

# 53 GREAT Holsters & Belts

What's great advice without compelling choices? Here's half a hundred great holsters and belts built by some of the top makers in the country.

## Belt Holsters



**Safariland Model 0701**  
• Dual-layer polymer  
• Level 2 retention  
**\$85**



**Galco Paddle Lite**  
• Polymer/leather  
• Level 1 retention  
• Medium cant  
**\$30**



**Bianchi Model 120 Covert Option**  
• Leather  
**\$87**



**Blackhawk CQC 3-Slot**  
• Leather  
• Thumb-break retention  
**\$65**



**Bulman PDL**  
• Leather  
**\$90**



**El Paso Sky Six**  
• Leather  
• Thumb-break retention  
**\$65**



**High Noon Need For Speed**  
• Rough-out leather  
**\$90**



**Kirkpatrick Texas Strong Side**  
• Leather  
**\$68**

## Gun Fit

Obviously, a holster holds a gun, but it needs to do so properly. If your gun is too loose, it can move and be in a bad position when you need to draw, and at worst the gun can actually fall out. I don't want to be put in the position of trying to explain to the little old lady at the checkout counter that there is no need to worry as I pick up my gun from the floor—not to mention trying to figure out what to say to the responding police officer.

Conversely, a holster that is too

tight could foul your grip or throw off your draw and derail your shooting. I have tried some holsters that were so tight that it was nearly impossible to retrieve the firearm.

The better the boning of a leather holster the less tight the holster needs to be. Boning is the process by which quality leather holsters are fitted to a specific model of handgun, and it entails forming the leather—when wet—to the contours of the gun with a smooth tool or “bone.” A properly boned holster will adhere to the trigger guard, slide stop and

other physical features detailed into the leather, eliminating the need for a strap to hold the gun in.

The best way to tell whether your gun fits a holster properly is to holster the unloaded pistol or revolver and then run hard and jump up and down. The gun should remain firmly in the holster during these vigorous actions, but it shouldn't be so tight that it impedes the draw. If you find yourself tugging hard to lift your gun from the holster, you need to loosen it. If you have an adjustable holster, the adjustment screw will change →

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←the tension easily. Leather holsters can usually be broken in by simply wearing them around the house.

### Comfort & Support

If you're going to carry for extended periods of time, a holster needs to be comfortable. Comfort has a lot to do with how well the holster fits the contours of your body and how well the holster and belt supports the weight of the gun. The key to proper support is thick, high quality leather in the holster and especially the belt.

While frequently overlooked, gun belts are extremely important. They contribute to both comfort and security of your carry rig. The belt is what keeps the holster positioned upright and prevents it from flopping around.

Don't use a common casual or dress belt. For maximum support, the belt should be made of thick two-ply leather to help support and distribute the weight of the gun.

If you intend on using your belt with an IWB (inside the waistband) holster, order the belt two inches longer than normal. Whichever belt

you choose, be sure that it is properly sized for the belt loops of your holster. If you have a 1.5-inch belt opening in your holster, use a 1.5-inch wide belt. Many shooters struggle with draws and reholstering because of ill-fitting belt/holsters.

### Cant

Cant is the angle at which the holster sits on the belt. Holsters are variously designed for a "straight drop," "cant forward" or what some call a "radical cant." Some holster designs offer adjustable cants.

The forward cant, used for strong-

## IWB Holsters



Safariland Model 27 IWB  
•Leather  
\$48



Galco Summer Comfort  
•Leather  
\$67

Mitt Sparks Executive's Companion •Leather

\$90



Blackhawk CQC IWB  
Leather •Adjustable cant •Tension screw  
\$59



El Paso Summer Cruiser  
•Rough-out leather  
\$75



Bianchi Model 3S  
•Leather •Adjustable cant •Thumb-break retention  
\$82



DeSantis Cozy Partner •Leather  
•Tension device  
\$70

Bulman TSAC  
•Rough-out leather  
\$65



Fist Inc Adjustable IWB  
•Leather  
\$70

Mitch Rosen American Rear Guard  
•Leather  
\$170



## Duty Holsters

Bianchi Model 19  
•Leather  
•Thumb-break retention  
\$63



El Paso Strongside Select  
•Leather  
•Thumb-break retention  
\$75

Safariland Model 2005 Top Gun  
•Leather  
\$125



Kirkpatrick TL-238  
•Lined leather  
•Thumb-break retention  
\$87

side carry, pushes the butt of the gun upward and reduces the amount of the grip that sticks out the back. The greater the cant, the more concealable the gun, but if it's too far forward, getting a proper grip becomes difficult. Cross draw and center carry rigs usually use a rear cant, which pushes the butt of the gun downward.

For strong-side carry, I find a radical cant, which angles the gun forward about 20 degrees, to be a good combination of concealability and accessibility. It's enough angle to keep the butt of a full-size gun

from sticking out the back but still allows a good grip.

### Rise

Another design element is the rise, or how high the gun sits in relationship to the belt. For taller folks, a high rise works well. I find I get better concealability and less flip-flop motion with standard-rise designs. Those of short stature may find that a low-rise holster makes drawing easier.

### Retention Devices

While they may appear to be es-

sential to hold a gun in the holster, retention devices are in fact not necessary. Quality holsters retain the gun quite efficiently by their fit and boning.

