

# Beginner shooting tips

The new shooter is in a great position to learn the fundamentals of shooting. Being new you are a clean slate where as a person who has been shooting for some time may bring some old baggage with them that is often times difficult to correct. Over 95 percent of the time the inability of the shooter to hit the target is just that the shooters inability. A new shooter is willing to learn from this and take the corrective measures necessary to remedy the situation. Where someone who has experience is more likely to blame the problem on the firearm rather than themselves. I will also go out on a limb and say that 95 percent of firearms are more accurate than their handlers.

**The first and most important thing in learning your new firearm is firearms safety!** You hear things like accidental discharge all the time in the shooting world. I have never seen a firearm fire on its own without a little help when someone or something pulls the trigger be it intentionally or not to make the firearm send a bullet down range. There is on a very rare occasions defective firearms but mainly it is OPERATOR ERROR.

With that said if you follow the four basic rules of firearm safety you will be able to enjoy your new firearm without problems.

The four rules are:

## **SAFETY RULES**

- 1 – Handle all firearms as if they are loaded**
- 2 – Always keep the firearm pointed in a safe direction**
- 3 – Keep your finger off the trigger and outside the trigger guard until you have made the decision to fire.**
- 4 – Always be certain that your target and the surrounding area are safe before firing.**

If these four simple rules were followed I will just about guarantee there would never be another firearm accident! Firearms are a big responsibility and should be treated with all due respect.

The only way to learn to shoot is to practice, practice and then practice some more! When you think about the actual process of shooting a firearm it is pretty simple. You need to do the following. Align the sights on the target and pull the trigger. There aren't a whole lot of things that are easier than that are there. Well theory is great real world is another thing all together. The problem is that there are a lot of different muscle groups involved in the sight alignment and pulling of the trigger that it is very easy to take the sights off of the target.

## **The tips**

Get instruction: While shooting itself is not a complicated thing having an instructor that can correct things that are being done wrong early will greatly help in obtaining accuracy and avoid having to try and relearn how to do something that has been committed to muscle memory.

**Safety:** Before you load your gun, review the basic safety rules in your head. You are the one behind the trigger, you have the ultimate responsibility for handling your firearm in a safe manner, and you cannot blame anyone or anything else for an accident.

Ear and eye protection: Most ranges require you to use both ear and eye protection. Even if the range does not require them I strongly recommend that you use them! You were only given one set of ears and eyes so you need to take care of them.

**Eye dominance:** This is an issue that I have seen many experienced shooters have to overcome an initial assumption that they later found out was incorrect. A lot of people assume that if they are right handed they are right eye dominant. This is not necessarily the case and can lead to a lot of frustration when you are trying to line up your sights. There is a simple test that can be performed to determine which eye is your dominant eye. The steps are:

1. Hold your arms out in front of you with your hands crossed leaving a small hole that you can look through.
2. Look through the hole and focus on an object.
3. Slowly start moving your hands towards your face.
4. When your hands touch your face one eye will be looking through the hole and the other one will not be.
5. The one that is looking through the hole is your dominant eye.

**Sight alignment:** Sight alignment is how the sights are aligned in relation to each other. Using the most commonly seen “notch and post” type of sights as an example. The front sight should be visible through the notch in the rear sight. There should be an equal amount of light (gap) on each side of the front sight post. The top of the post and the top of the rear sight should be even (flush) If the post is off to one side or the other of the notch the bullet will impact the target to that side. If the top of the front site is below (lower than) the top of the rear sight the bullet will hit the target low. Likewise if the top of the front sight is above the rear sight the round will impact the target high.

\*Tip to remember EQUAL LIGHT & HEIGHT when looking at the sights

**\*NOTE\*** The human eye can only focus on one thing at a time. You cannot focus on the rear sight, front sight and the target at the same time. You should focus on the front sight. The back sight and target will still be visible they will just be blurred. The reason we do this is the front sight shows the path the bullet is going to follow.

**Stance** Find what works for you there is several the one below is my choice for Action shooting.

**\*\*Relaxed Isosceles** stance I recommend

- Stand wider than normal
- Holster foot 3 to 5 inches back
- Hip and shoulders facing target
- Balance (knees slightly bent)
- Head straight in upright position

- Arms extended but not locked
- Elbows bent 1 inch for recoil management
- Firm positive tension holding pistol/revolver
- Equal weight on each leg, even balance
- 75% weight on balls of feet
- 25% on heels ( no flat feet)
- Head over balls of the feet to ensure forward balance

\*there will be times where you shoot from odd positions on the range; this is where your balance is the key to controlling the handgun.

