

LIFE SKILLS by David Dellanave



1. Make Muscle



2. Automate Your Finances



3. Make World-Class Coffee



4. Shoot a Musket



5. Grill a Perfect Steak

LIFE SKILL 1: Make Muscle

BY DAVID DELLANAVE

I don't want to tell you that you have to do anything in your life, that anything is graven in stone, that many things are definitively right or wrong.

But you have to strength train.

Look, there are just no two ways about this and no matter how hard I've tried to find shortcuts, I've come back to the same inescapable conclusion: you have to strength train.

At the very least, it improves your experience as a human. It makes you more useful. It makes you more resilient. It makes you harder to kill. It probably will make you better looking. You'll likely live longer if you strength train, but much more importantly you will live whatever years you have better because of it. You won't be constantly sidelined by back pain, hip pain, knee pain. You'll be able to eat more because you'll carry more metabolically active muscle.

If you hate being in the gym or weight room I get it. By all means get the bulk of your physical activity from a sport you enjoy or hiking in nature. But you need a minimal effective amount of strength training and there is just no way around it.

So let's discuss the principals of strength training that are most important to understand, and then we can concern ourselves with the less important details like the program itself.

It Has to Get Harder

The single most important factor in strength training is progressive overload. Basically, over time things have to get harder. That's it.

And in practice this really isn't all that complicated.

When you first start training you can get away with programs that are mind-numbingly simple. Let's say you start with 5 sets of 5 deadlifts at 200 pounds.

The next week you might simply add 5 pounds and do 5 sets of 5 deadlifts. You can do this for months and sometimes years. It's called linear periodization and is really the cornerstone of strength training. Yes, at some point you have to change another variable or you'd be deadlifting two thousand pounds in no time, but the people who get fixated on this are missing the forest for the trees.

If you knew nothing else about strength training than the fact that each session you needed to either move something heavier, or do more total work you would be better off than ninety-nine percent of folks who overcomplicate things. Make it heavier, or do more of it.

What To Do

It may seem strange that the "how" is more important than the "what", but it's true. If you were to barbell back squat the same amount of weight for the same number of reps for years you would make a little tiny bit of progress and then stall out completely or even regress. On the other hand, if you were to carry a big bucket of water up a hill every day, occasionally adding more water to it and sometimes doing more than one trip, you'd make almost unbelievable progress in your overall strength and fitness because of progressive overload.

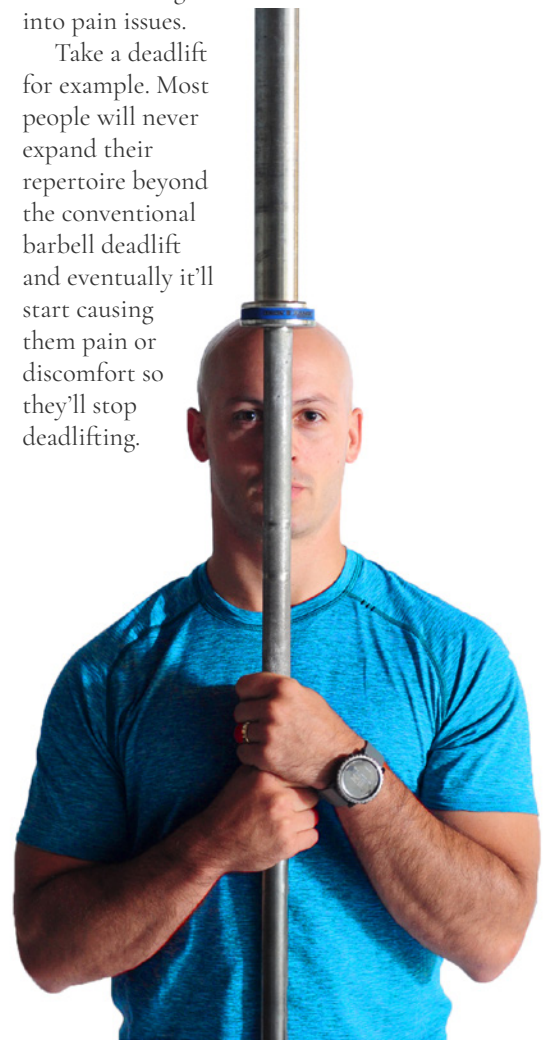
That being said, for practicality's sake I think you're better off focusing on the key strength movements: squat, deadlift, and overhead press.

Add to those core movements a few sets of accessory work and you've got yourself a lifetime of strength programming.

It's beyond the scope of this guide to teach you these movements, and besides plenty of qualified coaches have put out great tutorials on them that I would only be duplicating what has been done very well.

What I'd like to is open your mind up a little bit to how you can vary those core movements to make your training even more productive and sustainable over the long term, because the biggest thing that I see roadblock people in training is getting hurt or running into pain issues.

