RAM Defense LLC
Concealed Carry Guns Recommendations

This list is not comprehensive but provides a good reference for concealed carry sub-compact and micro-compact handguns we would recommend. Despite its low price point, please consider NOT buying a Taurus semi-automatic. Remember, there are tons of fine guns out there and we cannot cover them all.

Ammo recommendations are at the end of the document.

Remember the rules of choosing the right gun:

1. What do you want or need it for?
2. Pick a gun you'll actually use for that purpose.
    a. The bigger the gun, the easier it is to shoot but the harder it is to carry.
    b. The smaller the gun, the harder it is to shoot but the easier it is to carry.
3. Get the most effective ammunition and/or caliber you can shoot.

NOTE: In the state of Minnesota, there is an unconstitutional hoop you have to jump through before buying a pistol: You have to get permission from the county sheriff to be able to buy pistols. This requirement can be met by applying for a "Permit to Purchase" which is free and good for one year or take a class for and acquire a "Permit to Carry" which costs money but is good for five years. As of 4/21/2025, adults ages 18-20 can now get a Permit to Carry, but they still CANNOT buy handguns from a FFL dealer, BUT can legally buy or transfer handguns privately with conditions set by MN law.

RAM Defense LLC offers great value professional training and resources. More info can be viewed at https://ramdefense.com/.

TIP: YouTube, gun reviews on websites, manufacturers' websites, retailers' inventory on hand, friends, family, local experts and gun shows all can help in the decision process. Don't forget that besides the research, actually holding the gun and operating the action are enormously helpful when choosing.

To "fit" a gun to you, please see our guide called "Fitting a Handgun".

Our short list of some of the most popular AND recommended micro-compact 9mms in America:

- **Springfield Armory Hellcat**
    - **Can carry 11 + 1 rounds of 9mm.**
    - **GREAT shooting performance for the size.**
    - **Micro-compact easy to carry in a pocket holster.**
    - **GREAT texturing.**
    - **Can get it pre-milled to mount a red dot like a Hex Wasp.**
    - **Great for small to large hands.**
    - **Cost: around $525+**
    - **https://www.springfield-armory.com/hellcat-series-handguns/hellcat-3-micro-compact-handguns/**

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- **Glock 43 or 43X**
  - Extremely accurate.
  - 9mm.
  - Glock dependability.
  - Great for larger hands that find the Hellcat too small a grip.
  - Cost: $450+.
  - https://us.glock.com/en/pistols/g43
  - https://us.glock.com/en/pistols/g43x-us
  - NOTE: The Glock 48 is similar in some ways.
    - https://us.glock.com/en/products/commercial-firearms/pistols/G48-MOS

- **Sig Sauer P365 or P365XL or Legion**
  - Read a great review here: http://www.gunsandammo.com/handguns/first-look-sig-sauer-p365/
  - https://www.tyrantcnc.com/blog/gun-review-sig-sauer-p365-axg-legion
  - Small, shootable, great for females, especially the SAS sight (that they don't sell anymore but Meprolight Bullseye aftermarket sight can replicate sort of).
    - https://www.meprolight.com/product/mepro-ft-bullseye-rear/
  - $499 - $599 to $1,000+ for the Legion (now touted as one of the finest carry guns).

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- NOTE: The P365 Fuse is also gaining public popularity.

- **Walther PDP or PDP-F series**
  - .9mm
  - Won multiple "Handgun of the Year" awards, including for females.
    - F series is designed for female shooters:
      - 20% easier slide rack.
      - Reduced trigger reach.
      - Smaller grip.
  - Quality.
  - Performance duty trigger.
  - SuperTerrain slide serrations.
  - Performance duty texturing.
  - Red dot ready.
  - Red dot ergonomics.
  - About $650.
  - https://waltherarms.com/firearms/pdp
  - https://waltherarms.com/firearms/pdp-f-series

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- **Smith & Wesson M & P Shield or EZ**
  - The EZ:
    - The slide racks so easy you won't believe it.
    - Could be a great choice for elderly or handicapped (as well as anyone else).
    - BUT, we have seen it also fail to fully cycle when a shooter "limp-wrists" it.
      - So, we do not recommend it as much as we once did.
    - It is larger than the other micro 9s on our "short list" and arguably may not even be a micro-9.
    - About $450.

