

Self Defense Weapons: Worth Their Weight...?

Discover the pros and cons of carrying Self Defense Weapons for your protection. I highlight the best tools to give yourself a fighting chance in a violent attack. You'll learn about my personal experience of carrying weapons for the last 10 years (*as of 2015*), as I cut through the fluff and only leave behind the useful facts.

Mini-legal disclaimer notice: Before you read and follow the advice in this article, I need to mention the law. Even though I am writing these words from South Africa, this website is read by people from a number of different countries around the world.

Every country has its own laws about carrying and even owning weapons for the purpose of self defense. It's up to each of you to find out what your country allows and then follow those rules. The advice and opinions on this site are not to be regarded as legal advice.

I started off by carrying a simple "pocket stick" (also called a Kubotan) that I carved out of a small wooden dowel (See *what pocket sticks look like* [here](#)). It was about 2 cm in diameter (just under an inch) and had small loop of string attached to it so that I could slip my fingers through. This helps to prevent the weapon from slipping out of your grip if you happen to open your hand.

I then moved on to a folding knife (a Spyderco Delica), which I carried for several years in the right hand side, front pocket of my pants. Finally, I have settled on 1 folding knife (a Benchmade Griptilian), 1 fixed blade knife (a Cold Steel Safekeeper II) and a can of pepper spray (a South African brand called SWAT).

I carry these tools every day when I leave the house in addition to my [awareness](#), which is always with me! I have gone through the process of:

- Getting used to the idea of carrying a self defense weapon
- Deciding to carry one
- Choosing and buying a weapon to carry
- Actually figuring out how and where (on my body) to carry it every day

Since I have already done "the work", I have some very specific advice to offer. If you are new to the idea of carrying self defense weapons, there are so many little details involved that people don't always talk about

I hope to give you as much useful information as I can to help you along this journey. By learning from the mistakes I have made (and the things I have done right), you will be able to get started MUCH more easily. Let me quickly give you the Pros and Cons of carrying self defense weapons, as I see them.

PROS - Weapons allow you to:

- Survive the fight against a much larger, stronger attacker
- Fight off more than one attacker (criminals usually operate in groups)
- Win, even if you are injured, sick, old or weak

- Regain the advantage if you are caught off guard

CONS - Weapons may:

- Be uncomfortable or inconvenient to carry with you every day
- Land you in trouble with the law (if you are not following your country's laws)
- Not be approved of by your spouse or mother in law (!)
- Not be something you are actually ready to USE against another human being

What To Carry?

In my opinion, there are only a few kinds of self defense weapons that are worth carrying. The reason I say that is because many "weapons" out there are not really going to do enough damage to an attacker to have any hope of stopping him. If you are going to go to the trouble of carrying a weapon, you really should choose something that will save your life if you ever need it.

If you choose to carry some "gentle" weapon because you don't want to "hurt" the bad man, you are probably not ready to carry a weapon yet. You **HAVE** to be mentally ready to use your weapon against another living, breathing human being **BEFORE** you make the decision to carry it.

If you aren't, you would be better served by making sure your awareness is top notch. You should be doing that anyway, but without a weapon, it will be your biggest "tool" in protecting yourself. If you feel you **ARE** ready and willing to carry and use a weapon (if need be), you will need to pick one (or several) based on what:

- Is legal in your country
- Will be easy to carry and conceal (hide under your clothing)
- Will be the most effective
- You can afford
- You will be prepared to actually use against a criminal

The main kinds of self defense weapons that are worth your while to carry (based on their effectiveness) are:

- Projectile weapons (Handguns)
- Bladed weapons (Knives)
- Impact weapons (telescopic baton, pocket stick / kubotan etc)
- Spray type weapons (Pepper spray)

There are plenty of other kinds of weapons out there, but most of them are a waste of time. Why? Other self defense weapons may be:

- Ineffective (they won't hurt a bad guy enough to stop him)
- Too heavy to carry
- Too difficult to use
- Too slow to get out of your pocket to use

In the sections below, I will briefly tell you a bit about each of the main kinds of weapons that I do recommend.

