

## 380 AUTOMATIC (ACP)

Roy Huntington

Miracle-man John M. Browning introduced the .380 ACP (Automatic Colt Pistol) cartridge to use in the 1908 Hammerless Colt pocket pistol. The gun, and "powerful" cartridge immediately delighted the gun-toting public and sales remained brisk for decades. Keep in mind, at the time, most small pocket guns were .25 or .32 caliber, so the "big" .380 got some attention. But alas, as shooters became more sophisticated they demanded more "stopping power," and the .380 ACP, in spite of being chambered in endless numbers of handy pocket-guns, languished as merely adequate in the eyes of many. The FMJ ammo generally available simply didn't perform well, so many looked to more powerful cartridges.

Super Vel teased .380 owners with early versions of HP higher velocity rounds but technology still hadn't caught up with bullet design. In 1983, Colt introduced their Mark IV Series 80 Government Model — in .380 Auto. About 75-percent the size of a 1911, it caught on immediately. But regrettably, the .380 ammo of the time never allowed it to really gain the traction it deserved until years later and in another model's guise, the Mustang. At the time I was a San Diego cop and really wanted to like the .380 since the guns were so convenient. I did some experimenting with a SIG P230 in .380, which was a bit big for the caliber, which I thought was a good thing. I got 100 grain bullets up to some velocities I don't care to discuss right now — but eventually decided discretion was a better idea then the direction I was heading!

Today's bullets, loaded ammo and sophisticated powders have turned the .380 into a respected contender for personal protection. Some of today's most effective factory loads can penetrate 12" of ballistic gel reliably, while still offering effective expansion and adequate wound channels. In my opinion, almost suddenly, the .380 — even in a small pocket pistol like the Ruger LCP II — became an effective personal protection caliber. It especially fulfills the role of back-up gun splendidly. If you're loading with Nosler's 115 gr. JHP, 800+ fps can be reached, putting it soundly into the "effective" category.

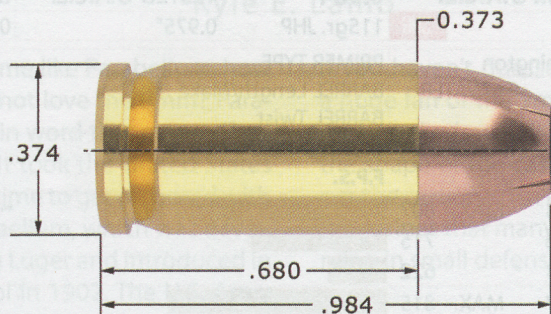
*Who says a .380 can't shoot! Roy is grinning because his vintage Colt 1908 delivers this sort of accuracy at 15 yards.*



**Roy Huntington**  
**Editor, American Handgunner**  
**Magazine**



## 380 AUTOMATIC (ACP)



Maximum S.A.A.M.I. Overall Cartridge Length: 0.984"

## BULLET CHOICES FOR THE 380 AUTOMATIC (ACP)

Sporting Handgun™

**SPHG JHP**

Grain  
115



## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The .380 Automatic (ACP) has grown in popularity over the last several years due to the vast quantity and variety of .380 pocket pistols being sold. Like most pistol cartridges, it headspaces on the case mouth. When loading for this cartridge, bell the case mouth just enough to reliably guide the bullet into position and then secure the bullet with a taper crimp. Using this seating and crimping technique will help ensure proper headspacing.





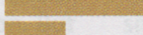


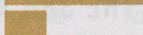




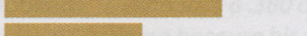

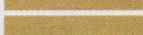
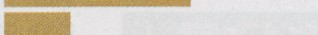




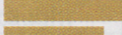

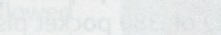
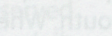
The S.A.A.M.I. overall cartridge lengths for this cartridge are .940" min. and .984" max. Seating on the higher end of this range is best so as not to encroach on the .380's already limited case capacity, provided that the longer rounds will function well in your particular firearm.



**380 Auto - 115 grain** **9mm (.355")**

MAXIMUM SAAMI O.A.C.L.			0.984"	TESTED O.A.C.L.	B.C.	S.D.
Sporting Handgun®			SHG	115gr. JHP	0.975"	0.109 0.130

CASE TYPE:	Remington	PRIMER TYPE	WSP
CASE HOLDS:	5.3 Gr. WATER	BARREL Length/Make	2-1/4" Colt Mk4
		BARREL Twist	1-16"

POWDER TYPE	POWDER CHG. GRS.		MUZZLE VEL. F.P.S.		LOAD DENSITY (VOLUME)
Unique	3.3	MAX.	807		** 106%
	2.8		715		90%
	2.3	*	622		74%
True Blue	3.7	MAX.	815		72%
	3.2		719		62%
	2.7	*	624		52%
Zip	2.9	MAX.	840		68%
	2.4	*	720		57%
	1.9		600		45%
Power Pistol	3.2	MAX.	851		81%
Most Accurate	2.7	*	726		68%
Powder Tested	2.2		602		55%
HS-6	4.3	MAX.	907		89%
	3.8		811		78%
	3.3	*	715		68%
Hi-Skor 700-X	2.5	* MAX.	921		94%
	2.0		775		75%
	1.5		629		57%
Bullseye	2.9	MAX.	937		87%
	2.4	*	811		72%
	1.9		686		57%
Red Dot	2.8	MAX.	945		** 108%
	2.3	*	808		89%
	1.8		670		69%

BC=Ballistic Coefficient SD=Sectional Density  
 \*Most Accurate Load Tested \*\*Compressed Load

Use Maximum Loads with Caution  
 Refer to page 79 for additional safety information