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Other good guns:

- **Smith and Wesson Bodyguard 2.0**
    - If you're going to carry a .380, this is a great choice.
        - NOTE: .380s have only about HALF of the take down power of a 9mm!
            - Still, it's very carryable as a pocket pistol, aids in self defense, etc.
            - Always use a holster with this type of handgun!
    - Some argue it's better than the Ruger LCP II or LCP Max.
        - Both form and shooting, and the Ruger LCP II or LCP Max shoot well.
    - Slim with aggressive slide texturing.
    - Orange and night sight center front sight.
    - So slim.
    - About $400.

- **Ruger LCP II or LCP Max (holds more ammo)**
    - If you're going to carry a .380, this is a great choice.
        - NOTE: .380s have only about HALF of the take down power of a 9mm!
            - Still, it's very carryable as a pocket pistol, aids in self defense, etc.
                - Always use a holster with this type of handgun!
    - Small but shoots extremely well.
        - So much so that it surprises you.
    - One of the best value .380s.

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        - We highly recommend it.
    - About $300.

- **Kel-Tec P380**
    - Small, light and affordable
    - Old school but oh, so small!
        - Hold one when you shoot it but once you practice it it's so convenient to carry.
    - Consider moving up to the only slightly larger Ruger LCP II or LCP Max.
    - Cost: $278+.

- **Smith and Wesson M&P Shield**
    - Three dot sights.
        - Somewhat customizable more than Walther PPS.
        - Button magazine release.
    - Pros:
        - Shoots well.
        - Smooth/non-aggressive texturing.
        - Good trigger.
            - Not as good as the Walther PPS.
                - But, it is customizable with parts from Apex.
    - Cons:
        - Small manual safety that can get engaged.
    - Cost: $350-$400.

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- **Ruger LCR**
  - Very trustworthy, easy to deploy.
  - Hammerless.
    - No catching when pulling.
  - Night sight on front (or used to come with it).
  - Cost: $400ish.

- **Walther CCP 9**
  - Smaller, concealable while Walther ergonomics.
  - 9mm.
  - Has a manual safety.
    - Arguably either good or bad.
  - Slide lock is very flat/flush.
    - Arguably either good or bad.
  - Pros:
    - Won award by NRA: http://www.waltherarms.com/walther-ccp-awarded-2016-golden-bullseye/.
    - Good shooter.
  - Cons:
    - Recall that can be fixed: http://www.waltherarms.com/walther-resources/ccp-recall/.
  - Cost: $368 - $450.

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- **Walther PPS**
  - Chamber/round indicator.
  - Paddle type magazine release on trigger guard.
  - Three dot sights.
    - Somewhat customizable (including P99 sights) but not as much as M&P Shield.
  - Pros:
    - No manual safety.
    - Shoots well.
    - Good trigger.
      - Slightly better than the M&P Shield.
  - Cons:
    - Remove backstrap and it won't fire.
      - Could come off inadvertently.
    - Aggressive texturing on backstrap.
    - Gap between grip and magazine that pinches some shooters during recoil.
  - Cost: $500-$600.

- **Kimber Micro 9**
  - Kimber quality is outstanding, BUT, it's so good and so smooth that we have seen several students with Kimbers accidentally lock the slide in place with their thumbs nudging the easily moved manual safety while shooting. If you are aware of this issue and train for it, maybe even using the manual safety as a thumb rest, it can be a great gun.

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- **Sig Sauer 938**
  - 9mm.
  - Night sights.
  - 1911 style.
    - So it has a manual safety.
      - We usually encourage no manual safety models of carry guns.

- **Sig Sauer 238**
  - .380.
  - Night sights.
  - 1911 style.
    - So it has a manual safety.
      - We usually encourage no manual safety models of carry guns.

- **Kel-Tec PF9**
  - Old school but Kel-Tec is so innovative you should check out all their products, new and older.

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- **Kahr PM9**

- **Kahr CW9**
  - Budget-minded decent gun.
  - Almost same size as M&P Shield.
  - Easy, smooth, short none stacking 6 pound trigger pull great for smaller hands/fingers.
    - But, on the range anyone with larger hands (specifically longer fingers) will have a harder time pulling the trigger because of pronounced trigger reach.

- Springfield Armory XDS
  - 9mm or .45.
  - Pros:
    - Very good performer for so compact (i.e. short) a gun.
  - Cons:
    - Very thick/wide.

