

A Look at the Springfield XD 9

Hello. Like many traditionalists, I was wrong in thinking that "plastic guns" would break quickly and not last the test of time. Though I strongly prefer blue steel and old, "out of date" Hi Powers and 1911s, there are many who rather like these "modern" pistols using polymer in place of the traditional steel or aluminum alloy frame. Though there were such pistols before Glock, *it* was the design that entrenched polymer into the making of handguns.

Of late I've been reading and hearing about a newcomer to this field, Springfield's XD. The pistol's available in a compact version, the service version, and a longer, tactical version and is chambered in 9mm, .357 SIG, and .40 S&W. There are rumors of a forty-five in the future.

Some opine that's it's a superior pistol to the Glock, which it obvious emulates while others firmly disagree. I don't know, but decided to add one to my collection and find out. Understand that while I will make observations and give opinions, such are frequently subjective and might not be true for you. This report is a bit more detailed than others I've done as not all of us are so familiar with the XD as we might be other guns. I'm well satisfied that some are considering buying as well.



The 9mm XD proved reliable with a wide number of ammo types.

Specs from Springfield Armory:

Barrel Length: 4.05"

Weight: 25 oz.

Length: 7"

Trigger Pull: 5.5 to 7.7 lbs. (They have the Glock-like safety lever mounted in the trigger, but refer to it in combination with the grip safety as "Ultra Safety Assurance" (USA) action trigger system.

Magazines: 10 round stainless steel "Easy Glide"

Finish: Bruniral

I also took some measurements that might be of interest:

Slide Thickness: 1.04" (Glock 26 measures: 1.003" for comparison.)

Frame Thickness: 1.18"

(Both are at the widest points.)

Barrel Diameter at Muzzle: 0.53" (It holds this diameter rearward for 0.36".)

Barrel Diameter Beyond Above: 0.52:

Vertical Bbl Movement w/Grip Safety Depressed: 0.01"* (Gun not cocked.)

Vertical Bbl Movement w/Grip Safety Not Depressed: Same (Gun not cocked.)

Vertical Bbl Movement w/Grip Safety Depressed: 0.015" (Gun cocked.)

Vertical Bbl Movement w/Grip Safety Not Depressed: 0.02" (Gun cocked.)

Distance from Middle of Fully Depressed Grip Safety to Middle of Trigger w/o

Depressing Trigger Safety: 2.598"

**When released, the bbl moved back upward as do the Glock barrels when pressed in the same manner.*

Unlike the Glock pistol that is close kin to a DAO auto in that pressing the trigger fully cocks and releases the partially cocked striker. When a round's chambered in the XD the striker's fully cocked and blocked by a sear and also has an internal firing pin safety that allows the pistol to fire only when the trigger's in the rearmost position. *In this instance, I DO like the internal firing pin safety, as there is no half-cock notch should something go wrong.*

The polymer frame around the magazine well, which is beveled on the sides and rear, does not flex, as do the Glocks, not that this really matters in terms of function. The front and rear grip straps are coarsely checkered and do provide for a secure grip. The thumb rests are more like thumb depressions and are actually very comfortable to me? I find the grip angle and grip "feel" more comfortable than any Glock. There is a slight relief cut under the rear of the trigger guard.

The recoil spring system consists of two springs and the dual guide rods are steel. I don't have any idea what strength these amounts to, but am guessing about 18 lbs. This system closely resembles the two-piece system sold by Wolff Gunsprings for the Glock 26. Unlike the Wolff, however, these springs are captive, something I *don't* like as it makes it more difficult to change out recoil springs. Also, the forward end of the guide rod consists of a flat disc, which protrudes from the front of the slide by 0.06". I'm sure that this prevents any problems or damage to the part, but this does not look all that great to me. Like most pistols these days, Springfield managed to squeeze in three front cocking serrations, so as not to be out of style.



Here's the front of the steel spring guide in its normal position.

The grooved trigger is steel with the safety being polymer. The trigger pull is long, but with a very minimal amount of over travel. Despite this weapon's firing from a fully "cocked" position, the trigger pull feels about the same as that of the standard factory Glock, but maybe not quite as smooth. Whether or not this smooths up with use, I do not yet know. Trigger reset is considerably longer than the Glock; it proved no problem for me as I'm an old double-action revolver shooter and currently shoot Browning Hi Powers quite a lot. Those who are really quick and welded to the 1911's exceptional trigger and short reset might have a problem with this pistol during speed shooting strings. The XD trigger is approximately 0.373" wide, centered in a trigger guard that's about 0.603" wide. This means the trigger's about 0.115" narrower than the trigger guard is on each side. For comparison, I measured my Glock 26 for these dimensions. The trigger measured 0.385" in width centered in a trigger guard that's 0.625" wide. Thus, the trigger is protected by 0.12" of trigger guard on each side. I see no particular "threat" from either being too wide for the trigger guard.

