

Benchrest Shooting

Teaches: accuracy, ideal sight picture, relaxation while shooting

Shooting from a pistol rest is the way to learn an ideal sight picture, good trigger control, and to build confidence that your gun shoots to point of aim. The NRA recommends starting all new shooters from a rest, just so they can see an ideal sight picture and understand that if the sights are aligned on the target when the gun fires, the bullet will accurately hit the target. Once this understanding is established, other kinds of shooting have a foundation to build from. Advanced shooters will find that by using a rest, they can shoot to the gun's limit. It's an excellent way to observe the shooting process by watching the sight lift, the slide operate, and the gun come back into battery on the target.

Shooting 1/4" dots from a rest is a challenging way to test your limits. Put 15 dots on a sheet of paper with a larger aiming circle around each one. One shot per dot at 7 yards; bullet must break the edge to score; anything over 10 is excellent.

Use benchrest shooting anytime you think your sights need adjusting. Chances are it's you, not the gun.

By shooting NRA targets or measuring your groups you can chart your progress.

Freestyle Group Shooting

Teaches: accuracy, ideal sight picture, making every shot count.

Put a 1" target dot on a blank paper and run it out to 25, 50, 75, or 100 ft, whatever distance stretches your ability to put them in the center when taking your best shot. Load ONLY ONE round into the magazine and cylinder, and make the shot as precise as you can, taking all the time you need. After every shot, step out of your shooting position, collect the brass, or do something else to rest. Use new target every 10 shots.

Try to call your shots. If you are perfectly focused on the front sight when the shot breaks, you will be able to tell if the shot was high, low, or off to the side. Wherever the sight is, that's the direction the shot will go.

Handle the gun exactly as you would for more aggressive shooting--loading the gun with the proper procedure and shooting from your normal stance. Pay attention to how your stance and grip feel to you; slow, careful shooting can show you where unwanted tension is coming from. If you feel tired, take a break.

You can measure your groups with a ruler or caliper. Date and file your best target to see how your shooting changes over a period of months or years.

Variation: Shoot from a rest or sandbags.

Receding Bullseyes

Teaches: accuracy, best shots at various ranges, settling into a shooting flow. Requires an indoor range.

Put a 1.5" target dot on a blank paper and put it as close as the range will allow. It should be relatively easy to put your rounds straight into the bullseye with no flyers. Fire a small number of shots, then move the target back just a little. Keep moving the target back, bit by bit, to the point where it's difficult to keep it in the bullseye.

You may be surprised at how you "lock on" to the bullseye doing this, to the point where you might shoot a good group at longer distances than usual. You might also become more aware of the shooting factors that degrade accuracy and make it difficult to shoot precisely at longer ranges.

Over time, you may find you can move it further and further back-- it's a good way to see your own progress. The outdoor variant is to progressively retreat from your target.

Dummy Round Drill

Teaches: flinch control and follow-through during live fire. Best when done with a shooting partner.

Principle: If the hammer falls on an empty chamber during slow-fire shooting, your gun shouldn't budge--sights should stay aligned and on target, eye still clearly focused on the front sight. If the gun does dip (or jump), you're anticipating the recoil.

Procedure: Have someone else load a magazine for you, mixing live rounds with snap caps, or for a revolver, leave one or more chambers empty. When you fire the gun, concentrate on keeping the gun steady, sights on target, no matter what happens. When the snap cap comes up you'll be able to check your flinch. If you're doing well, the gun won't budge. If you're not doing well, keep up with the drill until you are. Keep your sights aligned and on target while you release the trigger just enough to reengage the sear (proper follow-through).

You can do this yourself by loading several magazines and mixing them up, or loading a magazine with your eyes closed, or rotating the cylinder with your eyes shut.

Variations: if you have a laser or optical sight, it's even more difficult to keep the dot perfectly on the target when the snap cap comes up, and easier to diagnose the direction your flinch is taking you.

Also known as: cap-and-ball drill, ball-and-dummy drill.

Sensory Deprivation

Teaches: shooting kinesthetics, flinch control.

Requires partner, backstop that will stop rounds even if you significantly miss target.

