

# **STARS & STRIPES AMMUNITION**

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## **What are the different ammunition types?**

The debate goes round many times for shooters as to why they should choose a premium custom ammunition over factory made, discounted brands, remilled, reloads, or surplus ammunition. Many times we are asked to clarify what makes our ammunition better than other brands.

Our goal is to provide the most accurate, consistent, and cleanest ammunition you can find anywhere. Our ammunition is hand assembled with premium new brass cases and bullets, loaded with only the most efficient propellant for that caliber, case size and shape, and bullet weight and style. It is designed to give superior performance over factory ammunition. We offer the shooter virtually unlimited choices and options of premium component choices. We also make it possible to shoot obsolete and military firearms for which ammunition is no longer available.

Stars and Stripes' ammunition falls into the ultra premium category of ammunition. All of our ammunition is 100% guaranteed to fire and for consistency. When comparing ammunition it is necessary to make the proper comparisons. To compare premium ammo to discounted brands is like comparing apples to oranges. Cartridges aren't all the same; the difference is always more than the price alone. You may save on cheaper brands, but sacrifice quality.

I think everyone knows what factory ammo is and what it is about, but I will detail it anyway. Factory ammunition is designed to work in the broadest spectrum of firearms of any given caliber and still be safe in the oldest and possibly most worn out firearms in use. The premium brands of factory ammunition use higher quality components than the lower lines. Stars and Stripes' ammunition adheres to these same guidelines and is safe for use in all arms originally chambered for the caliber being used.

Even though modern factory ammunition companies are offering some very nice premium bullet choices, they are still being constrained by the oldest and junkiest firearms in use, and by the economics of mass-producing ammunition. While this ammunition is outstanding, it leaves a little to be desired if you own a brand new firearm of modern design. Stars and Stripes' custom ammunition line gives those customers with newer rifles a few more options with true custom ammunition. We can safely bump up the performance of some calibers to near magnum performance with the use of modern propellants in both handgun and rifle calibers. In the case of our shotgun slugs, the performance gain is tremendous due to the new technology that is filtering into the shotgun market.

All of our custom ammunition adheres to industry guidelines for maximum pressures and dimensional tolerances. Any loading used that can potentially take a cartridge over industry limits will require the firearm to be sent into Stars and Stripes Ammunition to verify that that load is safe for the firearm it is intended to be used in. This ammunition must not be used in any other firearm for reason of safety!

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Discounted brands of ammunition usually use components which don't meet a certain tolerance level for consistent weights, volumes, diameters, or powder burn rates that are needed for the premium lines. Some of the discounted ammo is made by former military arsenals in the former Soviet Republics, China, South Korea, Africa, and South America. Most of the discounted ammo is assembled with reasonable care and is safe to use. The commercial brands tend to be a little cleaner, and reloadable, and also use a copper jacketed bullet or one made from lead. The arsenal stuff is almost never reloadable and tends to be corrosive in nature; there is more to non-corrosive ammo than just a primer, some propellants leave a corrosive residue after burning.

Arsenal ammo can use copper plated steel jacketed bullets and both brass and steel cases, they will also be found with regular copper jackets and lead bullets too. Steel bullet jackets will wear out barrels much quicker than copper or brass jacketed bullets, and this is bad. While steel cases are not pretty to look at, they are very safe, but will prematurely wear out the feed lips on aluminum magazines, or magazines with materials softer than the steel cartridge case. Most of the arsenal made discounted ammo is universally banned by most indoor ranges; the steel bullet jackets damage the backstops more than copper ones do, and the dirty burning propellants clog up air filtration systems more quickly.

Re-milled ammo is that made from demilitarized mil-spec ammo. It uses the old components that were pulled apart. Military ammo can be de-milled for many reasons, some of them safety reasons. By Federal law, companies and individuals can only buy these components as long as the original primer has been punched out or properly killed.

In this ammunition type, the only truly new component is the primer, the others are un-fired, but pulled components. Pulled bullets can deliver good accuracy, but they can also be terrible. Pulled brass is just unfired mil-spec brass, but it is mostly mixed lots, which will affect ammo consistency. Pulled propellants can provide a very wide performance curve depending on the age of the propellant and how the parent ammo was stored.