Take a deadlift for example. Most people will never expand their repertoire beyond the conventional barbell deadlift and eventually it'll start causing them pain or discomfort so they'll stop deadlifting.



Instead let's look at all the ways you could modify or vary the deadlift to make it more suitable:

- You could do an entirely different variation, such as a Sumo or Jefferson deadlift that is still picking up a dead weight from the floor, but in a different body position.
- You could use a different tool, such as a trap bar or kettlebell(s) to change the leverages and physics of the movement.
- You could change your position slightly while keeping the core variation the same. For example in a

conventional deadlift you might stagger your feet just slightly, or change the width you place your feet at.

- You could alter the height of the implement by either raising it to shorten the range of motion, or raising yourself to lengthen the range of motion. Both will have profound effects on the leverages involved.

With these four ideas alone you could come up with nearly infinite deadlift variations that would keep you deadlifting for a lifetime.

A Sample Program Here's what an actual program might look like.

MONDAY:

Deadlift — 3 x 3



Chest Supported Row — 4 x 10



Romanian Deadlift — 3 x 15



Bicep Curl — 3 x 10



Hanging Leg Raise — 3 x 10



WEDNESDAY:

Overhead Press — 3 x 5



Pull-Up — 3 x 8



Dumbbell Lateral Raise — 3 x 15



Weighted Plank — 3 x :30



FRIDAY:

Squat — 3 x 3



Push-Up — 3 x 15



Walking Lunge — 3 x 10



Dumbbell Skull Crusher — 3 x 15



Hanging Leg Raise — 3 x 10



That's it. You could run this program for years by simply varying the movements, sets and reps, and total overall volume. In doing so you'd be strong enough to handle virtually any activity life might throw at you, and healthy enough to avoid unwanted medical bills and sick leave.

LIFE SKILL 2: Automate Your Finances*

BY DAVID DELLANAVE

I used to live in a big house with a giant back yard. I had foxes, deer, ducks, voles, squirrels and who knows what else doing their thing in that yard. As a result, I never noticed a lot of the little activities that went on out there. Now, in South Philly, my “back yard” is a wooden patio deck with a single potted plant on it. In a surprise to no one when you strip away all the distractions and focus on one thing you notice more about that one thing.

And I just noticed that a goddamn squirrel was digging holes to hide nuts in the dirt of my plant.

The very same day I got a letter from my Health Savings Account (HSA) provider which reminded me to login to my account to check in on it.

Lo and behold I had a not insignificant pot of money that had accumulated that I had completely forgotten about.

In case you're not familiar with HSAs they can be used as a tax-advantaged, meaning you don't pay taxes on the money you put into them, savings account for either medical expenses (including elective ones, so if I ever decide to get LASIK I can use that money) or in a lesser-known strategy you can simply use it as an additional retirement account. The point of this article isn't to explain HSAs in detail, however.

The point is that you can take advantage of some of the ways we are all irrational and driven by habits and whims rather than good sense when it comes to money.

You know that friend whose cheapness is exceeded only by their ability to accurately and pedantically account for exactly what portion of the check they owe, down to the penny?

Yeah, that friend is the outlier. The exception to the rule. That friend probably already has a retirement account so teeming with money that they could afford to not be so cheap. I'm happy for them, but it's probably not you.

Most people not only aren't saving enough for later in life, but they're actually going into debt far beyond their means. Everyone thinks that they're going to save or invest money “when they have some extra” but no one ever has any extra because that's not how most people operate with money.

For example, the average U.S. household carries \$15,000 in credit card debt alone.

Imagine if I were to ask you if you'd like to take out a loan for \$15,000. More than likely you'd decline, knowing that's a sizable chunk of money and not going to be easy to pay off.

Yet the psychological ease of handing over your credit card makes it all too easy to rack up the exact same amount of debt one small charge at a time.

It's death by a thousand paper cuts. We're not logical and rational, so we have to temper ourselves against ... ourselves.

But the good news is that you can easily flip the script and take advantage of the same irrationalities to make your assets, instead of debts, inflate.

And it's all totally automatic.

The vast majority of people operate the same *flawed* way when it comes to money. If they have money in their accounts they spend it, and if they don't have money they cut back on spending. This might work fine when you're a child with a piggy bank, but it falls apart when you have multiple credit cards, checking accounts, and auto-payments setup to take money out of your accounts. By the same token, all of these moving parts is what makes this “trick” work so well.

The key is to setup automatic transfers of money into investment or savings accounts, so you never see the money, you never miss it, and you cut back on spending because it's not there.



*DISCLAIMER: This article is going to assume that you have a level of income sufficient to meet your needs with some wiggle room to spare. In other words, you have discretionary income and you could possibly spend more wisely or differently than you do today. If you are living at the poverty line while working multiple jobs I'm sorry but this is probably not the article for you. With this disclaimer in mind I hope to avoid the usual torrent of angry messages about how privileged and entitled I am.

