

Safe and Secure

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Firearm education and training

They're prominently featured in movies, media, and television shows. Our police and military wear them as standard issue. They're divisive and pervasive. They're firearms, and like them or not, hardly a day goes by that people don't see or mention them. Because they're so present in our culture, it's easy to believe we've absorbed all there is to know about guns, even without formal training. But we'd be wrong, according to Dan Hulum, NRA firearm and license-to-carry instructor at Texan Defender.

"People may think there isn't anything to know about guns, but nothing's further from the truth," Dan says. "If you're going to handle guns at all, you need to learn gun safety and how your gun works."

Dan started Texan Defender to fill a need in the community and to keep busy after retirement. Class popularity soon turned his work schedule from part-time to full-time. In the decade since, more than 8,000 people in Georgetown and the surrounding areas have earned their license to carry thanks to Texan Defender.

Some class attendees were once victims, but these are not the majority of students. "It's mostly proactive people that come to class," Dan says. "They watch the news and see what can happen. The opportunity's there to arm and protect themselves. If attacked, many would have no chance without a gun."



But handling a weapon comes with responsibility. Human error and absentmindedness can lead to costly mistakes. As someone with more than 50 years of firearm experience, Dan firmly believes education and training are keys to preventing gun casualties and tragedies.

“More than 80% of gun incidents happen because people think they have an unloaded gun,” Dan advises. “They don’t know how to clear the gun before they start handling it. And keeping your gun away from your children is imperative. We’ve all read stories of children getting shot because their parents didn’t lock up their guns.”

While curious little hands shouldn’t touch a gun, the gun owner should, and regularly. Dan recommends that for every shot fired on the range, the gun owner dry fires (that is, shoots without bullets in the gun) ten shots at home.

“Go as slowly as necessary. Speed comes with repetition,” Dan says. “We teach all of this in our classes. When done correctly, practicing the sequence will teach you to shoot properly. Do things repeatedly the correct way, so that if it ever comes down to it, muscle memory takes over and you’re able to do what you need to.”

In the throes of an emergency is not the time to miss a target or have a gun malfunction. Shooting practice remedies the first problem, and keeping the gun clean solves the second. Dan recommends a thorough gun cleaning after firing between 100 and 150 rounds. “Dirty guns don’t work properly,” Dan presses. “A malfunctioning gun on the range—that’s an aggravation. But when somebody’s trying to kill you, it means you’re dead.”



Senior citizens and the disabled are the populations most vulnerable to attack. A lack of size, strength, or mobility works against them in a fight, but carrying a gun helps even the odds. Dan says there's usually no reason seniors and people with disabilities shouldn't learn to legally carry a gun and defend themselves. The key word is "defend." Dan emphatically advises his students to do anything and everything to avoid shooting someone and teaches them how to avoid such situations. He advises that people avoid engaging a criminal unless directly threatened. Instead, people should contact the police. Dan also stresses that guns aren't meant to resolve civil disputes.

Knowing when, where, and how to use a firearm is paramount for the safety of the handler and those he or she wants to protect. It's pointless to own a gun without understanding how to operate it, maintain it, and keep it out of others' hands. Those without such education may inadvertently cause gun incidents.

Firearms are dangerous, but when used responsibly, they serve a valuable purpose: to protect and defend. So while the hot-button issue of gun ownership isn't going away anytime soon, there's a simple solution to safety concerns. Gun owners must get educated on legal carry and

gun safety. "Don't just go buy a gun and think, 'I'm safe now,'" Dan says. "There's no guarantee you'll win any altercation you get in. It just gives you a chance. Most people that take these classes will never need to use a gun, and that's great. That's my prayer for everybody."

Texan Defender provides instruction on how to properly use firearms and for those wanting a license to carry. To register for a class or learn more about Texan Defender's services, visit texandefender.com.