

ISSUE 63

THE FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR MAGAZINE



THE **FIREARMS** INSTRUCTOR

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360° CQD

PISTOL HAND SWITCH

BY DET/SGT JEFF JOHNSGAARD

Editor's Note: The first third of this article was originally published in IALEFF's Press Check, Volume 3 Issue 4. It is reprinted here as part of the entire article.

We have been getting a lot of great questions and feedback from the 360° Vehicle Anti Ambush training sessions we presented at the 1st Virtual Conference and the live fire session during the Florida 2021 ATC. Specifically, several questions about the optimal way to switch hands in order to defend in 360 degrees from inside your vehicle with the technique. This article will cover the concept of a “Final Firing Grip,” then our preferred technique for switching hands (Rock – Grip – Place), and then our reasons for why we believe it to be the most optimal so you can judge for yourself. Finally, we will cover a few errors typically seen when live instructor feedback is not available.

While seated inside a vehicle there are two things necessary to be able to safely and efficiently aim and fire a pistol in 360 degrees:

1. A modification of the supporting side hand to increase stability. [FIGURE 1]

Called the “360 Grip” – Straightening of the support hand wrist and placing the firing hand's knuckles into the support hand palm.

2. The ability to quickly switch hands with the pistol to cover areas you are unable to rotate your body to when utilizing traditional Isosceles/Weaver techniques. [FIGURE 2]

FIGURE 1



Note the **left** wrist is straight



Note the **right** wrist is straight

FIGURE 2



A. Right hand hold



B. Threat on right side



C. Hand switch



D. Left hand hold

FIGURE 3



Photo #1 shows the pistol held completely inline with the bones of the forearm.



Photo #2 shows the pistol held at a slight angle by the same shooter.

To explain this technique effectively we first need to define the term “Final Firing Grip” (FFG) as it is a key component. FFG has two parts: the first is the pistol-holding hand needs to be gripping as high up as possible on the backstrap of the pistol. This means the webbing of the hand between the thumb and first finger is as high up on the pistol grip as possible, given the size and shape of the pistol grip and the person’s hand.

The second part of a FFG is the grip and is much less understood. The focus is on the placement and positioning of the hand and palm around the pistol grip. It may seem counterintuitive but hand placement resulting in the pistol being held directly in line with the bones of the forearm may not be the optimal placement for every person and we have rarely found that it is.

We find most people grip so the pistol is directly in line with their forearm which is typically good for grasping ability but then leads to non-optimal trigger finger placement and control.

See [FIGURE 3]. Photo #2 is the optimal hold for this person. To clarify, the just stated “optimal” for the person is defined as the ability to place both slow and rapid-fire shots down accurately. The first photo means that the person does not have enough trigger finger on the trigger for them to “Finish Flat” at the moment of shot discharge.

Please let us know if you would like further clarification on this or the drills we use to establish it for a person. Typically, firearms instruction teaches the person how to stand, then how to extend their arms then how to hold a pistol then finally how to manipulate the trigger. We believe this is completely backwards.

We teach the person to find where their finger needs to be to optimally work the trigger. Then that shows where you need to grip the pistol, then to the presentation and finally to whatever stance you are in (remember, typical gunfights are moving, not stationary). Next, I will describe our method for switching hands and some other fine details.

There is a three-step embedded command to the hand switch:

ROCK - GRIP - PLACE

ROCK – This is where we allow the pistol to “rock” forward slightly exposing the backstrap of the pistol. This means the pistol temporarily comes out of a FFG. This means the process of switching hands puts us at a temporary disadvantage from firing immediately. Though the reason for switching hands when you are inside a vehicle means you are needing to gain the ability to aim at the threat or threat area, so the switch is necessary.



Regular right handed grip



Rocking forward slightly to expose the backstrap

GRIP – This is where the other hand immediately goes for a FFG, just like if it was grabbing the pistol out of a holster. As the webbing of the other hand immediately moves to as high up as possible on the backstrap of the pistol and it is rotated sideways to allow gravity to help you gain a grip.



Immediately gripping as high up in the backstrap. Then rotate the pistol to the left in this case to allow gravity to help the hand change.

PLACE – We use the word “place” for this step on purpose. The word place, unlike drop, typically brings a connotation of intention and purpose along with it. Place is the last step in gaining a FFG with the other hand. Hopefully, the word place has more precision and awareness behind it for the student and this point should be reinforced by the instructor.



