4.4% Hand Transfers (dominant/non-dominant)
- 3.6% Unfamiliar Firearms
- 2.9% Holster/ Belt (new or different)

Other Causes (Muscle Co-activation) -24% : use of another finger - 8.8%, loss of grip – 5.1%, moving (walking/ running)– 4.4% Loss of balance – 3.6%, other – 2.2%

No “civilian” *peer-reviewed* data is available, but the numbers still apply



* O'Neill, J., O'Neill, D. A., & Lewinski, W. J. (2017). Toward a taxonomy of the unintentional discharge of firearms in law enforcement. Applied Ergonomics, 59, 283-292. doi: 10.1016/j.apergo.2016.08.013

What does that mean:

- 73% of UDs occur during routine handling tasks
- 8% of UDs occur during transfers between hands or with new firearms or equipment

If 81% of UDs occur at these times, WE can have a significant impact by focusing on safe, precise, and methodical gun handling training.



Confidence Leads to Better Performance

In NRA® Instructor training courses, we emphasize the importance of concentration

Safe Shooters are Spacially Aware:

- **Muzzle**
- **Safe Direction**, *wherever they are (It changes)*
- **180** *(and likely in a classroom, the safe direction might be 20 degrees if students are standing in a line completing drills)*
- Position and **“Workspace”**- *No gun handling sitting down*
- **Trigger Guard**
- The **“Wall”**
- **“Target and Beyond”**
- No ammunition in the **room**

These concepts must be learned through experience and constantly applied when they are in the presence of firearms and shooting sports



Focusing Attention and Building Confidence

- **TPI:** Learning by Doing - higher retention rates (65%) Press for 85%!
- **Have a command of lesson plans**, *never, ever read a Powerpoint Slide*
- **Focus on outcomes:**
 - Develop **Knowledge** (book stuff)- **Outcome: (90+ on the test)**
 - Develop **Skills** (doing things) - **Outcome: 20/20 in 3 levels, PRC**
 - Reinforce an **Attitude (SAFETY)** through acquiring skills and awareness of their environment) - **Outcome: Self Discipline and Confidence... Priceless**
- And make sure that students and instructor candidates have **FUN**

Polish Your Craft... Learning objectives, test Q&A, gun handling processes, and the “Five Fundamentals” should be a “motor program” that *you execute without thought...*

Training to fluency of this and the aforementioned skills would also be beneficial in civilian concealed-carry training programs, (O'Neill, et al., 2017)

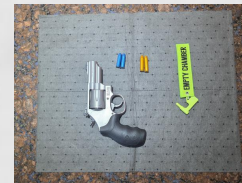


Class Structure and Learning

Block Training is superior for rapid Skill Acquisition. But...

It may not “stick”

Breaking up skill training into several pieces allows memories to form, so skills can be repeated with fewer errors.



