



***** Special Report *****

How To Build The Ultimate Home Defense Shotgun

The Ultimate Home Defense Shotgun
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The Home Defense Shotgun

It is the all-powerful, wall-shattering, body-vaporizing “boom stick” of television and the movies.

It can carve a door from the side of a home, blow bite-sized chunks from steel, and fold a man in half before throwing him across the room.

It is great and terrifying, loud and profound.

It is the shotgun, and everything you’ve heard about it is probably wrong.

It’s not your fault. In what may perhaps be a case of familiarity breeding contempt, everyone thinks they understand the shotgun.

This is because it is so common. Most of us grew up with fathers who owned a shotgun or two.

If you live in or come from a rural area, shotguns and .22 rifles were and are a way of life. Rare is the farm family that doesn’t have a shotgun somewhere on the property.

In some areas, hunting with rifles is restricted, on the theory that rifle rounds travel too far in built-up areas, but shotgun hunting is still allowed — further increasing the weapon’s popularity.

And even today’s urban “tactical” consumers are drawn to the shotgun, particular pump-action guns, because they are relatively inexpensive, very durable, and subject to fewer restrictions than many other types of firearms (especially so-called “assault weapons”).

The shotgun, particularly the twelve-gauge shotgun, is a remarkably versatile weapon.

Heavy enough for game like deer, more than sufficient to taking on a human opponent, and adaptable to different tasks based on the load used, a basic twelve-gauge shotgun in multiple barrels or pump configuration can be used for trap, skeet, and other sporting activities, or it can be used to defend your home.

It is this last application that concerns us. There is, unfortunately, a great deal of misinformation out there about shotguns. You could hear any of this intoned as The One And Only Truth from either side of a gun store counter, and some of your fellow shooters may hold some of these myths near and dear to their hearts.

Ask any ten-armed citizens about shotguns and you’ll get thirty opinions. So, let’s get to the facts about shotguns.

The Cold, Hard Facts

If you are shopping for a home-defense shotgun, you basically have two choices: a pump action or a semi-auto.

The advantage of double-barreled shotguns is that they are even simpler than pumps (and thus more reliable).

Semi-Auto Shotguns used to be unreliable designs, with only a few types of these shotguns being suitable to trust your life to. These days, there are quite a few semi-auto shotguns that work reliably.

The benefits to a semi-auto shotgun are that they are relatively easier to shoot, because much like an AR-15 or any other semi-auto long gun, you simply load them and pull the trigger and the shotgun loads shell after shell until you run dry.

An additional benefit is that because they rely on the functioning of the blast of the shotgun to chamber the next round—they have less recoil than a pump-action shotgun.

However, the proven solution for the home defense shotgun is a pump gun in twelve-gauge is “best”. I put best in quotations because it’s the best for “most” people (once size fits most right?). The 12 gauge is a versatile, extremely capable round...

You could consider one in .410, a lighter load that is the same diameter as .45 Long Colt. These are okay but don’t have the reassuring power of a twelve-gauge. Again, it’s certainly better than nothing if that’s all you have (or if you already hunt with such a weapon and know it like the back of your hand for instance).

A 20 gauge might be an excellent “compromise” choice—especially if you yourself are a smaller framed person, you’re getting old and weak (or your shoulders ache and don’t like the kick of a 12 gauge) or if your shotgun is going to be primarily used by your wife (and she happens to be 90lbs soaking wet and doesn’t like shooting a 12 gauge because of the recoil).

Another thing about 20-gauge shotguns is they often come in “youth models” with a smaller stock (more useful for “close quarters” home defense situations). And—with a hat tip to James Yeager—the 20 gauge is still twice as powerful as a 44 magnum (the handgun that Clint Eastwood as Dirty Harry famously called “the most powerful handgun in the world”).

Overall, a 20-gauge youth model, pump action might be exactly what you want—and a good all-around choice...

All that said, I would strongly recommend a 12-gauge shotgun if you—and anyone who will be using the shotgun in your family—can handle it!

Personally, I like to have a twelve-gauge pump with the proper ammunition on hand for home defense challenges, as this gives any user a good chance of meeting even more than one home invader with considerable authority.

Flashlight mounts are available for pump guns, and even fore-ends with built in flashlights, so don't neglect adding a light to your gun. And if you must accessorize, there's more than one way to add a shell carrier to your shotgun so you have plenty of ammunition at your fingertips.

That's it. That's the least you need to know about the home-defense shotgun. Make sure you take all these factors into account when you select your shotgun and train with it to protect your home. The lives you save could be those of your family.

So... What Do I Recommend?

Ok, I gave you the general "facts" – or as much as could be said about a personal choice such as choosing your personal firearm.

Here is what I recommend:

Choose a reliable, proven 12-gauge pump-action shotgun.

Specifically, Mossberg and Remington both make proven pump actions and they are NOT expensive. Even more specifically, the Mossberg 500 or 590 and the Remington 870 are the top choices here.

Now, depending on when you read this Mossberg and/or Remington might have several different models to choose from. At the time of this writing... With Mossberg, we have the 500, the 535, the 590, the 590A1, the Shockwave, and more. With Remington, we have the Express, Wingmaster, Tactical, the TAC 14, the DM models, and more...