The true intent of a retention device is to deter a gun grab. A retention device reduces the ability of others to grab your pistol from its holster.

Retention devices add time to the draw and may foul a draw if the user is not sufficiently practiced. With lots of continuing practice, the use of a retention device adds only a fraction of a second, but it is yet one →

## Light-Capable Duty/Range Holsters



**Bianchi Model 90 Vision** • Leather  
• Thumb-break retention  
**\$85**

**Galco Halo**  
• Leather  
**\$85**



**Blade Tech GL34**  
• Kydex • Thumb-break retention  
**\$103**



**Blackhawk Serpa Light Bearing Duty Holster** • Kydex  
• Level 3 retention  
**\$103**

**DeSantis Tac-Lite** • Kydex  
• Detent retention device  
**\$125**



## Deep Concealment Holsters



**Bianchi Model 4501 Pocket Change**  
• Nylon/rubberized nylon  
**\$15**

**Milt Sparks PCH**  
• Leather  
**\$75**



**Kramer Below the Waistband**  
• Leather/spring steel  
**\$105**



**El Paso Pocket Max**  
• Leather  
**\$42**



**DeSantis Tuck This II**  
• Ballistic nylon  
**\$37**



**Galco Pushup**  
• Leather  
**\$47**



**High Noon Down Under**  
• Leather  
**\$85**



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←more thing to work on.

Another argument against a retention device is that if your dominant hand is injured, using your non-dominant hand to draw from a dominant-side holster may be difficult.

Police officers are far more prone to attempted gun grabs than private citizens, and that's why they use security holsters—often with several security layers. The average person may never come into direct contact with the criminal element and is often better served with a non-retention holster.

## Holster Materials

While leather once dominated the market, Kydex—a plastic-type material that has good molding and machining qualities—has become quite popular. Kydex is relatively inexpensive to manufacture, provides low friction inside the holster and can be designed to be easily adjustable. It's also low maintenance and much less expensive than quality leather.

A great feature of Kydex is that it can be designed so it can be adjusted in terms of tension, cant, rise and types of belt loops.

Kydex has two great disadvantages: It's noisy and lacks flexibility. Also, because the material is hard plastic, it will not mold to your body with use like leather does.

## Design Features

Holsters, regardless of material, should feature certain characteristics.

They should cover the entire length of a handgun's barrel or slide. For IWB carry, full coverage eliminates skin burns. For belt carry, it protects the gun and the front sight.

## Range/Competition Holsters

**Galco M5X Matrix**  
•Thermoplastic  
•Tension-screw retention  
**\$29**



**Blackhawk SERPA 41**  
•Carbon-fiber composite  
**\$49**

**Bulman SBS-2**  
•Lined leather/Kydex  
•Tension-screw retention  
**\$125**



**Safariland Model 007**  
•Polymer  
•Tension device  
**\$56-\$113**

## Field Holsters



**Blackhawk Strike CQC**  
•Carbon-fiber composite  
•Molle mounts  
**\$49**



**El Paso Patton**  
•Leather  
**\$125**



**Bianchi M12 Universal Military Holster**  
•Synthetic  
**\$83**



**Galco S.A.O. Outdoorsman**  
•Leather  
•Thumb-break retention  
**\$82**

## Great Gun Belts



**El Paso Tapered Belt** •Leather •Sizes 32-52 **\$65**

In both cases, full coverage also prevents the front sight from catching on the holster during a draw. In most instances, a short gun can be used in a long holster, but not the other way around.

An indispensable feature for an IWB holster is the ability to stay open while the gun is out of the holster. This is vital to one-handed reholstering.


Another must-have feature is the ability to get a full grip while the gun is holstered. A good draw starts with a good grip. Be sure that you can

reach around the entire grip and place your hand properly up against the bottom of the trigger guard without the holster or belt getting in your way.

I like holsters with body shields. The shield extends upward between the gun and your body and offers significant advantages: it makes for easy reholstering; it helps to keep shirts from being pushed down into the holster; and it protects the gun from body oils, sweat and salt.

Body shields also provide an additional advantage for guns with

external safeties, helping prevent the safety from being deactivated accidentally by rubbing against the body.

There is no exact formula for putting all of these elements together. What is comfortable for one person may not be for another. Unfortunately, it's a trial-and-error situation. The good news is that many quality holster manufacturers accept returns if you are not satisfied. It's worth buying from those companies just for that opportunity, even if you have to pay a little more. 

## Alternate Carry Options



**Bianchi Model 7700 LeatherLite**  
• Synthetic  
• Thumb-break retention  
**\$131**

**Bulman HSH3•Leather**  
• Thumb-break retention  
**\$235**



**Fist Small of the Back 40A**  
• Leather • Thumb-break retention  
**\$125**



**Blade-Tech Tactical Thigh**  
• Polymer  
• Thumb-break retention  
**\$115**



**Kirkpatrick Small of Back•Leather**  
• Tension screw  
**\$72**



**Blackhawk Tactical SERPA**  
• Carbon-fiber composite  
**\$124**



**DeSantis Belt•Leather**  
• Sizes 30-64 **\$55**



**Galco SB6 belt•Leather**  
• Sizes 32-64 **\$100**

**Bianchi Model B4 Ranger Belt**  
• Leather • Sizes 32-46 **\$67**