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- Had a recall of an extremely rare issue.
  - More info on that here: http://www.springfieldrecall.com/Recall%20FAQ.asp
- Cost: $450+.

- **Springfield Armory EMP**
  - 9mm or .40.
  - Nearly perfect concession between size and function.
  - Pros:
    - HEAVY.
    - Outstanding quality.
    - Outstanding accuracy.
    - Outstanding shootability.
    - Night sights.
  - Cons:
    - HEAVY.
    - 1911 style single action first, e.g. must cock hammer to fire.
    - Grip safety.
    - Manual safety.
  - Cost: about $1,000.

- **Charter Arms Pathfinder**
  - .22LR or .22 Magnum.
  - If you choose to use a .22LR for personal defense, it is better to use a revolver.
    - .22LR rimfire ammo and/or the auto-loader (i.e. semi-automatic) pistols that shoot them are prone to malfunction.
  - Pros:
    - .22LR or .22 Magnum revolver.

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        - Mostly stainless steel.
        - Look, feel and weight of higher caliber revolver.
            - Aids in shooting.
        - Very dependable.
        - Good grip.
        - 6-shot.
        - Hammer.
            - Can cock, which moves the trigger to a great reset point for easy shooting.
            - Place for a holster strap to go.
    - Cons:
        - Partly plastic/polymer.
        - Hammer.
            - Can catch on clothing/apparel when drawing.
    - Cost: about $350.

Honorable mentions:

- **Diamondback DB9**.
    - Pros:
        - Micro-compact that is comfortable.
        - Durability with less felt recoil.
    - Cost: $250+

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DEFENSIVE AMMO RECOMMENDATIONS:

Consider going to YouTube and watching ballistic gelatin tests for the ammo + gun to find most effective pairing.

NOTE: Make sure your handgun can handle +P or +P+ higher pressure ammo if shooting defensive ammo--.380s or older guns may NOT be able to.

- **Liberty Ammunition brand Ultra-Lights**
  - ITS 9MM HAS AS MUCH KINETIC ENERGY AS A .45 ACP!
  - IT WILL PENETRATE LEVEL IIIA BODY ARMOR!
  - THE ULTRA-LIGHTS WEIGH ABOUT HALF AS MUCH AS A NORMAL 9MM ROUND!
  - Be aware, they are LOUD and FAST!
    - They feel like lightning shooting out the end of the barrel.
    - They require more intention / attention to shoot than target rounds.
    - Some people report they are easier to shoot, some harder, may be based on the gun or shooter.
  - It is twice the price of other defensive rounds at about $2 / each round.
    - We find the best price is usually at www.grabagun.com.
    - The Woods Goods in Warroad, MN, stocks it as of 2024 BUT it usually sells out FAST!
      - https://thewoodsgoods.com/
- **Federal HST**
  - Excellent expansion and penetration.
  - Very reliable.
- **Federal Hydra-Shock**
  - Has a central peg in the hollow point that keeps it from plugging.
  - Nickel plated.
    - Anti corrosion and smoother load.
- **Hornady Critical Defense**
  - Has a ballistic tip in the hollow point that keeps it from plugging.
  - Nickel plated.
    - Anti corrosion and smoother load.
- **Winchester PDX**
  - Bonded bullet that won't come apart.
  - Fans out looking like a ninja throwing star that shreds.
- **Remington Golden Saber**
  - Uses casing brass to jacket the bullet.
  - Has enormous cavity in the bullet that's like a cookie cutter and creates gruesome wound cavity.
- **Speer Gold Dot**

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- Very reliable.
- Trusted by many law enforcement agencies.
- Cartridge tech has been updated.

- ~~**Federal 30 Super Carry**~~
  - ~~A whole new caliber (30 caliber) that lets you get more rounds in a magazine than 9mm, but performs as well as a 9mm.~~
  - ~~AT THIS TIME, YOU WOULD HAVE TO BUY A SMITH & WESSON OR A NIGHTHAWK CUSTOM HANDGUN CHAMBERED TO FEDERAL 30 SUPER CARRY.~~
  - **Hey! Instead of buying a new caliber handgun, try Liberty Ammo Civil Defense / Ultra-Lights first! Now you can effectively carry soft armor piercing .45 stopping power in your pocket with even more capacity at nearly half the weight!**

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