Remington VS Mossberg:

Here are some differences between the two most dominant pump-action shotgun manufacturers:

- Safety: the Remington uses a traditional push-button safety located on the trigger guard. The Mossberg uses a slide safety located on the top, tang, part of the receiver.
- Slide Release: Both have the slide release on the left side of the receiver, with Remington it's forward of the trigger, and the Mossberg it's behind the trigger.
- Action: The internals of the pump-action are slightly different, the Remington uses a one-piece design combining the action-bar and pump. The Mossberg uses two pinned action bars anchored to a separate slide assembly.
- Material: Remington uses a steel receiver. Mossberg uses aluminum.
- Magazine Tubes: To extend the capacity of a Mossberg tube, you typically need a new barrel and matching tube. The Mossberg 590 however, you can just connect an extension

to the tube. With Remington, older models you could also screw on an extension. With newer models, there is a dimple that needs to be removed to increase the capacity.

- Shell Lifter: Mossberg has a shell lifter that is always in the up position, making it a little easier to load. Remington has a standard shell lifter that stays down and acts as a gate to the loading port.

In short, both the Remington 870 line and the Mossberg 500 line are proven performers with high pedigree. The Remington 870 models has always been considered the “gold standard” of pump-shotguns because it was the first to market and many police departments have traditionally always used this model pump gun. On the military side, the Mossberg 590A1 is the only pump shotgun that passed the United States Army’s Mil-Spec 3443E test—involving drops, falls, and over 3,000 rounds of full-powered buckshot—and was selected by the Army. It’s my understanding that Remington never even entered the competition for the Army, so that’s not a slight against the Remington. The bottom line is that either of these choices will serve you well if you are looking for a pump gun.

Now, again, both companies make many models, so you’ll have to choose which is right for you. You can start with something labeled “tactical” as you generally will get a shotgun that’s practically “out of the box” ready for home defense.

Also, depending on your height/reach—you may want to look at a youth model if it fits you better. To be honest, because I’m a short person (maybe 5 foot 5 inches on a tall day), if I had known the youth models were the same just... smaller... then I would have tried to get one of those.

Personally, I have a Remington 870 express tactical that my (wonderful) wife picked up for me on one of my birthdays. It was practically perfect from the day I received it, yet as you’ll see in this report, I’ve tried out some different things to make it more “custom” for me and my particular family defense needs.

In this report, we’ll use my Remington 870 express tactical as this represents a classic pump action 12-gauge configuration that is not hard to find, it’s not expensive, and it’s actually quite common.

Here’s what my shotgun looked like the first day I got it ...



As you can see—it already looks the part. Here’s a description of it that I grabbed off the internet...

... Features an 18-inch barrel, black finish, black synthetic stock, bead sights, cylinder bore, 3" chamber, black rubber recoil pad, 2-shot magazine extension, an overall length of 38.5 inches, an unloaded weight of 7.25 lbs, and a 6+1 round capacity.

SPECIFICATIONS:

- BRAND: Remington
- MODEL: 870 Express Tactical
- TYPE: Shotgun
- CALIBER: 12 Gauge
- FINISH: Black Matte
- ACTION: Pump Action
- STOCK: Black Synthetic
- CAPACITY: 6+1
- CHOKES: Cylinder Bore
- SIGHTS: Bead
- BARREL LENGTH: ... 18"
- OVERALL LENGTH: .. 38.5"
- WEIGHT: 7.5 lbs

If you already have a shotgun, then you can always use what you have. But if you’re going to buy one new, then this is a good “start” in my opinion. Great one actually. It’s already got an extended magazine tube (giving you 6 shells in the tube plus 1 in the chamber) and it’s matte “tactical” black, the polymer furniture and the 18” barrel make it just about perfect.

Again, if they offered this in a “youth” model, I would probably have not have had to modify the stock – because as you’ll see I’ve been experimenting to try to find the right stock to shorten the length of pull and fit my “smaller” frame/height.

With Mossberg, you want to choose one of the 500 series...

(If you are dead set on 20-gauge, then the Mossberg 500, in 20-gauge, the youth model, is a great choice. You, your wife, even your kids can all shoot a 20-gauge. James Yeager has a whole video on why this is a great choice. The model number appears to be the Mossberg 500 persuader #54300.)

Now, let's first talk about the importance of shotgun ammunition (and gauge) and then we'll move onto customizing the shotgun for the role of home defense.

The Importance Of The Right Ammunition ...

There is a huge myth that you should use "bird shot" for home defense.

This is a very dangerous piece of misinformation that even very experienced gun people often fall for. If you don't know, birdshot is shotgun shot that is very light and fine...

It is light and fine for the reason its name implies: you use it to hunt and kill birds, who are lightweight and relatively fragile. In fact, I'm told that birdshot is not even designed to kill the birds in the air, but the point is that one of the little tiny bb's will clip a fragile wing and the bird will drop from the air and the ground kills them (hopefully).

The logic of using birdshot for self-defense goes something like this: Double Aught Buck and slugs will punch right through a wall. This is extremely dangerous when defending yourself in your home. In order to reduce the risk to your family members, you should load your shotgun with bird shot. At close range, the shot will still poke a pretty big hole in the bad guy, but with distance, the bird shot will spread out and penetrate far less, which is safer for everybody.

This logic sounds right (and to an extent it is) but there are some serious problems with it.

First, at the ranges you're going to be shooting at another person in a realistic self-defense encounter, you still want penetration...

At the same time, you simply can't be sure that birdshot simply doesn't have penetrating power or stopping power sufficient to put a human being down and out for the count. You'll hit someone with it and hurt them, sure, but they'll still be able to keep fighting you unless you manage to blind them with the shot.