Most of the flinch comes from anticipating the noise and flash of shooting, not the recoil itself. Anyone who has hammered a nail has handled more recoil in their hand than a handgun usually imparts. Shooting blind, with heavy hearing protection, can help show a shooter that the recoil is not difficult, as well focusing attention on the internal feeling of stance and shooting. This aids in visualization and kinesthetic awareness.

You can cut down on noise by using ear plugs in tandem with muffs. Line up the gun on target, and close your eyes before taking the shot.

Important: your partner is there to watch your muzzle. She should keep a hand on your shoulder as long as you are pointed safely. If any unsafe range condition arises, she should take the hand off your shoulder.

Variations: learn to tell when your slide locks back by the feel of the recoil alone. Your partner loads a magazine with an unknown number of rounds, and after each shot, you report whether you think the gun is empty or not. Believe it or not, you will be able to tell pretty quickly. You can also do a blind emergency reload when you feel the last round go. Your partner will need to keep a close eye on you for safety.

Caveats: besides the obvious safety considerations, you should probably only do this infrequently. In general, you want to train yourself to shoot with your eyes open.

Correcting Blinking

Many shooters blink when they fire the gun. This is a flinch response to the noise of shooting. If a shooter blinks, she can't be watching the sights through recoil for a good follow-through, and has to require her visual index on the sight before firing the next shot. Brian Enos writes that this is a fundamental barrier to advanced shooting; you can't have a fast visual control of the gun if you aren't watching the sight through recoil.

Here is a method (Sandy Wylie's) to correct blinking. You have to relax the shooter to the point where she can keep relaxed and absorb the visual and physical input from the gun. This method is the short route; the real answer is a Zen-type awareness.

If you have a safe berm that you can get close to, get within 5 yards. You want to shoot into the berm without a formal target to get comfortable with the gun. If you shoot iron sights, try just looking over the top of the gun instead of at the sights. Wear plugs and muffs to reduce the noise problem. You might find it of benefit to start with a .22 as well. To help in keeping relaxed, try to keep your facial muscles relaxed. Monitor this closely. I work on relaxing the muscles behind my ears for best relaxation and awareness. Use a relaxed grip on the gun and eventually work with weak and strong hand shooting.

Repeat until you are comfortable keeping your eyes open while looking over the sights, firing downrange into the berm without a specific target.

Once you can keep your eyes open for the complete cycle, start watching the sights and monitoring yourself closely. If you are blinking, go back to no target and looking over the gun. After you have achieved the ability to keep your eyes open and relax, you will find a tremendous increase in awareness.

Correcting Trigger Slap

Shooters moving from slow-fire to rapid fire often move their trigger fingers all the way off the trigger between shots. This has a couple of negative effects. First, it takes time. Second, it leads to inaccuracy because the tendency is to slap the trigger on the second and subsequent shots.

To fix this, follow through on your shots with your trigger finger. Hold the trigger back all the way through recoil. When the sights are again aligned slowly release the trigger until the link re-engages. Then press to make the next shot.

Once you know how far to release the trigger of your gun, both accuracy and speed improve.

Shooting with Both Eyes Open

Many shooters close or squint their weak eye to focus on the front sight, but doing so impairs peripheral vision and depth perception while increasing eye fatigue. Your target-to-target transitions will be much quicker if you are using both your eyes, and you can be more relaxed, which will improve your shooting in general. The problem is usually that the dominant eye is not much stronger than the weak eye, so instead of seeing one image strongly and the other faintly, you see both strongly. When focused on the front sight, you see a confusing array of rear sights and targets, with no way to coordinate them.

It's impossible to sort out the double images every time you take a shot. Instead, train your eye to simply "know" what a good sight picture and to ignore the extraneous elements. Within a few months, you can shoot as well as anyone, with complete peripheral awareness, by learning not to "see" any doubling of the sight picture.