There are dozens of ways to do this, but I'll give you a couple examples of the simplest things you can do.

The absolute first thing you should do money-wise is take advantage of an employer-matched retirement program if your job provides one. This is *literally* free money and you would be crazy not to take advantage of it. Whatever it is, a 401k or an IRA, take advantage of it up to the maximum contribution. It's also... wait for it ... *automatic*. Every company should opt you in automatically by default, but many (most?) don't.

With that out of the way, it's time to setup some automatic transfers into other savings vehicles.

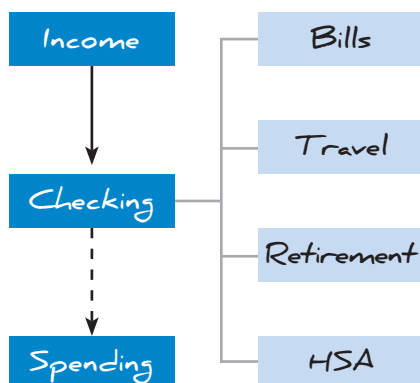
As an example, I have money automatically transferred out of my checking account into 4 separate buckets:

1. **Bills** – All major bills are on auto-draft so I don't have to remember to pay them, and I never see that money.

2. **Travel** – Jen and I each contribute \$200/mo to this, so at least once a year there is enough money for a pretty significant trip that is completely paid for and we don't have to find the money for.

3. **Retirement** – This consists of several different buckets of different investment vehicles. What is best for you is very much going to depend on your situation, but the important thing is that you have something. If in doubt start by maxing out an IRA and then go from there. Do your own homework and get some expert advice, but I use Betterment for a non-trivial portion of my net worth and couldn't be happier. For the reasoning, check out this [Planet Money episode](#). Betterment is just a very easy way to automatically invest in index funds.

4. **HSA** – This is both a health rainy day fund as well as a backdoor retirement account.



I never see any of this money, and I never miss it. Everything happens with automatic transfers behind the scenes. Of course my spending habits have had to shift with a not-insignificant portion of my income being hidden away from me, but the point is that I don't notice it.

You spend it if you have it, but you don't spend it if you don't have it.

Actual Real Steps to Take

Basically, open a Betterment account. People who talk to me about money eventually wonder why I am such an evangelist for Betterment (Wealthfront is good too. Charles Schwab's product is not.)

There are some really basic fundamental evidence-based truths about investing that have held up over time.

1. Don't lose money.
2. Invest often and regularly.
3. Allocate assets intelligently (a.k.a. don't put all your eggs in one basket).
4. Don't try to pick stocks (see #1).
5. Don't time the market (see #2).
6. Avoid fees that eat up your returns.

Turns out so-called robo-advisors like Betterment and Wealthfront basically solve these problems for you. They make it easy to automate, they balance everything for you, they have ultra low fees, and they invest you in a wide range of low-cost ETFs that cover broad indices. You can still screw it up by being a stupid human and yanking your money out, but it's harder!

I don't care what you use. I'm purposely not including my Betterment referral link because I've already maxed out my referrals.

But, please, do something.

If you don't know if you should create a taxable account, a Roth IRA, or a traditional IRA I can give you one simple tip and a reference article. If you don't have *any* safety net at all, create a normal taxable account so that there is no risk of penalty if you need to use the money in an emergency. If you have that covered you can decide between a Roth and traditional and [this article is helpful](#) for that.

What you actually do with the money you're saving is important, but not as important as that you automate putting the money away.

I'm In Debt!

So all of this sounds great you say, but you're in debt you say, so there's no extra to invest nor would it be a good idea with the interest you're paying on the debt. I've been there. Turns out the exact same principle still applies. Take a fixed amount and apply it automatically to your debt until it's gone. When that is done *immediately* shift that same amount over to investments. You will be accustomed to a certain standard of living and that won't change, but you'll now be putting money away for the future.

How Much to Squirrel Away?

The short answer is an amount that makes you uncomfortable, but not enough to put you in a bad position or cause problems.

As a longer answer here are a few strategies you can use to come up with an amount:

1. Take your bank and or credit card statement from the previous couple months and go through them line by line. Add up all the charges that are discretionary. Restaurants, bars, Amazon orders, movies, new iPhones, and so on. Be ruthless and honest in this. If you didn't have to spend it to keep a roof over your head or food in your belly, add it up. Take the whole amount and divide it by the number of months you looked at, and then take 20% of that amount. If you spent \$1000 on discretionary things, you'd come up with \$200. Start there. Every six months increase the amount by 10%.

2. Just start with \$100. Every three to six months increase it by \$100 until it causes too much strain, then back off.

3. The nuclear option: Go to [this calculator](#) and put in your details. Play with the "I save X amount annually" until you get to the number that balances what you are likely to have in retirement, and what you'll need in retirement. Start putting that amount of money away and force everything else to fall into place.