Using an inert pistol, we typically teach this hand switch from the standing position first. We have the students face one direction and have them bend their arms so they are manipulating the pistol closer to their body and not with extended arms. This is because you have more ability to recover if you fumble the pistol away from you as you can easily extend your arms.

The next teaching progression is typically done seated (mimicking being in a vehicle) and still with an inert pistol. Switching hands when seated requires the use of a “high ready”, muzzle definitively up position for the safety of the student. The same technique is utilized, Rock – Grip – Place. [FIGURE 4]

We prefer this technique because it is the safest and works on all models (frames) of pistols. First, it allows for the most control in a high ready as the pistol is always supported in the webbing of your hand. Secondly, because you “rock” the pistol forward you can easily use pistols with high backstraps like the 1911 as you are coming in from under the backstrap where you created room to grab with the rocking motion. We have had people not be specific with the “Grip” portion as described who failed to grab properly and fail to disconnect the grip safety.

Also, we have had people grab pistols without a larger backstrap like a Glock Gen 3 for example and their hand or glove comes up over the receiver and interferes with the slide, impeding operation.

Lastly, you can use this technique while seated in any position in the vehicle, even a backseat, without allowing your muzzle to sweep people who may be seated in front of you.

FIGURE 4



Right hand grip



Rocking forward



Gripping



Left hand grip

Now, let us talk about a couple possible errors that we have seen when people try to apply the technique without live instruction present.

One common error we have seen and even done ourselves is to use the trigger finger to help push the pistol into the other hand when changing hands. This does not ensure the immediate placement of the webbing of the hand high up into the backstrap as mentioned previously. Also, seen with people whose fingers are long enough to go past the trigger guard, the trigger finger will either push the pistol or even drop down and

slightly hook the outside of the trigger guard [FIGURE 5]. This is especially common to do when changing hands in a muzzle down, low ready position. This is because you do not have the pistol held into the webbing of your hand by gravity as in the muzzle upward hand change.

We find this action of the pointer finger to be non-optimal for two reasons. The first is the increased possibility of a negligent discharge. Having the trigger finger do any work other than just to rest on the slide or to operate the trigger means an increased chance it will slip or be confused and hit the trigger

FIGURE 5



Note finger pressing on trigger guard to “aid” in controlling during hand switch. This is not optimal.

FIGURE 6



Person places finger onto trigger guard to switch hands when but cannot grip the pistol because weapon light is now in the way. Gravity acts on the pistol and person clutches to maintain hold. Unintended discharge is more likely.

FIGURE 7



Right hand hold



Thumb moved to other side to initiate hand switch, is not optimal

FIGURE 8



Here the person is switching the pistol from their right to left hand while rotating their torso in their seat to the left. They inadvertently hit the steering wheel with the pistol.

This momentary loss of control could trigger a grabbing reflex and raises the possibility of an unintended discharge.

when you do not want to.

Second, by pressing the finger to rotate the pistol and grabbing it with your other hand instead of the technique just described, you will not have the same amount of control if the pistol has a weapon-mounted light. [FIGURE 6] The trigger finger should only ever have one action, to operate the trigger or lay still on the slide/receiver.

One other technique we have seen for changing hands with the pistol is the “thumb switching technique”. This technique has the person take the thumb of the pistol holding hand and flip it over to the other side exposing the pistol grip to then be grabbed by the other hand. [FIGURE 7]

We feel this technique is less optimal for the following reasons. First, not everyone has large enough hands to be able to move their thumb around larger backstraps found on some pistols like a 1911 style for example. This is especially important to be able to do as you may need to re-grip in a FFG with that hand to fire.

Second, there is an increased chance the pistol could become dislodged. With all four fingers and the thumb on one side of the pistol and while rotating in a confined space like the driver’s seat it is possible to hit the steering wheel with the pistol for example. You do not have as positive a grip on the pistol, and it may pry out of your hand. [FIGURE 8]

We hope this article has helped to clarify some of the details of the 360° Close Quarter Defense system for vehicle defense. Please refer to IALEFI® Firearms Journals #61 & #62, the IALEFI® 1st Annual Virtual Conference teaching block, or personally contact us with any questions or concerns. **TFI**

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