



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MANUAL
FOR THE HANDLING AND FIRING
OF
U.S. M1911 and M1911A1 Colt Automatic Pistol,
.45 A.C.P. Caliber
IN
INTERPRETIVE DEMONSTRATIONS

PREFACE

This manual sets forth the procedures required to demonstrate the U.S. M1911 and M1911A1 Colt Automatic Pistol, .45 A.C.P. Caliber in areas administered by the National Park Service. This manual will refer to the [*DESCRIPTION OF THE AUTOMATIC PISTOL, CALIBER .45, MODEL OF 1911*](#) for descriptions of nomenclature, inspections and maintenance.

Persons using this manual must be intimately familiar with the NPS guidelines, manuals and checklists regarding small arms demonstrations.

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INTRODUCTION

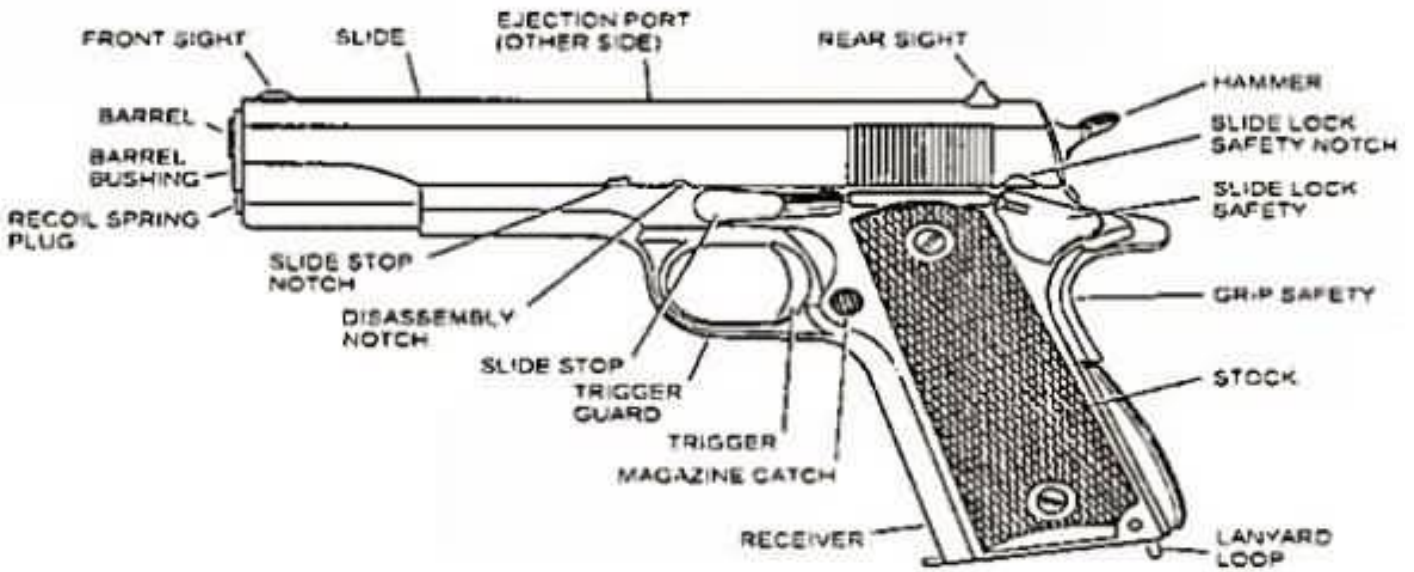
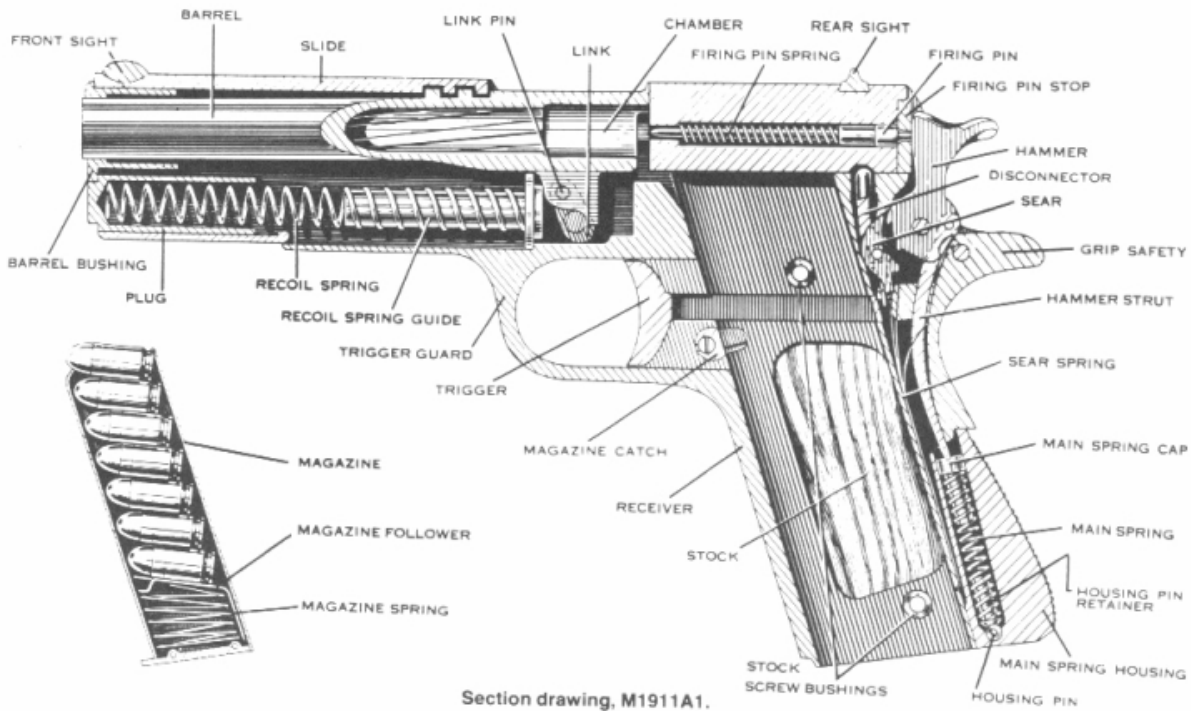
U.S. M1911 and M1911A1 Colt Automatic Pistol, .45 A.C.P. Caliber



