

HIDE FIGHT

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RUN.
When there is an active threat. Once you are safe, call 4911.



HIDE.
If escape is not possible, hide.
1. Block the door.
2. Avoid Windows.
3. Silence your cell.



FIGHT.
Only as a last resort and if your life is in danger.

RUN, HIDE, FIGHT: HOW TO SURVIVE AN ACTIVE SHOOTER EVENT

This article is a guide to, Run, Hide, Fight and how to survive an active shooter event. After the mass shooting in Columbine, Colorado, law enforcement agencies from the FBI down to local counties, cities, towns and villages got to work on redeveloping agency and interagency operating plans and tactics to address the mass shooter threat from a law enforcement perspective. If we can rewrite the way that law enforcement responds to a threat, we can also rewrite the way that potential victims respond to a threat. The changes in operating procedures for law enforcement agencies evolved from the understanding that the mass shooter threat was a very different threat from an armed gunman taking hostages and sharing a list of demands with a negotiator. So a different strategy was required to counter the new threat.

LESSONS LEARNED

One lesson learned from Columbine was that waiting on a SWAT team to arrive before making entry would only ensure that more victims would be killed in the intervening minutes. So new tactics evolved, which included having the first arriving officer or officers make entry the moment they arrived on the scene of the shooting, even if that meant making entry with just one or two officers.

The change in tactic seemed to be a good one. While the Columbine shooting lasted 47 minutes, subsequent mass shootings have averaged a duration of about nine minutes. So tactics for law enforcement evolved, but it wasn't until the federal government's Department of Homeland Security quietly released a program titled, "Active Shooter: How to Respond," that anyone began to address how victim tactics should change. The DHS program, which is better known by its other name, "Run, Hide, Fight," teaches potential victims of mass shootings that they aren't required to simply wait out mass shootings without a plan.

Instead, they must take an active part in their own self-preservation by either running, hiding or fighting back. While the program doesn't specifically call out this fact, it's important to

ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE
LEARN HOW TO SURVIVE A SHOOTING EVENT

RUN HIDE FIGHT

CALL 911 ONLY WHEN IT'S SAFE TO DO SO

RUN

- HAVE AN ESCAPE PLAN
- EVACUATE
- LEAVE YOUR BELONGINGS
- HELP OTHERS IF POSSIBLE
- DO NOT MOVE WOUNDED PEOPLE

HIDE

- BE OUT FROM SHOOTER'S VIEW
- LOCK DOORS AND BLOCK THEM WITH FURNITURE
- KEEP YOUR OPTIONS FOR MOVEMENT
- SILENCE PHONE
- BE QUIET

FIGHT

- ACT AGGRESSIVELY
- INCAPACITATE THE ACTIVE SHOOTER
- THROW OBJECTS
- YELL AND CALL FOR HELP

**FIGHT ONLY AS A LAST RESORT
BE PREPARED**

CALL 911

- CALL 911 WHEN YOU ARE SAFE
- GIVE INFORMATIONS TO THE OPERATOR

WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES

- FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS OF POLICE OFFICERS
- DROP ANY OBJECT
- KEEP HANDS VISIBLE

ACTIVE SHOOTER SAFETY GUIDELINES

understand that the “Run, Hide, Fight” methodology doesn’t look at those three options linearly or as a series of steps that you must progress through. In other words, if you are in public, at a school, at your house of worship or at your place of business and a mass shooter enters the area, you’re not required to first try to run and then try to hide before you elect to fight back. If the situation calls for it, you can choose to immediately fight back — and fight back aggressively. In this section, we’ll review the “Run, Hide, Fight” methodology in detail, where once again, I’ll supplement the information provided by the Department of Homeland Security with my own recommendations.

DENIAL ISN'T A REQUIRED STEP

Even before we look at specific actions you’ll need to take if you elect to run, hide or fight, let’s talk about what your immediate reaction must be to the sound of gunfire or other signs that a mass shooter has entered the area. As with many things in life that are out of the ordinary, our first response to a mass shooter threat may be denial, with thoughts of, “This can’t be what I think it is.” Even momentary denial can lead to the loss of valuable seconds which could have been used to escape or to prepare an active counterattack. Whether the first sign of an active shooter is gunfire, the alarm being sounded by another individual, the sound of a lockdown being called, or a text or tweet, you must skip the denial step and immediately accept the fact that it is real. You should then try to determine the direction and the proximity of the threat. If the alert has not yet been sounded, you must alert others around you by shouting, “Gun, gun, leave the area!” At that point, you’ll make a decision as to whether you will run, hide or fight.



In the event of an active shooter situation, you should try to flee the area as quickly as safely possible.

RUN

If you have the ability and the opportunity, your first choice of action should be to run out of the kill zone as fast as humanly possible and keep running until you've reached what you believe is a safe location. Regardless of whether you're in a wide-open room or a narrow hallway, your No. 1 goal should be to put as much distance between yourself and the shooter as possible. As you exit the area, you must remember that your top priority is for your own personal safety. That means leaving all personal belongings behind and even leaving others behind if they are too afraid — or unable or unwilling — to leave. Head in a direction opposite the sound of gunfire and make a direct route for the closest exit.

