

AR-15: The Ultimate Gun for Survival

Having an AR-15 (essentially a semi-auto version of the M-16) in your [survival gun inventory](#) is a good choice regardless of whether you choose a Colt AR-15 or some other brand.

That being said, actually choosing the best AR-15 can be a daunting task if you aren't familiar with all the options or the vocabulary that has built up around this rifle.

For example, you may find sellers that claim the weapon is "Milspec". Supposedly, this means that the gun was suitable for military use. According to Colt Firearms (the owner and trademark holder of the AR-15) there is no such thing as a legal Milspec AR-15.

While the gun in question, may be made to the exact same specs as military grade weapons, the gun you are looking at was not tested fired and/or inspected by government inspectors and found suitable for government contract. Weapons that have gone through this quality assurance process carry proof marks.

Unfortunately, if you do come across a weapon with these proof marks on it, it is an illegal weapon that may have been stolen, or the proof mark itself may have been forged. This means there is no way to tell what quality weapon you are actually receiving.

Many people today are interested in the AR-15 because it is related to the M-16. Even though these guns may look similar externally, they are very different on the inside and cannot be interchanged safely. Some key differences include:



- Hammer and trigger mechanisms are of a different design.
- Bolt carrier and interior lower receiver of the semi-auto AR-15 versions are milled differently so the fire mechanisms are not interchangeable with the M 16.
- AR -15 selector only has “safe” or “semi-auto” modes.
- M 16 selector has “safe” “semi-auto”, 3 round burst, or “full auto”.

How to Choose a Good AR-15

Before buying any AR-15, take the time to research it and make sure you know what you plan to use it for. Some important points to consider as a base:

- Do you need just one upper, or different configurations (the AR-15 can be changed to other calibers by changing the upper receiver and/or putting a mag block in the lower receiver).
- Which manufacturers have the best reputation for

dependability, accuracy, quality, and the best price?

- Do a hands on evaluation of the model AR-15 you plan to own, and shoot with different brands, and types of ammo during the test. This will help you evaluate basic grouping possible, how comfortable you will feel shooting the weapon, and make it easier to figure out which accessories will be most useful.

Where to Buy It From

It is very important to buy your AR-15 from a licensed firearm dealer. He/she can walk you through all the paperwork and legal issues surrounding this type of gun. You will also have a chance to get good warranty information, and get answers to any other questions that you might have. If you do buy the AR-15 from a friend second hand, try it out by shooting it at a range to see if it works properly.

It is a bad idea to buy an AR-15 second hand at a gun show. The weapon could be stolen, broken, or may have had some illegal modifications that cause the gun to be more dangerous to the operator than the target.

In addition, if the rifle has been tampered with and fires more than 1 shot with each pull of the trigger, it will be classified as an illegal machine gun which could cost you heavy fines, your freedom, and worse. It does not matter whether or not you made the modifications, all that matters is that you own a modified weapon at the time it is found in your possession.

Things to Keep in Mind When Buying an AR-15

When thinking about buying an AR-15 you must answer the following questions to insure that you purchase is the best rifle at the best price:

- How well does the manufacturer adhere to the weapon's specifications?
 - Is the company's inspection process robust enough to ensure there are no defects in production?
 - How will the rifle hold up over a lifetime of use?
 - How good is a company's warranty and customer service?
- If the company stands behind their product then they should fix or replace the weapon. If the company refuses to do so, most states have Lemon Laws to protect the consumer.

Where to Find Parts When Needed

To get [replacement or spare parts](#) I would try to find them at a good sized gun show that has many vendors that specialize in AR-15s. Here you can ask questions, physically examine the parts, and get the best prices because of the competition at these shows. These vendors also do internet sales which make it easier to get other parts or accessories as the need arises.

How to Make the Best Deal

The first and foremost thing is to [know the weapon completely](#), which can only be done by researching and test firing different configurations of the AR-15. You should be able to talk at the vendor's level, and also know the MSRP for all complete ARs, plus the upper and lower receivers that you are shopping for.

If the dealer's or vendor's price is too high, and you know it you can try to negotiate down to a more reasonable price. Failing that, walk away and try somewhere else. Do not be coerced into paying too much for the AR or getting a compromise package on a AR that does not 100% meet the standards or needs that you wanted.

The following table is meant to give you some ideas about the possible configurations and accessories you can buy for the AR-15. Since prices change so much, it is best for you to do your own research, and **use the additional column for other notes that will help you find and buy the perfect AR-15** for your needs.