BoPS ILT & Instructor Room Layout

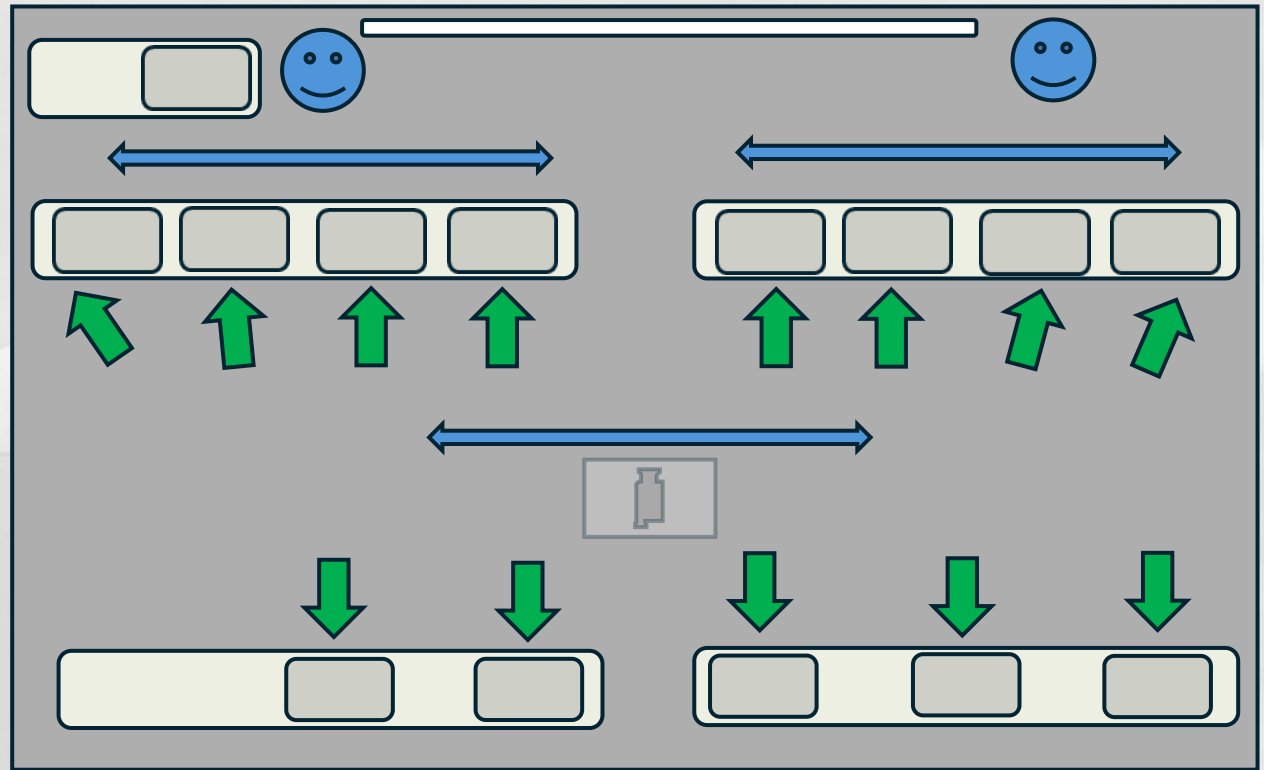
- Straight line seating (8)
- 5 handling stations in the back

↔ Instructor Path for Drills

😊 Instructor Lecture Positions

↑ Student and Safe Direction

▭ HazMat Pads / "placemats"



BoPS-ILT Day Plan

- **Gathering/ Intro** – Slide 10, then dark
- **Handling Demos-** SAR, DAR, DASA and Striker Autos, **Practice Drills-** 5 Guns, *including SA Auto*
- **Lesson 1:** Continue slides
- **Lesson 2:** Ammo & Fundamentals
 - **Mark hands** for two-handed grip
 - More handling- Precise Grip
 - *“The Wall”* - SIRT trigger work
- **Lesson 3:** Range
 - Handling- open practice during break
- **Lesson 4:** Reinforce handling
- **Lesson 5:** Review handling & PRC



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Training Students to Standards

Remedial work on Handgun Handling is required *more* often than expected. NRA Instructors are the gatekeepers.

We regularly refer students for BoPS to instructors that **we know** are issuing books, training safe gun handling to standard, completing PRCs , and prepare students for future training opportunities.



Certified Pistol Instructor - Overview

Two weeks before class we send out :

- Questionnaire (TC-Appx 1)
- Skills (TC-Appx 5)
- Level 4 Target (15 & 10 Yd sizes)
- Kinesthetic Handgun Handling Scripts: 5 guns, RH & LH (2026)

Scripts do not have pictures, our Handbooks do. Scripts are to be read, practiced with their unloaded firearms at home, then reread, practiced, etc.