The first automatic, magazine-fed pistol adopted by the U.S. Army, the Colt M1911 is a single action, semi-automatic, recoil-operated pistol chambered for the .45 caliber A.C.P. (Automatic Colt Pistol) cartridge. With the gas of fired cartridges driving back the slide to eject the spent cartridge casing, the pistol was self-loading from a box, spring-fed magazine holding seven rounds inserted and locked in the pistol's handle. Adopted to replace the M1892 .38 caliber Colt Revolver, the Automatic Pistol's powerful .45 cartridge proved lethal in stopping power against Moro guerillas in the Philippines. Designed by John Browning, the Colt Automatic became an iconic pistol of the U.S. military, carried through twentieth century wars until the Baretta M9 9mm Pistol was adopted in 1985. Nevertheless, the M1911 is still carried into combat by many American troops as their pistol of choice, in personal preference to the official M9 sidearm. Manufactured in large numbers for service in the trenches of the Great War, the Colt Automatic was supplemented by revolvers for the American Expeditionary Force: the M1917 Colt or Smith and Wesson .45 caliber revolvers chambered for the A.C.P. cartridge loaded in "half moon" metal clips inserted into the pistol cylinders to ease ejection of fired cartridge casings. Redesigned in 1924 with slight modifications to the original design (most parts interchangeable between the models), the Colt .45 Automatic (M1911A1), was the primary service pistol of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marines by World War II. Besides the U.S. Armory manufactured pistols, contractors like Colt, Union Switch and Signal, Remington-Rand, and Singer produced Colt Automatics for war service.

NOMENCALTURE

See pages 8-11 of [DESCRIPTION OF THE AUTOMATIC PISTOL, CALIBER .45, MODEL OF 1911](#).



