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Buying a Rifle, Part I

So, you have decided to get one of each type of firearm. Let's start with the rifle. What should you look for in a rifle? That is the first question. Get your pen and paper, I will wait... ;-)

A. How much money do you have to spend? No, that's not enough, go home and get more. ;-) Very seriously, your purchase price is a highly important issue. Set a budget. Write down a dollar figure that you are comfortable spending on your firearm purchase.

B. Then hit the bricks, or the keyboard, and find out if your budget estimate is valid. Can you find what you want for the money you have earmarked for this? Is your estimate too high, or too low? You must make a realistic assessment in the beginning. Do not expect to find a Remington 700 in stainless steel with a muzzle brake, pillar bedding, Leupold scope, rings and bases in a steel combo lock case for \$500.

C. What cartridge do you want this beauty to be chambered for? Most beginners rush out and buy too much gun. They get a .300 Ultra Bazooka with the Framis Trick scope and chrome reverse Whatsit. Here is the magic: First timers, you should buy a .22 LR rifle. Bolt, break, semi does not matter. Buy the best you can afford. All the skills you use to shoot the .22 LR will be the same as the .300 Ultra Bazooka. Then you can afford to shoot the .22 LR and learn about shooting while you practice! The .300 Ultra Bazooka will be there later.

D. Visit as many sources of gun sellers as you can. Gun shops are like restaurants. No one wants to eat at McDonalds all the time, I hope. Try them all, meet the staff. Most stores have a very resourceful crew who love to share their knowledge. Write down what you learned from them.

E. Surf the internet but beware. There is a lot of good stuff out there but there is 10x as much crap. Filter your findings.

F. Take a reasonable period of time for your research and to study those notes/comparisons you have been diligently making.

G. **MAKE A DECISION AND BUY SOMETHING!** Avoid "paralysis through analysis" where you spend so much time doing your homework you forget that the object is to buy a gun.

H. **PAY ATTENTION, THIS IS IMPORTANT:** If you have a better half, make this your rule. Whatever you spend on guns, they get to spend on themselves. Fair is fair. It also keeps the home happy. And if home ain't happy, you won't be either. So remember, the gate swings both ways.

See you at the matches,
Murray "DOC" Gardner.

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Buying a Rifle, Part II

Let's work towards finishing off buying a rifle.

As part of your research, you need to know how much energy you need to deliver on the target. This means that you have to know something about ballistics. This is a fairly simple process.

If you want to be a target shooter, study what the winners are using. No need to waste your time studying the wonder-gun you saw in a book. Maybe sometime down the road you will become the guru who leads everyone out of the darkness into the light with the gun you choose, but until then, go with what the winners use. They did not get to the top without knowing what works. Borrow that knowledge for now.

If you want to hunt with your rifle, you might be able to save a bundle and become much more knowledgeable about your gun and shooting. Try this thought: You MUST know how much energy the rifle you are going to hunt with can deliver. Then you need to know how much energy it takes to knock down the animal you are going to hunt. There must be a direct correlation to these two. If you want to hunt only deer, you do not need a .300 Ultra Bazooka. If you are only going to hunt moose, you need to have the correct cartridge that delivers the energy to put Mr. Moose in the freezer.

Once you have discovered the numbers, then think about this.

If you want to hunt a wide variety of animals, as most hunters do, then you might think you need a wide variety of rifles. If I sold guns, then I would confirm that for you, very emphatically. :-) But, as I don't sell guns, let me share this idea with you.

Buy a good quality rifle, scope, rings and bases and any other good quality accessories; sling, swivels, case, lock, scope covers, etc. Then buy a good reloading tool.

Now I get to push my ideas on you.

I would suggest you buy a rifle such as a Winchester, Remington, Browning, Ruger, Sako or similar quality. These brands will provide great quality, service and reliability for longer than you will be around. Leupold makes a high end scope with wonderful support, should you need it, in a price range that does not break the bank but provides an optically clear sight system. Use the same brand of rings to solidly anchor the scope to your rifle. This is an area where it does not pay to scrimp. Have it mounted by a reliable gunsmith.

What cartridge?

My thought is something with LOTS of energy. The .300 Winchester Magnum cartridge would be a very smart choice. Any cartridge that provide the same amount of maximum energy is also something to consider. Over the years, I have found that .300 Win Mag will be more than adequate.

See you at the matches,
Murray "DOC" Gardner.

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Rifle Ammunition

Good! You have decided on a good rifle that you have researched, with a matching scope. The scope should cost 50-100% of the cost of the rifle so you are not putting nylon tires on a Ferrari. You have found the right gunsmith to mount these items.

There is one more thing you should buy, a reloading kit. You can buy Dillon, from me of course, or any brand. This will cost you anywhere from \$250-\$1000. You will more than recover that cost in ammunition over the years. But the money is NOT important. Yes, I actually wrote that! ;-) The important thing is that once you reload, you will begin to discover a universe of knowledge about what you, your rifle and your ammo are capable of doing.

But you are still wondering about which cartridge. As I mentioned in an earlier blog, I think you want that .300 Win Mag-- here is why.

With any .30 calibre rifle, you have a very wide range of bullets, powder and primers available for reloading. In .30, bullets range from around 90 grains up to 250 grains. Combine those bullet weights with the right choice from almost 125 gun powders and you can hunt anything from gophers to grizzlies with one rifle. By choosing .300 Win Mag, you can load up to the maximum power it can deliver but you can ALSO load it down to .30 Carbine energy or less. Smaller game, less energy. Larger game, more energy. And all with just one rifle!

And talk about smart! As you learn to reload and discover the energy and trajectory of the cartridges you are making, you will begin to really UNDERSTAND what is happening. That is like a light coming on in a dark place. Knowledge is a tremendous tool in shooting, and you can have it just by making the effort.

Once you have all the gear and are reloading for it, you need to USE it. That's right-- get out to the range MORE THAN ONCE A YEAR! You can have the greatest kit in the world but if you cannot make it work to its potential, what's the point?

So grab all that ammo you have reloaded and take it to the range. You should go to the range at LEAST once a week and shoot. Add to that your dry firing two times a week and you will be able to predict where your shot will strike when you shoot. You not only need to be able to hit the target, you need to be able to "call" your shot placement. The average, run of the mill, off the shelf rifle with a decent scope and factory ammo should be capable of a 1" group at 100m off the sand bags.

If you, your rifle and ammo are NOT capable of that, get that fixed first. Yes, I can fix that part for you with lessons, if you want.

See you at the matches,
Murray "DOC" Gardner.

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