GUNSAFETY4U® Handgun Handling Process DA/SA Auto RH (GHDSR)

DA/SA Semi-Automatic Pistol All Types - Right Handed Operator

Always Keep your Firearm pointed in a Safe Direction, throughout the drill

Begin with an UNLOADED FIREARM, UNLOADED MAGAZINE, DUMMY ROUNDS (2 minimum) and NO AMMUNITION IN THE ROOM. The drill is begun with an (Unknown) Firearm State, Unloaded, unloaded magazine inserted, hammer down, placed on a horizontal surface, ejection port facing up (visible)

UNLOADING (Make it Safe):

1. Pick up the pistol with your LEFT hand
 - a. Keep the firearm pointed in a safe Direction
 - b. Nothing enters the trigger Guard
 - c. Do not place any part of your hands and body in front of the Muzzle
2. Place the pistol GRIP in your RIGHT Hand
 - a. High and Tight on the Backstrap, No space above your hand at the beavertail
 - b. RIGHT Index Finger ON the FRAME,
 - c. Wrap your 3 Lower Fingers around the Front of the Grip
3. Keeping the Firearm pointed in a SAFE DIRECTION, locate the MAGAZINE RELEASE (Push button, Paddle Release, or Bottom of Grip)
 - a. Press the MAGAZINE RELEASE with either Thumb (button), Index Finger (paddle), or Left Thumb (bottom of Grip).
 - b. If your pistol has a PADDLE RELEASE (Lever at the BOTTOM REAR of the trigger guard), you can use EITHER THUMB or your Right Index Finger.
 - c. Remove the MAGAZINE with your left hand or let it fall to the floor/ground.
 - i. If on the ground, do not pick it up until the end of the drill.
 - d. If the Magazine is in your left hand, Examine the MAGAZINE to see if there are any rounds in it
 - e. Place the MAGAZINE on a Surface if possible
4. Keeping the Firearm pointed in a SAFE DIRECTION, locate the SLIDE RELEASE (Catch). Adjust your RIGHT-HAND grip so your RIGHT THUMB SITS UNDER THE SLIDE RELEASE.

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Read/ Demo Time 13.50 / µDemo Time 4.51

GHDSR Page | 1



BIT (Day 1, using every minute)

- **Prep:** Set up 5 handling stations in the back
- **Shoot the Pre-quals...**
- **Introduction**
 - Handling Demo- SAR & DAR, practice - 2 stations 2 teams (15 minutes)
- **Lesson 1**
 - Handling Demo- DASA & Striker Autos, practice - 2 stations 2 teams (20 minutes)
- **Lesson 2**
 - Handling Demo- SA (1911/2011) Auto, practice - all stations – group (20 minutes)

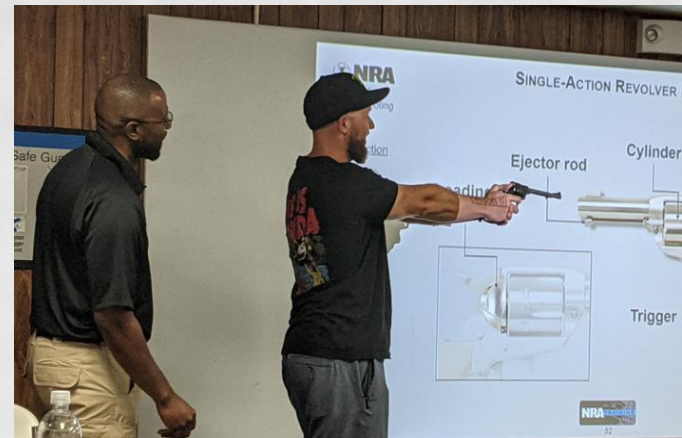
- **Lesson 3**
 - Handling Practice - 2 stations 2 teams (20 minutes)
- **Lesson 4**
- **Lesson 5**
- **Hand out Handgun-Handling Script Binders (for overnight use)**
 - Explain how to use them, practicing that evening...
 - **Unloaded Guns**
 - **No Ammo in the Room**
 - 3 Safety Rules -Safety Brochure

Clear up questions (loan dummies if needed)



Certified Pistol Instructor (Day 2)

