



Selecting the Right Firearms Training School or Instructor

By Brian S. Williams – Founder / Director of Training Services at
Grey Wolf Consulting, LLC
www.greywolfconsulting.us

Without regard for the reason why a firearm is purchased, personal protection, competitive shooting, hunting or professional development, the need for quality training cannot be overstated. This is where the selection of the right instructor is critical and a quality instructor will teach more than simple marksmanship, they help develop proper and safe gun handling skills, critical decision-making and will help build the confidence that comes from competence.

Unfortunately however within recent years there appears to be an explosion of instructors and training schools offering training courses promising to make the novice shooter who has never even handled a firearm into a Hollywood Action Star. Because it is not difficult to recognize that this is not something that is truly likely to happen, the selection of the right instructor or training school can make the difference between learning the correct techniques and not wasting money or the opposite.

Again, with all the choices which are available, the selection process can seem overwhelming and the goal of this article is to aid within the selection process by focusing on a few key factors which will help ensure that you find an instructor or training school that is safe, professional, and appropriate for your experience level.

Safety

The very first criteria which should be confirmed before making a selection is the overall safety of both the instructor and facilities used. This can be achieved by speaking with the instructor about their safety record and safety plans, requesting to observe a live class or speaking with others who have trained there. A truly professional instructors will always place safety above all else and every lesson should continually monitor and reinforce the universal rules of firearm safety, proper range etiquette, and responsible firearm handling.

Additionally, the instructor and all staff should consistently demonstrates safe practices at all times and expect no less from the students. This is not to say that the instructor should be unduly aggressive, as mistake will happen within a training environment. While no one likes to talk about it, the reality exists. The key is to mitigate these mistakes within the safest manner possible to prevent anyone from being injured. Safety should never be treated as an afterthought or sacrificed for speed or entertainment.

What About Credentials

While certifications from recognized organizations is important, as it will often indicate that they have met a specific series of advanced standards, it does not guarantee that the instructor is of quality. This is where many people will often find their first challenge. If an instructor has many great credentials, this is likely an indication of a vast level of knowledge and has demonstrated their ability to perform the techniques they are planning on instructing others in. It does not however demonstrate their actual ability to provide that instruction within a effective, efficient or safe manner. Some of the hallmarks of

a quality, competent and effective instructor will combine the following traits: Technical knowledge, the ability to communicate clearly, concisely and effectively, the ability to adapt to different learning styles rapidly, the ability to properly and safely demonstrate techniques within a manner which will allow for all of the students to follow and to provide constructive feedback. This is because for an instructor, teaching experience can often matter just as much as experience or shooting skill.

Understanding Your Goals

Within the firearms training realm, there are many different disciplines and different instructors will often specialize in different areas of training. This is not to say that a quality multi-certified instructor would not be able to provide instruction within most of these disciplines, the selection of an instructor who clearly understands your goals and objectives and generally participated within the discipline you are interested in will likely be a better resource. For example, if you are seeking concealed carry instruction for personal defense, an instructor who specializes in precision rifle shooting would likely not be the best fit. Therefore it is important to not only identify what your objective is, but also to speak with any instructor you are considering hiring and explain to them your overall goals. A professional instructor will tell you if they believe they will be a good fit and if not will typically refer you to another instructor who would likely better suit you. Before enrolling, consider what you hope to accomplish.

The Training Environment

There are many factors which play a significant role within the adult learning process, especially when. Some of these factors include: Smaller class size and student to instructor ratios as this will often provide for increased personal attention, the range facilities, if the facility is too loud, it can and often will be difficult to hear the instructor or specific guidance being given, specific equipment requirements for each student, this can include holsters, magazine pouches, extra magazines, eye and ear protection, etc., the facilities safety procedures and policies for any emergencies which may occur, the amount of ammunition which will be needed as well as the amount of actual live fire to be engaged in. These factors can often be a sign of a professional instructor and facility and should always be considered.