And then again, if you're close enough to hit your target with the load of birdshot, that shot will still penetrate drywall. If this sounds contradictory, it sort of is.

Just remember that birdshot isn't weak enough to be "safer" for use indoors, yet isn't powerful enough to be an effective and reliable stopper. Basically, it's the worst of both worlds. Avoid it

as a self-defense load unless your idea of self-defense is just scraping off someone's outer layer of skin.

The bottom line is that birdshot is extremely unreliable for stopping attackers and there are tons of news reports of people shot with birdshot and surviving. Remember when Dick Cheney accidentally shot his 78yr old buddy Harry Whittington in the face on a bird hunting trip with his shotgun and a week after getting shot in the face he was in public with just bruises all over his face?



This is why we don't use birdshot for self-defense. That leaves us with two choices:

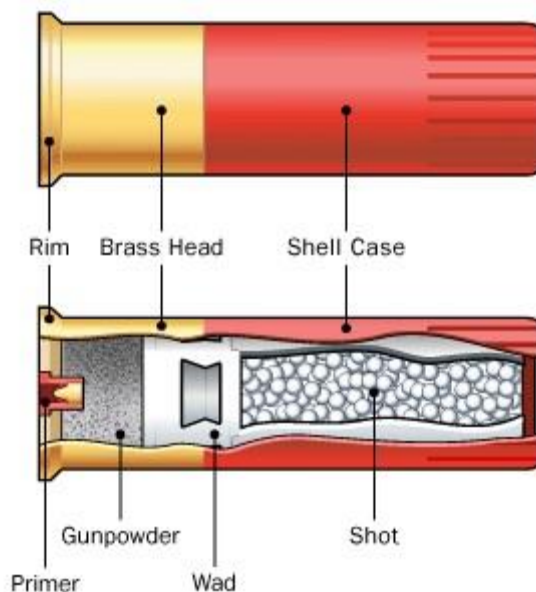
1. Buckshot
2. Slugs

First, let's define shotgun ammo and then get into a couple of examples of how to choose the right ammo for *your* situation (instead of giving you a "this is the only choice" answer)...

What Makes Shotgun Shells Different From Other Ammunition Cartridges?

While we don't need to go in-depth here, this will be important later, when we talk about recommended ammunition...

Shotgun shells have a shell case, with brass. Inside, the primer ignites the gunpowder and all the "shot" – the projectiles, either birdshot or buckshot – are in the wad and that's the part that goes out the barrel and at the target.



A Quick Explanation of Gauges...

The way that we talk about the size and power of shotgun shells is also different than pistols and rifles. Shotguns shells are measured by “gauge”—while we measure pistols and rifles in “caliber”.



.410, 20-gauge, 12-gauge

Pictured above, we have the most popular shotgun gauges from smallest to largest. From left to right, we have the .410, the 20-gauge and the 12-gauge on the far right. For “social work” aka self-defense the .410 is far too small. The 12-gauge on the right is the recommended gauge for self-defense as it’s the most popular shotgun platform and there are also the most popular self-defense ammo choices for it. As we talked about earlier, if you REALLY need to, you can step down to the 20-gauge pictured in the middle.

Why We Want A 12-Gauge Shotgun

The shotgun is useful, because it is a fight stopper...

When it comes to home defense, you want to take the attacker down and put him out with as few shots as possible (preferably the first shot). The attacker will be full of adrenalin, and might be hopped up on drugs, so it’s not enough to punch holes in him (though that will eventually stop him when his blood pressure drops from so many holes in the main cavity, that he drops)—it’s important you hit him hard as well.

To put the shotgun in perspective...

A .38 special (what cops used to carry when revolvers were the standard handgun) produces roughly 200-400 foot-pounds of force. The .38 is often cited as the “lowest” size cartridge you should go with handguns for personal defense...

The .223 rifle (basically the AR-15 or M-16 in 5.56 NATO) produces roughly 1,200 foot-pounds...

With the 12-gauge shotgun, you are hitting your attacker with 2,000 foot lbs or more. Even the smaller 20-gauge can hit between 1,200 to 2,000+ ft lbs. This is serious force. In short, a shotgun blast can take out anything that walks on land in North America.

For your reference:

- **410 shotgun muzzle energy 400-900 ft/lbs**
- **20-gauge muzzle energy 1200-2200 ft/lbs**
- **12-gauge muzzle energy 2000-3000 ft/lbs**

So, the first reason a shotgun is optimal for self-defense is it has extreme muzzle energy. Now, let's talk about the stuff that is actually flying into the attacker with thousands of pounds of force...

Why You Want Buckshot (But Not Just Any Buckshot)

Shotgun pellets are classified in two general categories:

- 1.) **Birdshot** (individual pellets typically less than .20 caliber in diameter)
- 2.) **Buckshot** (pellets vary in diameter from .24 caliber to .36 caliber)

We've already discussed that birdshot is not optimal for home defense. This is because the pellets are so small, they don't have the mass and density to penetrate deeply enough to reach and damage critical organs.

Let's talk about Buckshot specifically, since it's the optimal choice for home defense (from Wikipedia, emphasis mine)...

"Larger sizes of shot, large enough that they must be carefully packed into the shell rather than simply dumped or poured in, are called "buckshot" or just "buck" ...

Buckshot size is designated by actual diameter or (traditionally) by letter or number, with smaller numbers being larger shot.

