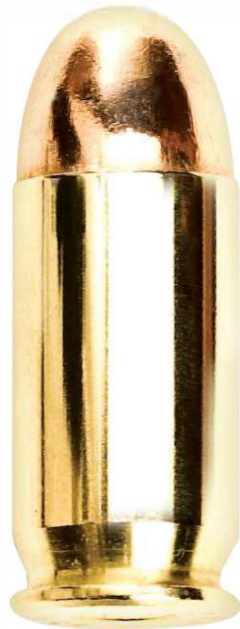


Ammunition Components

What you see below are not bullets; they are more properly called cartridges, rounds or ammunition. The bullet is the conical-shaped object sitting on top of the propellant (in other words, it's the part of the round that shoots down the barrel).

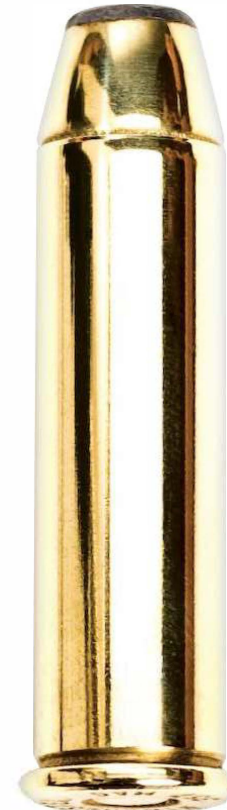
Semi-Automatic Round

On rounds designed for semi-automatics, the rim at the base of each round is no wider than the cartridge case, which allows the rounds to stack easily within a magazine and to feed and extract smoothly. The purpose of the rim is to provide a location for the extractor claw to grab on to as it's feeding and extracting each round.



Revolver Round

On rounds designed for revolvers, the rim of each round is wider than the cartridge case, which allows the rounds to drop in the cylinder without falling all the way through.



Ammunition Components

Bullet

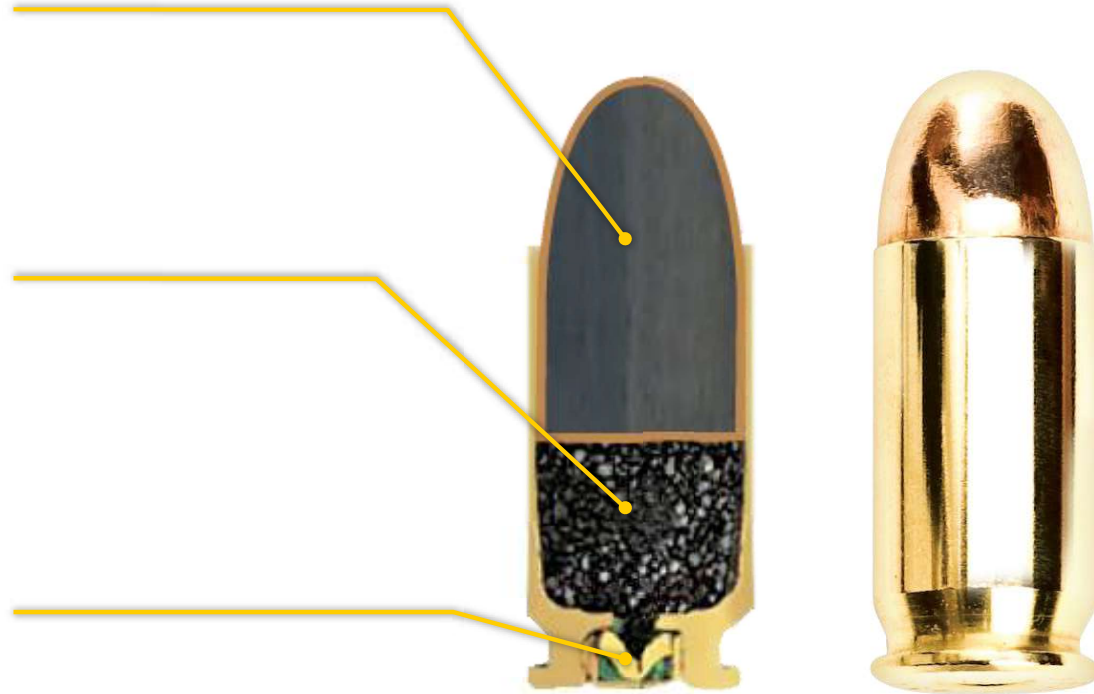
This “full metal jacket” (FMJ) bullet shows how the copper sheath covers a lead core.

