

PreDefence

Self defense before SHTF

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Should you carry a tactical flashlight for self defense?

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The tactical flashlight has a lot going for it. It also has a lot going against it. Make sure you know the good and the bad before you use one in self defense.

I carry a "tactical" flashlight. I believe it's an important addition to my EDC. Why do I believe this? Because I've used mine a lot. But a flashlight is not the magic bullet some people would have you believe (I'm looking at you salesmen and internet forums).

What a flashlight does badly

The humble flashlight is not very good at causing damage to someone. Yes, you get those nice hefty Maglites. But no, you're not going to be carrying one of those clipped onto your belt.

Yes, you get those snazzy "impact" bezels with spikes and cool shit on the front of the flashlight. But those are very much for niche (read "less likely") situations.

Yes, if you stare into them for a long time they can probably cause permanent eye damage. But I have a hard time seeing how that fits into the category of self defense.

So a flashlight is not a weapon in the way most people think of weapons – causing damage.

What a flashlight *can* do (self defense wise)

The tactical flashlight does a couple things really well.

Firstly, for those times you really can't see enough detail, a flashlight makes a big difference. The guy in the dark parking lot who asked you a question and is walking closer. Can you see what's in his hands? No? Great, use your flashlight to aid everything else you're doing to [disengage from the Threat](#).

Secondly, a flashlight can help deter a Threat. More accurately, it can put the finishing touches on all the other things you're doing to [deter a Threat](#). Maybe a Threat is unsure if you're a safe victim, so he comes closer to check your reaction. Suddenly he's lost almost all of his ability to see you.

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This helps tip the odds in your favour. He can't [evaluate you as a victim](#) if he can't see you.

Thirdly, a flashlight can provide deception and disorientation. The Threat who decides you are worth attacking can be disorientated if you mess with his ability to see. Flashing his eyes on and off for a couple seconds at a time can prevent his eyes from adapting to either the dark or the light.

If someone wants to get at you, but they can't see you, they're likely to go straight for the light shining in their eyes. If that light is held out away from your body, they could possibly be misled into walking right into a wall/car/lamp post.

Final self defense consideration

From a "self defence" point of view, there's one last thing a flashlight does really, **really** well. It tells the **entire** world exactly where you are. This can include showing good guys and help where you are. But it also includes every single person that might want to shoot at you.

Remember that Threat you're disorientating with your light? Well his friend is off to the side of you so he has no problems knowing exactly where you are. And he has no disorientation in coming right up to you. Especially since you forgot to close one eye when flashing your light on the Threat you do know about, so now **your** night vision is ruined too.

What a flashlight does *really* well

Help you get home every day. Personal safety (a.k.a. self defense) is about more than just "fighting". Remember Rule #1: I don't care, I'm going home. Sometimes that can involve such mundane things as helping you change a tyre just that little bit faster because now you can see where the f*#% you dropped that wheel bolt.

To me, the main reason to carry a decent light is to help with the "mundane" things. A big supermarket can be awfully dark if the power goes off. Calming down a kid who's freaked out in an unusual situation is a lot easier if you can give him a flashlight to give him a sense of control.

A flashlight can help attract the attention of someone who's trying to rescue you (lost in the woods; stuck on a roof in a flood; car breakdown on the side of a road).

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What a flashlight cannot hope to do

Solve a situation **for** you. A flashlight can put the frosting on the cake. It can give you that little bit of an edge. But it **cannot solve the whole problem**.

If you're screwed, shining a light in the other's guy's eyes isn't going to magically undo your screwedness.

If the Threat is charging towards you with a knife, it doesn't matter if he can't see you, he just has to run at the light.

Same thing goes for someone shooting at you. Actually it goes double when it comes to guns, because now **everyone** has an easy to spot target to aim at.

Flashlight, yes or no?



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Absolutely yes. Get one. Get quality. Don't go completely nuts trying to get a gazillion lumens though, 100 is a very usable minimum. Even 80 can do the job.

From my experiments in a pretty dark area, 100 lumens will stop someone seeing all of you except the feet. 200 lumens is physically painful to the eyes.

If you're in a fairly well-lit area like a parking lot, then your lumens will be a lot less effective and probably won't disorientate anyone. But if you're in a well-lit parking lot you can probably see what's in the guy's hands anyway, so you probably don't need the extra light. Rather keep your hands free.

Oh, and if you're trying to look for some dropped car keys, getting 500 lumens bouncing back into your eyes isn't cool. That's why I like [my 4sevens tactical flashlight](#) – the 1 lumen moonlight function has been used more than the 300-odd lumen bright function ever will be. 200+ lumens is just way too much when you're just feeding the animals at night.