

Defensive Strategies



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Contributing Editor

If you are a frequenter of websites that purport to provide crucial information to armed private citizens, you might have come across some “Rules for a Gunfight” that have been circulating for a long time.

On many sites the rules are anonymous, but on a few, a mysterious “Drill Sergeant Joe B. Fricks” is credited with developing the rule set. I have not been able to determine whether such a Joe Fricks ever served in the armed forces or ever created these rules. Nonetheless, they do have a military flavor that makes their origin at least possible, if not definitive.

What are those rules, and how do they apply, if at all, to those of us whose distance from the military can be measured in light years? Are there changes or additions that might be needed by armed folks in peacetime?

Let’s look at the original rules, as accurately as I could find them, and

Rules for a Gunfight

then some additional ones provided by other sources, including yours truly.

Drill Sergeant Joe B. Fricks Rules For A Gunfight

1. Forget about knives, bats and fists. Bring a gun. Preferably, bring at least two guns. Bring all of your friends who have guns. Bring four times the ammunition you think you could ever need.

2. Anything worth shooting is worth shooting twice. Ammunition is cheap—life is expensive. If you shoot inside, buckshot is your friend. A new wall is cheap—funerals are expensive.

3. Only hits count. The only thing worse than a miss is a slow miss.

4. If your shooting stance is good, you’re probably not moving fast enough or using cover correctly.

5. Move away from your attacker and go to cover. Distance is your friend. (Bulletproof cover and diagonal or lateral movement are preferred.)

6. If you can choose what to bring to a gunfight, bring a semi or full-automatic long gun and a friend with a long gun.

7. In ten years nobody will remember the details of caliber, stance, or tactics. They will only remember who lived.

8. If you are not shooting, you should be communicating, reloading, or running. Yell “Fire!” Why “Fire”? Cops will come with the Fire Department, sirens often scare

off the bad guys, or at least cause them to lose concentration and the desire to hurt you.

9. Accuracy is relative: most combat shooting standards will be more dependent on “pucker factor” than the inherent accuracy of the gun.

10. Someday someone may kill you with your own gun, but they should have to beat you to death with it because it is empty.

11. Break the rules. Cheat if you have to. Always win. The only unfair fight is the one you lose.

12. Have a plan. Two in the chest, one in the head is not a bad plan.

13. Have a back-up plan, because the first one won’t work. No plan ever survives 10 seconds past first contact with a serious criminal.

14. Use cover or concealment as much as possible, but remember, sheetrock walls and the like stop nothing but your pulse when bullets tear through them.

15. Flank your adversary when possible. Protect yours.

16. Don’t drop your guard.

17. Always do a tactical load, and threat scan 360 degrees. Practice reloading one-handed and off-hand shooting. That’s how you live if you are hit in your “good” side.

18. Watch their hands. Hands kill. Smiles, frowns, eye glances and other facial expressions don’t.

19. Decide NOW to always be aggressive ENOUGH, quickly ENOUGH.

20. The faster you finish the

fight, the less shot you will get.

21. Be polite. Be professional. But, have a plan to kill everyone you meet if necessary, because they may want to kill you.

22. Be courteous to everyone, overly friendly to no one.

23. Your number one option for personal security is a lifelong commitment to avoidance, deterrence, and de-escalation.

24. Do not attend a gunfight with a handgun, the caliber of which does not start with a "4."

25. Use a gun that works EVERY TIME. At a practice session, throw your gun into the mud, then make sure it still works. You can clean it later.

26. Practice shooting in the dark, with someone shouting at you, when out of breath, etc.

27. Regardless of whether justified or not, you will feel sad about killing another human being. It is better to be sad than to be room temperature.

28. The only thing you EVER say afterwards is, "He said he was going to kill me. I believed him. I'm sorry, Officer, but I'm very upset now. I can't say anything more. Please speak with my attorney."

Finally, Drill Sergeant Frick's Rules For Un-Armed Combat.

1. Never be unarmed.

OK, that's the original set as far as I can figure it out. All pretty good rules, as any regular reader of this column might know. Rules 19, 21, and 22 might require some particular study by women who aren't in a military mindset.

The idea that you might have to fight for your life is difficult for some women to accept, and the thought that one might be just forceful enough, but no more is tempting, but wrong. If you are in a fight that you can't avoid and that

might kill or seriously injure you, you should fight back fast and hard, with at least 110% effort.