Projectile Weapons - Guns

Guns are controversial! Some people love 'em and some people hate 'em. But you cannot afford to IGNORE them. The reason guns are one of the first weapons I talk about is because handguns are the TOP choice for a self defense weapon. For MOST people, a handgun that you:

- Can hold comfortably and fire accurately
- Have a bit (or a lot) of training with
- Can conceal (hide) well under your everyday clothing
- Are prepared to carry with you EVERY day

...will be THE BEST WEAPON you can get to protect yourself from crime.

Guns can be used by a small woman to protect herself from a huge, bodybuilding rapist who just got out of prison. They can be used by a frail, old man in a wheelchair to protect himself from a violent mugger or home robber. They can also be carried and used effectively by regular men and women who just need something that will WORK if they ever need to defend themselves from a deadly attack.

So It's Like A Magic Wand, Right? Well, not exactly! Having a gun and knowing how to use it is not a guarantee that you will always be safe. BUT, it is the BEST chance you have of surviving a criminal attack...no matter WHO you are! The problem comes in when people DO treat their gun like a magic wand. Many people feel that by simply carrying their gun with them every day, evil will automatically be warded off. They do this without:

- Seeking out ANY training with their gun
- Practicing with it
- Thinking about WHEN they might need to use it
- Maintaining or cleaning it regularly
- Mentally preparing themselves to actually SHOOT another human being

These people are taking a HUGE RISK. They may get lucky and never experience a real criminal attack in their lives. In that case, it won't matter that they aren't prepared for it. BUT...if they are ever faced with a deadly criminal attack, they may be in for a nasty surprise. They will not be prepared and they may find that that gun on their hip does not work automatically. They will actually have to grab it and USE it to SHOOT someone.

With some guns, the safety switch may still be on and it won't fire! They may not be prepared for the "kick" (recoil) and miss their target altogether. Any number of "unexpected" things could happen if they have never put in the practice time with their gun. Hopefully they aren't trying to protect their loved ones on that day.

Bladed Weapons - Knives

Knives are also quite controversial among many people, although not to the same degree as guns. Carrying and being willing to use a knife to defend yourself from a criminal attack is not something that everyone is prepared to do.

As with all decisions surrounding self defense weapons, choosing to carry a knife requires some serious thought. It's ESSENTIAL that you do not just decide to carry one without thinking it through. Why? Carrying a knife without being willing to actually USE it on a criminal may be worse than carrying nothing at all!

If you are not prepared to stab someone with a knife in order to save your own life, you probably shouldn't carry one. That is the harsh reality. Knives that are carried for self defense are made to stab and slice a criminal attacker to get him

away from you.

Without the willingness to use it, you may just halfheartedly wave the thing at your attacker, and get it knocked out of your hand. If you don't hold on to it with all your strength, he may even be able to wrestle it out of your grip. Then you have a REAL problem! I don't say these things to discourage any of you who may be considering carrying a knife. I just want to be sure that you fully understand what this decision means. Having said all of that, like a gun, a knife that is carried by someone who is willing and able to use it...is a **FEARSOME self defense weapon**.

Along with a gun, a knife is probably THE most effective of the self defense weapons you can carry. A knife will allow someone who is weaker and less capable, to defend themselves against a larger, violent attacker or more than one attacker. It may allow you to turn the tables on a criminal who has caught you by surprise and thinks he has the advantage.

The devastating effectiveness of a sharp knife as a weapon cannot be overemphasized. I would highly recommend you start carrying a knife if you are looking for a compact, easy to carry weapon with some serious potential.

Impact Weapons - Clubs, batons

Impact weapons are the third class/type of weapon that is worth carrying. Anything that you can HIT someone with that does not have a sharp point or an edge (like a knife) could be called an impact weapon. Some types of impact weapons are:

- Blackjacks or saps
- Pocket sticks (also called Kubotan, Yawara or Koppo sticks)
- Metal or brass knuckles/Short clubs
- Small Tactical flashlights (Surefire, Fenix)

Impact weapons are quite capable of being used very effectively to fight off a violent attacker. However, they are not usually AS deadly as guns or knives, UNLESS they are used to strike the attacker's head. In reality, if you are fighting for your life, that's exactly what you want to be striking (the head).

