

# WHAT KIND OF SHOTGUN: DOUBLE, PUMP OR SEMI-AUTO?

Excerpted from *NorCal Cazadora*, a blog by Holly Heyser

There are a thousand ways to answer this question, but I've come up with a little personality test that could provide a solid starting point for your decision. Answer the questions below and put a "1" in the appropriate column(s) in the score sheet, as directed. The column with the highest total might just be your true love.

## BUDGET

I strongly recommend that you buy the best gun you can afford, because with shotguns, you get what you pay for in terms of performance and durability.

With quality manufacturers, you'll find the pump is the cheapest (high end of \$600), semi-auto is in the middle (\$1,000-\$2,000), and the double gun (over-and-under or side-by-side) is the spendiest (\$2,000 and higher). Score one for the price range of your choice or preference. Amounts may vary, but the price hierarchy should hold.

## DURABILITY

Are you the kind of person who has wood floors and keeps them un-scratched and polished? Do you waterproof your deck every year? You'll probably do well with a beautiful engraved double gun. Do you constantly leave garden implements in the rain to rust? Get a pump. Somewhere in between? Score one for the semi-auto.

## PRESTIGE

Do you enjoy the look and feel of things that are classic, traditional and elegant? Double gun. Is power and speed more important than grace and elegance? Semi-auto. Couldn't care less what people think of the gun you're carrying? Pump.

## EASE OF CLEANING

Do you secretly enjoy things that are complicated to take apart and clean? Semi-auto. Are you more likely to keep your gun clean if it takes very little time to clean it? Score one each for the double gun and pump.

## VOLUNTARY LIMITS

Do you like imposing voluntary limits on yourself to keep things challenging? Score one for the double gun, because it fires only two shots before you have to reload. Do you want to shoot as much as is legally possible? Score one each for the semi-auto and pump, which can legally fire three shots at game before you have to reload.

## SPAZ FACTOR

If you're methodical and take your time, score one each for the double and the semi-auto. If you're a spaz who needs to be restrained for your own good, score one for the pump. Having to work that pump to chamber a new round slows you down in a good way.

## RECOIL

How worrisome is recoil? Not concerned? Score one each for the double and pump. Want maximum recoil protection? Score one for the semi-auto.

Semi-autos channel gas or inertia from the gunshot to expel your empty shotshell and replace it with one from the magazine. That reduces recoil, in gas guns more effectively than inertia-driven guns.

But keep in mind there are other factors that affect recoil: Weight (the heavier the gun, the more recoil it absorbs) and ammo choice (the more shot - measured in ounces - the more recoil).

	DOUBLE	PUMP	SEMI-AUTO
Budget			
Durability			
Prestige			
Ease of cleaning			
Voluntary limits			
Spaz factor			
Recoil			
TOTAL:			

## WHAT GAUGE?

The bigger the bore, the more shot in each shell, the more likely you are to drop the bird. *But*, think about what and where you plan to hunt:

**WATERFOWL:** Big ole 12 gauges are the standard for fast-flying and often large birds, but some high-end clubs require 20 gauges - they're quieter.

**PHEASANTS & GROUSE:** It's more common to see 20 gauges and 16 gauges for the larger upland birds, though you won't be ridiculed (in most places) for carrying a 12 gauge.

**QUAIL & DOVE:** I use a 12. A 20 is seen as more sporty. 28 is really sporty, and they're such light guns...

**Consider this:** Steel shot availability is best for 12 gauges, decent for 20 gauges and limited for 16s and 28s.

## CHAMBERED IN ... ?

**3½ inch:** Holds the longest shells. Nice to have for hunting geese, but you can live without all that recoil.

**3 inch:** This is the standard.

**2¾ inch:** If you get a gun that can shoot only 2¾-inch shells (uncommon in newer guns), it's going to be a *lot* harder to find ammo for hunting.