While the de-milling facilities go to great lengths to correctly categorize and label the pulled propellants and other components, mistakes can happen and lots can become mixed leading to pressure problems if the ammo is reassembled without the use of proper pressure testing equipment and frequent control checks and lot sampling. Stars and Stripes' re-milled ammo only uses the unfired brass cases. The bullets, powders, and primers are all new commercial items, with one exception, and that is 50 BMG mil-spec ammo. The 50 BMG mil-spec ammo uses the pulled bullet and unfired reclaimed cases, the propellant and primers are new. This ammunition can also be ordered with a new bullet for increased accuracy.

Surplus ammo is excessive or aging lots of military ammo. While we can no longer purchase US made surplus ammo in the USA that was made after 1994, surplus is available from many foreign nations, some of it is better quality than others, regardless of having NATO head stamps or not. Many people don't know that ammo can be put on the surplus market for reasons other than being old or in excess quantities.

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Any government arming its troops wants good ammo, and when certain problems ranging from simple case corrosion to firearms failures, attributed to the ammunition, encountered on a predetermined basis, then the entire lot of ammo is slated for either destruction or sale on the surplus market. Countries with stable economies are more likely to de-mill their ammo than to sell it as surplus, but this is not always so, surplus ammo is quick cash. Countries strapped for cash will almost always sell their surplus, regardless of safety issues.

Most surplus ammunition of USA and European origin that is older than 40 years is very corrosive in nature. Virtually all Soviet Bloc, Russian Federation, and Chinese surplus is corrosive. Any of the older surplus must be used with great caution as hang fires and misfires can be very potentially hazardous to the shooter and bystanders.

Older lots of steel cased ammo pose very serious safety concerns too; if the inside of the case has rusted due to the interaction of the solvents used in the powders and the steel case, then the shooter can experience some very severe pressure increases upon firing this ammo, it could lead to some very serious consequences which would negate how much money you saved on buying this ammo.

Another factor with surplus ammo is the age and how it has been stored. Old ammo stored under ideal conditions degrades slower than those stored in uncontrolled climates. Even under ideal conditions, most 20-year-old ammo has lost about 15% or more of its original velocity, or more. If the conditions of storage were uncontrolled it is not uncommon to experience hang fires and misfires with this ammunition. WWII era surplus usually has only 60% of its original potency and the incidence of hang fires and misfires are very common, usually at least one in 20 fails to work properly!

Hang fires are dangerous! Many a gun and shooter has been wrecked by a hang fire. Even innocent bystanders get caught in the fray from time to time. Misfires are dangerous too. Any ammo lot with misfires and hang fires, no matter how slight, should be immediately destroyed. If you are shooting an old relic or military firearm, you would do yourself and others a great favor by not shooting any old ammo that might be laying around. Some old guns may be in a weakened state or not made as well as a modern firearm, and the detonation from one hang fire could push the firearm over the limit. Always use quality new ammunition in older firearms.

Reloads are made from fired empty cases. As most of us have experienced at one time or another, reloads are generally junk and performance and functioning may be problematic at best due to the fact that they are generally assembled with the cheapest components available. Commercial reloads are generally safer and more satisfying than those made by the little guy at the gun show with buckets of reloads that are cheaper than dirt, being the commercial reloads have probably been tested and run through a headspace gauge, but there are no assurances of this! The better reloading companies will sell their reloads with all matching headstamps in the packages, this adds even more to the safety and functioning of the reload.

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Stars and Stripes Ammunition only makes reloads under very specific conditions. It is not our desire to make large scale runs of reloads, but from time to time we encounter once fired brass on the market that is from sources that use only new ammunition and firearms in very good working condition, and is known to be truly once fired, like from certain police ranges, military ranges, and firearms testing facilities. This brass almost always comes from a matching lot, and the chance of cases that have been previously reloaded in the batch or used in worn out chambers is next to nothing. All of these cases go through a final go-no-go sizer die after assembly to ensure that each round is genuinely back to industry tolerances of new ammunition. We can then pass on a good deal to the customer, and provide a reload that is superior to all others in safety and functioning.