Becoming a Better Shooter

Instruction, tips and checklists to make you a better shooter - what you can do to improve your skills and become a champion shooter
How to Become a Better Shooter

- Master the Fundamentals of Marksmanship
- Practice—Work Hard—Train
- Keep a Shooter’s Journal
- Learn to Call Shots and Follow-Through
- Improve Your Shot Technique (Consistency, Preparation, Focus)
- Improve Your Position Stability (Check lists, balance & relaxation)
- Train Your Mind Too (mental training)
- Go to Matches—Learn from the Best Shooters
- Set Goals—Strive to Achieve Your Goals
Fundamentals of Marksmanship: Stability-Alignment-Control

1. Rifle Stability
   a. Position Structure
   b. Bone and Sling Support
   c. Breath Control
   d. Relaxation
   e. Balance

2. Rifle-Target Alignment
   a. Sight Alignment
   b. Natural Point of Aim
   c. Sight Picture

3. Shot Control
   a. Initial pressure/slack
   b. Visual Focus
   c. Coordinated Smooth Pressure
   d. Shot call
   e. Follow-through
Sportsmanship & Etiquette

- Know and follow the competition rules
- Stay in your firing point/area
- No talking on the line except to Range Officers
- Don’t disturb other shooters
- No acting out
- Do your part to make the event a great experience for all!
Practice—Work Hard--Train

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ORDINARY SHOOTERS AND GREAT SHOOTERS IS HOW MUCH AND HOW WELL THEY PRACTICE!

TRAINING TIPS:
• Do positive repetitions—how much and how well you practice is the key to improvement
• Use dry firing or aiming exercises to increase repetitions
• Priority—practice standing and kneeling the most
• Time management—manage your time to do more practice
• Training Plan—plan each practice session (set goals/identify problems to solve)
Keep a Shooter’s Journal

A Shooter’s Journal is a written record and analysis of each day’s shooting

Shooters should record:
• Scores
• Equipment used
• What they Learned—things they did well
• Problems to Solve—things to work on in the next practice or competition
SHOT CALL: A mental picture of your sight picture at the instant the shot is fired. Call each shot according to a clock scheme—the top shot call would be a “7 at 10:30.” How would you call the other two shots on the left?

Calling your shots helps you focus attention on your sight picture and improve your follow-through.
Follow-Through After Each Shot

• Why: There is a delay between trigger release and shot departure from the muzzle
• Follow-through ensures that the rifle will remain steady while the pellet moves through the barrel

FOLLOW-THROUGH:
Continue to aim and maintain trigger pressure after the trigger is released until the shot leaves the muzzle and recoil occurs
• Follow-through aids in
  • Calling your shots
  • Maintaining consistent shot technique
Consistent Shot Preparation

Consistency: Doing each step in preparing to fire a shot the same way for every shot

Pay special attention to:

• Butt-plate in same location on shoulder

• Left elbow in same location on hip (standing) or knee (kneeling)

• Same pressures on rifle (hands, sling, cheek, shoulder)

• Approach target from same direction
Make a Shot Plan—Follow It!

A Shot Plan is a step-by-step check list for firing a shot—from shouldering the rifle to follow-through.

A shot plan describes:
1. Shouldering the rifle
2. Pre-shot checks (balance, relaxation)
3. Approach to target
4. Trigger pressure pattern
5. Visual focus
6. Shot call and follow-through

Jamie Beyerle, USA Olympic Team, 2008, 4th in women’s air rifle event: Beyerle begins her SHOT PLAN by making sure the butt-plate is placed in exactly the same location for each shot.
Keep Shot Groups Centered

- Centered shot groups get the highest scores
- Think shot groups even when firing on 10-bull targets
- Anytime a series of shots are consistently off center in one direction, make a sight adjustment
- Your zero (correct sight adjustment) in each position will be slightly different
- Your zero may change during one position (10 or 20 shots)
- If your shots are consistently off call in one direction you may need to make a sight adjustment
Pre-Shot Routine

After shouldering rifle, pause before beginning to aim to check:

1. Balance—does my position feel balanced?
2. Relaxation—is my left arm totally relaxed? Is my body relaxed?
3. Attention—am I thinking only about this shot?