No matter what you choose to do, the important thing as always is that you take action.

Don't get lost in the weeds of the details of finance — really, [it's not that complicated](#). Take and implement the lesson of automation and only then start figuring out how you can optimize your various contributions and vehicles.

Make World-Class

LIFE SKILL 3: Coffee

BY DAVID DELLANAVE

Some people would call me a coffee snob, and I won't take offense to that, but I don't think it's exactly accurate either.

I'll drink coffee from a gas station, McDonald's, a small-airport FBO (notoriously bad, if you didn't know), or a Keurig if that's what is available.

But most of the time great coffee isn't that hard to come by — all it takes is the right equipment and a little knowledge.

For a bit of context, there are as many methods to make coffee as there are opinions about it. Personally my daily dose comes from an espresso machine and grinder that is fairly high end for a home setup — in the four figures for everything. In this guide I wanted to go over what I consider the most economical and approachable way to make a world-class cup of coffee.

First things first, you need good coffee.

We can immediately eliminate all coffee that comes ground, because coffee needs to be made literally within minutes of grinding. If you're buying ground coffee, it's already stale and belongs in the trash. When it comes to whole beans they reach peak freshness a few days after being roasted and last about a couple weeks. Besides freshness it's obviously important that the roaster is using high quality green coffee beans that are fresh and have been treated appropriately.

Most coffee fans agree that an Ethiopian Yirgacheffe is a good gateway drug to great coffee. This particular region in Ethiopia produces a coffee that is consistently fruity, slightly sweet, and has just enough acidity to be light and pleasant in the mouth. Eventually you can expand your palette and repertoire, but I would recommend starting here.

There are hundreds maybe thousands of great roasters these days in the U.S. but there are also tons of companies riding the coffee popularity wave and selling crap coffee at a premium. Here are a few roasts and roasters I recommend that produce a great Yirgacheffe. Keep in mind that not all varietals are available at all times of the year. Also poke around local roasters and see if anyone roasts a great Ethiopian locally — you might be surprised.

- [Ceremony Coffee](#)
- [Stumptown Coffee](#)
- [Kickapoo Coffee](#)
- [Caravan Coffee](#) (Not always available, but check for it.)
- [Blue Bottle Coffee](#)
- [49th Coffee](#) (Not strictly a Yirgacheffe but also very good.)

Then you need some equipment.

1. Grinder

The grinder is arguably the most important part of your entire coffee setup. A good grinder is key to getting consistent particle size which results in consistent brewing.

- **Budget pick:** The [Hario hand mill](#) is a great entry-level hand grinder that with a little elbow grease will produce a great consistent grind.
- **Upgrade pick:** The [Baratza Encore](#) is a really solid entry-level electric grinder

that is perfect from freeing you from the indignity and stress of hand grinding.

- **Baller pick:** The [Mazzer Mini](#) is one of the gold-standard grinders that is high enough quality to use for years in a commercial environment. I have had mine for 10 years and have never regretted the purchase for a moment.

2. Aeropress

This silly little invention created by the inventor of a flying disc toy is, in my opinion, by far the most economical and efficient way to make a perfect cup of coffee. It costs less than \$30, works exceptionally well, and will last forever if you take basic care of it.

A minor upgrade you can make to the paper Aeropress filters is a stainless [filter disk](#) from Able brewing. It's relatively cheap at \$13 and means you never have to buy filters, don't create any waste, and in my opinion makes a better final product than running your coffee through paper. Not necessary, but a worthy upgrade.

3. A Way to Heat Water

Any old tea kettle will work, but if you want to be a baller you'll want an electric kettle that can heat the water to the exact correct temperature for your beans. Believe it or not, boiling water is actually too hot for most coffee. The best electric kettle according to my most trusted rating site is the [Cuisinart CPK-17](#). Full disclosure, I just heat water short of boiling and call it good.

Just Brew It

With the hard work of collecting your materials out of the way you can make coffee. As usual opinions vary but I'll share two methods I like, the quick and dirty and then the perfectionist. Keep in mind that you can vary the method and get slightly different flavor profiles even if you keep everything else the same. Some coffee roasters will provide water temperatures and brewing method suggestions that they have found work the best for that roast.

The quick and dirty method that will make a better cup of coffee than 99.99% of the swill available out there:

1. **Grind your coffee** fairly fine, close to what a French press grind would be — or about like table salt in terms of particle size.
2. **Heat your water** to about 180°F or 80°C.

3. **With the plunger extended** flip the Aeropress upside down and put the cap on the table. Wet the paper filter if you're using paper.

4. **Dump the coffee** in the Aeropress. Two of the scoopers included with the Aeropress is a good rough measurement.

