

# Choosing Pocket Carry

A “non-Politically Correct” opinionated guide to pocket carry based on personal experience. By Phillip L. Smith

Pocket carry is probably the stealthy-est and most comfortable concealment carry available. Unlike belt holsters, shoulder holsters, and inside the waistband holsters, the pocket holster allows you to dress in normal fashion without the need for an outer garment to conceal the hand gun. You can pocket carry with a suit, jeans, or even shorts, all without having to change your carry method, gun size, or holster type. Many see pocket carry as the perfect carry method, and it is, with a couple of considerations.

**Choose a “Pocket Gun”** First, and foremost, you must choose a ‘pocket gun’. That means a small a lightweight handgun. Don’t even consider trying to carry any handgun larger than a Baby Glock because you will just be kidding yourself. Of course, you are free to carry any handgun you wish, but pockets are no place for handguns over 30 oz.(including ammo), or barrels longer than 3". Some handguns that are sized for pocket carry are: Baby Glock 26/27, SIG 230/232, Bersa Thunder 380, Walther PPK, KelTec P3AT,

Beretta Tomcat, NAA Guardian, and almost all the J-Frame revolvers with 2"-3" barrels. This is not a comprehensive list of pocket handguns; it is a comparative list to show you the practical pocket carry handguns. If the handgun you carry fits into the size examples and does not weigh over 30 oz. fully loaded, You will probably be comfortable carrying it in the pocket for extended times. My experienced recommendation for those of you who have larger, heavier, or longer handguns is to

purchase a proper size pocket gun, or choose another style of carry since you will most likely not be comfortable, or content, with pocket carry. This is so important that I want to say it again in a different way: Pocket carry is for pocket guns. Pocket guns are small and lightweight. You cannot make your carry gun into a pocket gun if it is too large or heavy. Trying to carry a 4" or 5" handgun weighing 40 oz. is completely silly even for those who wear belts along with suspenders. Save your big handguns for range work or use a belt holster.

**Grip Length** Grip length is as important as barrel length when selecting a handgun for pocket carry. Excessive grip length will hinder your draw and frustrate the installation of the handgun in the pocket. The maximum comfortable grip length is around 5" from top of slide to the farthest tip of the magazine. Comfortable grip length can also be longer than 5" depending upon the width of your pockets and the pocket opening. For jeans it’s about 5" max. – for



BDU’s you can go up to 6" depending on the style of the pocket. “Tippers” say they can get a longer grip in standard pockets by tipping the handgun so the barrel is in the back corner of the pocket and the slide rests on the front side of the pocket. “Tippers” are silly – don’t listen to them.

**Caliber and Stopping Power** As guns get smaller, so does the ammo, and so does the stopping power. Stopping power is the ability of the ammo to deliver a One-Shot stop to someone trying to hurt you. The ability of ammo to deliver a One-Shot stop depends on the type of hollow-point bullet, the speed of the bullet, and the point of aim. The stopping power of ammo is brand, bullet and powder specific so you

cannot make a blanket statement that a specific caliber is the best at One-Shot stops. Consult Marshall & Sinows “Stopping Power” for all the delicious details. My opinion on Caliber and Stopping power goes like this: Make 9mm the FLOOR of your caliber selection since this is the caliber where the specific ammo jumps to over 90% stopping power (that is, 90 out of 100 times that brand ammo actually resulted in a complete stop of the attacker with only one shot fired). If not, then choose .32 cal. Over .380 and .38. Buy the fastest ammo you can find because that is where the largest group of One-Shot stops reside. A .22 is better than no gun at all, well, just barely. We will never know because Marshall and Sanow didn’t compile stats on using sticks or two-by-fours. I don’t want to get into all the different ammo brands that were tops at One-Shot stops, but I will tell you that specific brands of .357, 9mm, .40 S&W and .45ACP were all very close winners and you can get the brand names from the book. The point I’m trying to make is to carry a substantial self-defense caliber, in a premium handgun loaded with premium (that means expensive) carry ammo that goes bang every time you pull the trigger with no hiccups, and no excuses. Problems result when you “like” a certain gun or caliber without regard for research or the aide of combat or tactical training. Like the person who told me she carries a .22 and it is just as deadly as any other gun because if attacked, she was going to shoot the perp in the eye. My God, you don’t even have time to aim a gun when suddenly attacked that’s why they teach point-shooting at the center mass in tactical schools.