Propellant

Modern propellants have a high amount of surface area to ensure a rapid, stable burn, ensuring a maximum expansion of gases.

Primer

When struck by the firing pin, the round’s primer causes a small explosion, showering sparks into the round’s case and igniting the propellant.



Ammunition Components: Caliber



Caliber

Caliber is a measurement of the diameter of the bullet (not the case). The caliber designation has nothing to do with the round's power but rather defines how big of a hole it will make.

The name of ammunition is typically its caliber (in either hundredths of an inch or in millimeters) and some other designation, such as the company that holds the original patent on the round.

For example, the name .45 ACP (Automatic Colt Pistol) tells us that this round is 45 one-hundredths of an inch in diameter and that Colt originally patented the round. The round carries the same name regardless of whether it's being shot in a Colt, a Kimber, a Springfield, etc.

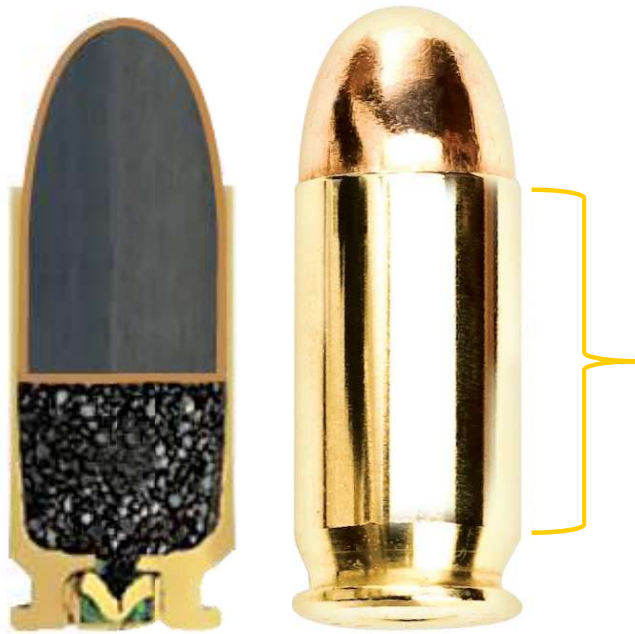
Ammunition Components: Bullet Weight



Bullet Weight

A bullet's weight is indicated in grains. There are 7,000 grains in a pound, and handgun bullet weights range from about 40 grains to 230 grains or more.

Ammunition Components: Case Volume



Case Volume

The relative volume of the case is a good indication of how much propellant the round has. The greater the volume, the more propellant, and the more propellant, the faster the bullet will leave the barrel.

Is Caliber All That Matters?

Each of the three rounds below is .22 caliber (that is, they'll each make the same sized hole in the target). They also each happen to have a 40-grain bullet, yet the differences in case volume (i.e. volume of propellant) alters the relative muzzle velocity (feet per second or "fps") of each bullet, translating to dramatic differences in the "power" of each round.

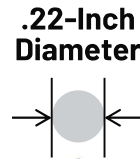


.22 Long Rifle

Best known as a plinking round, the .22 shouldn't be discounted as a self-defense round.

Bullet Weight: 40 grains

Muzzle Velocity: 1060 fps

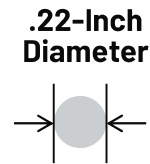


5.7mm FN

Designed by FN as an alternative to the 9mm, the 5.7mm FN is blazing-fast at nearly 2,000 fps.

Bullet Weight: 40 grains

Muzzle Velocity: 1950 fps



.223 Remington

Best known as the standard NATO round for light rifles, it has a velocity more than triple the .22 LR.

Bullet Weight: 40 grains

Muzzle Velocity: 3330 fps