5. **Pour the water** in to roughly two-thirds full.

6. **Stir briefly** then wait about 60 seconds.

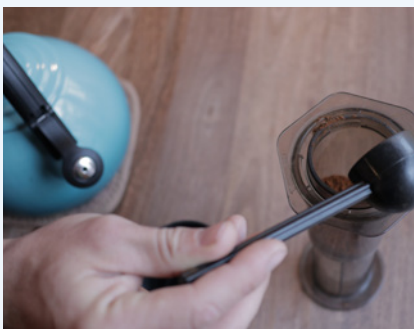
7. **Flip the Aeropress** over, place it on a cup, and press it out firmly but consistently.

That's it. Provided you started with good, fresh coffee you are now drinking a fine cup of joe that is virtually unmatched. If you've never had good coffee, you're probably in for a life changing experience.

Next Level

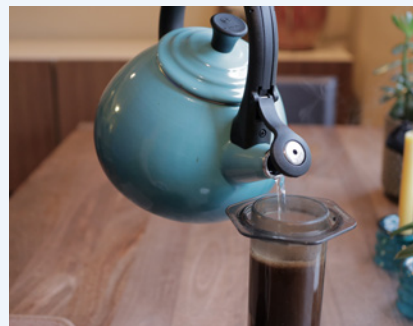
Now, if you want to get real real serious about matters then you can follow the recipe of one of the most recent World Aeropress Championship winners. You'll need a small digital scale that can measure down to grams.

1. **Boil** -250ml of water to 80°C (176°F).
2. **Grind** 35g coffee ground slightly coarser than filter (between a percolator and french press, toward percolator).
3. **Rinse** your filter paper.
4. **Place** the Aeropress upside down (plunger facing up) and add the coffee.



5. **Start** a timer.

6. **Add** 150g of water over 15 seconds.



7. **Stir** until 30 seconds on the timer.



8. **Put** the filter cap on, wait until 1 minute on the timer.

9. **Flip** the Aeropress over, swirl, plunge.



10. **Add** 100 to 120g of water to taste.



Whichever of these two methods

you choose, you're going to end up with a perfect cup of coffee in which you can detect all the wonderful notes and flavors that you should taste in good coffee. From here you can explore

other varieties of beans, roast profiles, and brewing techniques.

But don't be too good for a cup of Wawa coffee if that's all that is available on the road at 5 a.m.

LIFE SKILL 4: Shoot a Musket

BY DAVID DELLANAVE

Full disclosure time.

I'm not really going to teach you how to shoot a musket.

Look, I know that could probably be disappointing to some people but hear me out. There is a damn good reason we don't use muskets anymore. The modern breech-loaded firearm represents a massive improvement in safety, accuracy, efficiency, and efficacy over the traditional musket. It's not all that hard to blow your hand off by overdoing the charge in a musket. It's exceptionally rare to have the same kind of accident with a modern firearm. Plus, the reality of encountering a situation in which you need to fire a musket is a statistical improbability and I'm all about making you a more useful human.

Far more likely it would be that you'd find yourself in a situation in which you might need to use a handgun. Ideally I'd prefer you to be proficient in handgun, rifle, and shotgun but we need to start where we are, no?

Why is the skill to handle and use a pistol important?

There are a lot of scenarios that I would prefer that would never transpire, but I would like to be prepared if they do. If I am backpacking or hiking in bear country I know that bear spray can be completely ineffective – .45 caliber pistols are not ineffective. If I find myself in a terrible situation such as a movie theater or mall shooting and I'm unable to flee to safety I would prefer to be able to competently bring the fight to an attacker – with my own pistol or one I picked up from someone who failed to stop them. At the very least I'd expect everyone to have the ability to clear and make safe a

firearm that they came upon no matter what the situation. It's easy to sound a little crazy and paranoid when talking about these unlikely scenarios, but then again given the prevalence of gun violence in this country wouldn't you be willing to spend a few hours as insurance against something that is not altogether unlikely?

I'm not telling you that you should carry a gun everywhere you go, but I think it's good to know how to use one. Moving on to the mechanics...

This guide is going to assume that you have zero experience handling firearms and that not only do you not only not own a gun but you've never shot one.

Local laws and availability of resources may vary, but for the purposes of this guide I'm going to assume you live in the good old U. S. of A. where guns grow on trees and there is a shooting range around every corner.

Most shooting ranges rent firearms, and most of those that do are going to have Glock pistols available for rental.

I chose the Glock for this guide because it's one of the most common firearms on the market as well as arguably one of the most reliable functional. Without getting into that argument of belief and opinion suffice to say that the Glock is like the Honda Civic of handguns in no small part thanks to its reliability.

I would recommend reviewing the instructions below several times to familiarize yourself before heading to the range.

