



HOLSTER SELECTION GUIDE

Opening Shots

Choosing a holster is an intensely personal process, perhaps even more so than choosing a handgun.

Holster selection depends on a variety of things, including the gun carrier's level of training and experience, body type, and the intended activity and clothing worn while carrying the gun/holster. Some features are required on virtually all holsters.



Covered Trigger

A covered trigger prevents an object – including the shooter's finger – from entering the trigger area and causing a discharge. Covered triggers are required at all legitimate training courses and competitions, and should also be selected for defensive handguns. The one exception is when carrying a single action revolver that requires the hammer to be manually cocked before depressing the trigger. Note that completely covering the trigger guard is not required, as an excess of material at the base of the trigger guard will preclude a firing grip with the handgun in the holster.



Firing Grip Accessibility

The gun carrier should be able to establish a full firing grip on the handgun while it is fully seated in the holster. This enables the shooter to execute a smooth, quick, and fumble free draw without having to make grip adjustments while the handgun is in motion. Of particular importance is the clearance at the base of the trigger guard, which allows sufficient room for the middle finger to make complete contact with the handgun. Exceptions are made for sub-compact guns in low-riding IWB holsters where a "grip pinch" technique must be used.



Adequate Retention

The holster must retain the handgun over the course of the gun carrier's intended activities. Some gun carriers may require higher retention levels than others. For example, a law enforcement officer who must physically subdue a suspect may require greater retention than an office worker with a concealed carry permit. A competition shooter may require lesser retention than a hunter traversing rugged terrain and heavy brush. The greater the holster's retention level, generally speaking, the slower the draw (and vice-versa).



One-Handed Drawing Ability

The gun carrier may need to execute a one-handed draw. The shooter's other hand may be occupied fending off a close-range attacker, holding a critical object, or guiding a third party to safety. In these cases, the ability to draw the handgun with one hand is critical. However, if deep concealment is critical, it almost always requires one to "sweep" open a jacket, or pull up a shirt or pant leg with the support hand while drawing the weapon with the shooting hand.



One-Handed Holstering Ability

Some gun carriers prefer this feature, though it is not absolutely required. Law enforcement officers in particular may need to holster with one hand while drawing handcuffs or restraining a subject with the other. Some citizens with carry permits also prefer it, though in most cases if a citizen must draw "on the street," swift holstering will not be required. Virtually all competitive shooting events require a holster that allows single-handed holstering, as will most defensive training courses. While taking a defensive shooting course, you will draw and holster your weapon hundreds of times.



The Holster Wardrobe

Remember that every holster type is a compromise, and that none is perfect for every person in every circumstance. Just as you wouldn't wear the same pair of shoes hiking, at the gym, to church, and to the beach, you won't necessarily be able to carry the same holster in all circumstances. Therefore, a gun carrier should have a "wardrobe" of holsters to accommodate different modes of dress while remaining adequately armed at all times.

You might even need multiple guns *and* multiple holsters. But always remember the First Rule of Gunfighting: have a gun!

Different holster types have advantages and corresponding disadvantages, which we'll discuss next as we compare holster types.



Belt Holsters Worn On The Strong Side

This is a very common and highly practical carry position. It is the method recommended at most shooting academies, and also commonly seen in practical shooting sports like IDPA. These holsters may be worn on the strong hip or somewhat behind it, depending on user preference. They may also be neutral (vertical) cant, or have a butt-forward cant, again depending on user preference.

EXCELS

- Very comfortable when worn with a sturdy belt designed to support the weight of a handgun
- Fast to draw from standing position
- Fairly easy for most men to conceal

LIMITATIONS

- Slower to draw from seated position
- Can be trapped by seatbelt when driving
- Requires longer concealing garment than other types
- Can interfere when seated with certain chair backs



Examples of this holster type are the [Avenger](#) (shown), [Combat Master](#)[™], [Concealable](#)[™], [Cop 3 Slot](#)[™], [FLETCH](#)[™], [Side Snap Scabbard](#)[™], [Silhouette](#)[™], and [Yaqui Slide](#).

Belt Holsters Worn Crossdraw

This lesser-used carry position is underrated by many. While more difficult to conceal on some body types, it offers advantages not given by strongside holsters, particularly in comfort, ease of use with shoulder injuries, and adaptability to most female gun carriers.