The following is a recovery program for shooters with eye squinching problems:

1. Put a strip of scotch tape on your shooting glasses over your non-dominant eye and learn to shoot with both eyes open. The tape will obscure the weak eye's picture to the point where it will not interfere with your sight picture. Shoot this way until you have acquired the technique and your stance, sight focus, and follow through feel natural.
2. Dry fire every day. Select either the presentation from the holster or low ready, whichever makes sense to your situation, and practice first to make it smooth, then to make it perfect. Always keep a strong front-sight focus, and be very aware of where the sights are when the hammer falls. Work your way up to being able to make a presentation with your eyes closed, then open your eyes and see a solid sight picture.
3. Replace the tape with a smear of Vaseline, thin enough you see a ghostly rear sight when focused on the front sight. It will disorient you, as you'll see two rear sights and two targets. You will find that you are able to put the sight dead on the target regardless of the double vision. Continue the dry-fire regimen, and soon you will hardly be aware of the second image. As you get more acclimated to seeing the sight picture with only the strong eye, you can remove more and more Vaseline.
4. Eventually, open both eyes. Watch the sight through recoil. You will learn that you can follow the sight and retain a sharp picture, disregarding any weak-eye images of the rear sight or target. If your eyes begin to confuse the images, go back to the other glasses for a few minutes. In live-fire, gradually phase out the old glasses.

Within a few months, you won't ever think about it again--your eyes will "know" the sight picture and the non-dominant image will seem like a peripheral, ghostly superposition. This is because attention is what makes the image strong. The steps above will allow you to shoot as if the conflicting image didn't exist--and the more you ignore it, the more it doesn't exist. The result is no visual confusion, just a strong sight picture, normal depth perception, and the full range of your natural peripheral vision.

Firing from Low Ready

Teaches: sight acquisition and rapid first shot.

Gun should be held at low ready when danger is probable but the threat is not immediate. It gives the shooter a complete field of vision while enabling her to get the gun quickly on target and fire should it become necessary.

The "foot-shooting" low ready often seen on television is less than optimal. You want to keep the gun just low enough to see well over it, and no lower. If holding persons at gunpoint, you want to be low enough to see their hands. Finger should be off the trigger, gun decocked (DA/SA semi-autos) or safety engaged (SA semi-autos)

A gun is held at combat ready after shots have been fired, and the immediate threat neutralized. The gun is in condition zero (cocked, no safety engaged), held in the same stance as low ready, while the shooter assesses the target and then breaks tunnel vision to perform a scan of the area. This should be practiced until instinctive. Don't reholster the gun until you have assessed your surroundings and are satisfied no further threat exists.

Some people advise to decock DA/SA semi-autos when returning to ready. It's up to you. Remember in a defensive situation the gun might not be pointing in a safe direction.

Drill: Tape a 3x5 card to a target at 7 yards for your aiming point. On signal, put a round in the card.

Many indoor ranges prohibit drawing from a holster, but if you are familiar with the drawing track, you can simulate the last half of the draw by starting with the gun near your chest instead of at low ready. If you are not familiar with the drawing track, this drill won't help you. Do more dry-fire drawing first.

Variations: Low-ready/combat-ready reloading drill. Load three rounds into each of your magazines (on your belt or on a table), and two rounds in your gun. The drill is then:

1. Fire (and return to combat ready)
2. Fire; reload; fire (and return to combat ready)

Repeat #1 and #2 until you are out of magazines. Tape up your target after each drill so you are actively monitoring your accuracy.

Miscellaneous Accuracy and Slow-fire Tricks

Try these out and keep the ones you like.

Dry fire a LOT.

If you can see the muzzle flash, (1) you aren't blinking and (2) your eye was properly focused on the front sight. If you don't see the flash, check to see what your eye is doing.

Watch your sight and note that it goes straight up and straight back down as if on a spring. If the sights do anything else (e.g., pause at the top of the recoil arc, move sideways, "bounce" around at the bottom of the arc), then you are applying excess muscle force somewhere. You can't suppress recoil 100%, but you can manage it by riding with it. Think symmetry.

Make sure that for consecutive shots you are not shifting your grip or slapping the trigger.

Shoot at small reactive targets, like spinners, at a difficult distance.

Wear good hearing protection.

Fire a heavier caliber than you usually shoot; then go to your lighter gun.

Fire at a longer distance than you usually do for a while; then bring your target in closer.

You'll have a greater field of view if you shoot with both eyes open. For competition, if you find it difficult to do so, try putting a strip of transparent tape on your shooting glasses over your non-dominant eye. It will enable the strong eye to focus while still retaining some depth perception and peripheral vision. Don't visualize yourself shooting at the target; visualize yourself shooting into it.