- **Prep: Set up 5 handling stations in the back**
- **Handling Checkoffs** (if not already passed)
- **Lesson 1** (Sometimes Day 1)
- **Lesson 2**
 - *Check-offs continue*
- **Lesson 3**
- **Lesson 4**
- **Lesson 5 (Range)**
 - *ICs Reinforce during coaching*
- **Lesson 6**
- **Lesson 7**
- **Lesson 8**



Certified Pistol Instructor - Lessons Learned

Our Keys to Success:

- ***Similarly to the Level 4 shooting qualification, many Instructor Candidates are internally focused, mostly worried about passing handling drills. Some “choke”.***
 - ***Provide Reassurance***
 - ***Focus on Outcomes (take a breath)***
 - ***Scripts are designed to help candidates learn by problem solving as opposed to memorization.***
 - ***By enabling “learning by doing” and problem solving, we provide tools to improve skill acquisition. (Good Old-fashioned TPI)***
 - ***Motor programs become automatic, enhancing what is wrongly called “Muscle Memory”.***

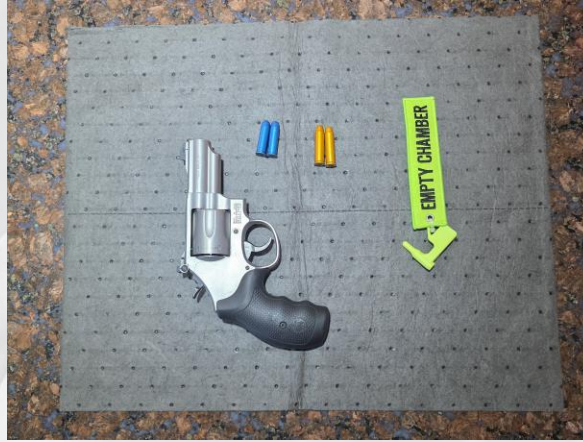


Tools of the Trade

Handgun Type	What We Use for Handling Drills
Single Action Revolver	<i>Ruger Single-Six, Wrangler, Blackhawk, Heritage, Uberti, Colt SAA (older)</i>
Double Action Revolver	S&W 66, 19, 10, 13, 65, 36, 37, 686, 681, 60, Colt Det. Spl., Cobra, Viper, Trooper, others
Double Action/ Single Action Automatic	S&W 639, 5905, any Gen 1,2,3 9mm. Beretta 92, 090, 80x. 84(all), Sig P226, 220, 239, 225 (both), Taurus 92, CZ 75, 85, P-09, Walther P22Q, HK P30, USP, FN-FNX
Striker Automatic	Sig P365, XL, Fuse, P320 (all), <i>Walther PPS(M1)</i> , Glocks, Canik, Taurus,
Single Action Automatic	1911, 2011, Colt, Sig, Rock Island, Kimber, others. <i>All with Active Grip Safety for decocking practice.</i>



Handling Stations



- Disposable HazMat pads absorb and protect our guns (and students)
- Dummies – A-Zoom, Tipton, NRA, Solid Brass, SS (w/ rubber base pads)
- Chamber flags are for familiarization

SIRTS and Other Aids



Glock(ish) and Sig style grips,
Dots and Irons for choice

“Wall” Training And Anxiety
reduction (w/ 10-foot Level-1)
before the range)



Hand Strength and Dexterity
Training Aids.