EXCELS

- Very comfortable if worn with a sturdy belt designed to support the weight of a handgun
- Fast to draw from standing position
- The drawing motion is not telegraphed to the rear
- Fairly fast to draw from seated position
- More comfortable when seated than strong-side holster
- Allows access unobstructed by seatbelts (right-handed shooter in driver seat or left-handed shooter in passenger seat)
- Ideal for most women

LIMITATIONS

- Requires longer concealing garment than other types
- Difficult for most men to conceal without a jacket/coat
- Cross-body draw can be stopped by an arms-length attacker
- Training courses and competitions often don't allow crossdraw on the range



Examples of concealment holsters suitable for crossdraw are the [Cop 3 Slot™](#) and the [Hornet™](#) (shown).

Paddle Holsters

Paddle holsters offer the same advantages and disadvantages as belt holsters worn in equivalent positions, but are very quick to put on and remove. Many plainclothes law enforcement officers prefer paddle holsters for this reason, as they may need to disarm to enter a jail, courthouse, etc.

EXCELS

- Relatively quick to don and doff
- Belt width not as critical as with belt holster (though a holster belt must still be worn)
- Galco's paddles are secure and stable on the belt
- Works well for some women

LIMITATIONS

- Slightly less concealable than a belt holster, since the paddle must lie between the gun and the shooter's body



Examples of this holster type are the [M5X Matrix™](#), [PLE™](#), [Speed Master 2.0™](#) (shown), and [Wraith™ 2.0](#).

Inside The Pants Holsters

An excellent compromise between speed and concealability, "IWB" holsters are very popular, since they offer excellent concealment with even full-sized handguns carried under proper garments.

EXCELS

- Very easy to conceal
- Requires only a very short concealing garment (waist length)
- Relatively fast to draw from standing position

LIMITATIONS

- Slower to draw from seated position
- Can be trapped by seatbelt when driving
- Generally clothing needs to be adapted to the holster (I.E., belt and pants purchased approximately 2" larger than normal)



Examples of this holster type are the [QuickTuk™](#), [KingTuk™](#) series (shown), [Royal Guard™](#), [Scout 3.0™](#), [Stow-N-Go™](#), [Summer Comfort™](#), [Tuck-N-Go 2.0™](#), and [Waistband™](#).

Shoulder Holsters

Galco's signature product is the Miami Classic shoulder system, which evolved from the original Jackass Rig. Shoulder systems offer several dramatic advantages that appear in real-life carry rather than range competitions and shooting academies.

EXCELS

- Relatively fast to draw from standing position
- Relatively fast to draw from seated position
- Generally very comfortable when seated
- Requires only a very short concealing garment
- No belt is required
- Works well for most women
- Quick and easy on and off, making a complete grab-and-go package

LIMITATIONS

- Not allowed in most shooting competitions or training courses
- Concealing garment must cover shoulder straps in addition to pistol
- Cross-body draw can be stopped by an arms-length attacker



Examples of this holster type are the [Classic Lite™](#), [Jackass Rig™](#), [Miami Classic™](#), [Miami Classic II™](#) (shown), and [VHS 3.0™](#).

There are some exceptions to the general rules listed previously among holsters designed for “deep” concealment, versus more generalized holster designs. These holster designs also have unique advantages and disadvantages, and will also often overlap the general designs mentioned earlier.

Deeper Concealment Options

Always remember that the deeper you conceal your handgun, the slower it will be to access. However, this is often an acceptable compromise in situations where the utmost discretion in gun carrying is required.



[UnderWraps Belly Band™](#) (shown).

Tuckable Holsters

Many of Galco's holsters allow the gun carrier to tuck in a shirt over the pistol, which is carried inside the pants. This enables the handgun and holster to remain almost completely hidden even in business (or other less casual) clothing, while retaining a neat (and unarmed) appearance. The only thing showing when wearing a Galco tuckable holster is a small black tab (or tabs), which virtually disappears when worn on a black belt.

