

Firearm Terminology

- **Action:** the part of a firearm that loads, fires, and ejects a cartridge. Includes lever action, pump action, bolt action, and semi-automatic. The first three are found in weapons that fire a single shot. Firearms that can shoot multiple rounds ("repeaters") include all these types of actions, but only the semi-automatic does not require manual operation between rounds. A truly "automatic" action is found on a machine gun.
- **Barrel:** the metal tube through which the bullet is fired.
- **Black Powder:** the old form of gunpowder invented over a thousand years ago and consisting of nitrate, charcoal, and sulfur.
- **Bore:** the inside of the barrel. "Smoothbore" weapons (typically shotguns) have no rifling. Most handguns and rifles have "rifling".
- **Breech:** the end of the barrel attached to the action.
- **Butt or stock:** the portion of the gun, which is held or shouldered.
- **Bullets:** the projectile. They are shaped or composed differently for a variety of purposes.
 - "round-nose" - the end of the bullet is round.
 - "hollow-point" - there is a hole in the bullet that creates expansion when a target is struck, creating more damage.
 - "1/2 jacketed" - the soft lead is partially surrounded by another metal, usually copper, that promotes exit velocity.
 - "jacketed" - the soft lead is surrounded by another metal, usually copper, that allows the bullet to penetrate a target more easily.
 - "wad cutter" - the front of the bullet is flattened. Used mainly for target p