Olympic gold medalist Katerina Emmons begins to aim 35 seconds after START.
**Trigger Control Chart**

**Start-Up Actions:**
1. Begin aiming at target
2. Exhale and stop breathing
3. Place finger on trigger, take up slack/apply initial pressure

**SHOT FIRES**—follow through by continuing aiming & trigger pressure until recoil occurs

- With sights aligned, apply steady smooth pressure until shot fires (2-3 sec.)
- Take 2-3 seconds to precisely align sights on target

**Trigger pressure line**—take up slack/apply initial pressure at beginning of shot

**Time, sec.**
Standing Position Checklist

- Head is erect
- Hand-wrist raises rifle to target level with the left arm & shoulder relaxed down on the side
- Left elbow is directly under the rifle
- Left hip is directly under the left elbow and rifle
- Weight is balanced over both feet
- Upper body bent back slightly to counterbalance the weight of the rifle
- Hips are aligned with feet, not turned; hips may be level, or tipped up
- Knees are straight, not bent
- Feet are turned 90-100 degrees away from target/line of fire, foot width is optional
SUPPORT ARM:

- Place elbow directly under rifle
- Relax arm and shoulder completely—support rifle with bones, not muscles
- Keep hip directly under elbow and rifle—look for straight line of support from rifle down to elbow to hip to middle of foot
A Standing Key—Relaxation

RELAX YOUR BODY DOWN:

• Steadiness comes from relaxation, not muscle tension
• When you exhale before starting to aim, let your body relax, try to feel it sink down
A Standing Key--Balance

BALANCE YOUR POSITION:

• Balance the weight of your body and rifle directly over your feet

• Before you begin to aim, think about how your weight is balanced on your feet—make sure it is balanced the same way for each shot

• Check your balance before each shot (pre-shot routine)
A Standing Key—Focus

FOCUS ON YOUR SIGHT PICTURE

• To hold the rifle really steady, focus your attention on the sight picture

• Concentrate on trying to get the target bullseye movements to stay within the front sight ring
Prone Position Checklist

- Head is reasonably erect, eyes look forward, not up
- Butt-plate is well up in shoulder, lies close to neck
- Left elbow lies directly under left side line
- Left hand is relaxed, forearm rests at base of thumb
- Sling supports all of the weight of the rifle and upper body
- Look for straight line from left hand to left foot
- More upper body weight is placed on the left elbow
- Body is rolled slightly to the left, more body weight rests on the left side
- Shoulders and spine form a "T"
- Left foot is turned up or to right, not out to left
- Right knee may be drawn up or straight
- Right foot is turned out to right
A Prone Key—Sling Support

SLING SUPPORT

• Check the sling—make sure it is tight enough to do all the work of supporting the rifle and upper body

• Relax the arm muscles as much as possible so that the sling, not arm muscles support the rifle

• Before the shot, try to let the left arm muscles relax completely (“let go”) each time you exhale

Look for vertical plane formed by left arm
A Prone Key--NPA

CENTER NATURAL POINT OF AIM

- The NPA is where the rifle points most naturally when the position is relaxed
- Find your NPA by closing your eyes and relaxing your body
- Open your eyes and see where the sights point
- Rotate your body on the pivot point to shift your NPA left or right
- Push your body forward or pull it back to shift your NPA up or down

Pivot Point—the pivot point must not move when adjusting NPA
Kneeling Position Checklist

- Sit on heel, keep foot vertical
- Balance body weight over heel
- Left elbow on or behind knee
- Lower left leg vertical or slightly forward
- Sling supports weight of rifle
- Head is erect
- Shoulders are relaxed down—back is curved, not erect
- Shoulder and hips are aligned
- Body weight rests on heel, roll rests under ankle
Kneeling Keys

1: BALANCE
The weight of the body and rifle must be balanced over the two heels.

2: ELIMINATE BODY TENSION
Let shoulders and upper body relax down—keep weight back on heel.

Keep the shoulders and hips aligned—avoid twisting the torso.
Train Your Mind Too

- Have a Shot Plan—Follow it!
- Focus on your sight picture and making the bulls-eye sit still
- Accept responsibility for every score you fire
- Always stay cool no matter what happens
- Control your emotions—no acting out when things go wrong
- Be positive—believe in yourself
- Stay in the NOW

Mental training is part of every great athlete’s development
Shooting in Matches

- Be prepared—obtain and study the match program—practice the match course of fire before the match
- Be prepared—have an equipment checklist—make sure your equipment is in top condition
- Strive to shoot the scores you have been shooting in practice—just try to shoot your average
- Make nervousness your friend—not your enemy
- Just try to do what you do in practice—the same routine, the same positions, the same shot plan
- Enjoy the experience—new friends, an exciting challenge in a different setting, a chance for recognition if my training has been good enough