Intersperse your timed/stress shooting (starting from low ready, or a holster, shooting at multiple targets, reloading, etc) with precision shooting as well. Brian Enos recommends starting and ending every shooting session with precision shots just to remind yourself that you can do it, and to have a feeling of balance and accuracy going into the more speed-oriented shooting.

If you have trouble figuring out adjustable sights, imagine the front sight is a foot tall. Now imagine how the gun barrel tilts. For windage, imagine the rear sight is a foot off to the left or right. This simple visual exercise will help you see how the sights work.

Read the US Army Marksmanship Unit's Pistol Marksmanship Guide (for bullseye.)

Consecutive Pairs

Teaches: shot-to-shot follow through, visual and kinesthetic awareness.

Shooters moving from slow-fire to rapid-fire often have trouble keeping the gun controlled, or keeping a precise sight picture. This exercise is designed to smooth out your shot-to-shot transitions.

To isolate the mechanics of follow through, don't use a target. This will prevent you from looking forward past the gun to see your shot placement. As long as the shots will be stopped by the backstop, we don't care where they go. If at an indoor range, set up a target large close enough that it will catch your fire easily.

Load a full magazine or cylinder, and with good sight alignment (sights aligned, but not aimed at anything in particular), carefully fire one shot into the berm. Watch the front sight move through the arc of recoil and return to alignment, and fire a quick follow up shot. Pay attention to how the gun feels while shooting, and make sure you aren't shifting your grip or lifting your finger off the trigger between shots. You are letting the gun show you how to fire it smoothly, letting it rise and snap back into alignment until it does this all by itself, as if it were spring-loaded. Watch the front sight, and don't worry about hitting a target. You're learning how to make your shots feel connected and continuous.

If something feels wrong, freeze the gun and look at what you are doing. Look at your grip, your trigger finger, and where your visual focus is. Correct it and keep shooting.

Repeat this drill for a half hour, and you will have a lot more awareness of how the gun fires and returns to the target. Come back to this drill whenever you find yourself having trouble with follow through mechanics.

Also see section on correcting trigger slap.

Indoor Variation: If you're shooting in a range that limits rapid-fire to a shot per second, you can still learn smooth, quick follow through by using a small target. Practice the above drill (with no target) until you are shooting as fast as the range will allow, and then move to aimed pairs on a 3.5 card at 25-40 feet. Keep shooting pairs, watching the front sight, paying attention to follow through, and keep your shots on the card. Verifying the sight picture will probably keep you within the slow-fire limits.

Accelerated Pairs

Teaches: Top-speed accurate fire.

Requires: High (or close) backstop.

Some shooters get hung up on the difference between double-taps (a.k.a. "hammers"--two shots fired from one sight picture) and accelerated pairs (two shots, each with a sight picture). This exercise will help you sort out the difference and realize that sighted pairs can be as fast as unsighted ones. The trick is in teaching your eye to follow the front sight through recoil and make an instantaneous verification of the sight picture.

You might be shooting slower than you need. The gun is in battery and back on the target very quickly, but many shooters add time finding the sight picture. This exercise helps you realize your body can shoot the gun very quickly once your eye knows what to see.

Drill: First, be sure of your backstop. You may get some very high shots in the first portion of the drill.

With an IPSC target or other large cardboard target three feet from the muzzle of the gun, fire a double-tap as quickly as you physically can. Watch the target, not the sights, during both shots. You should be able to see your rounds go through the cardboard. Don't worry about the sight picture, just see how quickly you can manage the trigger and still feel like the gun is under control. Repeat at least 10 times.

After you feel consistent shooting fast pairs, slow down enough to bring your shots within a hand's-breadth of each other on your target. Taping a 4x6 card to the target might help. Tape the target after every pair.

When you are consistently firing target-focus double-taps within four inches or so of each other, switch to watching the front sight. Follow the sight through recoil, and visually verify the sight picture as the second shot breaks, but don't let this slow the shot. You will see an aimed shot can be fired in the same amount of time as an un-aimed one. If you are visually following the front sight through recoil, sight verification is instantaneous.

