

## PRODUCT REVIEW

# RUGER SP101

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## COMPACT REVOLVER (.357 MAGNUM)



Five-shot .357 Magnum with 3" barrel (Model: 5719).

The Ruger SP101 (c. 1989) is the strongest small frame revolver, which makes it well suited to use with the .357 Magnum and .327 Federal Magnum rounds.

Originally designed for the .38 Special round, it was soon realized that it was more than strong enough to handle the full power .357 Magnum round due to its beefy dimensions, so the frame and cylinder were lengthened slightly to accommodate the more powerful round.

Although available with a short 2.25" long barrel this is too short for magnum rounds. The 3" barrel is best for defensive use, otherwise a lot of gunpowder is wasted as it will burn up outside the barrel. The longer 3" barrel causes a substantial increase in bullet velocity and energy.

The Remington HTP 125gr. SJHP .357 Magnum load (583 ft-lbs/1,450 fps) has the best one-shot-stop record of

any handgun round in police service made today (Federal made a near identical round with the same record but it has been discontinued).

As good as the lighter recoiling .327 Fed Mag version is (6-shot), the .357 Mag round is far more proven, has a far greater range of defensive loads available for it, and can be loaded with the lower power .38 Special rounds.

The problem with the .327 Fed Mag is that it is a high pressure round (45,000 psi vs. 35,000 psi for the .357 Mag and 9mm Parabellum rounds) so full power loads can cause extraction issues, while it performs no better than the best 9mm loads in a short 2.25" or 3" barrel but has sharper recoil and far more muzzle blast/flash.

If you want a pocket gun the 10 oz lighter internal hammer 9mm Ruger LCR with a 1.88" barrel is best, but if you want

the best stopping power in a readily concealable handgun the 3" barrel version of the .357 Mag chambered SP101 is best with the Remington load, albeit at the cost of being unsuited to pocket carry due to its weight, length, and external hammer.

The best 9mm and .327 Fed Mag loads have about a 90% chance of a one-shot-stop (upper torso hit), but the Remington .357 Mag load has a 95% chance (from 3" to 4" barrels). Thus the 90% loads will stop 9 in 10 attackers, but the 95% load will stop 19 in 20 attackers. That is a BIG difference and helps explain why many people still prefer .357 Mag revolvers for defensive use despite their recoil and muzzle blast/flash. If you only had time to fire one shot to stop you or a loved one being maimed or killed, which caliber would you prefer?

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The ideal small frame service revolver for the .357 Magnum round with the 3" barrel and the best compact defensive handgun for concealed carry in a belt holster.

## ACCESSORIES

### Log Book

Firearm Usage & Maintenance Log Book.  
[Blackheart International]

### Cleaning Kit

BoreSnake Soft Sided Cleaning Kit (34002 for .357/38/9mm handguns).  
[Hoppe's]

### Speedloader

HKS Speedloader Model 36-A.  
[HKS]

### Dry Fire Rounds

A-Zoom Snap Caps.  
[Lyman Products Corporation]

### Ear Plugs

EarPro EP3 or EP4 Sonic Defenders.  
[SureFire]

### Wood Grips

Secret Service Grips.  
[Eagle Grips]

### Belt Holster

BHYCS-TB Inside the Waist Scabbard with Thumb Break.  
[Black Hills Leather Store]

### Waistpack Holster

Stealth Pac.  
[Mitch Rosen]

### Tactical Flashlight

E2T-MV Tactician.  
[SureFire]

## HOT TIP

Have a gunsmith give it an action job and fit the SP101 spring kit from Wolff Springs (lighter/smooth trigger pull).