We don't use “A-coil” exercisers,
Too much work in ring fingers and
pinkies can increase “7 o'clock”



How Handling Scripts Work



GUNSAFETY4U® Handgun Handling Process DA/SA Auto RH (GHDSR)

DA/SA Semi-Automatic Pistol All Types - Right Handed Operator

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Begin with an UNLOADED FIREARM, UNLOADED MAGAZINE, DUMMY ROUNDS (2 minimum) and NO AMMUNITION IN THE ROOM. The drill is begun with an (Unknown) Firearm State, Unloaded, unloaded magazine inserted, hammer down, placed on a horizontal surface, ejection port facing up (visible)

UNLOADING (Make it Safe):

1. Pick up the pistol with your LEFT hand
 - a. Keep the firearm pointed in a safe Direction
 - b. Nothing enters the trigger Guard
 - c. Do not place any part of your hands and body in front of the Muzzle
2. Place the pistol GRIP in your RIGHT Hand
 - a. High and Tight on the Backstrap, No space above your hand at the beavertail
 - b. RIGHT Index Finger ON the FRAME,
 - c. Wrap your 3 Lower Fingers around the Front of the Grip
3. Keeping the Firearm pointed in a SAFE DIRECTION, locate the MAGAZINE RELEASE (Push button, Paddle Release, or Bottom of Grip)
 - a. Press the MAGAZINE RELEASE with either Thumb (button), Index Finger (paddle), or Left Thumb (bottom of Grip).
 - b. If your pistol has a PADDLE RELEASE (Lever at the BOTTOM REAR of the trigger guard), you can use EITHER THUMB or your Right Index Finger.
 - c. Remove the MAGAZINE with your left hand or let it fall to the floor/ground.
 - i. If on the ground, do not pick it up until the end of the drill.
 - d. If the Magazine is in your left hand, Examine the MAGAZINE to see if there are any rounds in it
 - e. Place the MAGAZINE on a Surface if possible
4. Keeping the Firearm pointed in a SAFE DIRECTION, locate the SLIDE RELEASE (Catch). Adjust your RIGHT-HAND grip so your RIGHT THUMB SITS UNDER THE SLIDE RELEASE.



GUNSAFETY4U® Handgun Handling Process SA Revolver LH (GHSRL)

SA Revolver All Types - Left Handed Operator

Begin with an UNLOADED FIREARM, UNLOADED CYLINDER, DUMMY ROUNDS (2 minimum), and NO AMMUNITION IN THE ROOM. The drill is begun with an (Unknown) Firearm State, Unloaded, unloaded Cylinder, Gate Closed, hammer down, placed on a horizontal surface, Gate facing up (visible)

Always Keep your Firearm pointed in a Safe Direction

UNLOADING (Make it Safe)

1. Pick up the revolver with your LEFT hand
 - a. Keep the firearm pointed in a safe Direction
 - b. Nothing enters the trigger Guard
 - c. Do not place any part of your hands and body in front of the Muzzle
2. Place the revolver GRIP in your RIGHT Hand
 - a. High and Tight on the Backstrap, web of your hand in the notch
 - b. RIGHT Index Finger ON the FRAME,
 - c. Wrap your 3 Lower Fingers around the Front of the Grip
3. Turn so you are facing 45 degrees to the right of your safe direction, while keeping the gun pointed in the center of the safe direction. The gun should now be moved to your WORKSPACE. Bring the Firearm to your WORKSPACE (Chest High, 6 to 8 inches from your body), while keeping it pointed at the center of the SAFE DIRECTION.
4. Turn the revolver on its side, place your LEFT hand underneath the gun with the barrel extending out between your thumb and index finger. Close your LEFT thumb, index finger, and middle finger around the base of the barrel. Place your LEFT ring and little finger along the edge of the frame. Make sure that no part of your LEFT hand touches any part of the cylinder.
5. From this point to having the gun fully loaded, no part of your left hand should move at all. This is called the "CLAW" grip.
6. Keeping the Firearm pointed in a SAFE DIRECTION, locate the Loading Gate behind the cylinder top facing you. USING your RIGHT THUMB ONLY, Put the tip of your RIGHT THUMB into the notch at the rear of the gate. Push the GATE DOOR Up until it stays open under spring pressure.
7. Keeping your RIGHT HAND ON THE GRIP, use your RIGHT INDEX FINGER to turn the cylinder Clockwise. It will only move in one direction. While looking at the chamber holes in the notch, verify that all the cylinder



Time is Money (or so they say)

- Any NRA® Instructor or TC will tell you that time is the most valuable commodity in training
- Instructor to student ratios for BoPS are 1:1, 1:2 max.
- Customer Service plays a role as well, too many students waiting to shoot or waiting for others to finish can create frustration or dissatisfaction.
- The availability and cost of a properly sized training team need to be balanced.



