

RUGER SR-556E "ESSENTIAL" #5912 5.56MM NATO/223 REM., \$1375

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

The fully outfitted SR-556FB got an 'A-' grade back in January 2010, and in the major areas, the Essential is a match to that gun. But we did like the SR-556FB's quad-rail setup, supplied sights, and overall package better. Still, money talks, and we wouldn't mind saving several hundred dollars for the 556E if we didn't need the 556FB's package. It all depends on what your pocketbook can stand.



SPECIFICATIONS

Overall Length, Min/Max.....32.75 in./36 in.
 Barrel Length..... 16.12 in. Chrome Lined M4/1:9 RH
 Barrel Length w/Flash Hider 17.6 in.
 Flash HiderRuger AC-556
 Sight Radius (Max.)..... 17.0 in.
 Sights (F/R)..... None
 Overall Height w/o Mag 7.5 in.
 Overall Height w/30-rd. Mag..... 10.4 in.
 LOP, Min. 10.2 in.

LOP, Max..... 13.5 in.
 Weight Unloaded 7.4 lbs.
 Weight Loaded w/30-rd. Mag 8.0 lbs.
 Action (Upper)Mil-Spec Hard-Coat Anod. Alum.
 Action Type.....Two-Stage Piston-Driven;
Chrome-Lined Gas Block, 4-Pos. Regulator
 Magazines.....1 30-Rd. Magpul PMAG
 Buttstock 6-Pos. Collapsible,
Mil-Spec Buffer & Spring
 Forend..... Round Aluminum

Pistol Grip.....A2 Plastic
 Trigger Pull Weight9.4 lbs., Single Stage
 Case Supplied Yes, Soft-Side
 WarrantyNone Written
 Telephone.....(603) 865-2442
 Website..... www.Ruger.com/SR556

Right: To gain functionality on the smooth handguard, we would want to add some rails to the tapped holes on the front of the gun.



We'd probably pick the 3-inch SR-556E TR3 Picatinny Rail #18090, above, for the sides and the 5-inch SR-556E-TR-5 Picatinny Rail #18095 for the bottom rail. Longer rails are available. All are made of black-finished aluminum and come with instructions and hardware. The custom-drilled pieces are available at www.ShopRuger.com.

Right: In the Ruger's piston system, gases from the barrel vent into the gas block and then against this piston, which in turn strikes an operating rod that replaces the gas tube.



Right: The 4-position adjustable regulator can tune the rifle to ammunition.



Right: The hidden winner in the test was the Ultramax 223 Remington 52-grain hollowpoints. This is a hot-barrel 10-shot group fired with the Ultramax commercially-remanufactured ammunition.



There's no stringing to be seen. Both the Ruger and the Adcor preferred this load over the others. It shot a 0.9-inch average group size in the Essential and a 0.7-inch average group size in the Elite.