... Sizes larger than "0" ("ought") are designated by multiple zeros. "00" ("doubleought") is the most commonly used size.

"... The most commonly produced buckshot shell is a 12 gauge, 00 buck shell that holds 9 pellets. **Buckshot is generally used for two purposes, self-defense and hunting medium to large game.**"

Here is a complete chart of the buckshot we'll be discussing:

Shot Number	Pellet Diameter (Inches)	Average Pellet Weight (Grains)
#4 Buck	.24	20.6
#3 Buck	.25	23.4
#2 Buck	.27	29.4
#1 Buck	.30	40.0
#0 Buck ("single-ought")	.32	48.3
#00 Buck ("double-ought")	.33	53.8

Again, the most important thing to remember here, is that the lower the number the bigger the pellets inside and the most common, commercially available size buckshot is 12-Gauge #00 ("double-ought") Buck which makes it our choice for home defense.

Why You Need Penetration...

Why do you have to worry about penetration? Isn't 2,000-foot pounds of force enough? It's a start but if you've decided to shoot someone you want them non-functional. To get nonfunctional you need to hit vital organs that the body needs to function...

Luckily there has been extensive research into this area by the FBI and others. The short answer is the shot you choose should meet the FBI's requirement of at least 12" of penetration in properly prepared ballistic gelatin/soft tissue. The official FBI protocol says that 12-18" of penetration in gelatin is ideal, because anything less than 12" and it's not going to hit vital organs and anything more than 18" and it will pass through the body and potentially into unintended hits.

Keep in mind this is a "gray area" and the 12" recommendation is considering all angles that a bullet could enter the body (from the ground at an angle, it might have to travel over 15" to get to the attacker's heart if it entered near the bottom of the abdomen, for example, or from the side it might have to punch through an arm bone to reach the vital organs in the chest cavity). This standard is supposed to be a "catch all" to determine "enough penetration".

Why You Do Not Need Penetration...

On the other hand, in a home, you may have family members or other “noncombatants” that are in just the other room behind the attacker. In most homes, walls are made of thin drywall—and any type of bullet that will penetrate more than 12” will penetrate clean through drywall.

The first answer to this is simple:

You absolutely MUST hit what you’re aiming at.

Point blank, period. This is the most important concept to understand when it comes to home defense and the idea of “overpenetration”. There is no magic bullet or shotgun shell that exists that will reliably stop an attacker, but also magically not be dangerous if it misses and penetrates the walls of a home.

I will say now, that I definitely do NOT recommend “slugs” for the home defense shotgun. The risk of over penetration (even if you hit the bad guy) is too great. The risk is even greater if you miss that the slug will continue through quite a few walls and hit something you don’t want it to hit.

However, with proper shotgun ammo choice, we CAN help mitigate overpenetration concerns.

So, What Is The “Ultimate” Home Defense Shotgun Shell?

In Tactical Brief #10 (October 1998) from the Firearms Tactical Website, they came to this conclusion:

“12 Gauge Shotshell Ammunition

For personal defense and law enforcement applications, the International Wound Ballistics Association advocates number 1 buckshot as being superior to all other buckshot sizes.¹

Number 1 buck is the smallest diameter shot that reliably and consistently penetrates more than 12 inches of standard ordnance gelatin when fired at typical shotgun engagement distances. A standard 2 ¾-inch 12 gauge shotshell contains 16 pellets of #1 buck. The total combined cross sectional area of the 16 pellets is 1.13 square inches. Compared to the total combined cross sectional area of the nine pellets in a standard #00 (double-aught) buck shotshell (0.77

¹ Cotey, Gus J.: "Number 1 Buckshot, the Number 1 Choice." Wound Ballistics Review, 2(4), 10-18, 1996

square inches), the # 1 buck shotshell has the capacity to produce over 30 percent more potentially effective wound trauma.

In all shotshell loads, number 1 buckshot produces more potentially effective wound trauma than either #00 or #000 buck. In addition, number 1 buck is less likely to over-penetrate and exit an attacker's body.

For home defense applications a standard velocity 2 ¾-inch #1 buck shotshell (16 pellet payload) from Federal, Remington or Winchester is your best choice. We feel the Federal Classic 2 ¾-inch #1 buck load (F127) is slightly better than the same loads offered by Remington and Winchester. The Federal shotshell uses *both* a plastic shot cup and granulated plastic shot buffer to minimize postignition pellet deformation, whereas the Remington and Winchester loads do not.

Second best choice is Winchester's 2 ¾-inch Magnum #1 buck shotshell, which is loaded with 20 pieces of copper-plated, buffered, hardened lead #1 buckshot. For those of you who are concerned about a tight shot pattern, this shotshell will probably give you the best patterning results in number 1 buck. This load may not be a good choice for those who are recoil sensitive.

Third choice is any standard or reduced recoil 2 ¾-inch #00 lead buckshot load from Winchester, Remington or Federal.

If you choose a reduced recoil load or any load containing hardened Magnum #00 buckshot you increase the risk of over-penetration because these innovations assist in maintaining pellet shape integrity. Round pellets have better sectional density for deeper penetration than deformed pellets.

Fourth choice is any 2 ¾-inch Magnum shotshell that is loaded with hardened, plated and buffered #4 buckshot. The Magnum cartridge has the lowest velocity, and the lower velocity will help to minimize pellet deformation on impact. The hardened buckshot and buffering granules also help to minimize pellet deformation too. These three innovations help to maximize pellet penetration. Number 4 hardened buckshot is a marginal performer. Some of the hardened buckshot will penetrate at least 12 inches deep and some will not.