Competency

The first and most critical tenet is to handle every firearm as if it is loaded

and there is no safety. The second is to never point the barrel at anything you don't intend to kill. Third is to keep your finger off the trigger until you intend to pull it. These rules dovetail into one another so that if you fail to heed one of them the others will keep you safe. Let me tell you a quick story about how quickly failing to follow these rules can result in catastrophe.

The day after the first [Man Camp](#) a few of us went hog hunting outside of Austin, Texas. I had brought along a couple of rifles and I loaned my single-shot bolt-action rifle to a Canadian friend who shall go unnamed who didn't have a lot of firearms experience and I was hunting with my semi-automatic AR-15. On the main day of Man Camp we had done a shooting class so he had become familiarized with these basic rules and I reviewed everything with him. We were legitimately hunting, so the rifle was loaded. During a change of location he was sitting in the passenger seat of a Jeep when I walked by the passenger side door. Just as I walked by he decided to dismount when we both heard a sudden, loud *crack*. I looked at him, dumbfounded, as the realization set in that he had just fired a round within inches of my leg straight into the ground.

In a common turn of events one of the guides had handled the rifle and taken the safety off without returning it back on. When our Canadian friend handled the rifle he didn't respect rule number one and wasn't aware of his finger



being on the trigger. When he moved, his finger brushed the match-grade trigger and discharged a round. Luckily it was pointed at the ground and I had moved past it just a second before, but it could have very easily ended a wonderful weekend with a catastrophe in which I took a large caliber round in the foot or leg.

Suffice to say that incident seared an even greater respect for firearms into my consciousness.

- Handle every firearm as if it is loaded and there is no safety.
- Never point the barrel at anything you don't intend to kill.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until you intend to pull it.

Once you have the basics of safely handling the pistol down, you need to learn how to operate it. These instructions are for a right handed shooter. Guns exist with left-hand controls, but I'm not going to get into that here.

Clearing

The first major thing you need to know is how to clear the weapon. This allows you to ensure that it is completely unloaded. You do this procedure no matter what when you first handle a weapon, even if you "know" it is unloaded. Again remember that this guide is based on a Glock but the procedure is essentially the same no matter what platform you're using.

First, remove the magazine by pressing the magazine release on the left hand side and let the magazine drop out.



Next, with your left hand pull the slide (the top moving piece) back all the way to the rear until it stops. With your right hand thumb, press the slide stop into the upward position and let the slide ride forward until it catches.

You may notice the slide isn't super easy to pull back. This is a good time to note that firearms operate under extreme forces, and the better the firearm the tighter the tolerances. You do not need to be gentle with firearms. Don't drop it or use it as a hammer, but don't handle it with kid gloves either. Move things

firmly and when they're spring loaded let them ride home briskly.

Now you can both visually and physically (feeling with your pinky) ensure that there is no round loaded in the chamber. Never look down the barrel, even if you've cleared the weapon, just don't do it.

This is a super important procedure. You should do it before you hand someone a weapon, and when you've just been handed a weapon clear it first to ensure that it is unloaded and safe.

Loading

Having cleared the weapon you're ready to load it. With the slide either in the open position with the slide stop holding it, or in the closed position, shove the magazine firmly home into the magazine well. Don't be gentle, be firm and make sure it engages solidly.

Now pull the slide all the way back, let it go, and let it slam home.

The weapon is now loaded.

Grip

How you grip a pistol is critical to proper functioning (so that the recoil energy cycles the action), accuracy, and safety.



Using your non-dominant hand, firmly place the butt of the pistol in the webbing between your thumb and pointer finger of your dominant hand. Glock grips curve up at the back just below the slide, so this lip should be pressing into the webbing of your hand. If there is a gap between the lip and your hand you do not have a good grip. If your hand extends above the lip the slide is going to hit it injuring you and potentially causing a malfunction. Next, wrap your three fingers around the front of the grip. Your trigger (pointer) finger should rest along the top of the frame just below the slide. Your thumb should also point forward along the side of the frame. This is your dominant hand grip.

Now take your non-dominant hand, place the heel on the exposed portion of the grip, and wrap your fingers around the front of the grip. Finally, rest your thumb alongside your other thumb



pointing forward.

This is a firm and proper grip on the pistol.

Standing

Just as important as grip is how you stand and position yourself for shooting. Your feet should be about shoulder width apart with your feet staggered slightly, with your non-dominant side foot forward and your dominant side foot behind. Your shoulders should be square to the target, and your hips as squared up as possible.

The pistol should be held in front of you, with the barrel pointed downrange at the target at all times, even if it's not up in front of you at eye level.

The two positions you should be aware of for our purposes are the Compressed Ready and the full presentation position.

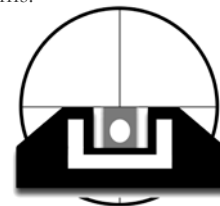
The Compressed Ready position is the same as the shooting position but with the pistol low, pulled tight to your belly, with your elbows at the side of your body. We are going to use this compressed ready position as the starting position for all drills.

