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Small Arms Training

Volume I, Pamphlet No. 11

Pistol (.38-inch)

1941

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By Command of the Army Council,

THE WAR OFFICE,
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Distribution	cover ii
General	1
Lesson 1. Safety precautions and cleaning	3
,, 2. Holding and trigger pressing	5
,, 3. Drawing and returning pistols, loading and unloading	8
,, 4. Firing, using sights	13
,, 5. Firing by sense of direction	15
Tests of elementary training	16

DISTRIBUTION

Scale D for Units and Establishments so equipped

GENERAL

1. The pistol is the personal offensive weapon of all officers and such other ranks as are armed with it. In pistol training, therefore, they must reach a standard which will ensure effective shooting in war, whether on foot or from a vehicle.

2. The correct handling of the pistol in war calls for cunning, initiative, determination, and a knowledge of the characteristics of the weapon. This is particularly the case in fighting in enclosed country, such as villages, woods, trench systems, etc. Handling the weapon in war requires confidence on the part of the firer to hit an adversary at close quarters.

3. The characteristics of the pistol are :—

i. A one-handed weapon, normally used without support to hand or arm. Therefore :—

(a) Correct holding and trigger pressing are of increased importance.

(b) The firer can fire with either hand.

ii. A short barrel, which :—

(a) Aids quickness in shooting at surprise and moving targets.

(b) Restricts the range at which accurate shooting is possible.

(c) Makes the weapon dangerous if carelessly handled, since it can so easily be pointed or discharged in the wrong direction. Safety precautions are, therefore, necessary at all times.

iii. A high rate of fire combined with the stopping power of the bullet, giving it special advantages in close-quarter fighting.

4. The occasions on service when a pistol is likely to be used are rare but, when the necessity does arise, it is essential that shots should be delivered accurately and very quickly. The pistol should, therefore, normally be used at ranges of 20 yards or under, and the instinctive action of a man suddenly confronted by an opponent within this distance is to fire instantly by sense of direction. Under such conditions, the quickness with which one or more effective shots can be fired is more important than the close grouping of the shots. The pistol is effective up to 50 yards, but considerable skill is necessary to hit an adversary at this distance.

5. Since the instinctive action of firing by sense of direction combines quickness with sufficient accuracy, it follows that the

main purpose of pistol training will be to produce effective shooting by this method.

Although sights are fitted to the pistol, they will only be used in the preliminary grouping practices or when time and circumstances permit of the firing wrist or hand being steadied by gripping it with the other hand—such as may occur when shooting from behind cover.

6. If an individual can fire equally effectively with either hand, then, in working round cover, the pistol may be carried in the outside hand in such a manner that an opponent can be dealt with without exposing more than the hand and head. A change of direction will necessitate changing hands, and this change should be practised until it can be done cleanly and quickly.

7. The pistol should be reloaded whenever the opportunity offers, and an advance should never be resumed with only two or three unfired rounds in the chamber.

8. Any form of trench system can be made to provide good practice in handling the pistol in cramped localities. If a pistol trench as described in S.A.T., 1931, Vol. V, is available, use can be made of it to give practice with dummy drill cartridges or with ball ammunition.

9. The system of training, therefore, based on the characteristics of the weapon, together with the requirements of service shooting, is designed to develop in the individual the ability to :—

- i. Handle the pistol with safety.
- ii. Hold it correctly.
- iii. Use it with either hand, if possible.
- iv. Press the trigger correctly.
- v. Use his instinctive pointing sense.
- vi. Shoot quickly by sense of direction.

10. The standard required is that an efficient firer should be able to place a bullet in a 16-in. by 12-in. rectangle at 10 yards in one second.

11. Five minutes at the end of each lesson should be set aside in order that men may be exercised in the strengthening of those muscles directly used in holding and firing the pistol, particularly in the actions of instinctive pointing and speeding up. Such exercises are left to the discretion of the instructor, who may include any lessons previously taught.

LESSON 1.—SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AND CLEANING

1. Introduction

Explain briefly paras. 1-7, 9 and 10 (pages 1 and 2).