The ambidextrous magazine release is mounted behind the trigger guard ala 1911, SIG-Sauer, Browning HP, et al. Depressing the steel mag release retracts the catch from the notch located in the front of the magazine body. The stainless steel body is very highly polished and smooth as a mirror. It does drop free w/o hesitation. The follower is black polymer as is the magazine floor plate. It loaded smoothly and w/o excessive effort. Rounds stripped by hand did so very smoothly and the follower/spring/lips set up is such that loaded rounds are angled upward for slick feeding. Don't worry about losing this magazine at night. Just shine a flashlight in the general area and it should reflect like a diamond! Nothing bright shows while in the pistol. There is a hollow area behind the magazine well as is the case with the Glock.

The slide release lever looks very similar to the Glock, but is larger and operates the same way.

The pistol's take down lever is mounted on the left, forward side of the frame, but is rotated upward rather than downward for dismantling. It is an easier system than the Glock. Other than this, takedown is quite similar.

An obvious difference in these pistols is that the XD uses an internal extractor that's sort of similar to that of the traditional 1911's. There's a cylinder of steel at the end that fits a recess in the slide to hold it in proper position. This cylinder has a groove cut in it and it appears that the firing pin safety-retaining pin fits in the cylinder portion's groove to keep the extractor in place. At the top rear of the very Glock-like ejection port is the loaded chamber indicator. This pivoting indicator does have what appears to be an extractor-like claw on it, but in checking it with 9mm hulls, it does not appear to aid in extraction. It does not protrude upward enough to interfere with sight picture nor does it present any potential snagging problems.

The extractor is on the cartridge's right side facing forward with the loaded chamber indicator on top. It holds the case firmly.

On the rear grip strap sits the grip safety. Much narrower than the 1911's, it is easy to depress and really isn't even felt at all when preparing to fire. When the pistol's got a round chambered a small pin protrudes from the rear of the slide through the locking plate in a manner similar to the HK P7, but it doesn't protrude nearly so far. With a round in the bbl, but the grip safety not depressed, the slide will move rearward only about 0.12;" call it an eighth of an inch.

Sights are fixed and the common 3-dot style and mercifully, made of steel. SIG-Sauer pistol sights will work in this pistol. Though more durable than the polymer fixed Glock sights, the sight picture's similar with both pistols and both sit on the flat slide top. To me the Glock slide is "cleaner" than the XD. The latter's is wider at the bottom than the top and kind of reminds me of SIG-Sauer P226 and 228 slides.

Ammunition: Four handloads and six factory rounds were tried. They were:

Federal M882 124 gr. FMJ
Speer Lawman 124 gr. TMJ
Federal 115 gr. JHP
PMC Starfire 115 gr. JHP (This load's not offered in anything but 124 gr. now to the best of my knowledge.)
Winchester USA 115 gr. FMJ (This is NOT the same company's "target ammo.")
Remington 115 gr. JHP +P

Handloads included cast, plated, and jacketed bullets. This was done as some will want to reload for this pistol.

124 gr. Hornady XTP
6.0 gr. Unique
Winchester SP Primer
Starline Cases
LOA: 1.11"*

124 gr. Speer GDHP
6.0 gr. Unique
Winchester SP Primer
Starline Cases
LOA: 1.115"*
*(Both of these hit over 1200 ft/sec from Browning Hi Powers.)

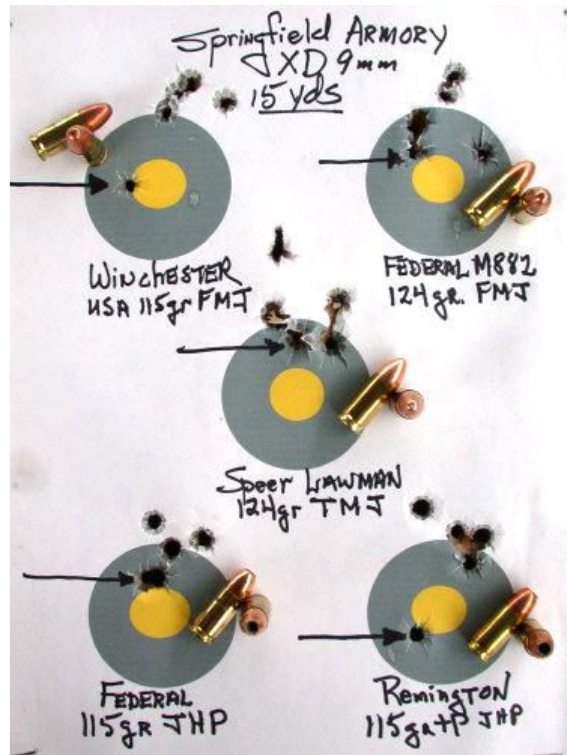
124 gr. Rainier Plated RN
6.9 gr. Blue Dot
Winchester SP Primer
Starline Cases
LOA: 1.15"

122 gr. Rucker Cast FP
6.9 gr. Blue Dot
Winchester SP Primer
Starline Cases
LOA: 1.075"

The handloads using Blue Dot average about 1140 ft/sec from Browning Hi Powers and have proven reasonably accurate, something frequently not so easy to find in 9mm pistols.