Reviews, Reputation and Red Flags

When researching an instructor, many people will first check online reviews. However these postings will not always show an accurate picture of the experience had. Many people do not bother to write a review and some may take the opportunity to write something negative for the slightest negative interaction. Therefore, while online reviews are a good starting point, there are other sources of information which can and should be explored starting with prior students and referrals from perhaps other instructors or professionals.

Some of the most important key things to pay attention to include recurring themes rather than isolated comments, which present so called “Red Flags” including: The instructor of school minimizes safety practices and policies, they encourage reckless, uncontrolled or unnecessary risk taking within drills or on the firing line, they may promise unrealistic results within a very limited amount of time, they will continually rely on either intimidation or humiliation tactics while providing instruction, they will either refuse to explain a technique or be resistant to answer student questions or they may attempt to focus more on their personal ego than the students training or skill development.

A professional instructor will seek to foster a respectful learning environment where the students feel comfortable asking questions and improving their skills while at all times maintaining safety and control over the environment.

In Conclusion

When choosing a firearms training school or instructor the focus should always be more about finding an instructor who will emphasize safety, communicate effectively, encourage their students to challenge themselves and provides training which aligns with your overall goals, and never just because they offer the lowest price or most convenient location. While quality instruction can be expensive, poor instruction can be extremely costly.

Continue Your Training Journey with Grey Wolf Consulting, LLC

We encourage you to continue exploring the Grey Wolf Consulting, LLC training resources and educational articles to help you build a stronger foundation of knowledge and skill.

At Grey Wolf Consulting, LLC (www.greywolfconsulting.us) our slogan reads Knowledge – Integrity – Discretion – Honor, It is these principles in addition to our belief and philosophy that the selection of proper equipment is only one part of developing a responsible and capable mindset. While tools are extremely important, they are only truly most effective when combined with proper knowledge, skill and attitude coupled with sound judgment, and quality training.

Our training philosophy is built around developing well-rounded individuals who understand that personal safety and professional performance require more than simply equipment alone. Awareness, critical thinking, communication, and disciplined decision making skills remain the foundation of effective preparation.

Through continued education with Grey Wolf Consulting, LLC, students can further develop their understanding of:

- ˘ The role equipment plays within a broader preparedness plan
- ˘ How stress impacts critical decision-making and performance
- ˘ The high value of consistent professional training and continued education
- ˘ How the correct mindset will impact informed decisions within high stress environments

Whether you are beginning your training journey, expanding your knowledge, or seeking to refine your existing skill set, Grey Wolf Consulting, LLC (www.greywolfconsulting.us) is committed to providing high quality professional firearms and tactics education focused on professionalism, responsibility, and continuous improvement.

About the Author

Brian S. Williams is a professional firearms instructor, tactical trainer, and executive security consultant with greater than 35 years of experience in firearms instruction, use-of-force training, and protective operations. As the founder of several firearms training and security organizations, he has developed and delivered firearms, tactical, and instructor certification programs for civilians, law enforcement officers, military personnel, and licensed security professionals throughout the United States.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Williams has trained and certified more than 10,500 Connecticut pistol permit applicants, instructed more than 2,000 civilians and hundreds of law enforcement and security professionals in advanced firearms and tactical applications, and provided remedial firearms training to military and correctional personnel. He served as a Marine Police Officer and Watch Commander with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and was appointed to the Connecticut State Police Firearms Advisory Council, where he contributed to firearms training and policy discussions.

Mr. Williams holds numerous professional certifications, including NRA Training Counselor, NRA Law Enforcement Firearms Instructor, General Dynamics Simunitions FX™ Instructor, The Heckler & Koch International Training Division and Sig Sauer Academy Instructor certifications, and USCCA

Concealed Carry and Home Defense Instructor. He is the author of *Welcome to the Real World: A Dangerous Place to Be Caught Unprepared* and has been recognized as an expert in firearms by the Connecticut Superior Courts. His work continues to emphasize responsible firearms ownership, sound judgment, lawful use of force, and practical, reality-based training.