2. Safety precautions

Explain that the following safety precautions will be read out on all pistol training parades until each man knows them thoroughly :—

- i. The pistol will always be proved (*i.e.* opened and inspected) when drawn from the case or picked up.
- ii. The pistol will always be proved when given to or accepted from another individual.
- iii. The pistol will always be kept in the case, except when drawn for a definite purpose.
- iv. No indiscriminate snapping will be allowed ; snapping at another man's eye will not be practised with dummy cartridges in the pistol.
- v. When out of the case and not in actual use, the pistol will always be carried at the "Ready" position and not hanging at the side pointing to the ground.
- vi. The pistol will never be opened or closed with the hammer cocked, if such is fitted.

3. Names of parts and examination of bore and cylinder

Explain and demonstrate, naming the parts, with squad imitating :—

- i. *The bore*—The cylinder will first be removed by partly* unscrewing the cam-lever fixing screw and pressing down the cam-lever. The bore will then be examined in the same manner as is taught for the rifle.
- ii. *The cylinder*—The chambers will be examined for fouling ; the extractor and spring for dirt and rust ; the extractor pin for damage. The cylinders of pistols will not be exchanged ; the number of each is stamped on it and must agree with that on the body and barrel.

To assemble—Care must be taken that the cylinder is home, and the cam-lever fixing screw is securing the cam-lever in position, before an attempt is made to close the pistol.

* With the .455 the cam-lever fixing screw should be completely unscrewed.

- iii. When a pistol is being opened or closed, the hammer—if fitted—must be down. Otherwise :—
 Injury to the ratchet and pawl may occur.
 If the pistol is loaded, a premature explosion may occur.

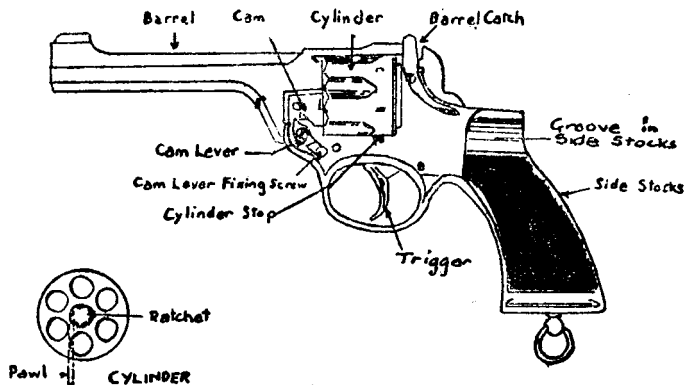


Fig. 1.

7. Cleaning materials

Explain :—

The cleaning rod will be inserted from the muzzle end of the barrel. The pistol will always be opened when the cleaning rod is used. Flannelette and oil as for rifle.

5. Cleaning

Explain and demonstrate, with squad imitating :—

- i. *Daily*—Clean the bore and chambers with slightly oily flannelette. The exterior and working parts will be cleaned and slightly oiled.
- ii. *Before firing*—Remove oil from the exterior, bore and chambers.
- iii. *After firing*—Remove the cylinder. Remove fouling from the bore and chambers and then oil. Clean with dry flannelette until no more fouling comes away and lightly oil. Oil the outside and working parts, paying attention to the cylinder stop and pawl and the hole for the hammer nose. This cleaning is necessary for 4 or 5 days after firing.
- iv. *After gas attack*—After a gas attack the same method of cleaning will be employed as with the rifle (see Rifle, Lesson 4).

6. Give conditions of test.

LESSON 2.—HOLDING AND TRIGGER PRESSING

Instructor's Notes

Squad extended.

Dummies will not be used in this lesson.

1. Instinctive pointing sense

Explain and demonstrate :—

- i. Pointing at a mark with both eyes open—if the hand, forefinger outstretched, is raised in the centre of the body, arm slightly bent at the elbow, then the forefinger comes directly on to the mark.
- ii. If the pistol is correctly fitted to the hand, it follows that when a man raises a pistol quickly to fire at a mark on which his eyes are fixed, then the barrel is correctly aligned on that mark.
- iii. Practise squad in two ranks, about 4 yards apart, pointing at one another. Note and question that the finger points directly at the centre of the opponent's body.