How Much Time Does Handling Need?

Instructor DEMO	SA REV	DA REV	DA/SA	Striker	SA Auto
RH	3:28	3:42	4:45	2:38	3:34
LH	4:05	4:26	5:07	3:28	4:05

Student DRILL RH	SA REV	DA REV	DA/SA	Striker	SA Auto
RH	4:30	4:47	6:18	3:35	4:38
2.5 reps	11:16	12:02	15:45	8:32	11:36

PILOT STUDY: Measurements over 3 classes 3-5 measurements each, measured in (minutes:seconds).



BoPS Total Class Handling Time

Instructor DEMO	SA REV	DA REV	DA/SA Auto	Striker Auto	SA Auto ~1911	Total
DEMO	3.46	3.70	4.85	2.63	3.57	18.22
4 Students 2.5 reps/ea.	45.07	48.10	63.05	34.23	46.37	236.82
6 Students 2.5 reps/ea.	67.60	72.15	94.58	51.35	69.55	355.23

Pilot study:
M:S
converted to
decimals

Clock Time Required	4 Students (Demo + Drills)	6 Students (Demo + Drills)
Total Time	255.03 (4h 15m)	374.44 (6h 14m)
2 Instructors	127.52 (2h 8m)	186.72 (3h 7m)
3 Instructors	85.01 (1h 25m)	124.48 (2h 4m)
4 Instructors	63.76 (1h 4m)	93.36 (1h 33m)



Instructor- Total Class Handling Time

TC DEMO	SA REV	DA REV	DA/SA Auto	Striker Auto	SA Auto	Total
DEMO	3.46	3.70	4.85	2.63	3.57	18.22
Candidate - 5 reps	22.53	24.05	31.53	17.12	23.18	118.41
Minutes .Decimals		TC+1	& Buzz	Groups	Total	136.63

Homework (Scripts)	SA REV	DA REV	DA/SA Auto	Striker Auto	SA Auto	Total
RH	11:42	12:15	13:50	11:15	11:10	1h
LH	12:10	13:30	13:50	11:10	11:10	1h 4m
Min:Sec						

First trial reported appx: 2Hrs 15 Minutes +- 10, 4 guns (differed)



Any Questions or Feedback?



Raw Data

Times in Seconds				Time in Minutes				Instructor Candidates			
Drill	Demo R	Demo L	Student	Student Rep Minutes	2.5 Reps/ Student	Total Minutes 4 Students	Total Minutes 6 Students	Total Minutes 5	Reps/ Instructor Candidates	Read/ Demo R	Read/ Demo L
			Rep							(Instructor Candidate Self Study)	(Instructor Candidate Self Study)
Single Action Revolver	208	245	270.4	4.51	11.27	45.07	67.60	22.53	702	730	
Double Action Revolver	222	266	288.6	4.81	12.03	48.10	72.15	24.05	735	810	
DA/SA Automatic	291	307	378.3	6.31	15.76	63.05	94.58	31.53	830	830	
Striker Automatic	158	208	205.4	3.42	8.56	34.23	51.35	17.12	675	670	
Single Action Automatic	214	245	278.2	4.64	11.59	46.37	69.55	23.18	670	670	
Seconds	1093	1271	1420.9	<i>Totals</i>		18.22	18.22	18.22	3612	3710	
Minutes	18.22	21.18	23.68			255.03	373.44	136.63	60.20	61.83	
N=3x each measure						2 Instructors	127.52	186.72	68.31		
						3 Instructors	85.01	124.48	Buzz Group	N=3x each measure	
						4 Instructors	63.76	93.36	w/ TC+1		