INSPECTION & MAINTENANCE

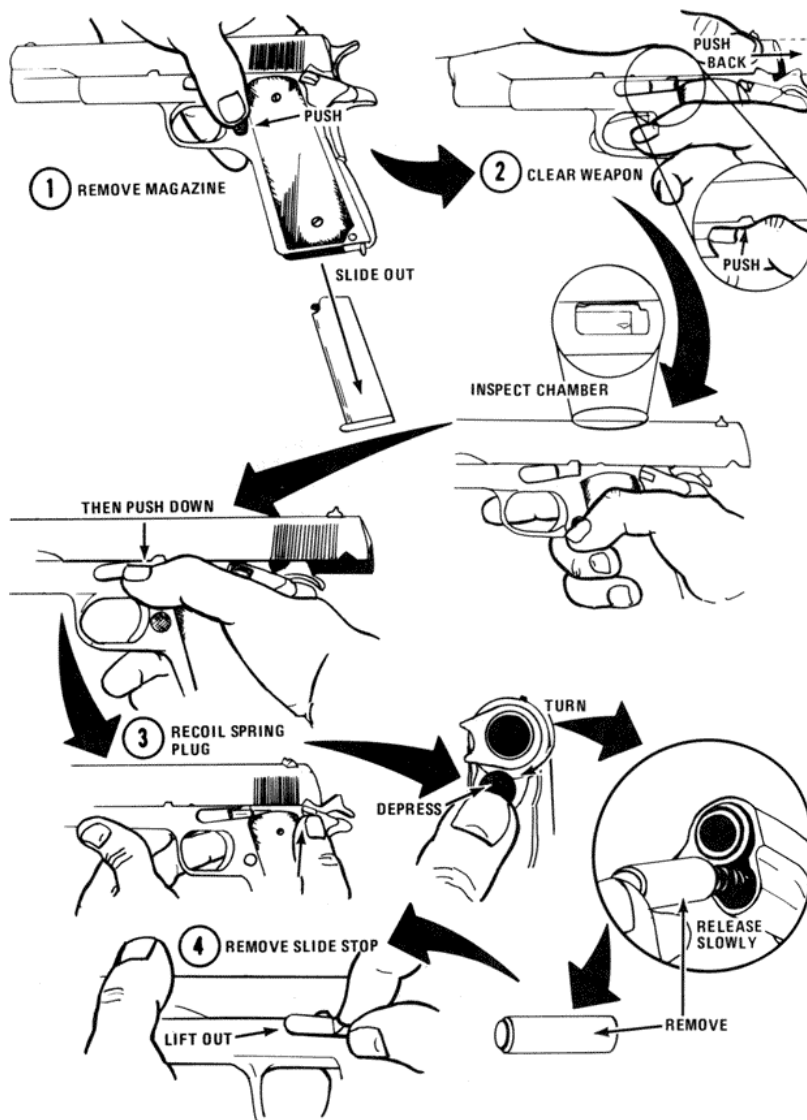
A. Dismounting & Assembly

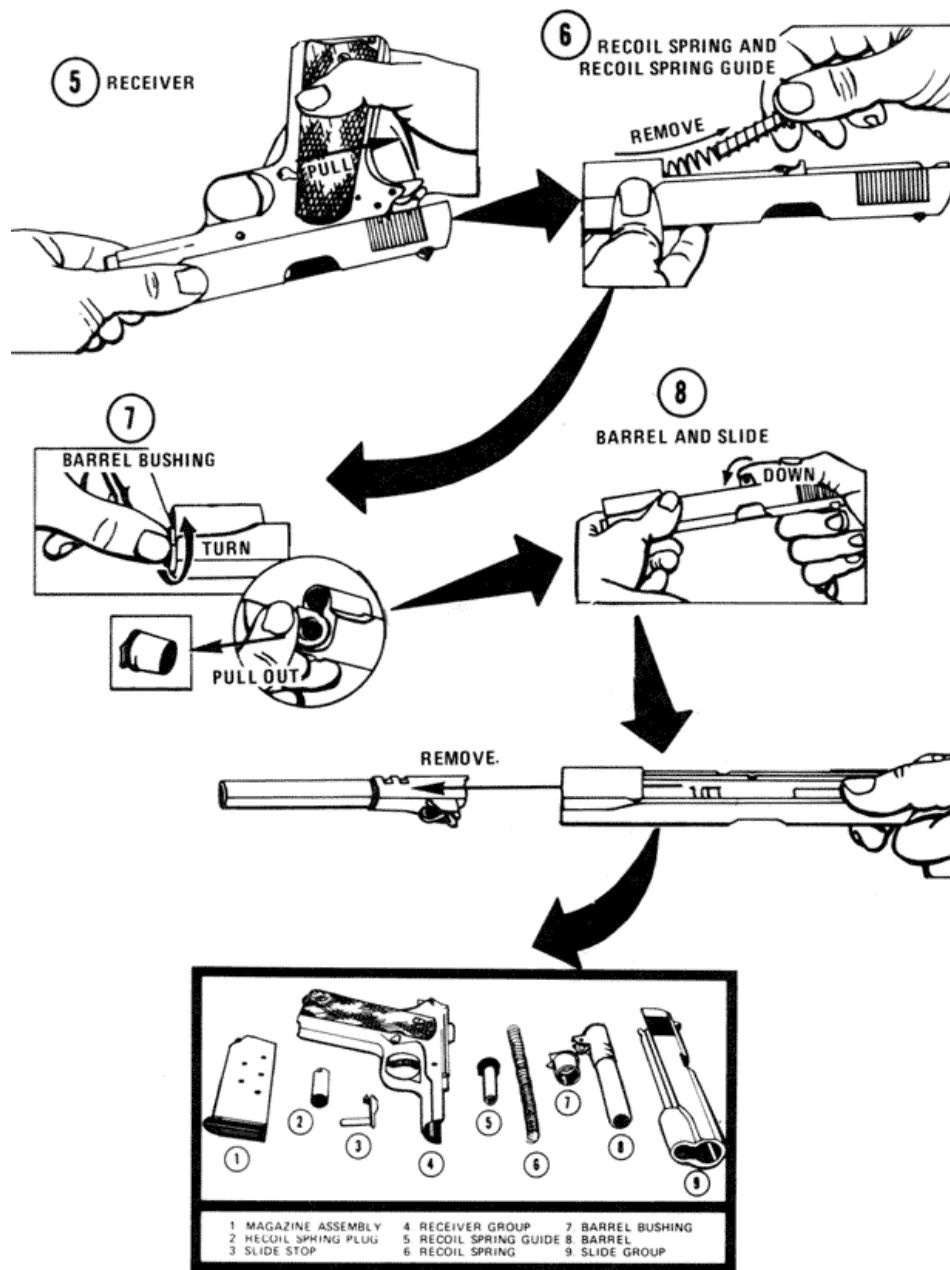
See pages 11-13 of [DESCRIPTION OF THE AUTOMATIC PISTOL, CALIBER .45, MODEL OF 1911.](#)

B. Cleaning

The Pistol requires a thorough cleaning after each firing demonstration to remove soot and residue from firing. Remove magazine, and inspect to verify it is empty of cartridges. Check bore, chamber, and magazine well also to verify pistol is unloaded. Pistol can be cleaned without disassembly, making certain to clean all fouling from interior parts of pistol mechanism and bore, as well as cleaning magazine. Lightly oil pistol to prevent corrosion, and to lubricate action. Store pistol without tension on springs: uncocked, with magazine removed.