2. Holding*

Explain and demonstrate the correct hold, with squad imitating (*see Figs. 2 and 3*) :—

- i. The second finger should be close up behind the trigger guard and third and fourth fingers round the butt so that, on raising the pistol to point at a mark, the barrel is aligned on it without undue bending of the wrist.
- ii. The trigger finger will be on the trigger.
- iii. The inner side of the part of the thumb between its first and second joint must be firmly in contact with the top of the stock on the shoulder of the butt or in the groove on the butt, with thumb fully extended or bent at the first joint, according to its individual size.
- iv. The hand and fingers on the butt must maintain the firmest possible grip. The pressure of the thumb should balance that of the trigger finger. It is important to hold the pistol always with the same grip. The correct hold must be practised until it becomes instinctive to adopt it.

*There are two sizes of stocks, side, for the '455.

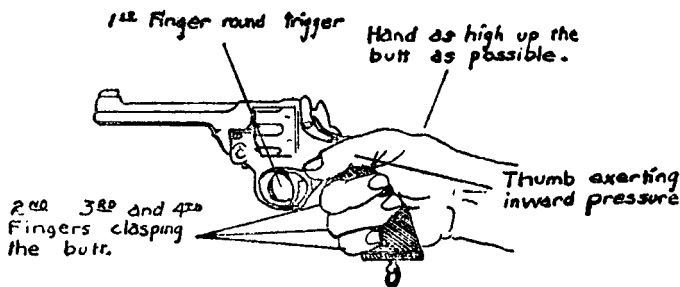


Fig. 2.

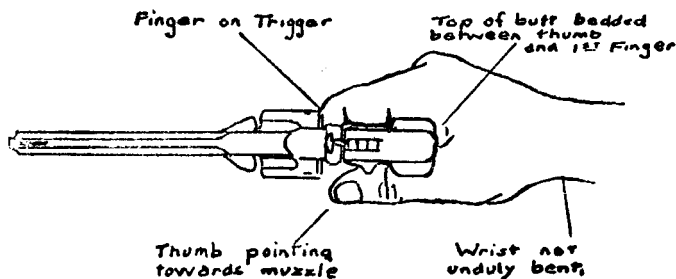


Fig. 3.

3. Adjustment in holding

Demonstrate :—

- i. To adjust the grip, withdraw the pistol slightly from the pointing position and, grasping the barrel with the free hand, alter as necessary the position of the butt in the hand holding the pistol. Once the hand has gripped the butt of the pistol that grip should be retained. Any tendency to ease the grip and jerk the pistol about in the hand will be checked.
- ii. Practise squad finding correct hold with either hand. Instructor in the kneeling position checks each man, who will raise the pistol to the instructor's eye.
- iii. Demonstrate drawing the pistol from its case and raising it quickly to the mark, emphasizing the importance of grasping the butt correctly while the pistol is in the case. Practise squad.

4. Trigger pressing

Explain and demonstrate, with squad imitating :—

- i. The importance of trigger pressing.
- ii. The trigger will be pressed by an independent action of the forefinger, the grip of the hand and the inward and downward pressure of the thumb must be such as to prevent the disturbing of the pointing of the pistol.
- iii. The forefinger **MUST** release the trigger fully after each pressure.
- iv. Practise squad using each hand. With the pistol in the " Ready " position, note a spot on the ground in direct alignment with the eye and the top of the barrel. Press the trigger so that the position of the barrel remains undisturbed.

LESSON 3.—DRAWING AND RETURNING PISTOLS, LOADING AND UNLOADING

Instructor's Notes

Squad extended in single rank. Dummies will be used.

1. Drawing and returning pistols

Explain and demonstrate, squad imitating:—

i. “ For inspection—draw pistols ”

Bring the left hand to the case and unbutton it.

Draw the pistol with the right hand.

Bring it to the vertical position in front of the body, muzzle downwards.