20 Gauge Shotshell Ammunition Recommendations

We're unaware of any ammunition company who offers a 20 gauge shotshell that is loaded with #1 buckshot. The largest shot size commercially available that we know of is number 2 buck.

From a strict wound ballistics standpoint, we feel the Federal Classic 3-inch 20 gauge Magnum number 2 buckshot cartridge is the best choice. It contains 18 pellets of number 2 buckshot in a plastic shotcup with granulated plastic shot buffer.

However, the Federal Classic load might produce too much recoil for some people. Given this consideration, Remington's Premier Buckshot 2 ¾-inch 20 gauge number 3 buckshot cartridge is the next best choice. This load contains 20

pieces of nickel-plated, hardened lead shot that is buffered to reduce pellet deformation from post ignition acceleration and terminal impact. The Remington buckshot load will probably produce the tightest shot patterns in 20 gauge shotguns.

Third place is Winchester's 3-inch 20 gauge Magnum number 3 buckshot cartridge, which contains 24 pieces of buffered, copper-plated, hardened lead shot."

Again, this wound ballistics data was from 1998 and the commercial market has made the availability of #1 buckshot hard to find. So, the best option is 12-Gauge #00 Buck.

Why You Want a Tight Pattern Buckshot

We know we want 12-gauge #00 Buck, but that's not the whole story...

Remember, any projectile that can penetrate deep enough to reliably stop an attacker, will also over penetrate interior walls of homes... so we want a tight "pattern" with our buckshot.

This is shot accountability, we do NOT want a stray pellet from our shotgun blast to miss the attacker and go through a wall and kill a family member. There are police incidents that have made the news after just one or two stray pellets from shotguns have killed innocent people downrange.

Most buckshot will "spread" about 1" for every 1 yard leaving the barrel. That means at 10 yards, we could have 10" spread.

The first thing to remember is that every shotgun barrel is different, so once you select a potential choice of ammo, you need to go to the range and see how it "patterns" in your particular shotgun at common distances of 5yds, 10yds, and 15yds—all the distances you have in your home to see what it does.

The second thing to remember is that there are particular self-defense/duty loads for shotguns that have all the qualities we want—a tight pattern that makes us more accurate and reliably will stop the threat.

Remember, this is not just about shot accountability. If all 8 pellets from your buckshot hit in a tighter pattern on the threat—then you get increased lethality. The same way that you would want all 8 of your handgun rounds to hit in the same small "group" on the attacker.

The Recommended Buckshot For Home Defense

Federal's 8 pellet FliteControl load (LE133 00) is considered to be the premium personal defense load for the 12-gauge shotgun right now. It holds a good pattern, is easy to shoot, and as a general rule functions well in pretty much any shotgun. It is the gold standard.

For #00 buckshot in 2 3/4" shells, there are two versions available — an 8 pellet load, and a 9 pellet load (you can find both in 5 round boxes or 250 round cases). Some boxes are labeled as "Tactical Law Enforcement" and others say "Personal Defense", but the ammo inside is identical.

You DO want the 8 pellet load, not the 9 pellet load, as this increases the chances you will not have the 9th pellet "flyer" that can miss the target.

Again, you should pattern this load in your particular shotgun (because all shotgun barrels are different), but in most shotguns, this gives a reliably tight pattern. 10yds and in and you're getting practically a single hole and it still patterns/groups tightly at 15yds and even 20yds in some shotguns.

This is perfect for home defense.

If you have trouble locating it, or your shotgun barrel doesn't pattern it well, you can also look into the Hornady Versa-Tite brand, which essentially uses the same design as the FliteControl, that also patterns well in most shotguns. The Hornady Versa-Tite, American Gunner 8 pellet load is a good one to try.

The bottom line with shotgun ammo is we want a tight-patterning 12-Gauge #00 Buck load for our shotgun because it gives us high hit accountability, accuracy and will reliably stop the threat.

Let's move on to accessories...

Accessories You Actually Need ...

As I stated before, just a regular old hunting shotgun with some buckshot is going to be plenty effective for home defense.

If you're on a budget, that might be all you can do right now and that's understandable...

However, if you have the money there are SOME accessories that I think you "need" for a good home defense shotgun. Again, this report is about "optimizing" your shotgun for home defense—everyone knows that shooting a bad guy with a shotgun is going to be a pretty bad day for the bad guy.

That said there's no need to go overboard and have so many things hanging off your shotgun that you don't need (to say nothing of the hundreds if not thousands of dollars you can waste).

In fact, when it comes to shotguns, I almost feel like their affordability kind of makes me less likely to want to spend money on them. I mean, you can get a good home defense shotgun (even with all the "bells and whistles" such as an 18" barrel, synthetic stock, extended tube magazine) for around \$400. Definitely less than \$500 at the time of this writing.

So, while most guys won't think anything of spending \$400 on a scope for their AR-15 rifle that costs \$1,000 or more – I have a hard time spending money on an accessory for the shotgun that costs almost as much as the gun itself!

ALL that said, I think there are about 4 accessories everyone should consider for a home defense shotgun:

1. Proper Length of Pull (LOP) Stock
2. Light
3. Sling
4. Side Saddle

After we cover these "essentials" I'll talk about a few more options that you may or may not need.

Let's get started ...

***** Proper Stock (with the right LOP)**

You might find that the length of your shotgun doesn't quite seem "easy" to get up to your shoulder really quickly...

