

The Opinion: At the Gun Store: The Compact version of the M&P give you similar palmswell choices as the full size guns although they are necessarily shorter. They are held in place by a rod that runs up from the bottom of the grip. Changing the palmswells involves removing the magazine and turning the rod extension and then pulling it out. Once the rod is out the palmswell can be lifted off from the bottom. Installing or reinstalling is the opposite of removal. The fit is very secure and looks like a one piece molded grip but the palmswell is a little softer than the rest of the grip.

The magazine release is reversible. It is located behind the trigger in what would be considered the "normal" position for polymer pistols. While I would prefer an ambidextrous magazine release like the Ruger SR series, being reversible would be the next best thing. But since I practice shooting with both hands, I'll probably never switch it. I have gotten used to using the left middle finger to release the magazine.

The trigger on the M&P series utilizes a joint that blocks the movement of the trigger until the lower portion is pressed. The trigger has a very clean break. There are two detectible clicks on the reset and you have to get to the second one before you can fire again.

The dust cover has a Picatinny rail for attaching accessories. Visually the shorter slide and frame is distinguishable from the full size by having two cross positions on the rail. The full size versions have three.

The Melonite finish on the stainless steel slide reduces reflection and glare and is very durable. The front of the slide is tapered and that contour blends into the dust cover to aid in holstering.

Standard three dot sights are in dovetails for drift adjustments. The front sight can be replaced by drifting it out to the ejection port side of the slide. Check the specifications for the model you are looking at because there are different configurations of sights available.

The takedown mechanism is a lever that gets rotated 90 degrees when the slide is locked back. There is a disconnect lever under the breech face that needs to be pulled down when the slide is locked back to disengages the sear. This mechanism negates the need to squeeze the trigger during takedown and possibly prevent a negligent discharge by the less safety conscience.

There is a model that has an ambidextrous thumb safety. Check the configuration before purchasing to make sure you are getting the features you want, or don't want.

Aside from the trigger, one of the great features of this firearm is the ambidextrous slide release. It is uniform on both sides. The feature was engineered in the design and does not look like a kludge added to the right side.

The back of the slide has fish scale serrations that make for a positive grip when manipulating the slide. It is one of physical features that make is easy to identify an M&P pistol.

The M&P 40C and M&P 9C are made on the same frame so their controls are the same. The Compact versions share the same controls as the full size M&PP 9 and M&P 40. The M&P 45 is a bit larger, it also has the same control configuration.

The M&P series enables you to have the same manual of arms in four different calibers. I think this is an advantage for home defense where there is more than one armed defender, but each defender has a different caliber preference. Being able to operate any available firearm in a stressful situation could be the difference between survival and defeat.

On the Range: The M&P 40C reliably handles target rounds from Remington, Winchester, Federal and even Tullammo. Test several brands of self-defense (hollow point) ammunition to be assured of reliable function.

You should do that with any gun. This advice is not unique for Smith & Wesson.

Accuracy and precision are on par or better than other handguns of this size. It would be suitable to get you through any of the Winchester/NRA qualifications that use a pistol.

When evaluating the M&P 40C versus the M&P 9C, there is some added value to getting the 40C. If you can spend another couple hundred dollars you could end up with one firearm capable of firing .40 S&W and 9mm. Storm Lake makes a conversion barrels for the M&P 40C. They also make replacement barrels so make sure you get a **conversion** barrel to go from .40 S&W to 9mm Luger. With a barrel change and a magazine suitable for the caliber, you can shoot .40 S&W or 9mm Luger from the same grip and slide.

The difference between shooting .40 S&W and 9mm is more noticeable in this compact version. The extra energy of the .40 S&W produces more muzzle flip. But compared to the sub-compact 9mm I started with when I started carrying, I would rather shoot the M&P 40C. It is more comfortable and controllable than the 9mm sub-compact.

The M&P 40C is bigger and heavier than sub-compacts such as the Kel-Tec PF-9. I have found the M&P 40C to still be wearable for extended periods of time. Even while trimming a shrub outside in Florida. (OK it was January).

The issue is how much gun do you want to carry? What do you want to pull out if you ever have to use it? The performance data indicates a .40 S&W should stop an attacker sooner than a 9mm Luger given the same shot placement and type of ammunition. While I think a sub-compact would be useful in a close range, I have more confidence in my ability to shoot the M&P 40C over longer distances.

I've made the comparison before. You might want to carry a PF-9 because of its size and weight, but if forced to use it, you'd want to pull a 1911 out of your hiding place.

My One Gun Theory states: Having only a single firearm will focus your ability to be proficient with it in all situations. This applies to self-defense, and excludes the special needs involved in hunting, sporting or competition shooting. If your purpose is to have a gun for self-defense, in the home and outside the home, the M&P40C could be that one gun for you.

The MSRP on the base configuration in February 2015 was **\$569**. In store pricing in the Tampa Florida market ranges from \$479 to \$500. That puts the M&P 40C between the lower priced Ruger SR 40 Compact and usually higher priced Glock 23 (as well as others).

If you were really lucky you might catch a promotional sale at a local gun shop at \$429. You might have a 1 in 52 chance of catching that price.

The package includes two 10 round magazines, one with a flush bottom and one with the grip extension. Three palmswells, Instruction Manual, and a plastic storage box.

- Greg Poole, February 8, 2015