

What is the Best Firearm for The Academy?

If you are new to police work and/or you are not affiliated with a police agency, then you have a very important choice to make: which firearm are you going to buy for The Academy? For someone with limited knowledge about tactical handguns, you may feel overwhelmed. Hopefully, this article will clear up the confusion and make the decision more manageable.

If you *are* affiliated with an agency, the first thing you need to do is read your agency's policy regarding on-duty weapons. The gun you pick needs to meet their requirements or you will not be allowed to carry it.

Stick to the name brands because quality is a must. If you find yourself involved in a gun battle, you need a reliable handgun that functions in harsh environments. During the course of your career, you are going to get wet, muddy, etc. Your gun is going to be exposed to dirt and possibly sand. You may find yourself in freezing temperatures. Your gun is going to be banged around, even while in the holster. Some guns handle these conditions better than others, so rule out any model that has not been proven over time to withstand this kind of abuse. In plain language, you should look for a well-established model from a major manufacturer.

In case you are completely new to the world of firearms, here are some recommended companies:

[Beretta USA](#)

[Browning Firearms](#)

[Glock Firearms](#)

[Heckler & Koch](#)

[Ruger](#)

[Sig Sauer](#)

[Smith & Wesson](#)

Double action versus single action. The hammer on a pistol must be pulled back, this is one action. The hammer must then be released to fall forward to fire the round, this is the second action.

- Some handguns are single action only. These guns are carried "cocked and locked." This means the hammer is already pulled back and the trigger simply releases the hammer when pulled. The single action is **NOT ALLOWED** in The Academy program.
- Other guns, like the Beretta M9, are carried with the hammer forward, which means that when you pull the trigger for the first shot the hammer must be pulled back before being released. After the first shot, the hammer is already back so you are just releasing it forward with each subsequent shot. This creates two distinct trigger pulls on the gun. The first shot has a much heavier trigger pull, and follow-up shots have a lighter trigger pull. This can create some problems for a new shooter under stress.
- Some guns, like the Glock, have an internal hammer system. This allows for a consistent trigger pull on every shot. Just pull the trigger and the gun fires.

Active safeties versus passive safeties. An active safety requires you to physically disable it before the gun will fire. Passive safeties are disengaged by simply pulling the trigger.

Mounting rails for a pistol light. The gun you choose should have mounting rails for a tactical flashlight. Tactical gunlights are in wide use by police officers around the country.

High capacity magazines. One of the great advantages offered by semi-automatic handguns is the increased carrying capacity. Most manufacturers have increased the capacity of .45 pistols to at least 12 rounds, so this would be the minimum some officers would feel comfortable with. Most officers carry a loaded weapon and 2 spare magazines. The more rounds you have, the longer you can stay in the fight.

Caliber. The most common calibers for law enforcement are 9mm, .40 and .45. The truth is that the most effective round is the one that hits the target. Pick the caliber that allows the most accuracy. The Academy allows any of these three.

- 9mm allows you to carry more rounds and the felt recoil is lighter, allowing more accurate follow-up shots in rapid succession.
- .40 has a higher velocity than .45 and some argue it has more stopping power than a .45 because of this. The .40 has more felt recoil than the 9mm or .45. The rounds are larger than 9mm, so the magazine capacity is slightly less than the 9mm.
- .45 is known for good stopping power and usually has less felt recoil than a .40. The larger rounds reduce the carrying capacity of the magazines. .45s are now offered with larger capacities than the past, but the grip may be too large to be comfortable for officers with small hands.

Magazine compatibility with back-up weapons. The ideal situation is one where your duty weapon and your back-up weapon operate with the same magazines and ammo. This allows you to stay in the fight longer if you have to switch to your back-up gun, by letting you use your spare duty magazines in your back-up.

Money should not be a major factor. If you are just starting The Academy, find out when you actually need to have a gun. If you have a little time, start putting money aside to allow you purchase a quality gun. You are going to be excited about becoming a cop and you will probably want a gun right away, but if waiting a little while will allow you to get a better gun, then put off the purchase as long as possible. You will be happier in the end.

Do not feel compelled to buy a cheaper gun for use during The Academy with the plan to upgrade later. You are going to spend a large amount of time putting rounds through your gun during firearms training in The Academy. With all of that time behind the trigger, you are going to become very comfortable with the weapon. If you later change to a different pistol with different functions or different positions of the releases, safeties, etc., you could suffer from operator error under stress.

*Article courtesy of [Spartan Cops](#)