Sight Picture

Sight picture is what you see when the sights, thus the firearm, is correctly aligned on your target. Sight designs vary, but they all follow the same basic principle. I'll be using images of standard Glock sights.



When the sights are properly aligned the image above is what you should see. The point of aim is the center of the sights at the top of the center sight. If you were to pull the trigger the bullet would go straight forward impact at the point you see just above the sight. Thus, if you were aiming at a target, it would look like this:



The grey post is the front sight and the black and white “U” is the rear sight. Again, sight designs vary (three dots, a V-shape, etc.) but the alignment principal remains the same.

Building Skill

I am not a firearms expert. Like any dilettante who has been doing something for a while I have enough expertise to teach a beginner, but I wouldn't call myself a true expert. Fortunately I have good friends who *are* true experts. So I asked the guys at SOFLETE, current and former members of U.S. Special Operations Forces, to give me a series of drills that you can use on your first trip to the range. They recently released a first-of-its-kind comprehensive shooting skill progression program so it was a perfect opportunity for them to share their knowledge and give you a little taste of what the program would be like. I'll be running the program myself over the next few months and I look forward to the improvements it will bring.

Without further ado, I'll let the SOFLETE boys take it from here:

Visualization Practice

Visualizing only, standing 2m from a bare light colored wall.

- Standing naturally, looking at the dot, head and eyes up visualizing the movement from compressed ready to proper sight alignment picture with a clear focus on the front sight.
- Clear your mind and repeat 5 times.
- Standing naturally, looking at the bare wall, head and eyes up visualizing the proper sight alignment picture with a clear focus on the front sight.
- Bringing your imaginary pistol to full shooting position and sights to eyes and not eyes to sights, pretend to fire one round then open up eyes point of focus back up from the very top center of the front sight to the overall target and surrounding area.
- Return to the compressed ready position.
- Clear your mind and repeat 5 times.

Range Day

We are going to begin by practicing “dry firing” the weapon to drill proper grip,

sight picture, and trigger squeezing. Some folks are under the mistaken impression that dry firing will damage the weapon. This was true for old, brittle weapons, but modern firearms can handle being dry fired. Ideally you would use “snap caps” for practice, but in this limited case it's not an issue.

Set your target 3m from your firing line.

Dry Fire

- Standing naturally, arms to the side, looking at the target. Pick up the pistol and bring it to the compressed ready position.
- Practice 5 movements from compressed ready to full presentation, transitioning eyes from target to front sight post during final presentation. Maintain complete focus on the top center of the *front sight post* only and squeeze the trigger evenly to the rear.
- Bring the pistol back to compressed ready, re-rack the slide.
- Reestablish grip.
- Repeat for 5 repetitions.
- Take no less than a two minute break between every 5 iterations, clear your mind.
- Do two rounds of 5 reps.

Live Fire

- Use A basic bullseye target.
- Set your target to 3 meters.
- Clear and then load your firearm with 5 rounds in a magazine.
- Starting from the compressed ready position, bring the pistol to full

presentation and acquire the sight picture you've been practicing, focusing on the front sight post.

- Slowly fire 5 round strings.
- When finished, drop the magazine and clear the weapon.
- Repeat at 5 and 7 meter target distance.

Next Steps

Like many things worth doing you could spend a lifetime honing your shooting skills, understanding your tools and platforms, and building your experience. With this tutorial you've gained some confidence, but it will take time and practice to build confidence. If you're interested in developing your skill as a pistol shooter, I strongly suggest checking out the SOFLETE shooters program.

The world of shooting sports is diverse and varied. Personally I prefer to do long range precision shooting with a long rifle. Others enjoy shooting clay pigeons, or competing in 3-gun competitions that test your skill in pistol, rifle, and shotgun all in a fast paced environment. Some people fill their freezers with their shooting skill, and yet others' skill in gunfighting keeps them alive in dangerous parts of the world while serving in the military or private contracting.

I hope that this introduction has been useful to you. Keep me in the loop about what you do next.



LIFE SKILL 5: Grill a Perfect Steak

BY DAVID DELLANAVE

I have a dirty secret about my steak grilling ability. I would like most people to think that my ability to grill a steak has to do with years of understudy with an award-winning grillmaster who learned from one of the greatest grillmasters of all time himself. And my training culminated with preparing a steak for Pat LaFrieda himself.

But none of that would be true.

The fact is my ability to grill a perfect steak has more to do with having the right tool for the job than anything. Which I suppose is a good lesson in and of itself.

Let's first discuss what it is that makes a perfect steak and then I'll reveal the tool you need and the steps to take.