Your balance is the key to recoil management

**Gripping the firearm:** Getting a proper grip is one of if not the most important aspects of shot accuracy and recoil reduction. The following steps list how to acquire a proper grip.

1. Hold the gun in your strong hand pointed at the ground at about a 45 degree angle. If you are right handed your right hand will be your strong hand and if you are left handed your left hand will be your strong hand.
2. The web between your thumb and first finger should be as high as possible on the gun but low enough that your hand will not come in contact with any moving parts.
3. Place your weak hand over your strong hand with the tips of your fingers at the knuckles of your strong hand.
4. Lay your thumbs on top of each other usually with the weak hand thumb on top.
5. Fully extend your arms.
6. Close your eyes.
7. Raise the gun in front of you.
8. Open your eyes without moving the gun.
  - a. If the muzzle is pointed off to one side you need to adjust the position of your weak hand.
  - b. If the muzzle is pointed at your strong side move the finger tips of your weak hand closer to the knuckles of your strong hand.
  - c. If the muzzle is pointed towards your weak side move your fingers farther from the knuckles of your strong hand.
9. Repeat steps 5 through 8 until you can raise the firearm with your eyes closed and the sights are aligned when you open them. This is where your hands need to be.

**\*NOTE 1\*** Using this method of gripping the pistol it is important to remember not to grip the firearm to death! The strong side hand is only responsible for approximately 40% of the gripping force while the weak side hand is responsible for 60%. The strong side hands job is to control the trigger while the weak side hand controls the gun.

**\*Note 2\*** This is not the only method of gripping a firearm it just happens to be the one that works for most shooters.

### **Trigger control:**

This is another one of those real important skills if you want to obtain reliable accuracy with your firearm. If you just yank down on the trigger you are going to inevitably move the muzzle off the target. The trigger needs to be squeezed. The keys to a good trigger squeeze are.

1. Slow
2. Smooth
3. Even

What you are doing is continually adding more pressure to the trigger until it breaks causing the round to be fired. Ideally if don't right the trigger break should come as a surprise every time you fire the weapon. When first starting out you may find it helpful to count backwards from random numbers while squeezing the trigger to take their mind out of the action of pulling the trigger.

When you place your finger on the trigger you should be contacting the trigger with the pad of your index finger. You should not use the first joint as this does not give you the feeling of the pressure on the trigger and lessons your control.

**Dry Fire practice:** Dry firing is the act of firing a firearm with out using ammunition. Most modern handguns will not be affected by dry firing. Dry firing allows you to practice sight alignment, sight picture, stance and trigger control without firing a shot. This is a useful option for the many of us who can not go to the range as often as we would like. Just remember to make sure the firearm is unloaded before any dry fire practice! I personally make it a habit to put all ammunition in a draw before dry fire practicing so that an additional step is needed to get to ammunition. Even though you have checked the fire arm and made sure it is not loaded and put all the ammo away remember to follow the 4 basic rules!

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**\*Training with firearms is an inherently dangerous activity. Be sure to follow all safety protocols when using firearms or practicing drills. These drills are provided for information purposes only. Use at your own risk.**

### **SHOOTING TIPS**

**SAFETY first and always**

**SAFELY Dry fire a lot**

**See the muzzle flash ( to insure no flinch , blinking)**

**Watch your sights**  
**Insure a good grip**  
**Stance, solid foundation to insure SAFE control of pistol/revolver**  
**Shoot targets that are smaller than normal**  
**Step targets back further when practicing**  
**Wear good SAFETY eye and hearing protection**  
**Shoot with both eyes open**  
**Always start and end a session with precision shooting**  
**Trigger control**  
**Feel trigger reset**  
**Train muscle memory**  
**Control the pistol/revolver at all times, SAFELY control muzzle**  
**Practice, practice, practice**  
**Keep finger off the trigger unless engaging targets**  
**Insure handgun is sighted in**  
**Keep handgun maintained (clean is reliable and SAFE)**  
**Relax and remember to breath**  
**Wear proper clothing and footwear**  

- **Long sleeve turtle or crew neck shirt**
- **Ball hat**
- **Good traction footwear**

Have fun be safe and see you on the range

John Dzurka