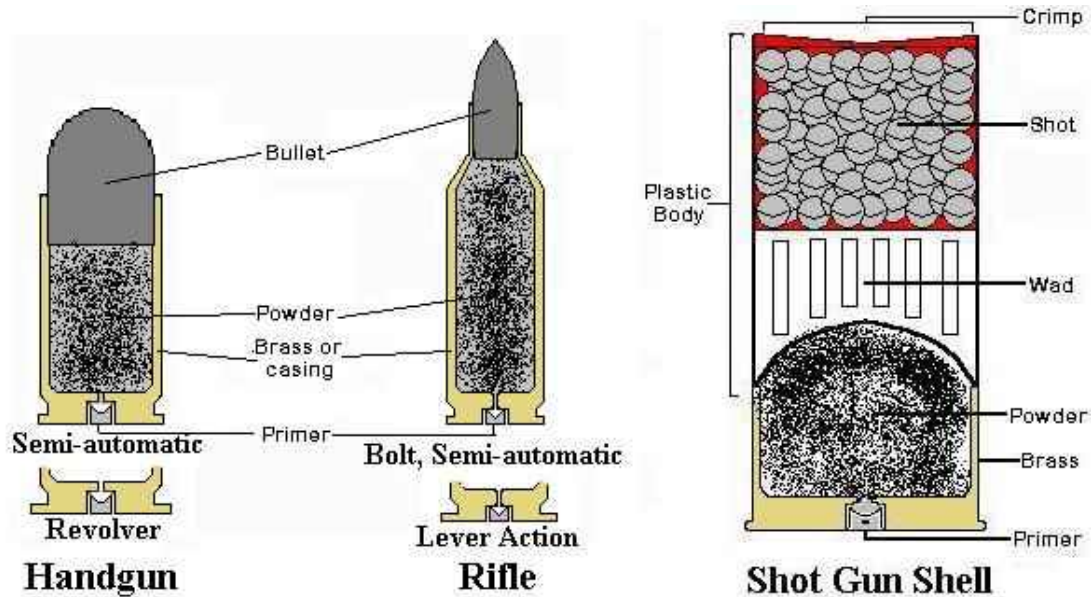


Round Nose Hollow Point Wadcutter



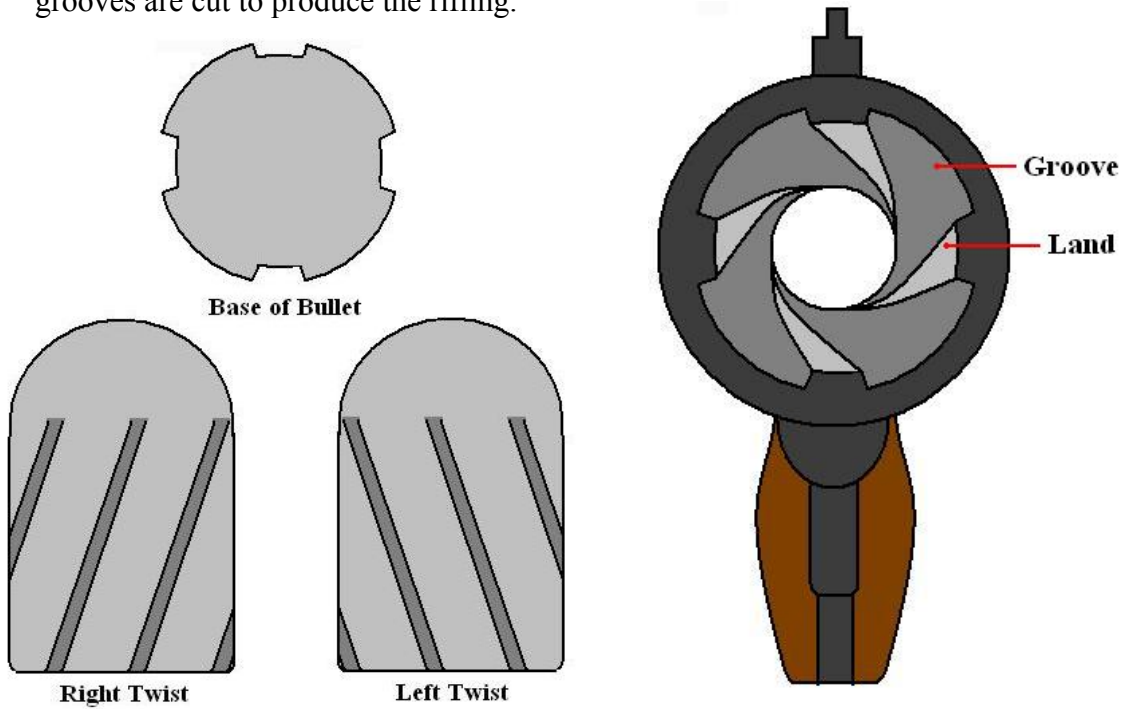
- **Caliber:** the diameter of the bore measured from land to land, usually expressed in hundredths of an inch (.22 cal) or in millimeters (9mm).

- **Cartridge:** also called a "round," "ammunition," or "shell". Made up of a case, primer, powder, and bullet.



- **Centerfire:** the cartridge contains the primer in the center of the base, where it can be struck by the firing pin of the action (most commonly on a 22).
- **Chamber:** the portion of the "action" that holds the cartridge ready for firing.
- **Choke:** a constriction of a shotgun bore at the muzzle that determines the pattern of the fired shot.
- **Double-action:** pulling the trigger both cocks the hammer and fires the gun.
- **Double barrel:** two barrels side by side or one on top of the other, usually on a shotgun.
- **Gauge:** refers to the diameter of the barrel on a shotgun, in terms of the number of lead balls the size of the bore it would take to weigh one pound (10 gauge, 12 gauge, etc.)
- **Hammer:** a metal rod or plate that strikes the cartridge primer to detonate the powder.
- **Ignition:** the way in which powder is ignited. Old muzzle-loading weapons used flintlock or percussion caps. Modern guns use "primers" that are "rimfire" or "centerfire"

- **Lands and grooves:** lands are the metal inside the barrel left after the spiral grooves are cut to produce the rifling.



- **Magazine:** a device for storing cartridges in a repeating firearm for loading into the chamber. Also referred to as a "clip"
- **Magnum:** an improved version of a standard cartridge which uses the same caliber and bullet, but has more powder, giving the fired bullet more energy. Magnum shotgun loads, however, refer to an increased amount of shot pellets in the shell.
- **Muzzle:** the end of the barrel out of which the bullet exits.
- **Pistol:** synonym for a handgun that does not have a revolving cylinder.



- **Powder:** modern gun cartridges use "smokeless" powder that is relatively stable, of uniform quality, and leaves little residue when ignited.
- **Primer:** a volatile substance that ignites when struck to detonate the powder in a cartridge.

- **Revolver:** handgun that has a cylinder with holes to contain the cartridges. The cylinder revolves to bring the cartridge into position to be fired. It is "single-action" when the hammer must be cocked before the trigger can fire the weapon. It is "double-action" when pulling the trigger both cocks and fires the gun.



- **Rifling:** the spiral grooves cut inside a gun barrel that gives the bullet a spinning motion.
- **Rimfire:** a cartridge with the primer distributed around the periphery of the base.
- **Safety:** a mechanism to prevent firing of the gun.
- **Shotgun:** a gun with a smoothbore that shoots cartridges that contain "shot" or small metal pellets (of lead or steel) as the projectiles.
- **Sights:** the device(s) on top of a barrel that allow the gun to be aimed.
- **Silencer:** a device that fits over the muzzle of the barrel to muffle the sound of a gunshot. Most work by baffling the escape of gases.
- **Single-action:** the hammer must be manually cocked before the trigger can be pulled.
- **Smokeless powder:** refers to modern gunpowder, which is really not "powder" but flakes of nitrocellulose and other substances. Not really "smokeless" but much less so than black powder.
- **Stock:** a wood, metal, or plastic frame that holds the barrel and action and allows the gun to be held firmly.