

CLEANING A HANDGUN

If you keep your handgun clean it will operate at its best and won't have any of the malfunctions associated with poor maintenance. A good rule to follow is to clean your handgun every time you use it. If you plan to clean it after every five hundred rounds, for example, you probably won't keep track of how many rounds you shoot and won't clean it according to your planned schedule. The result will be lack of cleaning and a lot of residue buildup in your handgun.

This can be a good opportunity to teach gun safety to children and other family members. You can teach the parts of the gun and demonstrate safety rules such as keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and always keeping your finger off the trigger.

Cleaning kit

Make your own cleaning kit. You will need to supplement any kit you buy by adding some additional items. You will want to combine all the items you get into a basic cleaning kit special kits for each caliber handgun you have.

A basic cleaning kit should include:

- (1) nylon bristle and stainless steel brushes
- (2) a rod in segments
- (3) patch holders that screw into the rod
- (4) a dental pick
- (5) nitro solvent
- (6) gun oil.

The special kit for each caliber should include:

- (1) bore brushes in the correct caliber. For a semi-automatic pistol you need two bore brushes, one brass and one stainless steel. For a revolver you need two sets. A long one to use on the chambers and a short one to use on the bore, one set in brass and one set in stainless steel.

(2) patches of a size that will fit through the bore.

(3) Keep the special kit for each caliber in a zip lock plastic bag. You could put a card in each bag with the caliber written on it for easy reference.

Keep your cleaning kit in a box or container that you can carry with you to the range if you want to clean your gun there before bringing it home.

Gun cleaning safety

Follow all the rules of safe gun handling while you are cleaning your gun.

Before you start to clean your handgun, unload it and put all live ammunition in another room. Re-check to make sure it is unloaded. Clean your handgun in a place where you are alone and won't be pointing the muzzle at someone else. Don't have the television on or any other distraction that may take your attention away from the task of cleaning your gun.

Cleaning a revolver

Most of the problems with revolvers come from poor maintenance that allows lead shavings and gunpowder residue to build up around the forcing cone, under the star, in the chambers, and in the bore. Cleaning your revolver every time you shoot, no matter how many or few rounds you shoot, will eliminate these problems.

The bore and cylinder will have residue and blow-back from the discharge. There will also be residue inside the bottom of the frame and the front of the cylinder. If you shoot lead bullets there will also be lead shavings on the forcing cone and in the bore.

Start by cleaning the bore.

(1) Look inside. If it is a mirrored surface it won't need the heavy stainless brush, as double passes with the brass bore brush will do. Use the short brush so it will pass all the way through the bore into the cylinder opening.

(2) Dip the bore brush into the solvent, then push it all the way through the bore.

(3) Be careful that you don't strike the rod against the edge of the muzzle. This can cause scratches that will affect the accuracy of the gun. Also be careful not to push the end of the bore brush against the firing pin on the inside back of the frame. Place a folded patch or small piece of leather over this area to help protect it.

(4) Push the brush all the way through the bore so the bristles all leave the bore. If you do this you won't be trying to pull the bore brush out with the bristles bent backwards inside the bore.

Where ever you put solvent, it has to come off. Don't let solvent run down inside the revolver; it won't come out by itself. Hold the revolver so solvent doesn't run down inside the hole around the firing pin.

Clean around the forcing cone. Dip a brush into solvent and brush this area. Then clean it using a dental pick to remove small lead shavings. Then brush it again.

Next, use the patch holder on the rod and the proper size patch. Run it through the bore a few times. It will come out dirty. Keep changing the patch until one comes out clean. Then use clean patches around the forcing cone and wipe this area until the patches come off clean.

Use the long bore brush in the chambers. There are two reasons for this. First, after cleaning the bore the brush you used will be compressed and it won't clean as well. Second, the chambers are much dirtier than the bore since this is where the cartridge detonates. The brush will get very dirty and you shouldn't use it on the bore next time you clean the revolver. If you use a long bore brush in the chambers you will easily tell it apart from the short bore brush.

It doesn't matter which direction you clean the chambers from, front or back. Dip the brush into the solvent and run the brush all the way through and back a couple of times in each chamber.

Clean any residue from under the star. Use a dental pick around each space under the star and follow this with the nylon brush.

Then run clean, dry patches through each chamber, changing them until they come out clean from each one. Wipe off the whole cylinder including the ejector rod and under the star with clean patches.

Clean off the frame with solvent on a bristle brush. Wipe it clean with patches. Brush around the trigger with a nylon brush.

Put a few drops of oil on a patch and push it through the bore then wipe it on the frame and cylinder. Don't leave excess oil on the gun because it will attract dust and lint. Take it off with a clean patch. Put a drop of oil on the shaft under the star and one drop on the front of the extractor rod. Work the rod a few times then wipe off any excess oil.

Wipe off all the cleaning equipment and put it away.

Cleaning a semi-automatic pistol

You need to disassemble a semi-automatic pistol to clean it. Follow the instructions in the gun's manual manual. You generally only need to remove the slide, barrel, guide rod, and guide rod spring.

Clean the barrel first. Look inside the bore. If it is a mirrored surface it won't need the heavy stainless brush, double passes with the brass bore brush will do. Dip the bore brush into the solvent, then push it all the way through the bore. Push the brush all the way through the bore so the bristles all leave the bore. If you do this you won't be trying to pull the bore brush out with the bristles bent backwards.

Next, use the patch holder on the rod and the proper size patch. Run it through the bore a few times. It will come out dirty. Keep changing the patch until one comes out clean. Wipe off the outside of the barrel with a clean patch.

Next clean the slide using a bristle brush dipped into solvent. Clean all along the guide rails. Use a dental pick on the area around the firing pin; there will be a lot of residue build-up. Use a bristle brush in this area. Finally clean off the solvent with clean patches.

Wipe the guide rod and guide rod spring with patches wiping off any residue and oil. Wipe clean any other parts that you need to disassemble for your pistol.

Using a brush dipped into solvent clean the frame, around the hammer, along the rails, and other exposed parts. Be careful that solvent doesn't run into parts where it will be difficult to remove it. Use the dental pick to remove residue build-up. Remove the solvent with patches until the patches lift off clean. Brush around the trigger with a nylon brush. Wipe inside the magazine well with patches.

Put a few drops of oil on a patch and push it through the bore then wipe it on the barrel, guide rod, slide, and frame. Don't leave excess oil on the gun because it will attract dust and lint. Take it off with a clean patch. Reassemble the barrel into the slide. Put a drop of oil on each rail then reassemble the slide onto the frame. Rack the slide back and forth a few times to disperse the oil. Wipe off all excess oil.

Wipe off all the cleaning equipment and put it away.