Diagnostics: If you have trouble seeing what the sight does during recoil, you may be blinking. Otherwise, your eye is seeing something during the recoil cycle of the gun. Pay attention to what it is. Some people see the top of the gun or ejection port; some people watch the muzzle flash or the flash in the chamber. Lower the gun a bit so you see a tall front sight and just watch what the front sight does in recoil for a while. Follow the sight while looking over the gun first, then learn to follow it from a conventional sight picture.

Reactive Targets

Teaches: target transitions, accuracy.

Requires: outdoor range.

Reactive targets are excellent training tools--they are area rather than point targets, and they give immediate feedback on your accuracy. For beginners, reactive targets quickly illustrate that hitting your target carefully is more efficient than firing quick misses.

Drawback is beginners who can't call their shots won't see where their misses are going.

The solution is to control the distance the shooter is from the targets. Shooting steel is unsafe under 10 yards because of back splash, but other reactive targets (bowling pins, balloons, blocks of wood, tin cans, etc) can be brought in close. The targets should be just far enough that it takes a careful shot to hit them. Twelve feet is a good place to start.

To refine your draw use an array of reactive targets, draw and shoot one target; drop to low ready, assess, scan, reholster. Repeat until out of targets, then reset and reload. Intensive repetition will ingrain a smooth, accurate presentation. The same drill can be adapted for reloading and for two-shot target-to-target transitions.

Reactive targets are also useful for working on the double-action to single-action transition on DA/SA semi-autos. Many shooters get a flyer in their first shot-pair, and don't know whether it's the first or second shot that's missing. By setting up two close targets, you can tell which is which, and work on smoothing it out.

Arrays of reactive targets are great for simple competitions. See who can knock down five bowling pins the fastest, or who can draw and hit a swinging potato fastest.

Failure Drill

This is a defensive drill (aka: the Mozambique) to prepare for the possibility an aggressor will not be stopped by shots to the chest. This could be for a variety of reasons, from body armor to narcotic intoxication to just bad luck. In the turmoil of an armed conflict the shooter will probably not be able to tell why. The best defensive response is not to diagnose the failure but to quickly remedy it with a follow up shot to the head.

The standard FTS drill is two shots to the chest; assess; one shot to the head if needed. It is important that the head shot be a response to the aggressor's continued threat, not just a rehearsed triple-tap. Taking a moment to assess also serves the purpose of changing pace from two quick shots to an accurate single shot to stop.

Any shooting drill on a silhouette or IPSC target can be adapted as a failure drill. The most common method is to have an instructor shout "FAILURE" after the shooter has fired two shots to the chest. If the instructor is silent, the shots are presumed to have stopped the threat.

You can perform this drill on your own with two shot-timers (if timers are available to you at a club). Start both timers on a five-second random delay, and when either goes off, draw and fire two shots to the center of a target. If the second timer goes off during the assessment phase, perform the failure drill. If the timer beeps overlap, or are so close that you are still shooting when the second timer goes off, your first shots were effective. This is a good method, because the pacing of the "failure" cue is unpredictable--it might come immediately after your chest shots, or up to two seconds later.

More elaborate setups are possible with reactive targets. Thunder Ranch uses targets that can be configured to only fall from certain shot placements, depending on the instructor's preference (documentation here.) These are excellent for drilling the failure response. Other instructors use balloons with some colored dye as the center-of-mass target. Depending on the color of the dye, the student will have to perform a failure drill or not.

Variations: After shooting any kind of defensive scenario, a shooter should go to combat ready, assess all targets, and scan the area for further threats. This is also a prime time to drill a failure to stop.

Reload Drills

Your primary method of practicing reloads should be dry-fire, but live-fire is the final litmus test.

There are three kinds of reloads: speed, emergency, and tactical. Your drills can be adapted to exercise either one, but ideally the circumstances of your practice should be appropriate to the reload (i.e. tactical reload should be from behind cover, emergency reload after firing to slide lock, etc).

Plaxco Academy Drill:

Set up three IPSC targets at 10 yards.

On the first target, fire one shot, reload, and fire one shot. Perform six times.

On the second target, fire two shots, reload, and fire two shots. Perform three times.

On the third target, fire six shots, reload, and fire six shots.

The goal is 100% A-hits and smooth reloads.

See also the simple IPSC drill, and the reload variation of the low ready drill.