You also may notice that you're going to be using your shotgun for "close quarters combat" (CQB) which means a shorter length shotgun overall is the best bet.

That's why most "tactical" shotguns are sold with 18-20 inch barrels. It makes the whole shotgun smaller and easier to maneuver (and maybe a little lighter too than a longer barrel giving you an even easier time using it). Also, for some reason, rifle barrels need to be a minimum length of 16" or they're considered Short Barreled Rifles (SBR's) under the NFA laws and require a tax stamp and paperwork to own... and shotguns must be 18" in barrel length—so we want the minimum required by law of 18".

In contrast most hunting shotguns, like for deer or birds or clay target shooting, are made longer (for accuracy) and you don't have to worry about those types of things (you have more time to get the shotgun into the pocket of your shoulder, etc)

So, the first thing you can do is buy a “tactical” shotgun that has a barrel of 18 to 20 inches (or try to use your shotgun with a similar length barrel even if it's not labeled “Tactical”).

Then the next thing to look at is your stock and the length of pull (LOP).

See, your standard shotgun comes with about a 14” Length of Pull (unless you get a youth model). It's good for bird hunting, etc as I said because your feet need to be planted, your body needs to be braced. It's ok for pivoting from that stance, but moving around is not so stable.

Better is a more modern and “squared” up stance, almost like the stance a boxer would use. It's also similar to the “isosceles” shooting stance you would use with a handgun (weight distributed over both feet a little more).

So, in summary, for almost anyone—even really tall people—a shorter stock/LOP works best. The ideal LOP for the shotgun has been found to be 12-13”

To achieve this shorter length of pull you have a few options with your stocks ...

1. Choose an adjustable AR-style pistol grip stock: One of the most popular, economic and most adjustable options is an AR-15 style 6-point adjustable stock.

I actually bought this one to try out on my shotgun (mainly because it was cheap and readily available on amazon):



[Ultimate Arms Gear Remington 870 Adjustable Pistol Grip Stock.](#)

Obviously, you have to like shooting a pistol grip style weapon to get something like this. And you have to like the adjustability of the “AR-15 style” stock.

Blackhawk also makes a popular version and for the most part they’re inexpensive and lightweight. I’ve yet to test it out though.

2. Choose a more traditional style stock—only shorter: You have a few options here ...

1. **Order the shorter “youth” model stock for your shotgun** (Remington and Mossberg both make youth stocks) – or buy the youth model in the first place.
2. **Hogue makes a 12” LOP stock** (it has the “overrubber” molding like most Hogue products on the grip which some people like the feel of). [Click here to see it.](#)



Pictured above, the Hogue Youth Stock

3. **Magpul makes a cross between a pistol grip and a traditional stock that a lot of people like**—and it has a very adjustable length of pull. You remove the spacers on the rear to achieve a shorter LOP and the shortest size is just about perfect at 12.5” LOP. [Click here to see it](#) ...



Pictured above, the Magpul adjustable LOP shotgun stock.

4. **You could just cut off an inch or two from the stock that's on your current shotgun to customize it to your optimal length-of-pull.** Make sure to measure and account for the size of the rubber butt pad that is on most shotguns.

Here's how I did mine, the Remington 870 I showed you earlier...

First, here's the way the stock looked from the factory:



It's pretty long as you can see there. When you factor in the recoil pad on the butt of it you see that piece makes it even longer.

I think if you didn't care about your shoulder, you could pop off the recoil pad there and try it out to see if you liked it at that length (about an inch to inch and a half shorter pull) to see the difference a shorter stock makes. You could at least dry fire and shoulder your shotgun like that to see the difference that shortening the length of pull will make – believe me you'll like it if your recoil pad is anything near the thickness that mine is.

Anyways, when you take the pad off, you'll see it has a “ledge” or recessed area that fits inside the stock:



That's because the inside of the stock has a recessed area where it fits in there, as you can see in this picture here (it's like a little lip on the inside):



Here's a close up so you can see how that piece looks. The point I'm trying to make is you'll have to cut your stock AND the butt pad so they fit back together the right way, when you screw it back on (it's just two wood screws right there – Phillips head on the Remington 870):



Anyways, so I took the recoil pad off and then measured a full inch from the end of the stock at the top, bottom and middle and made some marks with a pencil...



Then I grabbed some tape (should of been a brighter color like blue painters tape, but the electrical tape was all I had laying around) and taped the marks so I had a little bit of a “guide” to help me when I started cutting:



Then I grabbed the hacksaw and started cutting:



If I had more professional tools, like a vice this would of probably been straighter but it was simple to cut. And here's how much I took off the stock ...



Plus, here is the recoil pad shown next to it ...



And the final step where I cut that "lip" off the butt pad so it would fit together here:



And the final product is here in this comparison shot ...

It may be hard to tell the difference in length from a picture by itself, but if you look at the space between the end of the butt pad and the sling mount on the backend (bottom right part of the stock)—you can see it was quite a good amount of distance was eliminated—compare the distance above to the distance below:



BEFORE:



AFTER:

Anyways, depending on the shotgun you have, your mileage may vary but just know that it's certainly possible to take off as much length from a stock as you need with just hand tools and you can pretty much put it all back together afterward.

So, if you're on a budget, then simply cutting your stock to the correct length is a great option for sure.

*** Side Saddle

It's debatable whether you "need" this because it depends on your shotgun and how many shells you think you're going to want.

