

## ...Gripping the Combat Handgun...Gripping the Combat Handgun...Gripping the Comb

port hand flat against the side of the grip, allowing more lateral control of the gun with more consistent sight tracking.

The heart of the straight-thumbs technique is rolling the support hand wrist forward. This springloads the wrist in the “down” position and also allows the hand to get up higher on the gun for more leverage to hold down muzzle flip. Combine that with a side-to-side “pinching” action of the support hand where you make a C-clamp placing equal amounts of pressure on both sides of the grip, and it’s like the gun sits in a little machine rest allowing it to do nothing other than track consistently up and then back to the same spot.

Many people who don’t really understand the straight-thumbs technique, who aren’t aware of the importance of the rolled wrist and side-to-side pinch, think the important thing is pointing the thumbs forward. Thus they point both thumbs at the target but leave the wrist straight. Not only does this give very poor recoil control (low grip, no springload effect), it causes the support hand thumb to bang off many auto pistols’ slide stop levers, locking the action open with rounds still in the magazine. These worthies assessment when that happens: “Boy, this straight-thumbs grip sucks!” No, it doesn’t suck; you’re just really bad at executing it.

I am not saying there’s one “perfect” grip that everyone should mindlessly adopt so we all look like little clones. I’m saying, if you want to swiftly achieve a decent level of performance, to not waste immense amounts of time reinventing the wheel, and instead adopt the grip technique used by the

best shooters in the world. That doesn’t mean you should be afraid to tweak the basic technique. There are very, very good shooters riding their support and/or master hand thumbs either both against or totally off the side of the gun. Some folks point both thumbs straight at the target, some curl the support hand thumb down, and some use a high-thumbs technique pointing both thumbs upward at an angle.

I’m a recent convert to that last technique. After years of pointing both thumbs at the target and touching the side of the gun, I began pointing both thumbs up and off the gun because that improved both my index and sight tracking. That’s just what works best for me, not necessarily what will work best for you. But every successful iteration of this basic grip – whatever the shooter winds up doing with his or her thumbs – incorporates the rolled wrist and side-to-side “C-clamp.”

Many people, especially those who’ve been taught how to shoot by someone they love, or by an instructor they find particularly impressive, tend to fixate on the way they’ve been taught as being “right”; anything else is, by definition, “wrong.” I hope I don’t come across that way, myself. If you ever want to become a truly great shooter, you have to be willing to experiment, to tweak the techniques you’ve learned into what works best for you. That’s what I suggest you do with your grip. Take this basic, well-thought-out technique, and then experiment with it until you find the iteration that works best for you. Make an established approach uniquely your own rather than follow “the rules” simply for the sake of following rules.

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*Side-to-side.* The hand comes in from the side, the first gun/hand contact takes place when the fingers slide into place on the frontstrap, then the thumb wraps over the backstrap and into place before the gun is drawn. An advantage to this technique is that it doesn’t matter whether you start hands at sides below the gun, or hands up in the surrender position, the way you approach the gun is always the same.

*The hook.* I didn’t create this technique, but I’ve never heard even the people teaching it actually have a name for it, so I had to come up with one myself. As with the up-and-down technique, the hand comes up and over the gun, however first hand/gun contact is not with the web of the hand on the grip tang/backstrap, rather it’s the fingertips on the frontstrap. You don’t actually put your hand entirely on the gun in the holster; you hook the fingertips around the frontstrap with an inch or so gap between the web of the hand and the backstrap. Then, without lowering your hand, you close it, and when you do that the gun just pops right out of the holster. This completely does away with the tendency to ride the hand on the gun in the holster and, if you can synchronize the hand close/gun pop with your arm movement drawing the gun and orienting

it toward the target, basically as soon as your fingertips lightly touch the gun, in one movement you can have it out and on target.

As the old saying goes, “There are many A ways, there are very few THE ways.” The hook is not necessarily THE way to make first-hand contact with the gun in the holster. It’s just the best way I’ve yet found to solve the problem, myself.

**Right: Duane “hooking” his Glock from the holster.**



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