A great steak comes together when you take a good quality cut of meat, you season it correctly, you put a nice crust on the outside to lock the juices in, and you cook it to the correct internal temperature. Anything above medium is a crime and I won't have it discussed in my presence. You do what you want.

You'll need a nice cut of meat to start with. Personally I am a big fan of rib eye, but some people like filet or tenderloin better. When I am cooking for guests I will typically go with a very large porterhouse (essentially a t-bone, but cut from the larger end) so that I have both tenderloin and new york strip and then I slice it all up before serving. Either way, find a good butcher shop and source your meat from there. When I ask the butcher for a porterhouse I'll have them cut me a 2 to 2.5 inch thick porterhouse that is enough for 4 people. If I'm doing filets I want them at least an inch thick. Thickness is super important because if it's too thin you're going to overcook it every time. Regardless of the type of cut all of the principals are going to remain the same.



I always season steaks the same way: take it out of the refrigerator and put it on a cutting board an hour before you're going to cook it. Because I get my steaks cut pretty thick (two inches if possible) I apply a very generous amount of kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper that is coarsely ground. You'll want to experiment with the right ratio for you, and it also depends on how thick your steaks are. A thicker steak will only have a little salt on the edge relative to the rest of the meat, but a thin steak can get too salty easily. With a proper thick steak what looks like too much is the right amount.

You can cook it on a grill or cast iron skillet, either works. If you're going to use a cast iron skillet to cook for a group I recommend using an oven for the

second part of the cook to make it easier to be consistent. You want to start out with the grill or cast iron extremely hot. Basically as hot as you can get your grill. I have a Big Green Egg that I use for a lot of my grilling and I try to get it up to about 600°. Once you've got it smoking hot, you're going to sear your steak for 60 seconds on each side. Remove it from the grill onto a plate.



Now cool down your grill or turn down the heat on your skillet. You want the grill (or oven) around 350°. Once you've brought it down to the cooking-through temperature put it back on the grill.



This is where the secret key comes in. You need a **Thermoworks ThermoPro**. Look I know what you're thinking "Uggggghh why do I have to buy a thing and even worse why do I have to suffer the dishonor of using a thermometer?" I need to address this in two parts. The first is why you need a thermometer to begin with, and the second is why you need this particular thermometer.

First you need a thermometer because you do not have calibrated infrared vision that can tell you the internal temperature of a two-inch thick piece of meat, simple as that. I don't care how many steaks you have grilled every cut is slightly different and the fact that you can go to the finest steakhouses in the country and still get a steak that isn't cooked to the correct temperature is plenty of indication that even if you grill thousands of steaks you still will not have this ability. The only way to cook a steak, reliably, to an exact internal temperature is by measuring, not guessing.

Second, why this one? Years back when I first learned to bar-be-cue I noticed all of the best grillmasters raved about this one particular thermometer. So I did what good stubborn men do and I bought a cheap one from the local kitchen store. And then

another. And then another. They either broke or gave unreliable readings that always left me in doubt at the worst possible moment. Finally I broke down and bought a ThermoPro. What a revelation. It reads instantly, it's always reliable, and I'm still using the one I bought 10 years ago. I have given dozens away as gifts and every person, even the skeptics, have later raved about it and wish they had gotten one sooner. They're just that good.

Now that you can reliably measure the internal temperature of the steak you're cooking you're going to cook it up to your preferred temp. I cook steaks to 125°. This really depends on the size of the steak, but let's say an average is 5 minutes per side, not including the sear, give or take. Really thick steaks can take longer than you think.



When you've reached the correct internal temp, pull the steak off and let it cool on a cutting board for a couple minutes before slicing or serving.

I prefer to slice the whole steak and serve it that way.

Guys the whole key is being able to accurately, reliably, repeatedly cook that steak to the correct internal temperature. If you did nothing else other than that you'd still produce a better steak than the guy down the way that over or under cooks it. Don't be too proud to use something that makes the job easy. Invest in the right tool and you'll be able to grill a perfect steak every single time.



YOU READY FOR MORE?

Of course that's not where this journey ends; we're just getting started.

- I've got a series of videos on YouTube with more skills, and I'm just getting started over there.
www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLVws0vYvN-YMswZhIOEVQop_V2HLh6z2u
- If you want to learn more about strength training, here are my best articles.
www.dellanave.com/best-training-articles
- Sold on learning more new skills? Here's my favorite piece on how to learn complex skills.
www.dellanave.com/build-complex-skills
- Plus, here's a way for you to think about and structure your exploration.
www.dellanave.com/roomba-theory-improvement
- While you're there, you might also like this article about how to integrate new information you learn more quickly and effectively, with no extra effort.
www.dellanave.com/how-to-learn-faster-without-doing-anything

Finally, I'd love to hear from you about what you're up to or if there's anything I can help you with.

You can find me on:



@ddn3d



@dellanave



@ddn

To your capability,

