

Stoppage Reductions, An Historical Overview

As originally taught, there were four distinct stoppages and four methods of clearing those stoppages, one for each specific stoppage. These are what have come to be referred to as 'Diagnostic Stoppage Reductions'.

First, we encounter the 'Failure To Fire'. This stoppage may be caused by an empty chamber, an unseated magazine or a bad round of ammunition. Regardless of the cause, the indicator will be a 'click' of the hammer falling without the expected 'bang' of a round firing.

The solution is to vigorously TAP the magazine to ensure that it is seated, RACK the slide fully to eject a bad round and to load a fresh round from the magazine and BANG or fire the freshly chambered round.



Falling back into my habit of gunhandling, the elbow has indexed on the torso prior to TAP. In the days of yore, these stoppage reductions were done either at point or from Low Ready.



My preference is for the overhand grasp to RACK the slide. Arguments can be made for the 'pinch grip' as well.



The second commonly taught stoppage was the Stovepipe or Failure To Eject.

Rather than simply TAP, RACK, BANG, the common teaching was to WIPE the exposed brass from the gun with an overhand ridgehand-type motion.

Here's the problem.



And the skool solution...the WIPE



The third commonly taught Stoppage was the Double Feed, but we'll get back to that one. So far, we have the T-1 or FTF. This was cleared with the TRB. Next is the T-2 or FTE/Stovepipe. It was cleared by the WIPE. We'll skip the T-3 and move on to the T-4 or Failure to go into Battery [i.e. the slide doesn't go all the way forward]. Generally, this is caused by operator error in which the user failed to work the slide with force, i.e., they kept their hand on the slide while working it rearward and forward.



The solution was to smack the rear of the slide to drive it forward and it was accomplished like so.:



And, viola...



Now, the colder beers in our electronic six-pack may have glommed onto the idea that all of these problems could be solved by applying the same basic scheme of motion introduced as the TAP, RACK, BANG and they would be correct.

Particularly if you add that outboard roll that you see me doing in post 2 and 3, the basic sequence becomes TAP, ROLL/RACK, and that will solve all T-1, T-2 or T-4 stoppages that you encounter without the need to individually access the nature of the stoppage prior to initiating corrective action.

This brings us to the dreaded 'Double Feed' or T-3 stoppage.

A 'Double Feed' occurs when a round is not extracted from the chamber and another round begins to feed from the magazine. Two rounds are attempting to occupy the same space at the same time. The problem is compounded by the recoil spring exerting pressure to bring the slide forward, into battery, and the magazine spring applying pressure upwards to aid in the feeding of the new round of ammunition.

Recently, it has become popular to teach a shortcut method of dealing with T-3 stoppages that involves simply RIPPING the magazine out of the pistol, allowing the slide to snap forward, and reloading the gun.



Most of the people promoting this method simply tug the mag downward, allow the slide to snap forward, reinsert the mag and continue firing. While this works with a shooter induced Double Feed on the training range, I am not convinced of its efficacy with spontaneously occurring double feeds that have not been nicely set up on the range.

Regardless, this is what it looks like. I've simply been referring to this sequence as a "RIP & RUN".



More traditional, admittedly slower, but, *in my experience*, more likely to be successful is LOCK, RIP, WORK [3x], TAP, RACK. It has also been described as 'Unload the gun completely. Reload the gun completely.'

Realistically, when your gun fails to fire, you will initiate a TAP, ROLL/RACK, BANG. When the slide locks back or you get no response from the trigger, you will move on to the next stage of Stoppage Reduction which should consist of LOCKing the slide to the rear [which removes the forward pressure from the recoil spring], followed by RIPPing the magazine out of the gun. The top round of the magazine is, most likely, in conflict with the brass in the chamber and may not easily eject.

Here's a still picture illustrating those two stages:



After the mag well is clear, cycle the slide *hard* at least three times. Why three? When the slide first closes, the extractor may snap over the rim of the brass or ammo left in the chamber. The second time the slide is run, the round may be extracted and ejected. The third time the slide is manipulated, is insurance that the feedway is clear. A significant percentage of the time, the brass will fall down the mag well rather than out of the ejection port and the extra bit of manipulation often allows the brass to make it way out.



And there you have it... Stoppage Reductions 101. I'm a big fan of 'Less is More'. TAP, ROLL/RACK solves all of the common stoppages and LOCK, RIP, WORK solves the Double Feed. Consistent gunhandling is where it is at and anytime a technique is introduced that is at odds with your larger scheme of gunhandling, the benefits had better be significant and not attainable any other way.

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