NOTE: Hitting the attacker's head gives you the BEST chance of stopping him from injuring or killing you. It also has the biggest chance of severely injuring or killing him.

Impact weapons are not usually as easy to conceal (hide under or in your clothing) as other weapons like knives, since they tend to be heavy and somewhat larger than knives (usually). This is just something that you need to find a way around if you want to carry one.

The most common place to carry one of these tools is simply to drop them into a pants pocket. You can also get leather or kydex (strong black plastic) holsters that attach to your belt. This is often a better option since it's quicker to get to and it won't move around as much as something that is in your pocket.

Spray Type Weapons - Pepper Spray

Pepper spray is an excellent self defense weapon, IF you understand its role in your defense. Pepper spray (also called OC spray or tear gas) is a [Non Lethal Weapon](#). This means it cannot kill an attacker (except in very rare situations, e.g. severe asthma). However, it has a very good chance (around 80%) of stopping a criminal from attacking you.

It does this by causing a terrible burning feeling on the skin of the face, eyes and nasal passages. The eyes close tightly and start watering like crazy! Coughing and gagging also normally occur. The reasons for this are that pepper spray is made from the same main chemical that is found in chillies.

From [Wikipedia](#): "The active ingredient in pepper spray is capsaicin, which is a chemical derived from the fruit of plants in the Capsicum genus, including chillies". This "chilli oil" is extracted and used in the spray. Since it's an oil, it sticks to the skin and is almost impossible to just WIPE off. It can be washed off, but the procedure takes more than 30 minutes. During this whole time, the assailant is going to be in severe, burning pain.

When you spray someone in the face (best target), they will USUALLY start screaming and moaning while holding their face in their hands. This should give you time to get far away from the attacker. The reason I said "usually" above is because pepper spray will not work against EVERYONE. People who are on drugs, very drunk or mentally ill may not be affected by the spray.

Even though pepper spray is a fantastic self defense weapon, you MUST be prepared to do something else if it does not work as expected on your attacker. Don't just stand there with your mouth hanging open! DO SOMETHING ELSE!

- Hit him in the head with the bottom of the pepper spray can
- Run away
- Kick him between the legs and THEN run away!

As long as you take some action, you may still be okay. Pepper spray is a weapon that should be carried in addition to another deadly weapon if at all possible. That will give you options if, for one of the reasons above, your spray doesn't work or doesn't stop the attacker as you hoped it would.

If you have tried a non-lethal weapon (pepper spray), and you are still being attacked, it may be time to step it up a notch. If you feel that this person may actually be trying to kill you (you will probably know!), it may be time to use deadly force. In other words, your knife, gun or impact weapon should be used.

Note: Using deadly force is any force that has a high likelihood of killing or severely injuring someone. Anytime you use a knife or a gun, you are using deadly force, even if you aren't TRYING to kill them.

The law has some very specific rules about when you are allowed to use deadly force, so it would make sense to learn what those laws say in your country. Consult a lawyer if you need to. While that may be expensive, it would be worth it if you ever need to use a weapon to defend yourself.

So Which Self Defense Weapons Should You Choose?

The final choice of which self defense weapons to carry is a very personal one. There are so many factors to consider:

- Legalities
- Your usual dress (formal, business attire or casual)
- Your willingness to use the weapon
- Comfort
- Weight
- Personal preference

As you become more comfortable with carrying your weapon and learn more, your choices will change. That's the way it happens! You may find that you really start enjoying deciding what to carry and where to carry it. There are whole [internet forums](#) dedicated to choosing your "EDC" or Every Day Carry tools.

You must realize that carrying self defense weapons to protect yourself from violent crime is a process. For many of you it will be a LIFELONG process. That's fine!

I hope you enjoy the process of learning, adapting, changing and carrying self defense weapons as much as I have (and continue to enjoy). I wish you the best with your journey and be sure to keep reading this website to learn more about every aspect of carrying weapons for self defense.

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