



**CARBON-FIBER  
FIREARMS**

Are They Worth the  
Extra Money?

**STOCKED  
UP** How Stock Fit  
Affects Accuracy

# Gun Digest

**WE KNOW GUNS SO YOU KNOW GUNS**

**THE MAGAZINE**

DECEMBER 2020  
VOLUME 37 • ISSUE 16

## Glock Upgrades

Aftermarket Parts That  
Improve Performance



**PLUS**

You and Your Handgun:  
Mindset, Tactics and  
Marksmanship

Dos &  
Don'ts For  
Upgrading  
Your AR

Review:  
Decibullz  
\$30 Custom  
Hearing  
Protection

Behind the  
Brand: H-S  
Precision

Know  
Your Cartridge:  
.338 Win. Mag.

## Way Out There

RimX's 500-Yard .22 LR



## The Corona Cartridge

Hornady's Curve-Flattening 6mm ARC



US \$5.95  
CAN \$6.95



Display until February 08, 2021



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Make sure you can retain your rifle, and get a two-point sling like this Vickers sling from Blue Force Gear.

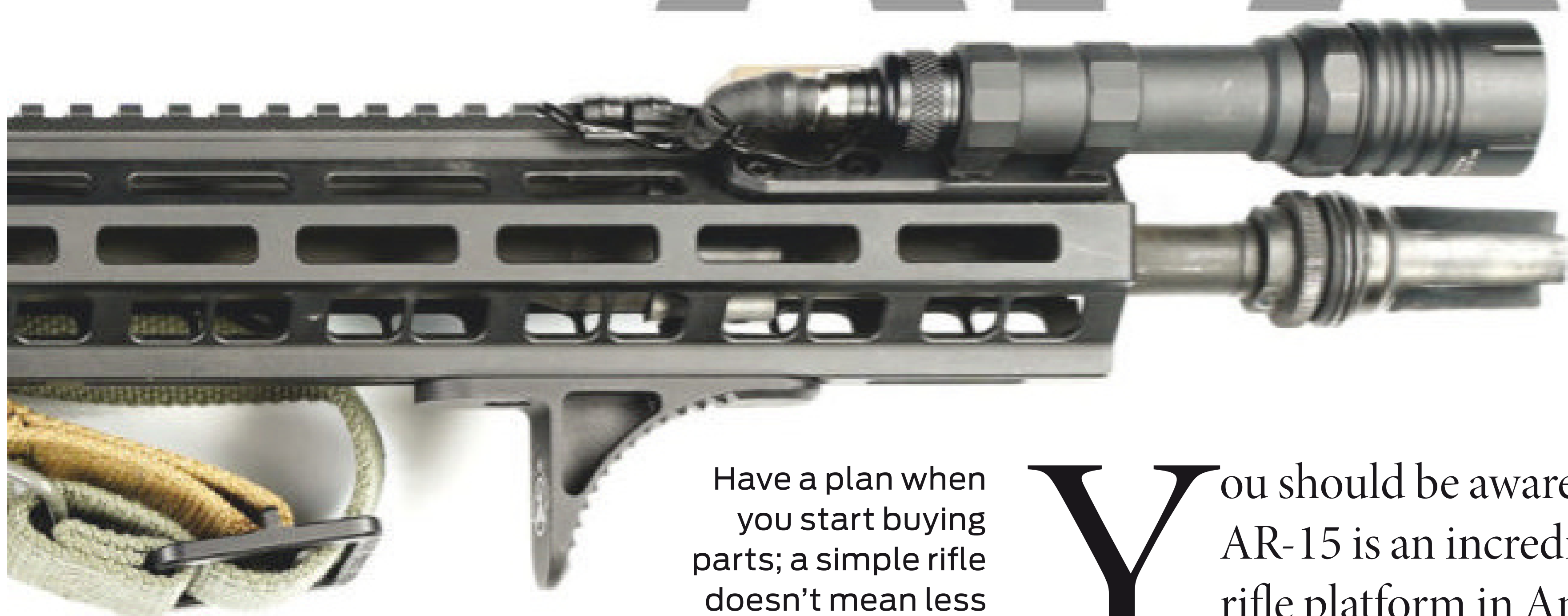






# ONE PIECE AT A TIME

## Dos and Don'ts for upgrading your AR-15.



Have a plan when you start buying parts; a simple rifle doesn't mean less capable.

**Y**ou should be aware that the AR-15 is an incredibly popular rifle platform in America, and for good reason. Relatively inexpensive, light recoiling, reliable and easily adaptable to a particular role are all huge factors in why it's grown to be crowned as "America's Rifle."

And if I may be completely frank, those are the same reasons that we have a sea of subpar parts all over the market. Experience and several hours of exhaustive re-

search on Facebook tell me that the AR-15 is misunderstood by a huge number of AR owners.

just like snapping together some LEGOs ... but you couldn't be more mistaken. It wasn't until I had the good fortune to attend an armorer's course from William Larson, the AR-15 Yoda himself, that the number of out-of-spec AR parts on the market sunk in.