**Pocket Depth** Remember when your CCW Instructor told you that you would probably be changing your style of dress when you started carrying your concealed handgun? Well, it’s true, but to a much lesser extent with pocket carry. When you pocket carry the emphasis is on the “pocket” and whether or not your handgun fits in the pocket and is concealed by the pocket. Also, the pocket and pants cannot be so tight that the handgun outline shows on the outside (called printing). Jeans do well for pocket carry and usually their pockets are large enough for the pocket size handgun. There are online stores that sell jeans with extra large pockets – try the “5 pocket” jeans at [www.duluthtrading.com](http://www.duluthtrading.com). When riding in the pocket, the



handguns grip should not be able to be seen, so if it is close to the top of the pocket then you need to get your pockets lengthened or get new pants with appropriate pocket depth. If the handgun tips over then your pockets are probably too wide, which is easier to fix than a short pocket. Don't use a stapler to snug-up the width on a pocket. I can tell you from experience that wives are not too happy about this solution.

**Types of Pocket Holsters** What's the best type of pocket holster? Leather with a closed bottom – there, that was easy! But, here is why I choose the leather with a closed bottom. Leather holds it's shape long after the cloth-type or nylon holsters have wrinkled-up and collapsed. Leather tends to stay in the pocket better while drawing the handgun. Leather tends to distribute the outline of the handgun over a larger area to avoid printing. A well broken-in leather holster draws nice and smooth, with little drag or movement.

A closed-bottom is a must with pocket carry. If the bottom of the holster is open then two conditions result: Oil from the gun migrates to the bottom of the pocket where the gun barrel is touching the pocket material, and, the barrel gets packed with pocket fuzz (and I mean packed!). A well designed pocket holster will have the bottom sewn shut so only leather rides against the bottom of the pocket. The majority of pocket holsters have open bottom's, probably because they are trying to gain the 1/4" of height required to run a seam along the bottom of the holster. Some very well made, well known, and expensive leather pocket holsters have open bottoms and don't quite match up to my criteria for a well designed pocket holster. Below are some photos of open bottom pocket holsters so you will know exactly what to look-out for. I'll keep the brand names to myself, but I will tell you about the perfect leather pocket holster a little later.



What about nylon, isn't that a good pocket holster? Nylon and suede type leather or orthopedic suede are perfect for the person looking for cheap, or for those who didn't read this article and don't know any better. Problem is, for another \$9-\$10 they could purchase one of the best leather, closed-bottom pocket holster on the market. There are closed-bottom nylon pocket holsters available from KNJ Manufacturing for those who want to try-out pocket carry and want to keep their barrel and pocket clean. If choosing nylon, I would definitely choose the KNJ over other open-bottom nylon pocket holsters.



**Ross Pocket Guard** In my humble opinion, the Ross Leather Pocket Guard pocket holster is the best holster and best value for those deciding on pocket carry. It provides all three of the requirements of a well made holster. It covers the trigger guard, it protects the handgun from bumps and falls, and it holds the handgun in a ready position.

As an added bonus, the bottom is closed just like a well made pocket holster should be designed. Also, notice the "bump-out" under the pistol grip. This helps keep the holster in the pocket while you draw the handgun. Sight rails (space for sights to slide through) are formed naturally on the seam closest to the slide top. The Ross Pocket Guard is a good, semi-rigid support for my handgun and since it's made from real leather, it won't collapse after repeated use. The Ross Pocket Guard is sewn with the smooth side in and the rough side out. This method accomplishes two objectives: The smooth side in allows for a smooth, fast draw; and the rough side out helps catch the holster in the pocket so it stays in the pocket after the draw. Now you know why I say the Ross Pocket Guard is the perfect pocket holster.

**Drawing From a Pocket Holster** All pocket holsters require that the handgun be pulled to the rear while drawing the handgun. This rearward motion helps catch the holster on the pocket so the holster stays in the pocket and doesn't remain attached to the handgun while you are attempting to aim or fire your handgun. Drawing your handgun shouldn't be funny, this is not the time for you or the perp to be laughing.

Practice a little with the pocket holster to break it in; all leather holster must be broken in. Usually this is done by putting the handgun in and out of the holster many, many times. A good time to do this is while watching some mindless program on TV. Just be sure the gun is unloaded and separated from the ammo. Also, I wouldn't do this if you've got company over, since it might be the last time they stop over to see you.

I still believe that pocket carry is the best carry method, especially for men (no offense ladies, your hips and clothes are a much different shape than a man's). Pocket carry is one of the most comfortable types of conceal carry and when a carry method is comfortable, you tend to carry longer and more often. Pocket carry is also very stealthy. People just don't look at pockets, and, you won't have to wear an outer garment to conceal your handgun. Get a pocket holster that meets the common sense criteria for pocket carry. And be sure to check out the Ross Pocket Guard, I'm sure you will like what you see.

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