

# history of the 45 70 government cartridge

**history of the 45 70 government cartridge** is a fascinating journey that traces back to the late 19th century, marking a significant evolution in ammunition technology and military use. Initially developed for the United States Army, the .45-70 Government cartridge has a storied past that reflects the changing needs of warfare and hunting. This article will explore its origins, design specifications, historical significance, and the cartridge's enduring legacy in both military and civilian applications. Furthermore, we will delve into its performance characteristics, popular firearms that utilize this cartridge, and the cartridge's resurgence in the modern shooting community.

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## Origins of the .45-70 Government Cartridge

The .45-70 Government cartridge was developed in the early 1870s, primarily for use by the United States Army. The cartridge was designed to replace the .50-70 Government cartridge, which had been in service since the Civil War. The transition to the .45-70 was influenced by the need for a more efficient and versatile round that could perform well in various combat situations.

In 1873, the Army adopted the .45-70 as a standard cartridge, which consisted of a .45-inch diameter bullet propelled by 70 grains of black powder. The initial bullet weight was around 405 grains, making it effective for both infantry and cavalry units. The .45-70 was introduced alongside the Springfield Model 1873 rifle, also known as the "Trapdoor Springfield," which became the first breech-loading rifle adopted by the U.S. military.

The cartridge was named for its dimensions: .45 caliber, with a 70-grain charge of black powder, which was significant at the time for its power and accuracy. The adoption of the .45-70 marked a pivotal shift in military

ammunition, moving towards more powerful cartridges that could deliver greater stopping power and improved range on the battlefield.

## Design and Specifications

The .45-70 Government cartridge features a straight-walled case design that measures 2.105 inches in length. Its overall length is approximately 2.55 inches, allowing for a substantial case capacity that can accommodate a variety of bullet weights and styles. The bullet diameter is .458 inches, which is slightly larger than its nominal caliber, facilitating better performance with larger projectiles.

The cartridge's design is particularly notable for its versatility, allowing for various bullet weights ranging from 300 to 500 grains or more. This adaptability has made the .45-70 popular among hunters, especially for big game hunting, where its heavy bullets deliver substantial energy upon impact.

Some typical specifications of the .45-70 Government cartridge include:

- Bullet Diameter: .458 inches
- Case Length: 2.105 inches
- Overall Length: 2.55 inches
- Typical Bullet Weights: 300 to 500 grains
- Velocity: Approximately 1,300 to 1,900 feet per second, depending on the load

## Historical Significance

The historical significance of the .45-70 Government cartridge extends beyond its military applications. It played a crucial role during the Indian Wars and was used extensively in various conflicts where U.S. forces were engaged. Its powerful ballistics made it effective against both human adversaries and wildlife.

One of the cartridge's most notable moments came during the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, where soldiers armed with the Springfield rifles chambered for .45-70 faced off against the Lakota and Cheyenne tribes. The performance of the .45-70 was a significant factor in the early engagements of the U.S. Army, showcasing its lethality and range.

As military technology advanced, the .45-70 began to be phased out in favor of newer cartridges such as the .30-40 Krag and .30-06 Springfield. However, its use did not completely disappear; the cartridge remained in production for civilian use and hunting, maintaining a loyal following among enthusiasts.

# Performance Characteristics

The performance characteristics of the .45-70 Government cartridge are a major reason for its enduring popularity. Known for its substantial stopping power, the cartridge is particularly effective for hunting large game such as elk, moose, and bear.

Some key performance aspects include:

- **High Energy:** The .45-70 can deliver significant kinetic energy, with some loads producing over 2,000 foot-pounds at the muzzle.
- **Effective Range:** While it's primarily a short to medium-range cartridge, it can be effective at distances of up to 300 yards with proper shot placement.
- **Variety of Loads:** With a wide range of available bullet types, including soft-point, hollow-point, and cast lead, the .45-70 can be tailored to specific hunting needs.

## Firearms Chambered for .45-70 Government

Numerous firearms have been designed to chamber the .45-70 Government cartridge, both historically and in modern times. The most iconic is the Springfield Model 1873, but many others have followed suit. These include lever-action rifles, single-shot rifles, and even modern bolt-action platforms.