One of the sayings that Will was fond of is, "AR-15s aren't LEGOs because LEGOs have a spec." Armed with new knowledge, I started to pay closer attention to aftermarket AR parts than I ever



This Palmetto State Armory rifle shows that you don't need to spend a ton to get a lot of performance.

search on Facebook tell me that the AR-15 is misunderstood by a huge number of AR owners.

So, before you jump on AliExpress and order all of the Chinesium parts you can find, this is where I would start to get the most out of my rifle—and get the most from my money when considering upgrades.

### THE AR-15: NOT LEGOS

It's easy to think that building an AR-15 is

had before. And as you might expect from Yoda, Will hit the nail on the head.

The truth is that most of the ARs on the market—and the majority of aftermarket parts—labeled as mil-spec ... well, they aren't. On the civilian market, that dirty little term "mil-spec" means that the part is sized to fit the wide range of specifications found on commercial AR-15s, not that it meets the standards outlined in the actual technical document that outlines the real mil-spec.



An 18-inch DMR rifle would make a less-than-ideal home-defense rifle, but it's great at distance.



The ultra-strong Magpul UBR Gen2 is a perfect companion for the Vltor A5 system.

Just because that bargain-priced part says it'll fit doesn't mean it will. You might have to rely on time-tested gunsmith techniques—such as holding your tongue just right between your lips, a large hammer or even a Dremel tool.

If you prefer sparing yourself the guessing game, stick to high-quality parts; you might not need to rely on the Dremel after all.

### HAVE A PLAN

The saying “Jack of all trades, master of none” is just as applicable to rifles as it is people. The “one rifle to rule them all” simply doesn't exist. Every rifle has specific weaknesses and strengths based on how the rifle is spec'd out from the factory, plus whatever changes are made to it after purchase.

An 18- to 20-inch barrel rifle might be perfect for some hunting, Cold War engagement distances or use in a DMR role. Will it work in a CQB role while defending your home? Sure—but it isn't going to be ideal.

Similarly, I recommend that you don't choose a 10.5-inch 5.56 NATO SBR or pistol to compete in a Precision Rifle match. That MK18/CQBR-inspired gun is far more at home in the tight confines of a structure, such as your home.

Whatever role you have for your rifle, make sure you follow local and federal laws. Yes, many can be considered unconstitutional, but failing to do so could

land you in much more trouble than you're interested in handling.

### IT ISN'T 'JUST AS GOOD'

I'm not going to shame anyone for the Zombie Slayer 9000 that was built to kick-start their second career as a “gun-fluencer” by propelling an online social account to legendary status. The truth is that rifle is probably as functional—if not more functional—than the GM Hydramatic M16A1 clone hanging on my wall.

Cool-looking guns are cool, and there isn't anything wrong with that until you start believing that the Zombie Slayer 9000 is “just as good” as a proven rifle from Sons of Liberty Gun Works, Sionics,



Geissele, Knights Armament, FN America and a pile of other AR manufacturers with guns that are proven reliable.

The same thing applies to knock-off parts that are priced significantly below the cost of the original one. Better materials, more research and development, innovative design and better quality control are going to play a factor in price, making the original version likely more expensive.

Instead of blindly cutting corners with part quality, think hard about the part you intend to save a few bucks on ... and then think about how badly you might get hurt if that part blew up during a catastrophic failure. Buy the quality; it's always worth it.

M-Lok has become the new standard; a 1913 rail is still serviceable, but avoid KeyMod at all costs.

### GET A SLING

A sling is essential. Period. It can be used to carry a rifle, provide more stability when lining up a shot, and retain your rifle should someone try to grab it away from you.

The single-point sling is easier to use in cramped spaces due to the amount of movement they offer, but that's also the weakness of the single-point design. When the rifle is slung, it swings all over the place, hitting your knees, shins and everything else in its path.

There are a bunch of well-made examples of single-point slings, but if you're determined to buy one, get a Magpul MS3 or MS4 sling that can be converted to a two-point easily.

Preferably, choose a quick-adjust two-point sling, which offers more stability when carrying the rifle *and* shooting it than a single point will. The two-point sling also excels when carrying the rifle slung in front, side or back.

Models to consider are the Blue Force Gear Vickers Sling, the SOB B-Sling, and other similarly built models. Pick a high-quality design and you won't be disappointed.

or low-powered variable optic (LPVO) to your rifle reliably enhances your ability to aim the rifle.

LPVO technology is to the point that shooters who've acclimated to the more versatile optic are about as fast as the folks using a red-dot. Not only is most of the speed you get from a dot available, but there are also 10x

While a folding AR-15 might seem unnecessary, the robust LAW Tactical folder is a must-have on many of the author's rifles.

scopes—like the Vortex Razor HD Gen III 1-10x—that you can crank up when precision is needed.

If the minimum buy-in for a high-quality LPVO of \$1,000 is a bit steep, a good red-dot might be the ticket.