EXCELS

- Most concealable IWB design
- Handgun is fully hidden in most business and casual attire
- Completely conceals a medium or large handgun without a jacket
- May be tucked when needed and used as a standard IWB the remainder of the time

LIMITATIONS

- Generally clothing needs to be adapted to the holster (i.e., belt and pants purchased approximately 2" larger than normal)
- Longer prep time when donning holster and tucking shirt*
- Requires two hands to draw*

* Only applies when tucked



Examples of this holster type are the [KingTuk](#) series, [Scout 3.0](#), [Tuck-N-Go 2.0](#) and [V-Hawk™](#) (shown).

Ankle Holsters

The traditional solution to carrying in deep concealment, ankle holsters remain an excellent choice for carrying a small or medium sized handgun when rapid access is less important than complete concealment. Ankle holsters are often used for a back-up gun, when not the primary carry gun/holster.

EXCELS

- Highly concealable (unless wearing shorts, skirt, capis pants or kilt)
- Very fast to draw from a seated position
- Well suited to those with desk jobs, or who spend long hours in a vehicle
- Comfortable mode of carry after a brief adaptation period

LIMITATIONS

- Requires two hands to draw
- Minimal clothing adaptations required (skinny jeans need not apply)
- Immobilizes the shooter during the draw



Examples of this holster type are the [Ankle Glove™](#) (shown), [Ankle Guard™](#), [Ankle Lite™](#) and [Cop Ankle Band™](#).

Pocket Holsters

Pocket carry offers unique advantages. The gun carrier can casually place a hand on the holstered pistol if a nonspecific threat materializes – and the fastest draw is to have the gun in hand. While shown in a front pocket, jacket and cargo pants pockets are often applicable, as well.

EXCELS

- Handgun is completely covered and concealed
- User can grasp the pistol with complete discretion
- Keeps the gun in the same general position so a firing grip may be quickly achieved
- Conceals the shape of the gun so that its outline doesn't print through the fabric

LIMITATIONS

- Restricted to smaller guns
- Difficult to draw when seated
- Must be removed from pocket prior to holstering gun
- Accessible to one hand only



Examples of this holster type are the [Front Pocket Horsehide Holster](#) (shown), the [Pocket Protector](#)[™] and the [StukOn-U](#)[™].

Belly Bands

Belly bands are both highly concealable and extremely versatile. They essentially function as a tuckable inside the pants holster that accommodates handguns and a wide range of accessories.

Galco's UnderWraps Belly band has two leather holster pockets to facilitate stable positioning of one or two firearms simultaneously, while two accessory pockets accommodate badge, cuffs, ammo, etc.

EXCELS

- Extremely concealable
- Can be used strongside or crossdraw
- Designed to be worn without a pants/holster belt
- Shirt can be tucked in over gun with nothing showing on the outside
- Can be worn low on the waistline, partially under the belt line, just above it, or around the solar plexus area
- Accommodates virtually any mode of dress from gym clothes to formal attire

LIMITATIONS

- Generally requires two hands to draw
- Requires two hands to return gun to holster



[UnderWraps Belly Band™](#) (shown).

Off Body or “Hidden in Plain Sight” Carry

A handgun carried in a purse or day planner may not be as fast to access as a handgun carried in a belt holster, but it is vastly better than the gun left at home or in the car! The First Rule of Gunfighting is “Have a gun!”

Much like a pocket holster, the gun carrier can casually place a hand on the holstered pistol if a nonspecific threat materializes – and the fastest draw is to have the gun in hand.

EXCELS

- Handgun is completely covered and concealed
- Holds the handgun in the optimum position for ease of draw
- Ideal for environments where complete discretion is required
- Does not limit clothing choices
- “Have a gun!”

LIMITATIONS

- Sacrifices some draw speed
- More easily separated from gun carrier



Examples of this holster type are the [CarrySafe™](#), [Defense Planner™](#), [iDefense™](#), [Hidden Agenda™](#), and any of our ladies' [holster handbags](#).

Field Holsters

Holsters intended for carry in the wild differ from those used for concealed carry. Guns carried in the field run the gamut from .22s used to harvest small game to magnum revolvers used for protection against dangerous animals or as a back-up while hunting. Field holsters keep the gun available for quick action when game appears or when a routine trek becomes a survival situation.