Similarly, being polite and friendly is important to most women. Those qualities are great with people you can trust, but can be taken advantage of by people with baser motives.

As to Rule 24, yes, a caliber starting with "4" or above is ideal, but not everyone can practice with,

carry, and shoot effectively with such a gun. The modification I'd suggest here is, bring the biggest gun you can shoot quickly and accurately. Nothing handheld is a reliable stopper, even if it does start with a "4." It is better to have a gun that you are comfortable and competent with than a bigger gun

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that you can't manage so well.

Once I got started researching gunfight rules on the web, I found some really good ones from other sources, particularly a Marine Corps site and the online group rec.guns. Here are some additional rules that those places suggest.

A. Avoid gunfights like the plague. Be aware of what is going on around you by staying in condition yellow. Run away if you can to avoid a fight.

B. If you can't bring friends with guns, bring friends who can act as witnesses.

C. Ensure that your gun is loaded. Believe it or not, there are people who don't do this. They carry a gun without a round in the chamber. They believe that they will always have time to chamber a round before the shooting starts. Don't bet your life on it.

D. You will start a gunfight at a disadvantage, so seize the initiative as soon as possible. If you do get into a gunfight, it will probably be with a person that has already made up his mind to kill anyone who gets in his way. You don't go to work everyday thinking, "I'll kill anyone who gets in my way". Therefore, the bad guy has an advantage by starting the confrontation. You can take it away from him very early in the fight if you use good tactics and good shooting.

E. Rules of drawing: If you're the bad guy, draw & shoot first. If you're the good guy, draw second and shoot first.

F. The first person to score a good hit usually wins. A good, vital zone shot will usually take the fight out of your opponent. When he decided to attack you, he probably

thought that you were an easy target. If he is surprised by your ability, he may give up. Place your shots well. Pay attention to where your shots fall. "Speed's fine, but accuracy is final." Don't miss. You can't miss fast enough to win.

G. Wyatt Earp was a moron; seek cover and use it. When you watch a cowboy movie or Dirty Harry, you'll notice that the heroes never use cover. Those actors are not really going to die if they get hit. Real humans do. It is foolish to stand in the open while bullets are flying. Clint Eastwood is bulletproof, we're not.

H. Rules of quitting: Don't quit just because you're hit; GET EVEN. Never quit, period. There is no prize for second place.

I. Anything you do can get you shot, including doing nothing.

J. Fire 'til the felon falls. If you're shooting, it's to stop a deadly attack. Do not stop firing until the assailant's ability to hurt you or others has ended. Don't fire to wound or kill. Fire to STOP.

K. Reload at the first tactical pause. If there is a time-out in the action, use it to reload. Although your gun may not be empty, reload anyway. All of your opponent's buddies may have heard all the activity and are headed your way. It would be nice to have a full gun.

L. Before you quit the fight, make sure the fight is over. Back in the "old days" we used to tell guards and cops on the range, "fire two shots and re-holster your weapon". This is fine on the range ... until a couple of them did it on the street. Well, they didn't hit the bad guy with the first shots and "automatically" re-holstered, only to be shot by the bad guy! We also learned that people don't think in a highly stressful situation, they react ... so

practice like its real life.

M. Always assume that there's one more bad guy somewhere.

N. Never turn you back on an armed bad guy, even if he's down. Never assume your opponent is out of ammo

O. Keep shooting until the threat no longer exists; then stay sharp until somebody with a badge tells you to freeze.

P. When the cops pull up, think fast and move slow. Say the minimum. . Remember the line "Anything you say can and WILL be used against you...?" If you don't have an attorney, now's the time to find one. Consult with your attorney, no matter how justified you think you are. Anything is possible in the legal system, i.e. lawsuits, prosecutions.

Here's a new one from Rec.guns that I confess I never thought of:

Q. Insist on at least \$50K from tabloid TV producers.

Why are these rules good? They distill lots of experience and complex reasoning into nuggets that are easy to remember, and thus might come to mind when it is time to apply them. The rules are also short enough for you to mentally practice them before it is time to actually use them.

Some wisdom shrunken even more is called an aphorism. That is a short pithy instructive saying, a tersely phrased statement of a truth or opinion, an adage. Here's an example: "Slow is steady; steady is fast."

Do you have other rules that you have internalized for any future gunfight? Do you have any other gun-related aphorisms, serious or not? If so, please email them to me, bates@aware.org, and I'll try to get them in a future issue.