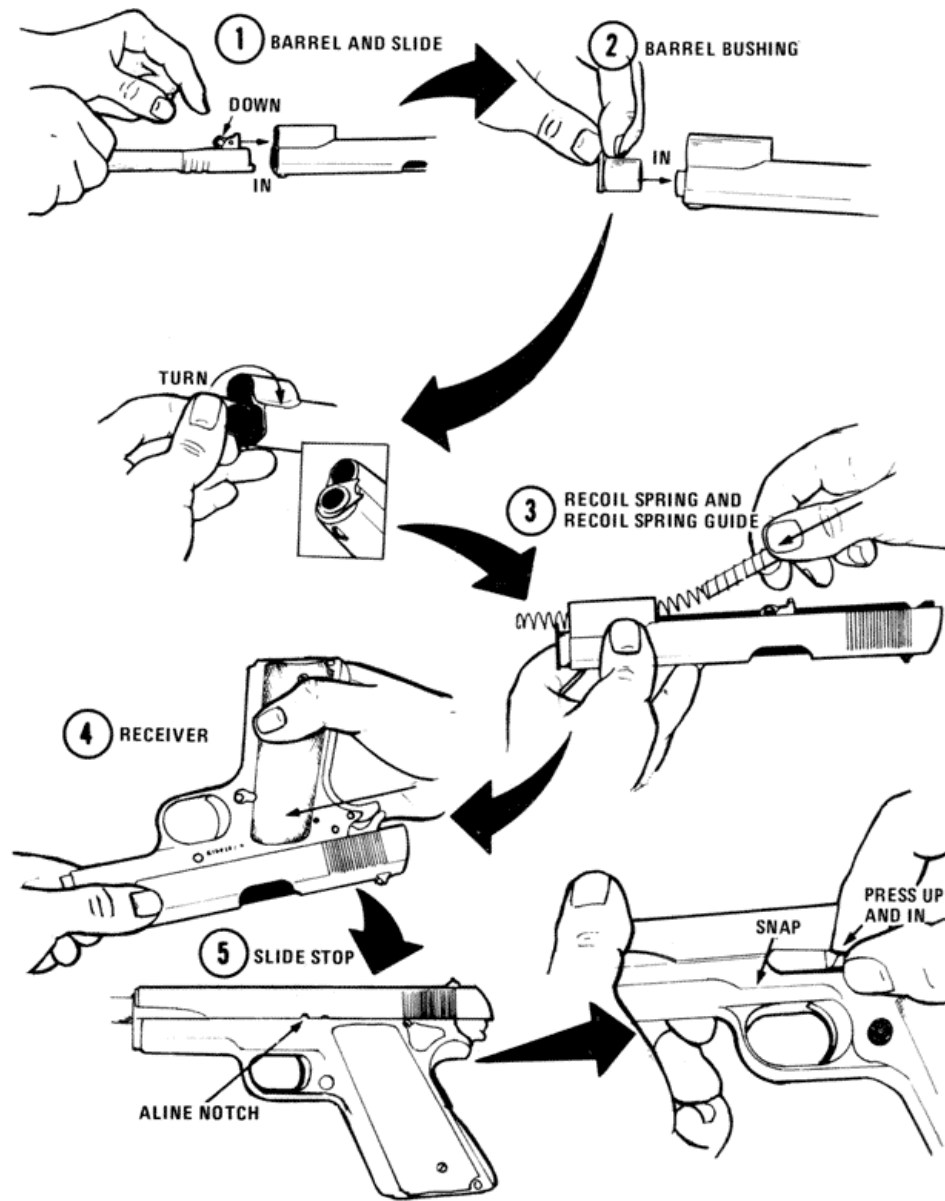
Disassembly of Pistol

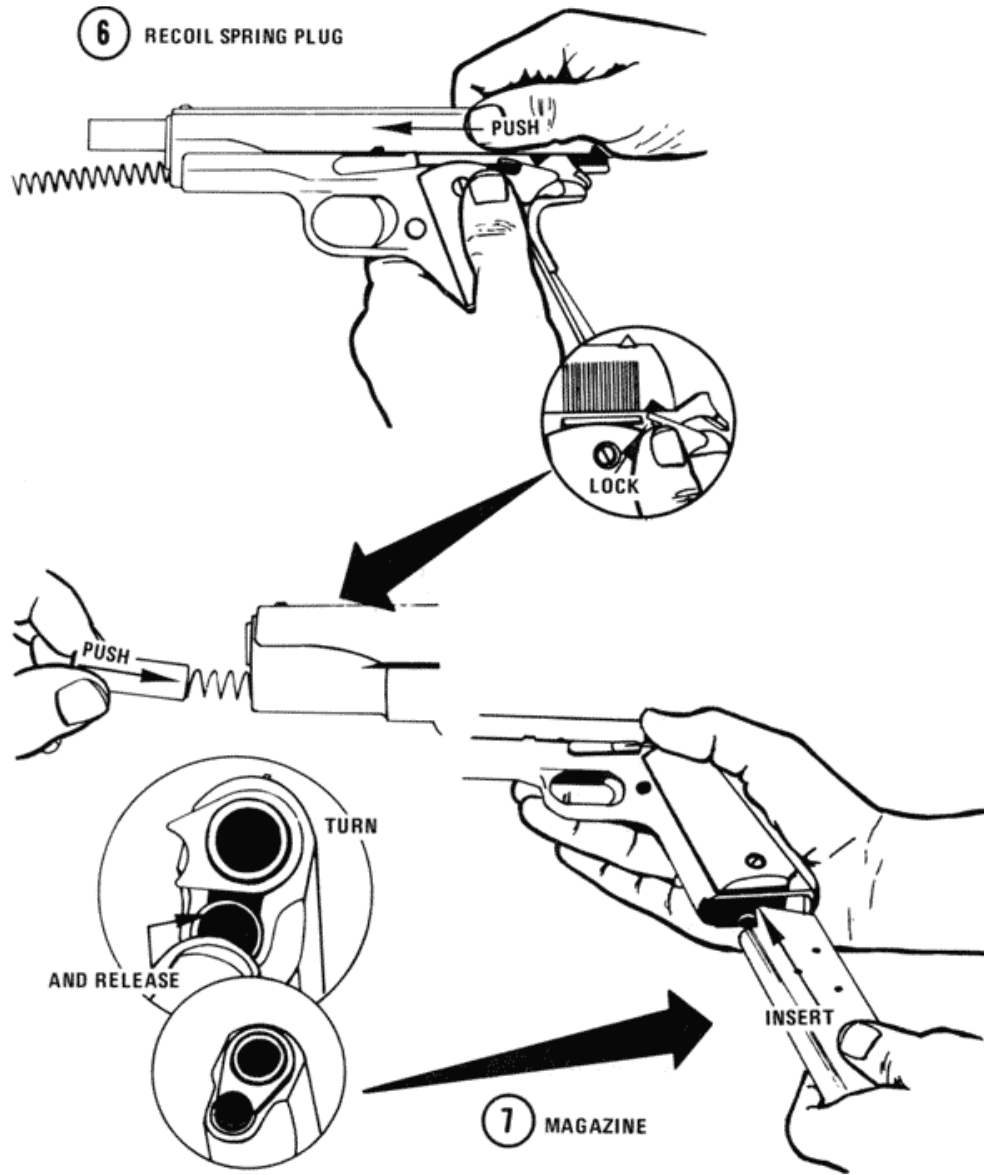




With proper tools, barrel bushing wrench and screwdriver punch, disassemble pistol, being careful with parts and especially with spring beneath barrel bushing. Under tension, it must be carefully removed from piece. With solvent (Break Free, Ballistol, Hoppe's, etc.) and cleaning rod and patches, clean bore of barrel, magazine well, etc. Wipe down metal of piece to remove residue and soot. Clean magazines. Apply light coating of oil to bore, magazines, metal of pistol to preserve from rust, and oil mechanism to lubricate action of piece.

Cleaning: Re-assembly of Pistol





MANUAL OF ARMS

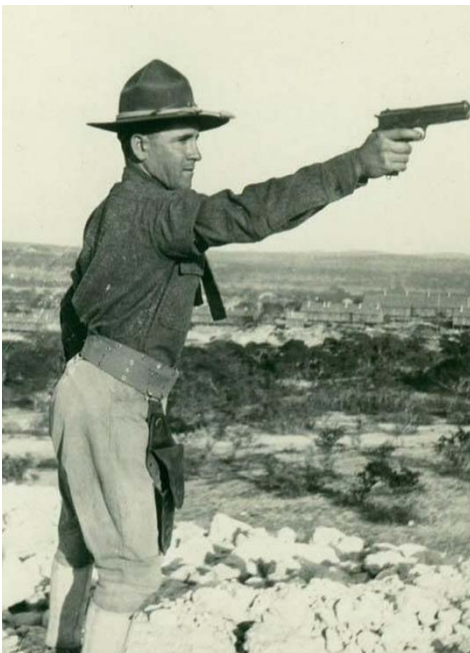


The movements of the pistol drill differ from that of the rifle in that there is no need for simultaneous execution. The drill consists of movements for the simple, quick, and safe handling of the pistol.

Pistol is carried in a holster fastened to the Mills waist belt. Magazines are carried in the pouch attached to the belt. **Inspection, Pistol.** Draw pistol from holster and hold upright in right hand, muzzle inclined upward at 30°, finger outside of trigger guard. Always hold pistol with barrel oriented in safe, downrange direction. Insure hammer is in safe (down) position. Visually inspect pistol for magazine: if inserted, turn pistol slightly to right, press release catch with right thumb, and remove magazine from handle with left hand. Insure magazine is empty of cartridges. Insert empty magazine in belt pouch. Grasp slide with left hand, and draw back while holding pistol upright in right hand. Check for ejection of cartridge, and insure that chamber of pistol is empty. Without magazine, slide can be worked, using right thumb to engage slide stop in notch on slide to lock open chamber. Release slide stop to close chamber, lower hammer by pressing trigger while easing hammer down with right thumb. Engage grip safety with left hand while easing down hammer with right. NOTE: the M1911 Pistol has three safety locks or settings: the thumb-operated slide lock safety; the grip safety; and the half-cock hammer safety. All must be disengaged to fire the pistol. **Return, Pistol.** Lower pistol and return to holster.