Configurations and Accessories For the AR-15

Part Type	Description	Important Notes	MSRP	Notes
Barrel	Chrome Lined	Durable; shoots 1.5 to 2.0 inch groups at 100 yards		
	Stainless Steel	Accuracy over durability; shoots 0.5 to 1 inch groups at 100 yards		
	Nitriding/Melonite Coating	Durable and cheaper than Chrome or Stainless Steel; 1.5 to 2.0 inch groups at 100 yards		
	Standard	no coatings; 2.0+ groups at 100 yards; fair durability		
Barrel Twists	1:7	Used on heavier and longer bullet designs (60-75 grains).		
	1:8	Used on lighter and shorter bullet designs (55 grains or less). Will work on a variety of bullet weights.		
	1:9	Used on lighter and shorter bullet designs (55 grains or less). Will work on a variety of bullet weights.		
AR-15 Calibers	5.56mm	Can safely shoot the .223 This round is used by police and military		
	.223	Cannot safely shoot the 5.56mm round. Due to heavier bullet and case design of the cartridge there can be a dangerous over pressure in the chamber which could lead to an explosion.		
Builds	SPR (Special Purpose Rifle)	18" stainless steel barrel; very accurate, used by military		
	M16A2 (clone)	20" barrel of choice, A2 fixed carry handle upper receiver, fixed butt stock; some consider this weapon obsolete because upper receiver does not have a rail system.		
	M4 (clone)	14.5" barrel with a permanently attached flash holder that is welded to the barrel to make it a legal 16".		
	M16A4	20" barrel of choice with a flattop receiver. Has a long sight radius. Excellent upgrading potential.		
	16" Mid Length Barrel AR-15	Not a clone of any service rifle. It is very compact and easy to shoot, and can be built any way that you choose. A great compromise system.		
Sights for your AR-15	Iron Sights	Used in older style carry handle receivers. The rear sight was located in the carry handle. The front sight was in a raised angled platform		
	M4 Setup	Pop-up rear sight. Raised platform front sight. (The M4 version of the AR has a flat top that is setup for optic sights to be attached to the upper receiver.		
	M4A1	There are emergency pop-up front and rear sights.		
	Optic Sights	Electronic sights that need batteries to operate. Examples are Aim Point Red Dot Sight and OPMOD EOTECH EXPS2. These sights are excellent from close range to 100 yards.		
	Variable Power Rifle Scope	Variable magnification makes shooting from 100 yards and beyond much clearer and more accurate. I recommend a 4 to 12 power scope.		
AR-15 Gas Systems	Direct impingement	Original gas system on AR-15.		
	Long or short stroke gas pistons.	A cleaner and more dependable gas system.		
	Direct blow back	Used in pistol caliber AR-15s.		

Usability Tips for AR-15

You will need to practice in order to be a good shooter with the AR-15. With the high price of either 5.56mm or .223 the best solution is having a 22 caliber upper receiver or a 22 caliber AR-15 to practice with. Mosberg makes a nice rifle that is reasonably priced starting at \$276.00. A complete 22 caliber upper can cost \$400 or higher depending on maker and quality.

Here are Some Important Things to Practice:

- 3 positional shooting – practice in the standing, prone, and kneeling positions.
- How to make you the smallest target possible
- Use cover correctly
- Shoot targets at different distances while walking and running
- Set up a combat course with different types of targets at different heights and distances, and ones that pop up.
- In the beginning make the course simple and do not use time limits. As you get better, expand the course and add time limits for each station and number of rounds to be fired at the target while on the move.
- Reloading drills
- Failure to fire drills. There is nothing more irritating to have a failure to fire when the weapon is needed the most. Know how to clear the weapon and reload quickly without getting killed. The shooter must practice regularly so that the act of clearing and reloading becomes muscle memory.

Having an AR-15 in your survival gun collection is a excellent choice. It should be noted that I wrote as little as possible

about the legal side of owning an AR-15 because what is legal today may not be legal tomorrow. Whether you choose to abide by these laws or not is up to you.

Just remember that your end goal is having a usable AR-15 in time of need. It is not advisable or useful to put yourself in a situation where you have chaos on your hands long before a large scale crisis occurs. So for now – it is my recommendation to stay within the laws and do your best to be ready for any situation that arises.

The real reason why most home defense plans don't work **WATCH VIDEO** 

*This article has been written by **Fred Tyrell** for [Survivopedia](#).*