

# How To Choose Your Self-Defense Knife

*Owning a firearm for personal protection is probably the best life insurance money can buy.*

However, you may not always depend on it, and the rise in gun-free zones is becoming a problem for many. In the absence of a firearm, you can use a knife for self-defense. A good knife becomes a deadly force tool in skilled hands, capable of inflicting great bodily harm and even death.

No matter where I go, I always carry a knife for self-defense. It also helps that knife laws are less restrictive than those for concealed carry and you won't get in trouble for carrying a knife. It's perhaps the only alternative you have for thwarting off a violent attack.

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The main problem, among others, with picking a knife for self-defense is that the market is flooded with such knives. It becomes a confusing task for those unfamiliar with the knife world. There are knives that fold, those with fixed blades and the ever-growing market of custom-made ones. Before you break the bank, I recommend going first for something mass produced and later on, move into the custom-made market.

Knives for self-defense come in every shape and size, but the price range is often the deciding factor for most of us. If you are serious about carrying a knife for self-defense, you need to have a basic understanding of knife selection.

# Covert Carry

Before investing in a knife for personal protection, you must consider the legal aspect of your purchase. The laws can greatly vary from one jurisdiction to another, and you need to be aware of such laws. Some jurisdictions prohibit the possession of knives designed with characteristics for mainly inflicting death or major body traumas. In this category, you will often find the Bowie knives, daggers, dirks, the famous butterfly and switchblades.

When it comes to the blade length of your knife, the laws may also be strict. In fact, in most states, you are allowed to carry a knife with a blade that is less than 3,4 or 5 inches long. Not to mention that certain blade shapes and styles are also prohibited. I think there's no point in stressing about the existence of certain locations (like government buildings) where carrying a knife is strictly forbidden. It's pretty much common sense at this point.

When you have identified the legal parameters binding you to the purchase of a knife for self-defense, the basic knowledge about knives comes into play. Coupled with the instinctual decision-making, it's all it takes for consumers to make a solid purchase.

## Feeling the grip

NORMAL STRAIGHT



CLIP POINT



DROP POINT



SPEAR POINT



DAGGER



AMERICAN TANTO



JAPANESE TANTO



KUKRI POINT



TRAILING POINT



TALON



NEEDLE POINT



SHEEPFOOT BLADE



WHARNCLIFFE BLADE



SPEY POINT



DAO BLADE



NESSMUK



This is my first consideration when purchasing a knife and it should be intuitive for the majority of people. You need to find a knife that feels good and fits well in your hand. Never purchase a knife

before actually holding it. You need to grasp the knife and consider how it feels. It should feel good and there should be no need for a hand-on-grip adjustment to handle it properly.

If you would like to pick a folding knife, try opening it and see how it performs. Can you open the blade one-handed and unassisted? If that's not the case, chances are it's not the

right knife for you.

The size of the handle plays an important role in how comfortable you feel holding the knife. You should make sure that a proper grip can be achieved. I recommend doing the following the next time you buy a knife. Grasp the knife in a hammer grip – your fingers and thumb wrapped around the handle. While grabbing the knife in such way, there should be minimal gaps between the fingertips and the meaty portion of the palm. If there is a gap, retention of that knife will prove difficult in a self-defense situation.

Likewise, if the handle is too small, the contact between your hand and the grip will not be enough to maintain a secure grip. The user can also be injured if the hand envelops the grip completely and overruns onto a portion of the blade.

The shape of the handle will affect impact retention and cause discomfort in certain cases. Knife retention is impacted by the dynamic nature of the knife. Picking a knife for self-defense with an exotic handle, just for the looks of it, it's not practical. An improper grip can make it easier for the attacker to disarm you. You should remember that in a life-or-death scenario the way you initially grasp the knife it's likely to be the way it remains throughout the entire fight. If the handle is grasped incorrectly, topped with knife handle features (like finger grooves) will lead to discomfort and a weak grip.

The materials from which the knife handle is built, also play a role in picking the knife. However, this is a negative role, and it will often lead to a bad choice since the purchase is made based on aesthetics alone. The handle can be made from materials such as metal, thermoplastic, fiberglass, and resin.