Grip the barrel with the left hand, the thumb pressing against the cam and cylinder fluting, and open the pistol, keeping the left hand and barrel stationary (see Fig. 4).

ii. “ Return pistols ”

After the pistol has been inspected and the inspecting officer has passed the next file, close the pistol by raising the butt to the barrel, keeping the left hand stationary. Then return the pistol to the case with the right hand. Button the case with the left hand. Return to position of attention. Stand at ease.

iii. Practise squad.

2. Proving pistols and “ Ready ” position

i. Explain and demonstrate, squad imitating:—

On the command “ Draw pistols,” draw the pistol as already taught; and, keeping the elbows stationary, turn the breech of the pistol towards the instructor. After a pause, close the pistol and come to the “ Ready ” position by carrying off the left foot a walking pace to the front, the body leaning forward, knees slightly bent, elbow against the side. The pistol should now be in the centre of the body, pointing downwards at an angle of 45 degrees, and to the front, forefinger on the trigger (see Fig. 5).

ii. Return pistols as already taught.

iii. Practise squad.

(From the “ Ready ” position, on the command “ Rest,” straighten the body without moving the feet.)

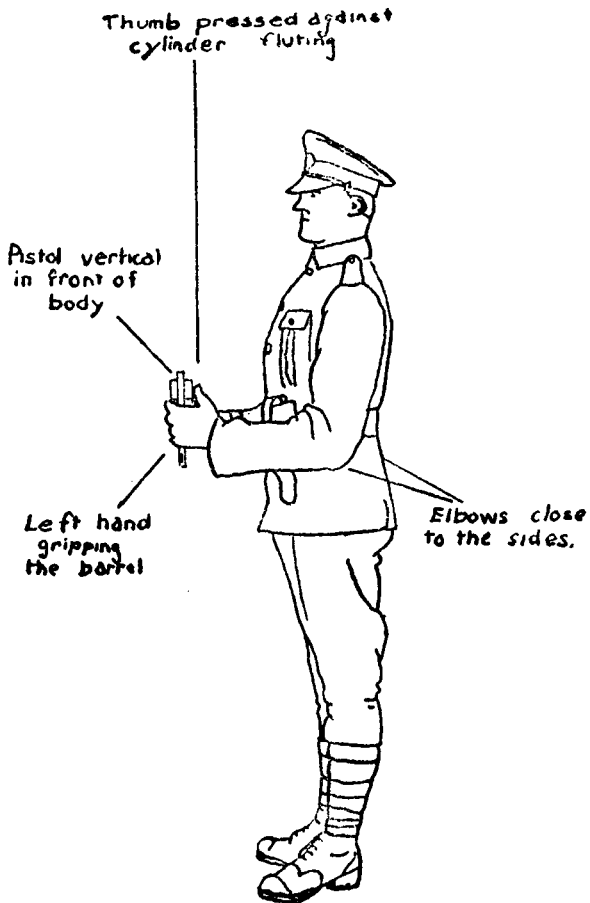


Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

3. i. Changing hands

Explain and demonstrate, squad imitating :—

“Change hands.” Transfer the pistol to the other hand, ensuring that a correct grip has been obtained.

ii. Practise squad.

4. Loading and unloading

i. Explain and demonstrate, squad imitating :—

“ **Six rounds—load.** ”—Assume position as shown in Fig. 6.

Open the pistol, lowering the butt from the barrel without allowing the barrel to move.

Take either one or two rounds, holding them by their bases, and insert them in the chambers, first round placed in 10 o'clock chamber. Continue to load anti-clockwise until all chambers are filled.

Close the pistol by bringing the butt up to the barrel. Return to the “ **Ready** ” position.

ii. “ **Unload** ”

Adopt the loading position. Open the pistol slightly. Place the butt on the hip, open fully, and sharply eject into the right hand. Close the pistol ; adopt the “ **Ready** ” position.

The barrel must be kept pointing throughout in the direction of the target.

iii. Practise squad.

5. Give conditions of Test.

6. Practise squad in the complete lesson.

7. Final five minutes (*see* para. 11, page 2).



Fig. 6.