Raise, Pistol. Draw pistol from holster and hold upright in right hand. Turn barrel to right. Grasp loaded magazine from belt pouch with left hand, and insert into handle of pistol, pressing it firmly home with butt of hand.

Load, Pistol. Turn barrel slightly to left. With left hand, grasp slide and pull fully back. Release slide to chamber cartridge. Quit slide with left hand, and engage slide lock safety. Hammer should be at full cock.



Aim, Fire. Straighten arm, with slight bend to elbow, and sight along barrel. Step back with left foot, and brace against recoil. Hold pistol upright, firmly in right hand. With right thumb, disengage safety lock. Keep forefinger outside trigger guard until ready to fire. Depress trigger with steady pressure to discharge pistol.

Become accustomed to “feel” of piece, trigger pull, recoil, etc. Be aware of ejected shell casings. Re-aim, and fire until magazine is expended. Slide should lock open on empty chamber.



Return, Pistol. Turn barrel slightly to right. Visually inspect pistol: ensure chamber and magazine are empty of cartridges. Press magazine release catch with right thumb, eject magazine and return empty magazine to belt pouch with left hand. With right thumb, press slide stop, and release slide to close empty chamber. Un-cock pistol with right thumb, easing down hammer by pressing trigger. With left hand, engage grip safety while uncocking pistol with right. Lower pistol to holster, insert pistol and button flap of holster with right hand.



AMMUNITION REQUIREMENTS

Only factory manufactured blank ammunition will be used in demonstrations. These blank cartridges use a $\frac{3}{4}$ load of powder, and the nose is crimped to ease operation (feeding during loading). A source is Atlantic Wall Blanks at www.atlanticwallblanks.com: .45 ACP Blanks, #451911.



MISFIRE PROCEDURES

Level I Misfire.

Failure of cartridge to discharge. Primer may be faulty. At all times keep muzzle facing in safe, downrange direction. Wait 10 seconds with pistol at firing position in case round is a squib or hang-fire. Try to fire round again once, by re-cocking hammer. If cartridge again fails to ignite, it is most likely a dud. Eject dud round by drawing back slide to eject cartridge and reload with fresh round from magazine (make certain to retrieve dud later, after demonstration, along with fired, spent casings). Discard dud properly.

Level II Misfire.

After attempting to clear misfire, problem persists. Cancel demonstration, and disperse audience. Cartridges do not ignite. Eject dud rounds with slide. Engage slide lock safety. Eject magazine and remove remainder of cartridges. Disengage slide lock, and eject cartridge from chamber. Inspect cartridges to determine cause of misfires. Examine pistol to check for proper assembly. Clean pistol thoroughly and examine for proper operation and function of mechanism prior to further demonstrations.

Colt M1911 .45 Automatic Inspection Checklist



Park: _____ Weapon: _____ S.N./Prop.# _____

- The piece is confirmed to be unloaded.
 - Your overall first impression is favorable.
 - The grips fit snugly and are free of cracks, serious chips, or splinters.
 - The action works smoothly, slide cocks piece, and moves freely.
 - The half-cock and safety locks function properly.
 - The trigger is rigidly held at the half-cock, and with safety lock engaged.
 - The grip safety functions properly.
 - There is no excessive looseness to the slide, nor is there any gap between slide and the barrel.
 - Bore and breech display no fouling or corrosion.
 - The bore is in good condition.
 - There is adequate tension on the mainspring.
 - The magazine fits into the handle securely, and the magazine catch freely releases the magazine.
 - The slide stop functions properly, and engages the notch on the slide.
 - Hammer and firing pin show no excessive wear or damage.
 - Hammer functions properly, and holds securely at half- and full cock.
 - The hammer displays no excessive wear, and strikes squarely.
 - The trigger releases hammer with sufficient tension.
 - The pistol is properly lubricated.
 - Metal is free of pitting and corrosion.
 - Magazine spring tight and properly functioning.
- Park staff reports no problems in using this firearm.

COMPETENCY EXAM

Knowledge of pistol nomenclature.
Name and function of parts.

Ability to inspect pistol for safety issues and to communicate regulations pertaining to pistol display and demonstration in park.

Knowledge of safety procedures in handling and firing pistol.
Demonstrate practical skill in performing drill and firing (both dry and live on range).

Display skill in maintaining pistol: cleaning and disassembly-reassembly of piece.

Demonstrate ability to safely and properly clear misfires, both level I and level II.