

Gun Cleaning

By Chuck Hawks

After the fun of shooting comes the drudgery of cleaning one's guns. For this purpose most shooters acquire a cleaning kit. If you are starting out, the basics can be acquired as a package deal, the kit from Outers being typical. Cleaning kits typically include a three section aluminum cleaning rod of appropriate diameter for the caliber purchased (one section if it is a pistol cleaning kit), two tips to hold patches, cloth cleaning patches, a bore brush, a bottle of liquid powder solvent, and a bottle of gun oil. Some kits include a small tube of gun grease, and if it is a shotgun cleaning kit it usually includes a bore swab. To use one of these kits, merely follow the directions that come with the cleaning kit.

After purchasing the basic kit, you will need to add patches, tips, and brushes in all the calibers for which you own guns. You may also need to purchase additional cleaning rods. Cleaning rods are generally available in appropriate diameters for .17 caliber rifles and pistols, .22 rifles and pistols, centerfire rifles and pistols, and shotguns. Some shooters prefer to purchase one-piece steel cleaning rods, which are better but more expensive and less portable than the jointed aluminum kind.

In addition to the basic cleaning kit I recommend the purchase of a silicone cloth. This is used to wipe fingerprints off the gun after handling and replaces the traditional oily rag. Silicon cloths are excellent protection against "rust prints."

There are also silicon-based sprays for external use on firearms (which are then wiped down). I have never used silicon sprays myself, but those that do report favorably on them.

Prolix total gun care product is a proprietary cleaner, lubricant, and preservative that can replace both traditional powder solvent and gun oil. I use Prolix on all of my handguns. It comes in 16 ounce plastic bottles with "trigger squeeze" tops, or bulk jugs. Prolix is a one step gun cleaner that will not harm wooden grips, but you should test it on plastics before use. (It does not attack the polymer used in Glock pistols.) I first read about Prolix in Peter Kasler's book GLOCK: The new Wave in Combat Handguns. Prolix is the chosen cleaning product of Glock armorers. It contains industrial grade solvents that penetrate and remove fouling.

I spray Prolix down the barrel and through the cylinder chambers to remove fouling, let it sit for a short time, and clean the gun as I would if using a normal powder solvent. Prolix is the only cleaner/lubricant I will spray into an action. After cleaning, wipe off all the Prolix you can. Prolix has a dry solid lubricant/protectant base that leaves a residue at the molecular level on gun parts that is very long lasting. It completely eliminates the use of gun oil.

An accessory I use to clean my rifle and shotgun barrels is the "Bore Snake." This is a Hoppe's product that pretty much replaces the tiresome chore of running patch after patch through the bore. It is a synthetic cord several feet long and slightly larger than the bore size for which it is intended. At the front of the Bore Snake is the first floss area, designed to remove foreign particles prior to the scrubbing action of the brush. A bore brush is embedded in the next couple of inches of the cord to loosen hard deposits. The rest of the Bore Snake is the main floss, with 160 times more surface area than an ordinary patch. A length of small diameter cord, considerably smaller than the bore size, is attached to the leading end of the Bore Snake; it has a skinny brass weight at its tip.

When I use a Bore Snake I generally saturate the first floss area with Hoppe's #9 bore solvent. Then I drop the Bore Snake's brass weight into the breech of the gun and let it carry the small diameter cord through the barrel and out the muzzle. Next I grab the cord and slowly pull the body of the Bore Snake completely thorough the barrel. Just to make sure, I pull the Bore Snake through the barrel a second time (without adding more Hoppe's). That's it, the barrel is cleaned. Bore Snakes are made for all common rifle, pistol, and shotgun calibers.

A handy accessory for quickly wiping a shotgun barrel is the Tico Tool from Silencio (the ear protector people). The Tico Tool looks like a very long, very skinny "duster" (of the sort your mother used to dust bookshelves) that mated

with a shotgun cleaning rod. Like Bore Snakes, they are made to fit specific gauges. The Tico Tool is merely pushed back and forth through the shotgun's bore, exactly like a cleaning rod. Because it fits tightly, it removes the bulk of the loose powder residue, just like a feather duster carries off dust. An accessory tip (supplied with the Tico Tool) is used to oil the shotgun barrel after the Tico Tool has done its work. A Tico Tool is a handy accessory at the range, but it cannot be said to actually clean the gun.

A good accessory to keep with your cleaning kit is a bore light. These are basically penlight flashlights with a light conducting plastic tip that is bent at an angle. The plastic tip can be inserted into the breech of a firearm so that the light shines down the bore. A bore light makes it easy to see the inside of a gun barrel.

While I am most likely to spend my money on products that speed-up gun cleaning, like Bore Snakes and Tico Tools, there are also products designed to do a better job than the ordinary cleaning kit. One of these, used by a Guns and Shooting Online staff member who praises it extravagantly, is the Outers Foul Out kit. This is an Electro-chemical process basically consisting of an electrode rod that goes in the bore, a liquid electrolyte, a bore plug, connecting wires, and an electronic "black box." When assembled per the instructions, the system is plugged in and cleans the bore Electro-chemically. An LED on the black box comes on to indicate when the core is clean. The length of time it takes for the LED to come on depends on the amount of fouling in the bore. Typically this process takes from 1/2 to several hours. Foul Out is the ultimate bore cleaner and works with handguns or rifles.

One thing worth noting on the subject of gun cleaning is to go very easy with the gun oil. Keep excessive oil out of the bore and action of any firearm. Very, very little oil is required to lubricate the action, and none is necessary in the bore unless the gun is to be stored for an extended period of time. Excess oil collects dust and dirt and accelerates wear. It can also gum up an action, and it will attack and soften a wooden stock. (Regular gun oil is completely different from the kind of oils used to finish stocks.) If you use Prolix to clean and lubricate, and a silicone cloth to wipe down, you can omit gun oil altogether and your guns will be better for it.