



Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC

Tip of the Week – August 25, 2025

🔥 The Truth About Stopping Power 🔥

Handguns don't deliver movie-style "one-shot stops." They punch holes. Whether the hole stops the threat comes down to placement, penetration, and your ability to shoot under pressure.

Here's our no-BS (in our opinion) breakdown of common calibers:

★ .22 LR

Pros: Low recoil, cheap, and easy to shoot accurately.

Cons: Inconsistent penetration, unreliable in some guns, and weak terminal ballistics.

Verdict: Better than nothing. Great for training and as a backup, but not a first-choice defensive round.

★ .380 ACP

Pros: Compact pistols chambered in .380 are easy to conceal and carry everywhere. With premium defensive ammo (Hornady Critical Defense, Federal HST Micro), it can meet FBI penetration standards.

Cons: Borderline performance—light bullets, shallow penetration in some loads, and expansion can be iffy.

Verdict: A minimum baseline for carry. If it's the only gun you'll actually carry, it's far better than leaving a 9mm at home. But if you can handle a 9mm, step up.

★ .38 Special (+P)

Pros: Decades of proven street use. With +P hollow points, it penetrates and expands respectably.

Cons: Standard pressure loads are weak, and revolvers limit capacity and reload speed.

Verdict: Solid option in snub-nose revolvers with quality +P ammo.

★ 9mm Luger

Pros: Today's gold standard. Modern JHPs expand wide, penetrate deep, and give you more rounds with less recoil.

Verdict: Best balance of power, control, and capacity.

★ .40 S&W

Pros: Slight edge in energy over 9mm.

Cons: Snappier recoil slows down most shooters, and the gap has closed thanks to modern 9mm loads.

Verdict: Not irrelevant, but losing ground fast.

★ .45 ACP

Pros: Big, heavy bullet with wide expansion.

Cons: Low capacity, slower follow-ups. Practical performance difference from 9mm is minimal.

Verdict: A classic that still works, but not superior.

★ .357 Magnum

Pros: Excellent penetration and energy—devastating out of a 4" revolver.

Cons: Blast, recoil, and low capacity limit real-world utility.

Verdict: Still a fight-stopper, but less practical today.

💡 Bottom Line:

9mm is king for most armed citizens.

.380 ACP is the minimum floor—carry it only if you can't manage or conceal something larger.

.38 Special with +P loads is still respectable.

.22 LR? Last-ditch or backup only.

👉 Our Takeaway: Stop debating calibers like it's a religion. Any defensive caliber can work if you can shoot it accurately and fast under stress. What ends fights isn't the bullet alone—it's the armed citizen behind the gun.