Shooting: There was no 50-yard shooting today; it was sprinkling off and on between true showers and I stayed dry shooting at the closer distances as the 50 yard range was ankle deep in water. Groups were fired off-hand at 15 yards standing and w/2-hand hold. I did shoot the groups at 25 yards seated and using a rest. The 10-yard rapid-fire group was fired standing w/2-hand hold. Due to the rain, I did NOT chronograph ammunition from the XD today. I'd never fired this pistol before today and had no idea where it would hit so I aimed "dead on" at the 15-yard targets.

Fifteen Yards:



The arrows indicate the position of the first, hand-cycled round compared to the rest of the group.

Twenty-five Yards:



Cast bullets did pretty well out of the XD. The pistol uses does not use polygonal rifling, but has lands and grooves as do most service pistols

Observations: The most obvious one to me was that this particular XD suffers from "first-shot flyer syndrome." The first shot fired (chambered by hand) usually hit a bit low and left from the subsequent group. Until I saw the pattern developing after a few groups, I had thought it was just my shooting. The range master came over and fired with the same results and he is a very fine shot. I'm not sure if this will be common to the gun or just individual specimens.

Feeding, extraction, and ejection were 100% reliable in this admittedly low-round test. The loaded chamber indicator caused no problems that could be seen. Fired cases landed about 5' to my right regardless of their being standard pressure or hotter.

All rounds chambered w/o hesitation.

Recoil from any service-size handgun in 9mm is not much and this gun proved no different. I did note more muzzle flip than expected, but whether this has to do with its bore axis being 1.79" above the middle of the trigger, grip angle or a combination, I don't know. (On the Glock 26, the same measurement yielded 1.48".) The XD bbl was conventionally rifled, having lands and grooves and appeared to be a 1:10 twist.

This pistol hit a bit high for me. Switching to a 6 O' Clock hold helped, but it is still on the high end on POI. Windage seemed about right out of the box and while I prefer plain black on black fixed sights, these were not hard to use.

I found this pistol "hard" to shoot accurately in slow-fire @ 15 and 25 yards but got a little better as the testing proceeded. While I had no scales by which to measure the trigger-pull, it did not seem that much different than the Glock, although it *did* seem less "smooth." I could get decent groups, but had to work/concentrate for them more so than with some other pistols. In rapid-fire, I could tell no difference between this pistol and a Glock in terms of getting good hits.

Certainly, this pistol would need to be shot more before I'd consider it for self-defense use and I plan to use it as a "loaner" in CHL class I teach as well as personally shoot it quite a bit. Should there be dramatic changes, I will report them, good or bad. I have no idea how this gun's dark rust-resistant finish will hold up compared to the Glock's tennifer. Time will tell and so will I.

A personal concern that I've had with striker-fired pistols is reliability in firing "hard primered" rounds. I recall some Greek surplus 9mm that was not recommended for Glocks due to this. I checked primer strikes with CCI, known for harder primers, a military Federal load, and a +P Remington load. Though not definitive, it does show reasonably well-centered strikes along with some cratering and firing pin "wipe." This caused no problems, but I'd sure be sure of my ammunition, not only in feeding/extraction, but also in firing.



This particular XD9 was reliable with lots of varied ammunition, but was reliably unreliable with Glaser Safety Slugs. I suspect that has to do with the recoil impulse of this particular light bullet, high velocity load. With standard 115 to 124-gr. bullets at standard and +P velocities, there were no problems. Not many of these expensive Glaser rounds were fired due to cost, but all failed to extract. Always test a potential defense handgun with the ammo you intend to use.

It's my opinion after looking the gun over pretty closely that its intrinsic accuracy potential is there, but I had a somewhat challenging time in practically being able to get it due to the trigger. Part of this is just me. I can usually be found shooting light, crisp 1911 triggers or very nice BHP triggers. However, some more practice and familiarization with the XD might result in some tighter groups.

So what's it good for? I think it's obvious that the pistol's meant to be a down-and-dirty defensive tool rather than a match-precision target pistol, but I do think it has the mechanical capability of doing some tight groups with practice and ammo it "likes." If you like holsterless carry and prefer the Glock genre of defensive pistols, this would be the one I'd pick over the Glock. Fully loaded, weight is NOT a problem and I personally find the feel of the XD more comfortable than the Glock 19. (I think the G19 is the best Glock to compare the Service XD to, but I only own one Glock, the G26.) Assuming reliability, I would not hesitate to carry this as a trusted personal defense pistol and think it would be capable of "rescue shots" at 15 yards in my hands right now. However, in a tactical type situation or taking small game, I'd have to go with my 1911s and P35s. This does not mean that I wouldn't take a shot at a jackrabbit 40 yards out, only that I'd have to "work at it" more. I'm sure that this is due to my having used the single-action automatic pretty heavily for just over 3 decades now.

I have no perfect pistols and didn't find it with the Service XD, but I did find a pistol that appears well thought out and reliable for "serious" purposes. As they've become a bit more common, they have gained a pretty respectable following, but just don't appeal to me the way that a more traditional semiautomatic does.

Best.