

Handgun Holsters Categorized by Method of Wear

Popular holster types are:

Outside the Waistband (OWB) or belt holsters, are most commonly used by police and military, and by citizens who choose to open carry. Belt holsters can be worn high and close to the body, slightly behind the hip bone ("4:00 position"), and can be concealed under a long, untucked shirt or jacket.

Inside the waistband (IWB) holsters, which clip or mount to a belt and allow one to securely holster the weapon inside the pants. Some IWB holsters give the wearer the option of tucking a shirt over the firearm and holster.

Shoulder holsters consist of two straps connected in a manner similar to a backpack, with the actual holster mounted to a strap on the right or the left side. Shoulder holsters are designed to position the handgun: 1. in a vertical position with the barrel pointed generally toward the ground; 2. in a vertical position with the barrel pointed generally upward; 3. in a horizontal position, with the barrel pointed generally behind the wearer. Shoulder holsters are typically comfortable for the wearer, as they distribute the weight across the shoulders instead of directly on the belt.

Sling holsters are similar to shoulder holsters, but instead consist of a band worn over one shoulder and another around the chest. This style of holster (designated M3 for the early 1-strap model and M7 for the two-strap model in the U.S. military) was used for pilots, tank operators, and other vehicle drivers in World War II as they were easier to use in the seated position. They became popular with other soldiers who disliked the heavy leather flap on the standard issue M1911-A1 hip holster. They are still produced by the U.S. military for the M9 pistol.

The "Belly Band" holster is a wide elastic belt with a built-in holster, usually worn under an untucked shirt, to facilitate access. There are various types, worn at the belt line or higher, with the gun placement anywhere from in front to under the armpit. In order to remain in place, a belly band must be extremely tight; this is generally uncomfortable - it is comparable to wearing a girdle.

Pocket holsters are used for very small weapons, such as a back-up gun or a mousegun.

Small of back holsters place the weapon directly over the center of the back, allowing for even large handguns to be carried with little printing. While both comfortable and stylish, should the wearer fall onto the weapon (such as in a close quarters fight) serious spinal injury may occur. For this reason, in recent times many police departments in the US have disallowed any equipment, gun, handcuffs, etc., to be worn in this position.

Groin holsters place the handgun mostly below the waistline around the 12:00 position. There are few body movement or clothing restrictions with this holster type.

Thigh holsters (also called tactical or drop leg holsters) are a popular military and police item that holds the sidearm on the leg where the hand naturally hangs, making for a fast draw. Early U.S. cavalry units

used these in the early 1900s with a leather thong strapping it to the leg. Modern ones often use a drop leg PALS grid with a modular holster attached, often with buckles for quick release. Police and military personnel wear these when a bulky vest or a full belt (as in the case of K9 officers) makes belt carry impractical. Western style holsters of this type, known as Buscadero holsters, were worn by many actors in Western films and TV shows set in the 1800s, even though they weren't invented until the 1920s.

Ankle (aka "boot") holsters offer excellent concealment and are used by law enforcement officials who wish to carry a secondary weapon to back up their primary firearm. However, many officers find that even a small handgun bounces around too much while running or other physical activity.

Chest holsters can be attached to MOLLE compatible vests and chest carriers. Like shoulder holsters, chest holsters are often easier to draw from than belt holsters when the operator is seated inside a vehicle.

Strut holsters are used exclusively for concealed carry. They are worn above the trouser belt line as a cross draw holster located directly under one's arm (9 o'clock position) or toward the front of the body (10 to 11 o'clock position). The design contains a strut which is shaped to nest behind one's trouser belt and attach to the holster at the other end. The strut transfers the weight of the firearm to the belt and retains the weapon in place for secure removal. A flexible band is also attached to the holster and worn above the waist to keep the weapon snug against the body. Concealment is achieved by wearing the unit inside of a shirt which may be tucked in or worn outside.

Pancake holsters are typically made of two pieces of the material with the handgun sandwiched between them, containing at least two belt slots. They should be carried slightly off the hip to the rear part of the back. The pancake style of carry allows pulling the gun tight against the body for a better concealment.

Cross draw belt holsters are designed to be worn outside the waistline, on the weak side of the body (opposite to the dominant hand). Although, the cross-draw carry is often considered to be slower due to the necessary movement across the body; drawing the gun from a seated position can be more comfortable and even quicker carry method comparing to the others. The cross-draw belt holsters may be an ideal option for wearing a backup gun on the waistline and also appropriate choice for women due to the comfort carry and naturally good adaptability to the female body.

Other, specialized types of holsters are designed to be mounted inside briefcases, day planners, purses and Filofaxes, or even articles of clothing, including the bra.

Above courtesy Wikipedia.org