If you want to pick a good knife for self-defense, go for one that has a handle with scales. During a fight, possible sources of moisture (sweat, blood, etc.) will create

conditions in which retention becomes a real challenge. Unlike the smooth surface, scaled handles offer better retention.

## **A fixed blade or a folder?**

This is one question you will have to figure an answer for when picking a knife for self-defense. Since we established that the law alone would dictate most of your knife's features, you do have a saying when it comes to picking between the two.

Many survival experts will tell you that a fixed blade is the best option and I understand their point of view. They fear that a folding knife may be unreliable due to its blade-locking mechanism that may fail when you need the knife the most. I used to think the same, but eventually, I understood there's more to it than it seems. Any mechanical device can fail if you think about it. However, there are much greater chances of your knife folding up unexpectedly if you buy cheaper products. I buy only from reputable companies that have sturdy locking mechanisms which were put to the test before selling the final product to the general public.

I'm also paying attention to where the lock is positioned, and I avoid the ones with locks that can be released unintentionally while squeezing or twisting the handle of the knife. After buying various knives over the years, I can tell you that a locking mechanism most certainly will fail due to a handling error than from a manufacturing flaw.

Your biggest concern when picking a foldable knife over one with a fixed blade should regard your mental ability to handle a stressful situation. In cases of extreme stress, some people will lose dexterity to the point in which opening a folded knife becomes difficult, while others will just freeze and forget about the knife they're carrying. A situation leading to loss of dexterity requires a knife that can be easily opened one-handed, unassisted. However, even such a knife

requires practice drawing and opening. After a certain number of tries, you should be able to open your knife from the location of concealment, using muscle memory alone.

## Types of opening mechanisms

There are folding knives with different types of opening mechanisms, and you should have a general understanding of how they work.



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Opening mechanisms such as:

- **Flipper** – Knives with a flipper have a stud on the spine. When pushing on the stud with your index the blade is deployed. The stud becomes a finger guard.
- **Wave** – These types of knives have a wave (a hook) on the spine of the blade. If you pull it from your pocket, the hook will catch the lip of the pocket, opening the blade.
- **Disc/thumbhole** – These folding knives have a certain cutout on the face of the blade. Your thumb pad falls into this recess slightly and allows the thumb to assist the blade open.
- **Thumb stud** – With a stud on the blade, these knives can be opened by pushing the stud with your thumb.
- **Out-the-front** – These knives have a blade that slides out of the front of the knife by a stud in the sheath.

Seeing that opening mechanisms of folding knives are different, you will need more skill and practice to open some of them. You will have to pick one based on your ability to operate the opening mechanisms and personal preference.

If you have trouble opening a folding knife one-handed, it may also be an indication that said knife is too big or too small. You will need patience in trying various knives with different locking mechanisms, and you shouldn't settle for a knife that doesn't feel right.

## **My choice for an EDC**

Personally, I like the Spyderco brand, and I have various knives from them. It's a reliable manufacturer of high-performance cutting tools and accessories. In fact, they pioneered many features that are now common in folding knives, including the pocket clip, serrations, and the opening hole.

## **My knife**

My current EDC knife is a Spyderco Tenacious Black. The handle material is made of high-quality G 10, rustproof blade made from 8Cr13MoV steel with a 3.39" length. It has a liner lock, lanyard hole, and 4-way clip. The black 4-way pocket clip allows the folder to be set in a variety of carrying and drawing positions: Tip-up/tip-down left-hand/right-hand. I've had it for almost two years now, and it never let me down.

## **Conclusion**

As you can see in this article, picking a knife for self-defense requires a little bit of research. Don't just pick one because it looks good and it's pricey. You need to feel and try the knife before taking it home. Check if the grip settles properly in your hand without causing gaps that will lead to poor retention. A folding knife can be much better concealed compared to a fixed blade, but you should make sure you can operate the knife one-handed, unassisted. Pick a reliable manufacturer and don't cheap out on quality. And lastly, always practice with your knife to develop muscle memory.



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