

**C**ongratulations. You are now officially a licensed concealed carry permit holder. Your state department of justice, county sheriff's office or whoever it is who handles such matters in your neck of the woods has bestowed special trust and confidence in you to be able to legally carry a concealed firearm. Now it's time to purchase all of those goodies and accessories that you've been eyeing.

As you scroll through the vastness of cyberspace and stroll down the aisles of your local gun shop, something becomes abundantly clear almost immediately: This stuff is expensive. Concealed carry clothing, inside-the-waistband holsters, belts, magazine carriers — the list goes on. And the tab for all of it can add up quickly. But there are some simple budget-friendly hacks that can help you exercise your right to effective self-defense without breaking the bank.

### **A GOOD BELT**

One of the first things you're going to realize is that you'll almost certainly need a good belt if you're going to successfully carry on your waistline. Even the most quality, form-fitting jeans or pants will buckle under the weight of a loaded pistol. So, you go to your local gun store and quickly realize that a tactical belt can run you anywhere from \$50 to way over \$100. While a belt in this price range is probably well-made and can get the job done, there are much cheaper options out there, especially if you know what to look for.

First is the thickness of the belt. A pistol is heavy. The thicker the material of the belt, the sturdier it will be.

Second, choose the right material. While thick leather is ideal, it is expensive. If you are looking for a more budget-friendly option, go with a thick nylon unit instead. Affordable options that offer appropriate thickness and that are made from quality material are relatively easy to find in places such as Ross, Marshalls and Amazon, and they typically cost between \$10 and \$25.





**BUY GOOD, BUT  
BUY REASONABLE**

*Think \$70 sounds like a lot for a holster? Just imagine how much a cheap one could cost you. That said, there are other areas in which you can save money.*

# PATCH THE POCKET HOLE

*BUDGET-FRIENDLY HACKS FOR NEW GUN OWNERS*

■ *By Paul Peng*

## A QUALITY HOLSTER

While it may be tempting to simply carry your pistol directly in your pants, don't. There are a lot of potential safety issues that can arise from doing so, from pushing your pistol down your pants to the pistol snagging on your clothes to the pistol shifting positions along the seam of your pants to experiencing a negligent discharge. A pistol holster is necessary because it significantly reduces the chances of such safety hazards occurring.

A holster is generally made from one of three types of material: leather, Kydex or nylon. While a nylon holster is the cheapest out of the three, it is usually flimsy and inappropriate for even a training environment, let alone everyday carry. A leather holster, although extremely sturdy, can be expensive and bulky. Therefore, a holster made from Kydex would be the best bang for your buck if you are on a budget. It is important to note that even a holster made from Kydex can be expensive, especially if you are buying a name-brand unit. Shop around online and you can find a decent Kydex holster for as little as \$40, especially if you plan to carry a common model of pistol.

Some of you may be wondering about an appendix-inside-the-waistband rig with a magazine pouch. While having a spare magazine on your AIWB holster certainly doesn't hurt, it is important to note one fact: Statistically speaking, it is rare to encounter a situation in which you must reload during a self-defense scenario (afterward is another matter). The decision whether to drop more than \$100 on a rig with a magazine carrier is yours. You'll also have to determine whether you would even find an AIWB holster comfortable.

## LAYERED CLOTHING

You are most likely going to realize that carrying a concealed firearm can be uncomfortable, especially when you're in a seated position. Anyone who carries in the appendix position knows the feeling of the back of a pistol slide jabbing into his or her stomach, which is why multiple companies sell clothing tailored to concealed carry.

Just like with a quality belt, clothing that aids in your carrying of a concealed firearm is not inexpensive. A shirt or a pair of pants can range from \$70 to as much as \$250. This type of clothing is typically characterized by designs and patterns

geared toward obscuring a firearm's outline or even outright enveloping that firearm.

A simple budget-friendly hack would be to conceal your holstered pistol between a tucked-in T-shirt and an untucked outer shirt. It is, however, important to note that when you purchase that outer shirt, you should buy it in a larger size than you normally would. Keep in mind that your goal while carrying is concealment, not necessarily fashion. Depending on what you already have in your wardrobe, this budget-friendly option could potentially be free or cost you \$5 to \$15 per T-shirt and \$8 to \$25 per outer shirt, making the grand total range between \$13 and \$40. While the material on an everyday shirt is not as thick as specialized concealed carry clothing, you will find that the difference in comfort level is often negligible.

## NECESSARY TRAINING

Now that you have the proper gear, you are ready to go out into the world prepared for any situation that may be thrown your way, right? Not so fast. If you're without consistent and proper training, the best holster, belt or clothing will not necessarily help you in a life-threatening self-defense incident.

If you do not learn how to properly draw your firearm from concealment, the best holster in the world will not prevent snagging or a negligent discharge. The most user-friendly concealed carry shirt will not prevent you from grabbing your pistol through the fabric or missing it altogether in a crisis situation. Neither will a thick, sturdy belt help you draw your firearm faster or more smoothly if you don't practice doing so.

We all live busy lives, with responsibilities ranging from work to hobbies to family and beyond. We constantly juggle these daily responsibilities, and nothing is more attractive at the end of the day



### SAVE WHERE YOU CAN, SPEND WHERE YOU SHOULD

*Your best bet is to save money on all of your other EDC components and then put those savings into a quality holster, like this one from SentryTactical.com.*

than relaxing or maybe even just going to bed. However, you've made the decision to carry a firearm for self-defense. If you haven't done so already, learn proper draw techniques from a professional and then practice those techniques on at least a biweekly basis to keep your skills at an acceptable level. Training, if done correctly, is the best indicator of how fast you will be able to get your sidearm out and on target during a crisis. Best of all, running draw drills in your residence — with an empty, triple-cleared pistol — is free.

## SAVE A FEW BUCKS

Carrying concealed is a right, but it brings with it major responsibilities. You need to know and understand applicable self-defense laws, and you need to understand and practice proper storage and safety protocols. If your sidearm

is to be of any help to you during a crisis, you need to possess strong tactical firearms capabilities and a proper carry platform from which to draw that sidearm. None of it has to be expensive, but all of it is important and can be accomplished without spending a fortune.

Getting the right equipment is necessary but should not break the bank. Whether sourcing an inside-the-waistband holster, magazine pouch, belt or shirt, do your research and shop around for the right equipment that you will need in order to maximize comfort and accessibility for your everyday carry. Above all, remember that the primary component of your concealed carry arsenal should be consistent training. With everything at stake, and with as little as a dedicated dry-fire-drill regimen in your own home costs, it's one area of your personal protection plan in which you cannot afford to skimp.