Even if the shooter has entered your immediate area (such as a conference room or classroom), escaping may still be an option, but you must immediately kick your escape plan into action by running in the opposite direction, moving laterally or diagonally from the shooter, which moves you off of his line of attack. Anyone who has taken a trip to the range and then tried to translate that to hunting wild (and moving) game can attest to the fact that accurately shooting at a stationary target can be difficult enough, but shooting at a target that is moving laterally or diagonally away from you increases the difficulty exponentially.

HAVE AN ESCAPE PLAN

As simple as running away sounds, escaping first requires you to have a plan, which is as simple as always knowing where the exits are in any room that you enter and knowing where the building exits are. As part of your institution's Emergency Operations Plan (or as part of your individual or family plan if no EOP exists), it's important to identify appropriate escape routes in the event of a mass shooting.

Similar to knowing escape routes in the event of a fire, there should be at least two identified escape routes from each room. The selection of which escape route will be used will be based upon the location and disposition of the shooter. In some cases, exterior doors may be used, while in other cases, exterior windows must be opened or broken to enable a rapid escape. Once clear from the building, you should run as quickly as possible until you've reached law enforcement. Keep your hands in the air and follow the direction of law enforcement personnel to the letter.

BE A GOOD WITNESS

If your institution is like most, law enforcement will not have an internal video feed to determine the disposition of the attacker. So they must either operate in the blind or depend on eyewitness accounts from those who were able to escape from the area. Even if you had just seconds to look at the attacker, try to remember these key items, which will be critical in helping law enforcement end the attack quickly

HIDE

If the shooter has not yet seen you but there is no practical escape from the building, you may choose to hide in as safe a place as possible ... if one is available and it meets the definition of good concealment and cover. Concealment is anything that hides you from the threat (a closed door, a wall or anything you can duck behind) while cover (a concrete pillar, a concrete wall or the front of a vehicle where the engine block is) also protects you from incoming bullets.

Concealment may keep you safe, but if the shooter approaches your area, you may be very easy to detect, especially if you are breathing heavily or are with others who are making noise. Cover is a far superior choice since it can not only protect you from incoming bullets but also help to keep the noise of you and others down so that you go undetected by the shooter.

Hiding can be a viable option if escape is impossible, but there are several factors to keep in mind.

IF YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO HIDE, HERE ARE KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

As part of the EOP your institution developed, you should be aware of which rooms have locks and which rooms do not. Even if you need to travel a greater distance to reach a room with a lock, this will be a far superior choice.

If you have the choice of hiding in a room on the interior of the building or the exterior of the building, choose the room on the exterior. You may have an opportunity to break a window and escape from the building, or rescuers arriving on the scene may do it for you.

Once you and others have entered the room, immediately lock the door and move out of the line of sight of any windows in or alongside the door. As part of your institution's EOP, the room may have a marked line on the floor indicating the areas inside and outside the line of sight.

If the room you entered does not have a lock, quickly barricade the door with heavy furniture. Don't be shy about this — if there are tables, chairs and desks in the room, quickly move as much as possible to block the door.

- 1. Turn off the lights and silence all electronic devices.**
- 2. Remain silent. Remember that on average, you will only have five to nine minutes to wait until the shooting has ended.**
- 3. If possible, use strategies to silently communicate with first responders. For example, in rooms with exterior windows, make signs to silently signal law enforcement and emergency responders to indicate the status of the room's occupants.**
- 4. Hide along the wall closest to the exit but out of the view from the hallway (allowing for an ambush of the shooter and for possible escape if the shooter enters the room).**
- 5. Find an improvised weapon and have it at the ready in case the shooter forces his way into the room. Silently indicate to others in the room that they should do so as well.**
- 6. Remain in place until given an all-clear by identifiable law enforcement.**

Exterior rooms are superior to interior rooms, but as long as the interior room meets all other criteria, it is highly likely that occupants can survive the eight to nine minutes it will take for

the average mass shooting to end. As part of an effective EOP, each safe room should also be pre-staged with an emergency first-aid kit and an intercom or other means of communicating with responders to update them on the status of the room's occupants (all safe, under attack or emergency medical care needed).

STAGING YOUR SAFE ROOM

As part of your institutional EOP, rooms should be identified as "safe" or "not safe," and you should include in the plan the specific items that will be staged in your safe rooms. These items can include:

1. **An additional ability to block the door, such as a Door Jammer or other commercial device.**
2. **Any required tool to open or break exterior windows if they are an avenue of escape.**
3. **Any required item to block or cover the viewport in the door (if one exists).**
4. **An emergency first-aid kit.**

Communicate with law enforcement. The most sophisticated way to do this would be electronically. A simpler method would be for each safe room to have three pre-printed posters which can be stuck to the exterior windows indicating whether the occupants of the room are "All Safe," "Under Attack" or "Need Medical Assistance."