EXCELS

- Positions the gun for fast and easy draw
- Retains the handgun when moving through thick brush or traversing rough terrain
- Can be carried either strongside or crossdraw at the user's preference

LIMITATIONS

- None, within scope of design intent



Examples of this holster type are the [DAQ™](#), [Ironhide™](#), [Phoenix™](#), [SAQ™](#) (shown), [Switchback™](#) and [WheelGunner™](#).

Field Holsters

A chest holster is an excellent alternative to belt carry in the field. Chest holsters spread the weight of the handgun across the shoulder and torso, often increasing comfort and enhancing accessibility.

EXCELS

- Carries the gun higher, providing clearance for items carried on the belt, backpacks, hip waders, or other outdoor gear
- Positions the gun for fast and easy draw
- Retains the handgun when moving through thick brush or traversing rough terrain
- Allows convenient carry of optional spare ammo carrier

LIMITATIONS

- None, within scope of design intent



Examples of this holster type are the [Kodiak™](#), [Kodiak Hunter™](#) and [Great Alaskan™](#) (shown).

A Word About Belts

Just as a good house is built on a strong foundation, an effective waist-level carry system – firearm, holster, ammo carrier – is built on the foundation of a purpose-built belt.

Many gun carriers try to get away with wearing a handgun on a flimsy department store belt. This usually leads to discomfort and dissatisfaction with the performance of the holster. In truth, the lack of performance can usually be traced directly to the belt! While a belt purchased in a department store may be of good quality, and do an admirable job of holding up one's pants, it will not be designed to bear the weight of a handgun carried for many hours every day.

In addition to creating (or magnifying) discomfort, a pants belt will also not provide the stability required for a holster to be as concealable as it could and should be. A weak belt will often allow the butt of the handgun to lean out, away from the shooter's body, thus impeding good concealment.

A lightweight belt will allow the handgun to move and flop as the gun carrier moves. This may take the form of the handgun bouncing against the shooter's side – sometimes to the point of causing bruising – or simply shifting positions throughout the course of the day. Shifting requires the gun carrier to constantly reposition the holster, a dead giveaway to wary observers that one is armed. A constantly shifting holster also impedes draw speed, since the shooter's hand needs to hunt and grope for the pistol.

Galco's holster belts are designed to comfortably support the weight of a heavy pistol during a full day of carry, and keep the handgun correctly positioned for quick access and effective concealment.

In the old days, a "holster belt" meant a wide, unfashionable belt that only fit in the belt loops of blue jeans. Modern Galco holster belts come in various widths, including 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ " for wear with jeans and work pants, along with sturdy 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " and 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ " holster belts that mesh extremely well with casual chinos, dress pants and even suits. No longer is a wide, garish belt required to comfortably and discreetly conceal an effective defensive handgun.



Parting Shots

Carrying a handgun demands a tremendous level of responsibility. Gun carriers not only have a responsibility to our family, friends and society to carry safely; we also have a responsibility to ourselves to do so efficiently and comfortably. Choose your holster and carry system just as carefully as you choose your defensive handgun(s).

Finding the right holster and gun comprises two of three steps in the concealed carry process. High quality, recurrent training in the safe and effective use of your gun and carry system will provide you the skill to use it, and will help you meet your responsibilities as a gun carrier.

No holster is perfect for everyone and all situations, and despite what some “one holster does it all” makers may claim, nothing Galco or anyone else can sell you will make your chosen gun any smaller or lighter. Leather, Kydex® and nylon aren’t magic, and carrying a gun will seldom be as comfortable as *not* carrying a gun. However, following the recommendations in this guide and applying them to your own unique needs will set you up for a lifetime of gun-carrying success.

Please contact us if you have questions about what you’ve read in this guide. Our customer service department is staffed with knowledgeable shooters who carry guns every day, and who are very familiar with the challenges of carrying concealed every day. They’ll be happy to have an in-depth discussion about your unique needs as a gun carrier. Contact us at 800-874-2526, customerservice@galcoGUNleather.com, or via the live chat available at GalcoGunleather.com.

Ultimately, our goal is to ensure that you find a holster that meets your expectations and fulfills your needs. If the holster you select does not do those things, rest assured that we will do everything we can to help. Review our [Satisfaction Guarantee](#) and know that you can buy from Galco with confidence!

Galco as always: “For those who demand the best...and know the difference.”