### STEP UP YOUR OPTICS GAME

We live in the future with the entire internet in our pocket, and adding a red-dot



## LARSON'S LEGACY

You might be scratching your head, wondering who Will Larson was and what LEGOs have to do with AR-15s. The simple answer is that Will was equivalent to a rock star in the AR-15 world, and he lent his expertise to some of the industry's biggest names. Heck, Will made 11.5-inch 5.56 NATO guns a "thing," among a laundry list of other contributions he quietly made to the AR platform.

Will spent most of his life dedicated to improving the AR industry. Still, his most impactful contribution was the Semper Paratus Arms armorer course he taught all over the country to civilians and professionals alike.

One of Will's protégés and earliest students, Mike Mihalski, brought Sons of Liberty Gun Works to life due to the seeds planted in Will's 3rd armor course. But Mike isn't alone in carrying Will's torch: Every student who learned how to properly maintain and build an AR-15 leaves Will's mark on yet another gun.

AR-15 owners everywhere are in debt to you, Will.

Among Holosun, Aimpoint, Sig Electro-Optics and EOTech, there's a dot that fits your needs. However, beware of the bargain dots: The market is flooded with cheap sights that will die or lose zero at the worst times.

Also, don't forget a high-quality mount for your new optic to ensure you don't move the optic should you bump it on something. Not all rings and bases are created equal, either. Not even close.

### FLOPPY BARREL FIX

Did you know that when you apply pressure to your plastic clamshell handguards by leaning into a bipod that it actually changes your point of impact?

A free-float rail nearly removes that deviation and also gives you somewhere to attach lights, lasers, sling mounts and index points, such as a Gripstop. Look for a high-quality Picatinny rail model or preferably, something with M-Lok slots. Avoid KeyMod since it isn't heavily supported anymore. M-Lok is the

clear winner in that popularity contest.

Any high-quality brand should do you well, but there's a handful of proven performers: Geissele, Sons of Liberty Gun Works, Hodge Defense, Bravo Company and Knight's Armament.

Cover the full length of the barrel, but don't extend over the muzzle.

### TRIGGERED

You don't really *need* to upgrade your trigger, the standard mil-spec style trigger

that's found in most rifles will be perfectly adequate for most shooters. However, upgrading a mil-spec trigger almost always offers immediate performance



01 BCM GUNFIGHTER MOD 0 STOCK



02 LMT SOPMOD STOCK



03 MAGPUL STR STOCK



04 M16A2 STOCK



improvements.

Should you decide that you want to upgrade the trigger on your rifle, I suggest that you look for a trigger that isn't housed in a drop-in cassette. It's possible that this design can trap debris in the trigger mechanism, leading to a malfunction.

Geissele made their name with their triggers, and for good reason. Regardless of the role you have identified for your rifle, Geissele has a trigger that'll work for you. There's a budget-friendly option—the ALG Defense Advanced Combat Trigger—if the regular Geissele line is more money than you'd like invest.

### NEW FURNITURE LIVENS THE PLACE UP

An A2 grip and M4 stock will do just fine in a pinch, but those are often among the first things that get ditched on a new rifle. Sadly, the M4-style stock is missing a QD attachment point for a sling, which is a good enough reason for me to chuck the stock one into the recycler. As for the grip, many aren't fond of the “bump” between the middle and ring finger placement ... and they ditch that as well.

There are a ton of great grips out there: Which one you choose really depends on the role of the gun. The Magpul series of grips that accept an insert are a solid option because you can stow some extra oil, some Skittles or even a spare bolt and firing pin with one of the available inserts.

What stock you choose is equally dependent on the gun's purpose. If you have a dedicated precision-focused rifle, you might choose the Magpul PRS stock or B5 Systems Precision Stock. A general carbine might be better off with something a bit less expensive yet still offering a wide range of adjustability.

### FOLDY STOCK

While a LAW Tactical folding stock adapter might not strike you as a common-sense upgrade, it really is. A LAW folder isn't a must on every AR-15, but it's a useful addition to rifles or pistols that you might want to carry discretely.

The ability to chop the buffer tube and stock off your rifle for storage and trans-



05 MAGPUL UBR GEN2 STOCK

06 MAGPUL PRS STOCK

07 MAGPUL CTR STOCK

portation opens up a bunch of possibilities in terms of rifle bags, in addition to where you're able to stow that bag. Pair a LAW folder and a discrete rifle bag from Tuff Products, and those awkward moments in the hotel elevator while attending an out of town training class or match are in the past.

Be cautious of knock-off folding stock adapters or ones that copy the design of LAW Tactical that are made from inferior metals. You might save a hundred bucks or so at the cost of replacing durable steel construction with substantially weaker 6000 series aluminum. Personally, I don't like the idea of my face being close to a reciprocating bolt and bolt extension that passes through a joint that needs to be

precisely aligned, only to be housed in “good enough” materials.

### AR-15: IT CAN BE LIKE LEGOS

The AR platform is nothing short of amazing. It checks just about every box that you can think of and, if it missed one, just change the rifle so it checks all the boxes for *you*.

Even though the commercial model AR-15s doesn't have a spec now, maybe one day manufacturers can settle on some standards.

If that happens, AR-15s might actually be like LEGOs. **GDTM**