As for myself, I got one for these reasons:

- My shotgun holds 6 in the tube. After I get done shooting someone/something I would want to top it back off ...
- There's a 50% chance during any type of criminal attack that it will be more than one criminal, so more ammo is better...
- Nobody was ever unhappy they brought too much ammo to a gun fight...
- Side Saddles are cheap...
- It will make practicing with my shotgun more enjoyable, allowing me to shoot more rounds with more "Tactical" practice so I can become more proficient with the shotgun...
- I have the option to put a slug round or other "specialty" round in the side saddle "just in case" I ever need it (my current situation does not call for this, but good to know you could put a couple rounds of slug in your side saddle in case—I don't know—something crazy happens like a criminal breaks in with level 5 body armor or he wants to get in a Hollywood style gun fight with you (highly unlikely) and hides behind a refrigerator—you could just shoot through it.)
- They are cheap so why not?

And let's face it they look cool (I'm not ashamed to admit it).

The first AR-15 adjustable stock that I tried out (and did not like) came with a plastic side saddle and screws to put it in. I didn't want to do that. I also looked at other side saddles and reviews online, here's what I discovered:

- The plastic ones often break under hard use ...
- The metal ones are tougher but often require you to replace the bolts already in your receiver with the side saddle ones... and that can be an iffy choice (those are key bolts)

I basically found out that the Velcro attached side saddles are the best bet because:

1. They don't break/crack because they're made out of nylon/cloth
2. The right ones are TOUGH
3. They are easy to install with Velcro
4. They allow you to quickly switch out full side saddles with empty ones
5. If you had a vest or other "Tactical" equipment with Velcro you can easily carry around multiple side saddles that you just switch out instead of replacing the shells one by one...
6. They hold up under hard use.

The brand I chose for my shotgun was from OriginalSOEGear.com. The side saddles are overbuilt so they won't sag with the weight of the shells or anything compared to other not plastic or metal brands. They have a lifetime warranty too, not that I think you'd ever need it with this product. These days, there are a lot of reputable brands making these Velcro back side saddles...

Here's how you install the Velcro backed type Side Saddle:

First, you need to clean the side of your shotgun to get any grease or dirt off, then you will need to get some industrial strength Velcro Brand Velcro, and you want to get your side saddle shotgun cards ready:



You want the two-inch-wide Velcro by the way, here's a pic of mine:



So, then I basically just stuck one of the shotgun cards on the Velcro and kind of matched it up where I thought it should go on the receiver of the shotgun. As I do with most these things – I eyeballed where I should cut the Velcro:



After I cut it, I cut a little off the top right-hand corner just so it followed the curved line of the receiver a little more, again I eyeballed it then stuck it to the receiver and flattened it down multiple times to make sure it adhered well.



And then I just left it alone. The Velcro instructions say that it takes 24 hours for it to take full effect so I didn't put any of the shotgun cards on for 24 hours (because then I would be tempted to rip them off I know)

And that's it. I keep the one with buckshot on the receiver, plus the 6 shells in the shotgun tube gives me 12 total and that other shotgun card sits beside the shotgun where I store it ready for action if I need to grab it too.

*** Light

Ok so let me start by busting a relatively common myth again. My dad always told me he didn't think lights on guns made any sense for home defense, because then you give away your position and someone knows where to shoot at when it's dark.

I agreed with that because it made sense (and it was my Dad's advice after all) but now I've changed my tune and I think that if you're outfitting a gun primarily for home defense you should put a light on it.

Yes, you will give away your position. Too bad. You're the good guy—that's a chance you have to take.

And here's why I don't think it matters on the scale of "pros and cons":

CONS:

You give away your position. Here's the thing, I've yet to read a police report or news story where the bad guy "won" because a home defender gave away his position and got shot because of it.

PROS:

If it's night you will see your target before shooting it. This is a basic gun safety rule. Know your target. It is VERY easy to find a news story about a father that killed either his children or wife because he shot what he thought was an intruder in the dark. You need to see what you're shooting at, period. Especially if you have kids, wife or other family in the house.

Even if you don't and you live alone, I read another news story where a guy shot a neighbor's kid who was drunk and crawled in the wrong bedroom window because his friends thought it was funny to drop him off at the neighbor's house and let him try to stumble and sneak his way in through (what he thought was) his own bedroom window.

In short, the pro of seeing your target outweighs the negatives in my opinion.

Modern gun lights are blinding. They typically START at 200 lumens. When I bought my shotgun light (before I put it on) I shined it in my dad's eyes – he did what everyone does when a stupid bright light in their eyes—he turned away immediately and said "ahhhh".

Right?

Weapon mounted lights these days are WAY more powerful than 200 lumens, so this is a good thing to have.

Options for Shotgun Lights:

SUREFIRE: Buy the surefire brand forend light and be done with it. This is the top of the line in shotgun lights. I was hesitant because of the price but I'm so glad I picked it up.



Pictured above: Surefire Light.

Obviously, it's stupid easy to work with, your pumping hand on the shotgun can hit the light and you can choose to just turn it on briefly or only when you're holding the pressure switch or you can choose to switch it to "on" mode so it stays on the whole time without holding a switch. The ONLY drawback to this I see is the price. I have the old one (pictured above and [linked here](#)) but you can get there new model too ([link here](#)).



Pictured above: Streamlight light.

STREAMLIGHT: Streamlight makes a less expensive style shotgun mounted light that has good reviews too from people I know and respect (though I don't have any personal experience with it). You can find it [here](#) on Amazon.