Malfunction Drills

Your primary method for learning malfunction clearance procedures should be dry-fire, but dry-fire practice lacks an essential element of real-life malfunctions: they are unexpected. Live-fire drills should present the shooter with the problem of (1) recognizing that a malfunction has occurred, and (2) clearing it.

Any shooting drill can become a malfunction drill with the judicious introduction of ammunition that won't fire. The most common method is the surprise snap-cap. Other methods involve making the gun or the ammunition temporarily less reliable:

Shoot an unreliable gun (finally, a use for that junker you got at the flea market...)

Shoot any ammunition that doesn't feed well in your gun. Most semi-autos have a preference for certain kinds of ammunition. Feed it something it doesn't like.

Shoot wad-cutters or semi wad-cutters in your semi-auto. In many guns, this will cause failures to feed.

Strengthening the recoil spring in some autoloaders will make them unreliable enough to practice jam clearing. Wolff Springs sells complete kits.

For reloaders, try seating the bullet upside-down. This may not feed, but if so, it will probably be unreliable.

Using a roll crimp can cause feed problems, BUT beware of possible overpressure. Increase the crimp gradually, using a light load, until you notice problems feeding.

Be sure you perform the proper clearance procedure even if you "know" that it's only a snap cap. Don't evaluate the malfunction--just clear it. The point is to ingrain the Tap-Rack-Ready (and Lock-Rip-Rack-Load-Rack-Ready) procedure as an automatic response to a gun that won't fire. Keep your focus on the target, not the gun.

Be sure to keep unreliable ammo marked and separate from practice and defense ammo.

Simple IPSC Drill

Teaches: draw, reload, smoothness and economy of motion.

This is commonly used among IPSC shooters to get their draws and reloads as efficient and smooth as possible.

With a target at seven yards, draw and fire one shot into the A zone. Speed reload, and then fire one more shot.

Variations: Vary the distance to learn the tradeoff between speed and accuracy.

Bill Drill (after Bill Wilson)

Teaches: draw, grip, rapid-fire, recoil control, flash sight picture.

With one IPSC target 7 yards away, start from surrender position, draw, and fire 6 shots into the A zone. If any shots miss the A zone, the time does not count, so the emphasis is on accuracy before speed.

Brian Enos puts master-level time for this drill as 2.0 seconds.

Variations: for a beginner, bring the target as close as 8 feet, or start from low ready instead of holstered. Shoot as fast as you can while keeping the shots in the A zone and keeping a feeling of control over the gun. The point is to get used to the feeling of controlled rapid fire, learning to watch the sight, and familiarizing yourself with rapid fire recoil characteristics. When drawing from the holster, it helps guarantee that you acquire a good shooting grip; otherwise the gun will start to feel out of control. If you are missing the A-zone, you're making mistakes. SLOW DOWN and do it right.

My Note

As with most everything else in life, this drill has been misconstrued and mixed up.

According to Bill Wilson himself, the original drill is to have three targets or a target with three marked aiming areas, and the drill has three completely separate strings.

In the first area/target, fire six shots as slow as possible. Strive for the smallest group possible. Time is no consideration. Try for the smallest group possible, period.

In the second area/target, fire six shots with about one-half second split times. Again, try for smallest group possible, but at the proper speed.

In the third area/target, fire six shots as fast as possible, BUT keep all shots in the marked aiming area.

Tueller Drill (after Sgt. Dennis Tueller)

Teaches: speed draw and fire under stress.

Requires: three people, or two people and a timer.

The Tueller drill is essentially an exercise, under stress, to measure your draw and first shot in terms of distance rather than time. The area that a charging assailant is able to cover in the time it takes you to draw and fire gives you a good idea of what a "safe distance" threshold is.

At the time of the original drill, the Gunsite par time for drawing from concealment and firing two shots at a 3-yard target was 1.5 seconds. Tueller found the average distance an assailant could travel in 1.5 seconds, starting from standing still, was about 21 feet. Any closer and the assailant might start grappling before the shot fired.

There have been many variations. The easiest is to have the "assailant" start back-to-back with the shooter. On signal, the runner runs and the shooter draws and fires at a 3-yard IPSC target. At the sound of the shot, the runner stops and the distance is measured. If the shot was good (A-zone), the distance counts as the "score."

