

## Commercial Blowguns or Homemade Blowguns?

*An Analyzation of their Strengths and Weaknesses*

*Have you ever wondered which is better? Well, here's a paper written on the topic. -Editor*

The first subject that may influence the choice between a commercially built blowgun and a homemade is the cost. A homemade blowgun may be made of any pipe (as long as it has an internal diameter of less than .75 inches). Half-inch conduit or half-inch PVC piping may be purchased for less than \$2.00, then trimmed to an appropriate length for use as a barrel. A PVC coupling may be recruited to serve as a mouthpiece for about 50 cents. Both of these pipes have an internal diameter of .62 inches.

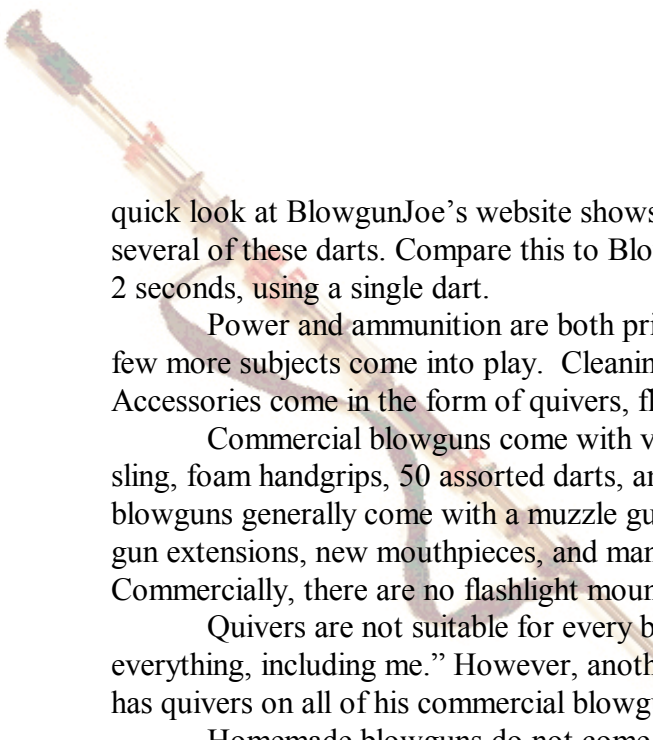
Compare this to the cost of a commercial blowgun. A quick look in the Cabela's Shooting Catalog will reveal that the least expensive blowgun (the *Terminator*) available from them is priced at \$6.99. This is for a 3 foot .40 caliber blowgun. It includes 12 darts, which are not suitable for hunting and may quickly be lost by the new blowgunner. One would certainly want to upgrade to a four foot barrel, at the cost of \$7.99, and purchase a package of darts. Perhaps the best deal is the 3 foot .40 caliber Bunker Buster, which has fifty darts and several quivers, priced at \$19.99. Any way the new blowgunner goes about the purchase, a commercial blowgun will cost at least \$20.

A discussion of the caliber and length may prove prudent at this point. It is known that a bigger bore size (say, the .62 caliber) and a longer length (about 6 feet) will increase the speed, accuracy, and penetration power of a blowgun. Thus, a 3 foot blowgun in .40 caliber would be inferior to a .62 caliber 7 ½ foot long blow gun, for reasons of power and accuracy. These are some of the many variables blowgun selection. The average size that a person should be able to handle is the general use 5 foot, .62 caliber blowgun.

Moving on to ammunition for the homemade blowgun, one will find that it is convenient to cut a piece of the pipe used in making the homemade blowgun to use to trim the ammunition to a specific caliber. By doing this, one can "size" different kinds of darts to the blowgun, and use them for different purposes. One could roll a piece of paper into a dart for practice or playing around with friends, then modify it into a hunting dart by adding a wooden shaft and a broad head. The important part is the variation in darts allowed by the homemade blowgun- a quick look through various internet websites will provide the beginner with darts suitable for many applications.

The commercial blowgun is a little more finicky about its ammunition. One cannot trim off a piece of the barrel of the gun for a sizing pipe, for this would void the warranty and needlessly shorten the blowgun, lowering the accuracy (remember that length and caliber determine power, and the faster a dart flies, the more accurate it is). Thus, one must find a piece of pipe with a .40 diameter for sizing (on the Bunker Buster example), or use the commercially sold ammunition. Hunters in this situation should take note that some blowgunners believe that these darts lack the power to kill cleanly.

There are many different types of ammunition for both homemade blowguns and commercial blowguns. Geezer's website ([www.geezers-corner.com](http://www.geezers-corner.com)) or Norbert (the Caveman) Pieper's website ([www.polar-electric.com/blowgun](http://www.polar-electric.com/blowgun)) provide many different designs. A general, all-purpose hunting dart for the homemade blowgun could be found on Blowgunhunter's site, [www.geocities.com/blowgunhunter](http://www.geocities.com/blowgunhunter). Commercial darts come in many different designs. Cabela's catalog features spike darts, sharpened wire darts, spearhead darts, stun dart kit, and mega-spike darts. However, these are light darts, and may not bring down game much larger than rats. A



quick look at BlowgunJoe's website shows that killing a rat with commercial darts requires several of these darts. Compare this to Blowgunhunter's dart, capable of killing a squirrel in about 2 seconds, using a single dart.

Power and ammunition are both primary considerations in picking a blowgun. However, a few more subjects come into play. Cleaning and accessories also matter, but to varying degrees. Accessories come in the form of quivers, flashlight mounts, bipods, and slings.

Commercial blowguns come with varying accessories. The Bunker Buster comes with a sling, foam handgrips, 50 assorted darts, and the quivers to hold all of them. Commercial blowguns generally come with a muzzle guard and an anti-inhale mouth piece. You can buy blowgun extensions, new mouthpieces, and many more, so long as there's a website that sells them. Commercially, there are no flashlight mounts available.

Quivers are not suitable for every blowgunner; Geezer states that, "they get caught on everything, including me." However, another blowgunner who goes by the name of BlowgunJoe has quivers on all of his commercial blowguns, and uses them effectively.

Homemade blowguns do not come with quivers or other accessories. However, with a little homegrown ingenuity, a true craftsman could give his blowgun quivers, slings, mag-lite mounts, and even bipods if thought necessary. The cost for these is very little, although more time is required to make them.

The advantage of commercial blowguns is that many are made. Quality is assured in that many other people have purchased the product, and have no fault with its construction. When purchasing ammunition for the blowgun, consistent results are assured. Because there are many different types of ammunition for the commercial blowgun, it is possible to find several different designs that fit the wallet, the gun, and a certain purpose. The disadvantages to the commercial blowgun is that it has no autonomous sense of individuality, and that it requires commercially made ammunition. Another problem is their high cost for a beginning blowgun.

The advantages of a home made blowgun is its low cost, and the fact that it is customized from the start. One can make it any length wanted, and any size one wanted, so long as the pipe is the right size to do with it. If the bore size is correct, then commercial ammunition can be feed through it. You can attach various other things, such as quivers, maglite mounts, and perhaps a bipod.

Commercial blowguns are good if one has the money available money to purchase them. Several of the more prominent blowgunners on the net dislike them, yet other blowgunners really like them. To a purchase blowgun, one only needs about \$20. They can be bought from Cabela's or from Blowguns Northwest, a site that has a player's group on the internet to share stories and pictures. Homemade blowguns are always customized to their owner's likes, and can be cheaper to make and try many different configurations of. However, the problem to them is that they can lack the refined look of a commercial blowguns.

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