Mounts and lights: you can find various "screw on" mounts for regular tactical lights that hold these lights.

Here's the type you can get on Amazon that work in a "clamp" manner for the forend, you put them where you can thumb the light on if you're left or right-handed.



Tactical Light Mount

Forend attachments work with the rail system on the [Magpul MOE shotgun forend](#) too. The little “holes” there are compatible with MOE rails, mounts and other accessories you can attach to a firearm:



Ok, let's talk about ...

***** Sling ...**

I recommend having a sling for your shotgun too.

As they say “a sling is to a long gun as a holster is to a pistol”. If you take ANY training course, they will require a sling. You have some options like all long guns:

- 1 point
- 2 point
- 3 point

First, I don’t recommend a 3-point for any long gun. They’re just too complicated. That leaves us with the 1 point or 2-point sling when it comes to the Pump Shotgun. I already run a 2-point sling on my rifle, so for this project, I went with a 1-point sling for the shotgun.

Why? It’s a ***pump*** shotgun. You have to pump it, so the common excuse many guys have for not having a sling on their shotgun is excused—you won’t get caught up in a single point sling.

To run a single point sling, you’ll need to attach it.

I have tried out multiple single point slings in the last few weeks and I am most impressed and can fully recommend the ***SOE Gear 1 point Bungee Sling***. It’s tough enough to hold the weight of the shotgun and you don’t even need a mount to put it on if you want to go ahead and wrap the nylon wrap around your stock.

I went ahead and got the [GG&G Remington 870 Sling Mount](#) with the heavy duty swivel. as you can see in most of the pictures and this one:





This bungee sling is super adjustable and was even short enough to work with my height (I'm 5' 5" on a tall day). If you are looking for a *TOUGH* sling the SOE Gear slings are excellent and you won't be disappointed.

The traditional 2-point sling is also an excellent choice, just keep in mind, you'll also need a way to attach it to the end of your barrel near the muzzle as well. Some shotguns have these attachment points, and sometimes you'll need to purchase one.

***** Optional Upgrades You Might Need.**

Depending on how your shotgun is setup or how you prefer to run it, you might need some other accessories that I would say are "optional" ...

Tube extension: If you have a standard capacity shotgun, not "tactical" it might only hold 2-4 shells, you'll have to get a shotgun tube extension.

Sights or optics: You can go "low tech" and do whatever type of sight you like – aftermarket style like a XS Big Dot sight or a blade sight ... or a ghost ring site ... or you can even mount a "red dot" type site on the top of the receiver.

I actually have no sights right now on mine. I'm just using the factory sights.

In the future, if I have some extra money, I'll probably mount a small, aimpoint style, red dot type sight on it.

Now, let's get to the part of the manual that reminds you of the most important thing.

Why You Need To Practice With Your Shotgun for Home Defense...

It's fun buying cool guns and gear. I get it. But you need to practice with your shotgun too.

You've seen a lot of myths busted in this report. One of those is that you don't have to aim that the shotgun will magically make you a marksman and you'll always hit your target.

I hope by now you understand that isn't true and that you need to practice.

Some other skills you should practice ...

- Shooting rapidly
- Shooting and seeing your patterns at different distances
- Doing "ready up" drills from the low ready stance
- Reloading efficiently
- Reloading from the side saddle
- Reloading while moving to cover/just reloading while moving
- Transitioning from the shotgun to the handgun

Those are just some basics. You should get some live training, like taking the Patriot Training Center 2-Day Patriot Shotgun Course, and then practice. You can practice dry fire extensively with the shotgun just like the handgun.

I recommend picking up some dry fire shotgun shells from Amazon.com. I like [this brand](#):



[B's Dry Fire Snap Caps \(TM\) - Dummy 12 & 20 Gauge Training Rounds \(9 Pack\)](#)

That way you can SAFELY practice reloads, manipulations, and drills with your shotgun. It will protect the internal components, but give you shotgun shells that weigh the same as real shells and make it easy to practice everything.

WARNING: Please get a color of these dummy rounds that is NOT the same color as the primary shotgun shells you use in your gun. You do NOT want to confuse your practice “dummy” rounds with live ammo. You should also MARK them somehow so it is clear which rounds are your dummy rounds. Remember the fundamental rules of dry fire practice: NO live ammunition is in the same room. Triple check your gun for unloaded and safe and the ammunition is really dummy ammunition. Keep the gun pointed in a safe direction and never at anything you’re not willing to destroy.

Finally ...

It’s beyond the scope of this report but you want to have a good Home Defense plan setup and know exactly how your shotgun that you setup – for home defense – plays into that plan.

Who is gonna go grab it? Who is gonna get the kids? Where are you gonna post up or get into position? Etc, etc ...

Closing Thoughts ...

In this short report, we’ve covered a LOT of ground.

I hope I’ve given you some important points to think of. As you can see – when it comes to using the Home Defense Shotgun – it’s not as easy as some bone-head politician like Joe Biden makes it seem “Get a shotgun! Get a shotgun!”

It’s not a magical weapon that vanquishes all attackers. But it IS a unique weapon platform that can meet many of your home defense needs if you know what it can do, its limitations, and how to customize it to fit your own personal home defense plan.

My prayer is that I’ve helped you do all those things, and hopefully with my reviews, you’ve saved some money too. As always, thank you for reading this report.

For Our Freedoms,

Caleb Lee