A more stressful variation is to have the runner begin 21 feet away from the shooter, parallel to the firing line. On signal, the runner runs toward the shooter and tries to touch her on the back as he passes. This is pass/fail.

With ASP Red Guns, the drill can become a full-contact exercise.

Variations: Have the shooter sidestep while drawing. Moving to the runner's 45 degree area throws the runner off balance as they attempt to correct and gives the shooter more time to draw and fire. The shooter is also out of the line of attack in case the shots don't stop instantaneously. Other variations are documented here.

Wounded Shooter Drills

Wounded shooter drills are more than just learning to fire one-handed, as is usually adequate for competition. In a defensive encounter, there is a chance you might be hurt immediately and have to draw your weapon while injured. You may not know where incoming fire is coming from. So good wounded shooter drills are a combination of one-handed handling skills, use of cover, and threat assessment. Essentially, you'd like to be able to do anything while simulating an injury that you practice for two-handed.

WARNING: One-handed techniques involve operating the gun in unfamiliar ways, sometimes with the gun held much closer to the body than usual. Safety is a big concern. For that reason I highly recommend:

1. You don't practice any of these procedures until you have been trained in the proper technique.
2. You practice your handling skills exclusively with dry-fire, using snap caps, until you are highly confident that you will be safe. Be aware of your trigger finger, muzzle direction, and the possibility of clothing snags.

Wounded shooter skills include:

Drawing the gun, firing one-handed from prone and kneeling positions, reloading, and malfunction clearances.

These should be practiced both strong-hand and weak-hand only.

To exercise these skills in drills, perform it while simulating an injury. Simulated injuries can be anything from a disabled arm to disability of everything but your arm.

Stress-fire

Massad Ayoob prefers always shooting under stress, even if it's just making a bet with someone or penalizing yourself in some way for not meeting your goals. I personally think there is also a place for relaxed, no-penalty experimentation, but still, nothing can hone your skills as much as learning to exercise them under stress.

These are just some notes on what some people have done to create stress for shooters.

The best stress-fire is man-on-man. Any way to involve a "hostile" antagonist immediately increases the stress level of an exercise (see the Tueller Drill).

Paintball or simunition courses are the most realistic and demanding ways to test gun skills and tactics, because you have to deal with receiving fire as well handing it out. Even simple close-quarter exercises with squirt guns will get your heart pounding.

Police instructors often follow cadets around a shooting course, shouting to confuse. Massad Ayoob at LFI will have a shooter hold a paper target at gunpoint while an instructor harangues her with verbal abuse. The shooter must distinguish death threats from all other abuse, and cannot fire until given a lethal threat. Any kind of verbal involvement in a shooting course is going to help make it stressful.

Paintball guns can be rigged with RC triggers to fire at shooters in scenarios. This forces good use of cover BUT be sure that proper protection is worn by both the shooter and the range officers. Keep them aimed low enough that guns will not be knocked from hands.

Shooting in competition introduces a level of stress, and surprise courses are good.

Running before shooting is a common stress inducer used by the military.

Slosh water on your shooter just before a course of fire. Sniper trainers are known to drip water on the back of a shooter's neck while he or she takes a difficult shot. Squirt guns and super soakers are possibilities.

Put Vaseline on a shooter's hands before a stage.

LFI has been known to use an electric stun gun on a shooter before firing a standard. I do not know if it was modified to deliver less of a charge than usual, and I would not recommend that you try this without finding out.

Combine any of these with shoot/no-shoot targets, so shooters must take the time to evaluate targets. The most common live-fire method is to fasten cutouts of either weapons or innocuous objects to the "hands" of the targets. The best threat assessment exercises are man-on-man confrontations using paintballs or simunitions.

Bullseye National Match

The National Match is a simple objective bullseye course of 30 rounds fired on three targets. Official NRA targets are readily available, calibrated to score consistently at a various distances (50 ft, 25 yards, or 75 yards).

Remember that official NRA bullseye is shot strong hand only.

Match Stages: Slow-fire: 10 rounds on slow-fire target in 10 minutes.

Timed fire: 10 rounds on timed/rapid fire target, in 2 strings, 5 shots each in 20 seconds.

