

Accuracy/Chronograph Data: .357 Mags.

	Taurus	S&W
Winchester 110-grain Jacketed Hollow Point	617	686+
Average Velocity at 10 ft.	1,116 fps	1,218 fps
Standard Deviation	10 fps	65 fps
Power Factor	123	134
Smallest Group at 25 yds.	2.4 in.	2.1 in.
Largest Group Size	3.4 in.	2.9 in.
Average Group Size	2.7 in.	2.6 in.
Federal Hydra-Shok 130-grain JHP	617	686+
Average Velocity at 10 ft.	1,266 fps	1,271 fps
Standard Deviation	16 fps	39 fps
Power Factor	165	165
Smallest Group at 25 yds.	2.3 in.	2.1 in.
Largest Group Size	4.2 in.	2.4 in.
Average Group Size	3.2 in.	2.3 in.
Winchester 145-grain Silvertip Hollow Point	617	686+
Average Velocity at 10 ft.	1,174 fps	1,200 fps
Standard Deviation	24 fps	28 fps
Power Factor	170	174
Smallest Group at 25 yds.	2.9 in.	1.3 in.
Largest Group Size	3.4 in.	2.9 in.
Average Group Size	3.2 in.	2.2 in.
Winchester 158-grain Lead Semi-Wadcutter	617	686+
Average Velocity at 10 ft.	1,014 fps	1,058 fps
Standard Deviation	40 fps	35 fps
Power Factor	160	167
Smallest Group at 25 yds.	NA	NA
Largest Group Size	NA	NA
Average Group Size	5 in.+	5 in.+
Federal Classic 180-grain Hi-Shok Jacketed HP	617	686+
Average Velocity at 10 ft.	1,023 fps	1,042 fps
Standard Deviation	19 fps	19 fps
Power Factor	184	188
Smallest Group at 25 yds.	2.4 in.	2.4 in.
Largest Group Size	3.8 in.	2.6 in.
Average Group Size	3.2 in.	2.5 in.

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groups were four-shot clusters of 1.7, 1.3, and 1.3 inches and two three-shot groups measuring 0.60 inch. Mind you, this is with ammo ranging from 180 to 110 grains.

Under any circumstance, trigger

In part because of the superb adjustable rear target sight. Explanation: After missing with the Taurus, we saw the Smith's great sight picture so well we found ourselves cutting it too fine, trying for dead-center hits. Also to the 686 Plus's

control is what accurate shooting is all about. Double action means a longer stroke of the trigger, equating to a longer period of time to obtain or mess-up a good sight picture, depending how you look at it. Plus, the longer the stroke the more likely the finger position on the trigger will change. Some professional shooters prefer a wide serrated trigger they can track forward and back. Others prefer a rounded edge on a thin trigger that will allow the finger to "roll" and slide across the trigger as the finger is pulled back.

The 686 Plus's double-action trigger response was crisp and fast, we thought, though its timed runs of 4.11, 4.67, 3.75, 4.30, and 3.71 seconds were noticeably slower than the Taurus. Why did the Smith wheelgun lag?

credit, we felt its trigger return speed allowed for a more consistent stroke. The more we shot it, the better we got with it, and the final and fastest run featured nearly dead center hits on all targets, at a time comparable to the median Taurus reading.

Taurus 617SS2KL

Our recommendation: Though we like the S&W better, we still say this gun is worth the money. If you are on a budget or not, here are seven rounds of .357 Magnum that will conceal as well as most five-shot .38 Special handguns.

This 2-inch-barrel, stainless-steel .357 Magnum sells for \$395. With an overall length of less than 7 inches, the Taurus 617 will go nearly anywhere a small-framed revolver can go. It will disappear into many inside-the-pants holsters meant for J-frames and even manages to slide into Uncle Mike's sleeve-like pocket holster.

The finish on ours was polished stainless steel. This is not our first choice for a concealment gun, but it makes cleanup a snap. Though the front sight is a serrated ramp, we would have liked a contrast, such as a black-anodized finish instead of the brushed stainless. The barrel has a full lug, and the ejector rod is miniscule, protruding just 0.59 inch past the crane. We wondered how this would eject full-length magnum cartridges, but experienced no trouble with it at all.

The Taurus 617 is also available with a bobbed hammer (look for the letters CH added to the prefix), and all 617s come with a key that locks the hammer down. This lock is discreetly machined into the hammer and does not affect the profile or bulk of the gun. We don't think it can be easily picked. At the very least the side plate would have to be removed and parts cut and replaced. With the light .357 Magnum 110JHP in place, the 617 is a lot of fun to shoot fast. Despite the