

## **The Opinion:**

**At the Gun Store:** The SD was introduced by Smith & Wesson in 2010. At that time it was a mid-tier between the entry level Sigma and top line M&P. It is available in both .40 S&W and 9mm Luger. Two years later the Sigma ceased production and the SD was reintroduced as the SD VE. With the absence of the Sigma, the SD VE line became the entry level full-size, polymer frame, DAO, semi-automatic pistol from S&W. S&W also lowered the MSRP on the VE line compared to the original SD.

The VE line closely resembles the last incarnation of the Sigma cosmetically. The SD VE enhancements include a Picatinny accessory rail (replacing the proprietary Sigma accessory rail), sculpted brushed stainless steel slide, and a better trigger. The grip angle, slide stop, magazine release, and take down mechanism remained the same.

I find the SD9VE a very comfortable gun to grip. The grip angle mimics the 1911 by design. The circumference and curvatures are a natural fit. The slide release and magazine release are only on the left side. The slide release is a stamped piece but I find the size and position combined with the tension of the recoil spring to be easier to operate than other semi-automatic pistols.

The take down mechanism is two small tabs that have to be pulled down with the finger tips in the same manner as a Glock. Verify the chamber is empty, remove the magazine, point in a safe direction, pull the trigger, pull the slide back ¼" and then pull the tabs down and release the slide. Did I mention there was a lawsuit brought by Glock against Smith & Wesson for the original Sigma? They worked that out but apparently one of the things S&W didn't have to change was the take down mechanism.

The SD VE has the peep hole as a loaded chamber indicator.

The MSRP in July 2016 was **\$389**. In-store pricing in the Tampa Florida market ranged from \$339 to \$359. You might catch a sale price of \$299 if you are in the right place at the right time. Compare that to the entry level Ruger 9E MSRP of \$459.

The package includes two 16 round magazines, (10 rounds in restrictive states), Instruction Manual, and a cardboard storage box. A plastic box would be appreciated but I know that means a few dollars on the MSRP.

## **On the Range:**

The range session that produced the .83" group was shot outdoors with dappled sunlight on blank targets at 45'. It was the best group shot that day and the results agree with the longer barrel, longer sight radius usually mean increased precision.

The worst group was 3.1" with an average of 2.11". Every pattern had two within 1" and an outlier.

The sights are both dovetail mounted. Standard white three-dot variety.

The trigger is the part of the gun that is criticized the most in reviews. It is a long pull, and it is heavy, and the face is curved.

I had experience with a 9mm Sigma that I smoothed the trigger by polishing the sear ramp. That improved Sigma trigger is about the same as the broken in SD9VE trigger, at least on the sample I had for this review. When Smith and Wesson eliminated the Sigma they upgraded the entry level firearm in their semi-auto pistol line.

While the trigger pull is long and heavy, it does what it is designed to do as a Self-Defense firearm. There should not be any unintended discharges with this 9 pound trigger. Apex Tactical markets a spring set and a replacement trigger for those who like the other features of the gun but want to alter the

trigger. My advice is to leave the trigger alone and spend the time and ammo to learn to shoot this gun well.

My first center-fire handgun was a Sigma. I attribute learning to shoot with it as a reason I have decent trigger control on any other firearm. It takes good technique to shoot this gun well.

Reliability is very high with this design. The Sigma before it and the current SD is not particular about the ammo.

The magazine well is slightly flared and the magazine lockup is solid. The loaded chamber indicator is a peep hole. The ejector maintains a slightly raised position when a round is in the chamber and that may be enough to use as an indicator. But I would not count on that in a stressful situation.

The magazine release and slide release are on the left side and the magazine release is not reversible.

I consider this gun to be a good value for an inside the home self-defense gun. Materials, finish, grip, and shooting results are all good. This is also a good training gun because it demands good technique to get good results.

- Greg Poole, July 30, 2016