LESSON 4.—FIRING, USING THE SIGHTS

Instructor's Notes

Squad extended in single rank.

Stores :—Fig. 2 or Fig. 3 targets.

Dummies will NOT be used in this lesson.

Not more than six shots should be fired at a time, in order to instil the instinctive habit of counting the rounds fired.

The following are common faults :—

- i. Snatching the trigger or anticipating the shock of discharge, causing low inwards shooting.*
- ii. Loosening the grip, causing scattered shooting.*

1. Introduction

Explain that occasions may arise on service when it will be desirable to aim the pistol, for instance, when it is possible to use both hands when firing from cover. Such is not the normal service method of firing.

The following are aids to good shooting :—

- i. Physical fitness.**
- ii. Determination to hit the target.**
- iii. Concentration on the central part of the target.**
- iv. Count the number of rounds.**
- v. Ignore the shock of discharge.**

2. Aiming

Explain :—

- i. The sights.**
- ii. The rules of aiming are similar to those for the rifle. One eye may be closed in using the sights.**
- iii. The aiming mark will be the centre of the target. At a target moving across the front, aim should be directed at the front edge.**

3. Firing

Explain and demonstrate from the " Ready " position :—

Raise the pistol quickly to the aim—press the trigger—return to the " Ready " position.

4. Practise squad using each hand.

5. Firing from cover

i. The main conditions to be observed are :—

Modification of position to suit the cover, so that the firer can see his target and use his pistol effectively.

No undue exposure.

The firing wrist or hand should be supported by gripping it tightly with the other hand, and the hands or elbows should be rested when practicable.

ii. Explain and demonstrate firing from various types of cover, a trench, the corner of a building, a tree, etc.

6. Practise squad firing from various types of cover.

7. Final five minutes (*see para. 11, page 2*).

LESSON 5.—FIRING BY SENSE OF DIRECTION

Instructor's Notes

Dummies will not be used for this lesson.

During instruction two shots will always be fired in quick succession at every target to inculcate the habit that, on engaging an adversary on service, TWO quick shots should always be fired to make certain of killing. During training, the mark will be either the Instructor's or another man's eye. (Kneeling position.)

1. Introduction

Explain that on service, when speed is essential, the pistol will be fired by the instinctive pointing sense, with both eyes open; there will be no aiming. This type of shooting can only be developed with practice. The attention of the firer must be concentrated on the mark at the moment of firing. The trigger must be fully released after firing each shot so that the mechanism can function correctly.

2. Firing

- i. Explain and demonstrate from the "Ready" position :—

With the eyes fixed on the target, quickly raise the pistol and fire two shots in quick succession. The body should face the target squarely; the position of the feet is immaterial. This action is then repeated twice, two shots being fired in quick succession on each lift of the pistol.

- ii. Give conditions of Test.

3. i. Mutual inspection of pistols and pouches.
- ii. Practise squad firing in pairs about 4 yards apart as master and pupil, using each hand.

4. Final five minutes (see para. 11, page 2).

TESTS OF ELEMENTARY TRAINING

There are three tests. Of these, Nos. 1 and 2 will be carried out collectively, and No. 3 individually. Dummies will *not* be used during tests of elementary training.

No. 1.—General knowledge of the pistol

Men will be asked questions on safety precautions, care and cleaning.

Standard.—Three out of four questions to be answered correctly.

No. 2.—Handling the pistol

Men will be tested in drawing and returning pistols, the "Ready" position, "Change hands" and "Loading and Unloading." Those who make serious faults will fail.

No. 3.—Firing

The test should be carried out at a distance of 4 yards between firer and instructor, the mark being the instructor's eye, the instructor being in the kneeling position. Firer in the "Ready" position—using either hand—a latitude of aim will be allowed proportionate to the service standard, i.e. if the instructor considers that the shot would have hit an area approximately the size of his face, the shot will be considered correct. Two shots will be fired in quick succession on each of three lifts of the pistol. Time, 2 secs. for each series of double shots.

Standard.—1 shot of each series to be correct.