Notable firearms chambered for the .45-70 include:

- Springfield Model 1873
- Marlin Model 1895
- Henry Repeating Arms .45-70
- Ruger No. 1
- Winchester Model 1886

These firearms have contributed to the cartridge's legacy, with many still in production and popular among hunters and sport shooters alike.

## The Resurgence of .45-70 in Modern Times

In recent years, the .45-70 Government cartridge has experienced a resurgence

in popularity, particularly among hunters and collectors. Advances in reloading technology and the availability of high-quality factory ammunition have made it easier for enthusiasts to utilize the cartridge effectively.

Modern ammunition manufacturers have developed a wide range of loads, including high-velocity options and specialized bullets designed for specific game. This has broadened the appeal of the .45-70, making it not only a historical cartridge but also a practical choice for contemporary hunting scenarios.

The cartridge's reputation for power and reliability ensures that it remains a favorite among those who appreciate traditional firearms and the history surrounding them. Its continued use in hunting and sport shooting underscores its timeless appeal.

## **Conclusion**

The history of the .45-70 Government cartridge is a remarkable tale of innovation, military significance, and enduring popularity. From its origins in the 1870s to its modern resurgence, the .45-70 has maintained a strong presence in both military and civilian shooting contexts. Its powerful performance and versatility have made it a favorite among hunters, while its historical context provides a rich narrative that appeals to collectors and enthusiasts alike. As firearms technology continues to evolve, the .45-70 Government remains a testament to the enduring nature of effective ammunition design.

### **Q: What is the origin of the .45-70 Government cartridge?**

A: The .45-70 Government cartridge originated in the early 1870s, designed for the United States Army to replace the .50-70 Government cartridge. It was officially adopted in 1873 and used in the Springfield Model 1873 rifle.

### **Q: What are the specifications of the .45-70 Government cartridge?**

A: The .45-70 Government cartridge features a bullet diameter of .458 inches, a case length of 2.105 inches, an overall length of approximately 2.55 inches, and can accommodate bullet weights ranging from 300 to 500 grains.

### **Q: What are the notable firearms that use the .45-70 Government cartridge?**

A: Notable firearms chambered for the .45-70 Government include the

Springfield Model 1873, Marlin Model 1895, Henry Repeating Arms .45-70, Ruger No. 1, and Winchester Model 1886.

### **Q: Why has the .45-70 Government cartridge seen a resurgence in popularity?**

A: The .45-70 Government has seen a resurgence due to advances in reloading technology, the availability of high-quality ammunition, and its effectiveness for hunting large game, making it a practical choice for modern hunters.

### **Q: How does the performance of the .45-70 Government cartridge compare to other cartridges?**

A: The .45-70 Government is known for its high energy and stopping power, making it effective for large game hunting. While it has a shorter effective range compared to more modern cartridges like the .30-06, its heavy bullets provide significant energy at closer distances.

### **Q: What was the .45-70 Government cartridge used for historically?**

A: Historically, the .45-70 Government cartridge was used by the U.S. Army during the Indian Wars and other military conflicts. It was noted for its effectiveness in combat situations and against large game.

### **Q: Can the .45-70 Government cartridge be used for big game hunting?**

A: Yes, the .45-70 Government cartridge is highly regarded for big game hunting due to its substantial stopping power and versatility in bullet choices, making it suitable for various large animals.

### **Q: What types of bullets are available for the .45-70 Government cartridge?**

A: The .45-70 Government cartridge offers a variety of bullet types, including soft-point, hollow-point, and cast lead bullets, allowing hunters to choose appropriate ammunition for their specific needs.

## **Q: What is the typical velocity range for the .45-70 Government cartridge?**

A: The typical velocity for the .45-70 Government cartridge ranges from approximately 1,300 to 1,900 feet per second, depending on the specific load and bullet weight used.

## **Q: Is the .45-70 Government still used by the military today?**

A: The .45-70 Government is no longer used by the military as a standard cartridge, having been replaced by more modern ammunition. However, it remains popular in civilian use for hunting and sport shooting.

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