Use any weapon handy which can be used against the attacker if he makes entry. This can be as well thought out as an expandable baton, as simple as a baseball bat or as specific as a taser or firearm in a lockbox.

FIGHT

If it's too late to run, or if the shooter finds your hiding spot and escape is not possible, you have just a single choice remaining: You must commit to aggressive action to stop the shooter using whatever means necessary. That may mean using improvised weapons that you find on the scene, or it may mean using a firearm if you had the foresight to include one in your personal or institutional plan.

If all else fails, you may be forced to fight to defend yourself from an active shooter.

While the "Run, Hide, Fight" program doesn't specifically take a stance one way or another on whether a firearm in the hands of potential victims would change the outcome, it is significant that the Department of Homeland Security recommends fighting back at all. I'll add that the European version of this program is "Run, Hide, Report." Leave it to the Europeans to avoid fighting back at all costs.

Had the "Run, Hide, Fight" methodology been taught to the students at Virginia Tech, it's likely that even if the shooter hadn't been incapacitated by his potential victims, any aggressive action on the part of the students would have disrupted his momentum and confidence, forcing him to move from offensive mode to defensive mode. Remember that a mass shooter counts on being entirely in control of the situation, and a coordinated response by the students to fight back would threaten that control.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

We'll talk about how firearms may fit into your personal or institutional plan in a moment, but let's first talk about improvised weapons. As would have been the case in the classrooms in Norris Hall at Virginia Tech, we're typically surrounded by dozens of objects, large and small, which could be used as improvised weapons to disable or deflect an attacker.

While any object thrown at an attacker's head will cause him to temporarily break off his attack as he turns to dodge the object, your first choice should be any hardened object that can be used as an impact weapon, such as a chair, the leg from a table, a lamp post or a laptop. Any object which can serve as an improvised edged weapon, such as scissors or a box cutter, is also a good choice. Other objects, including shoes, coffee mugs, books, or even papers thrown at the attacker's head, will cause at least an involuntary reaction to turn away from the improvised missiles, which can allow other defenders to reach the attacker and overwhelm him.

To improve the likelihood of success, I'll echo what the Department of Homeland Security has to say about fighting back, and that's that you must commit to your actions until the shooter is overwhelmed and either disabled or dead.

If you're unsure of how easy it will be to find an improvised weapon, the next time you're at your child's school, at your house of worship, at your place of business or even out in public shopping, take a critical look around at the objects in whatever room you find yourself in. You can even make a game of it, which should drive some creative thinking on how you can take an everyday object and turn it into a weapon.

ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE
LEARN HOW TO SURVIVE A SHOOTING EVENT

RUN **HIDE** **FIGHT**

CALL 911 ONLY WHEN IT'S SAFE TO DO SO

The graphic features a dark blue background with white text and icons. At the top, the title 'ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE' is in large, bold, white letters, with the subtitle 'LEARN HOW TO SURVIVE A SHOOTING EVENT' below it. To the right are white icons of a handgun and a knife. Below this is a horizontal bar with three circular icons: a person running, a person crouching under a table, and a person fighting with a knife. Below these icons are three colored arrows pointing right: a light blue arrow labeled 'RUN', a dark blue arrow labeled 'HIDE', and an orange arrow labeled 'FIGHT'. At the bottom, the text 'CALL 911 ONLY WHEN IT'S SAFE TO DO SO' is written in white.

AN ARMED RESPONSE

For 12 million Americans, carrying a firearm on a daily basis under a state-issued concealed carry permit is as everyday as carrying a wallet or purse. But for most school boards, most church committees and most corporate lawyers, the thought of including firearms in an Emergency Operations Plan may be a difficult idea to swallow.

If you fall into that camp, my suggestion is that you play this scenario through in your mind: 30 seconds from now, a mass shooter will walk into the front door of your school, house of worship or business, and he will shoot and kill the first three people he sees, just feet away from you. You and a dozen others have no chance to run or hide. In this scenario, you get to pick three extra people to join you. Those people can be friends who will call the police (of course, you know that the shooting will last about nine more minutes before the shooter kills himself or the police apprehend him). You can choose three psychologists or spiritual leaders who will plead with the shooter not to kill anyone else and to give himself up (but you know that only 4 percent of active shooters surrender). You can choose three friends who have taken karate classes. Or you can choose to have three friends join you who are legally armed.

While you may consider this scenario overly dramatic, I use it to illustrate the fact that just because these killers are using firearms as an offensive tool does not mean that you should be dissuaded from considering a firearm as a defensive tool. The truth of the matter is, nothing else in the world can level the playing field between a demented individual who will kill everyone and anyone in his path with a senior citizen or an expectant mother or a disabled veteran. Nothing. If you ever do find yourself face to face with a mass shooter, having a gun in your possession won't guarantee that you'll survive, but not having one increases the odds that you'll be dead and that everyone standing behind you will be dead too.



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WE THE PEOPLE
THE SECOND AMENDMENT.

*“The right of the people
to keep and bear arms
shall not be infringed.”*



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