

CHOOSING A SHOTGUN

I get a lot of questions on shotguns, what to buy and how to upgrade. For you who are new shooters, you don't need to spend a fortune on a shotgun. If you want to buy a 2000 dollar custom shotgun and have the money for it, buy it. However, most stock shotguns with very little upgrades will serve you well. When getting started, keep it simple.

Let's start with me. I shoot an older Benelli M1 with a 26 inch barrel and a +7 Nordic tube and a Nordic follower. I have removed some of the metal at the loading port. I did this in my garage a little at a time. That's about it for functionality. I did not put on a welded lifter. I like the concept but have never had a need for one. I also run a full weight bolt carrier. Some shooters have lightened their bolt carriers. I have heard many thoughts on whether to have this done or not. I have not seen a need for it on my personal gun. I also do not run an extended bolt release or extended charge handle. These are things that can be done later at your leisure.

Many shooters have had the carrier welded. This was done to prevent ripping off the thumbnail by getting it trapped in the loading port. It is my opinion only that the advent of the load 2 or load 4 method should not relate to this injury. This is based on the shells being pushed in by more of the side of the thumb than the tip. If looking to get your carrier welded I would suggest looking to Jeff at C-Rums, <http://www.c-rums.com/>.

A good pump shotgun will work just fine for getting involved in 3 gun. The most common pump shotgun in use is the Benelli Nova / Supernova (\$500). Can you use this and compete against the guy with an Autoloader? Depends, is the answer. I have seen shooters do very well with a pump gun because they don't overshoot targets. They have that fraction of an extra second during the manual operation. Now when you are beyond that skill level and you want to be highly competitive and go for the win you will most likely want to upgrade to an Auto.

What Auto's are out there and are in use in the 3 gun and tactical shotgun game? Benelli M1 and M2 (\$1,200) are the most common. Benelli Vinci's (\$1,300) are coming around into the sport. Remington Versa Max (\$1,150) has a large following as does the Mossberg 930 (\$1000) and the FNH SLP (\$1,200). I have seen a few Browning's in the mix as well. A good article was also recently written by shotgun aficionado Patrick Kelley on the Stoeger 3000 (\$500). Once the article is in print I will put a link to it here. There are others of course but this is a brief overview. Benelli M4's (\$1,800) are not seen much as they are a gas operated system with 18 1/2 " barrel.

You can run a factory gun pretty much right out of the box and have a good time at a match. You will be at a slight disadvantage with a limited magazine capacity but that is the easiest fix with a Magazine extension. For this I will turn you to our local and fellow 3-gunners at Nordic Components, <http://www.nordiccomp.com/>. Remember to support those who support the sport.

How long of a barrel do you need for tactical shotgun competitions and 3 gunning. I suggest a 24 or 26 inch barrel. Some will think they need a really short gun to start with. I will tell you that you will want the mag tube to hold 8 to 9 rounds. Some like upwards of 10 to 12. Eight is the minimum you should consider. Remember, a loaded start is 9 rounds in the gun, 8 in the tube and 1 in the chamber. Anything less will put you at a disadvantage. A 21 inch barrels used to popular but the most common are as stated above, your everyday field barrel of 24 to 26 for ducks and pheasants. You will be most successful buying in at those barrel lengths. If you already have a gun with a 28 inch barrel it will work too. Be careful not to buy a ported barrel as that would bump you to the open division.

What kind of sights should you have? The simplest is the Tom Knapp Easy hit sight. It adheres right to the vent rib. High Viz also makes some good sight options. Both are inexpensive.

Choke tubes. If you can only have one, make it a Light Modified. If you can only have 2 make them IC and Modified. See the article on Choke tubes for more on this topic.