

## Revolver Loading and Unloading

Watching people at the range on public nights (nights when the public can shoot as a new member), I have decided that revolver sales are as strong as they have ever been.

Law enforcement learned a lot about carrying revolvers before they switched to semi-automatics in the 1980's. One of the first was that revolvers didn't carry much ammunition.



## Extra Ammunition Carry Methods

We have four ways to carry reloads or additional ammunition:

1. Loose cartridges in a pocket
2. Speed strips that hold ammunition in a straight line
3. Speed loaders
4. Moon clips

These are still the primary ways to carry extra ammunition for a revolver. Most revolver shooters prefer speed loaders and for good reason. Speed strips are also a good viable option for personal defense. They both involve practice to become proficient with the tools and techniques.

Having loose cartridges in a pocket is better than having no extra ammunition at all. The problem is that when you pull out the cartridges, everything in your pocket will be pulled out and mixed in with them. You have to pick out the cartridges for reloading. This is time consuming in a gunfight.



Speed strips hold the cartridges in a line together. The rounds are all oriented in the same direction. You shove two rounds on the strip into the cylinder and peel them off at the same time. You repeat this until the gun is loaded. The speed strips also lie flat so they are easy to carry and conceal in a coin pocket, vest, or box.



Speed loaders are designed to fit specific revolvers. They hold the cartridges in the correct position to line up with the cylinder. Once the cartridges are started in the cylinder, the rounds are released through several different methods into the cylinder.



Moon clips were originally used for .45 caliber military revolvers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The thin metal clips are shaped like a half or full moon and hold cartridges in place to be dropped into the cylinder. The difference between a moon clip and a speed loader is that the moon clip is designed to be dropped into the cylinder and hold the cartridges in place while the gun is being fired.

Moon clips have one big problem. Being made of thin metal, they can bend easily. And once bent, they can make the revolver difficult or impossible to close up. Revolvers must also be designed specifically to use moon clips, and the majority of revolvers on the market are not.

Always pick the gun up in your shooting hand. Start with an empty revolver. Always visually and physically check the gun to ensure it is empty. Always keep your finger off the trigger until you're ready to fire. Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.

## Right-Handed Reload

**Step 1:** Grip the gun with your right hand in a two-handed grip.



**Step 2:** Activate the cylinder release with your right thumb and keep it activated. The method will differ depending on the manufacturer.



**Step 3:** Slide your left hand under the gun and away from the barrel. Use the ring and middle fingers of your left hand to push the cylinder open.



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**Step 4:** Continue to push your middle and ring fingers through the open gap under the top strap toward the cylinder. The gun should settle in the palm of your left hand. Position your left index finger over the barrel. Place your pinkie over the hammer or at the rear of a hammerless gun. Put your left thumb on top of the ejector rod.



**Step 5:** Tilt the revolver down so that gravity holds the cartridges toward the cylinder. Get in the habit of keeping the gun up in your vision toward any potential targets. Line up the cartridges in the speed loader with the holes where the cartridges are seated. Insert and activate the speed loader. Different manufacturers have different release mechanisms. Practice using dummy ammunition or snap caps with the type that you carry.



**Step 6:** Transfer the revolver to your right-hand grip. Remove your middle and ring fingers and close the cylinder with your left thumb.



**Step 7:** Use your left-hand index finger and thumb to slightly rotate the cylinder and ensure the cylinder is locked in place.

## Unloading the Revolver

**Step 1:** Grip the gun with your right hand in a two-handed grip.



**Step 2:** Activate the cylinder release with your right thumb and keep it activated. The method will differ depending on manufacturer.



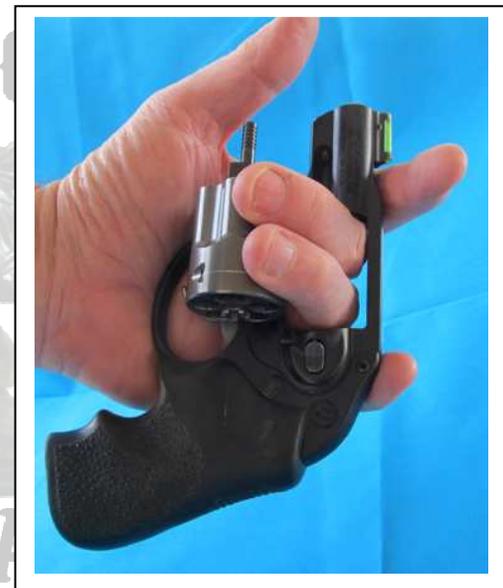
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**Step 5:** Tilt the revolver with the barrel pointed up. Use the thumb of your left hand and push the ejector rod down rapidly. At the same time, use a slight downward motion to assist gravity in removing the fired cartridges. Visually confirm that all cases have been removed. Repeat this step if any cases are still in the cylinder. Occasionally a case will become form-fired to the cylinder and difficult to remove. If that happens, use your right hand to pick out that case.



**Step 6:** Keeping the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and parallel with the ground now it's time to look and feel. Remember it's not enough to look and see if the chamber is empty. You must also feel the holes in the cylinder and make sure they are empty.



Keep the gun high in your field of vision so that you can keep an eye on any potential targets while you are reloading. Reload the revolver using the steps listed above.

## Types of Reloading Situations

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An emergency reload is loading the gun when all ammunition has been expended and you are still in a dynamic critical situation.

A tactical reload is used at a time of your choosing during a dynamic critical situation. This occurs if there is a lull in the action or a tactical “pause”. It may also occur when things seem to be winding down, but you want to have a full ammunition load in case the situation fires up again. Ideally you reload when you want to reload, not when you need to reload. You want to use cover and concealment to your benefit in any tactical situation, so use them when reloading as well.

Techniques are available for left-handed reloading, reloading while wounded in the dominant arm, and keeping the gun in your strong hand while reloading. Space limitations prevent a full discussion of them. What I have presented is the best and most proven method for reloading a revolver. It is a good way, but not the only way. Choose what works safely and best for you and your abilities.

Safely practice these techniques with dummy ammunition. Find out what works for you and the equipment you carry. Be prepared for the exceptional as well as the commonplace.