Rapid fire: 10 rounds on timed/rapid fire target, in 2 strings, 5 shots each in 10 seconds.

Scoring: Any bullet hole crossing a scoring line is awarded the higher score. A perfect score on all three targets is 300 points.

Points	Percentage	Ranking
Less than 255 pts	Below 85%	Marksman
255-269 pts	85%-89.99%	Sharpshooter
270-284 pts	90%-94.99%	Expert
285-290 pts	95%-96.99%	Master
291 & up	97% & up	High Master

Official rankings are issued only by the NRA through sanctioned matches. Shooting an Expert target under your own timer won't qualify you as a Bullseye Expert.

El Presidente and Variations

Designed by Jeff Cooper as a rough benchmark of skills. It is the most widely known handgun standard around.

Setup: three targets, spaced one yard apart, 10 yards distant.

Starting Position: hands held above shoulders (surrender position), back to targets.

Drill: Turn, fire two shots into the A-zone of each target, reload, and fire two more shots into each target.

Originally, the drill only counted if all shots were in the A-zone. When shot in competition, all hits on the target usually count using standard scoring for whichever individual sport you are participating in.

Par times (for a clean run):

Time is measured from the start signal to the last shot fired.

D Class	15.00 seconds*
C Class	11.25 seconds
B Class	7.50 seconds
A Class	6.00 seconds
Master Class	5.30 seconds
Grandmaster	4.75 seconds

The original API (American Pistol Institute) par time was 10 seconds.

* These times were calculated using a GM time of 4.5 seconds for a clean run (limited), broken down according to USPSA hit factor percentages and checked against the scores of 30 ranked shooters at Hill Country Practical Pistol Club. D-class par is the empirical average of 7 D-class shooters' scores.

Variations:

Vice Presidente: three targets, one yard apart at 7 yards. Start facing targets, hands above shoulders. Draw, fire two shots to each target, reload, and fire two shots into each target.

Demi Presidente: three IPSC targets, one yard apart at 10 yards. Start facing away from targets (180 degrees), hands above shoulders. At signal, turn, draw, and fire two shots into the center of each target. Reload, and then fire ONE shot into the "head" (A/B zone) of each target. Par times are identical to standard El Prez.

Tactical Presidente: Three targets at 10 yards. Start facing targets. On signal, one three shot to T-1 and T-2, then two shots to T-3. Then come back to T-2 and T-1 for one head shot each. This sequence is usually referred to as 1-1-2, head, head.

The IDPA classifier is basically a sequence of variations on El Presidente incorporating cover and movement. The Central Texas Standards also incorporate movement.

John Farnam Drill

Setup: Target is an 8.5 x 11" sheet of paper at 8 meters. Shooter begins with gun in the holster (concealed), retention strap engaged if holster is so equipped.

Semi-auto: round chambered, with four rounds and a dummy round in the magazine. The dummy round may not be the first or last round in the magazine, and the shooter is not to know which round is the dummy. One magazine on the belt contains two live rounds.

Revolver: cylinder loaded to capacity, speed-loader on the belt.

Drill: from interview position (hands at sides, not touching gun), draw and fire into the target. When the dummy round comes up, clear it with tap-rack. Continue firing until you run dry, then speed load and fire the last two shots. Revolvers just draw, shoot all rounds, reload, and then shoot two more.

All shots must hit the target to count, and all procedures (draw, malfunction clearance, reload) must be done correctly. Any miss or any failure to perform the correct procedure disqualifies you.

Par times:

	First shot	Splits	Tap-Rack	Reload	Total Time
Basic level Student					
Semi-auto	3.00	1.50	3.25	4.50	25.00
Revolver	3.00	1.50	N/A	6.00	18.25
Instructor					
Semi-auto	2.00	.75	2.75	3.50	12.00
Revolver	2.00	.75	N/A	5.00	12.00

Times are from shot to shot, and all procedures must be performed in the allotted time to pass. For instructor qualification, the drill must be successfully completed twice in a row.

Variations: InSights Training Center recommends adding movement. Practice moving off line on the draw. Add another step in a different direction on the tap-rack, yet another step on the speed reload, and finally a scan when you finish. For Ninja level, you can add some verbal commands like "Don't Move", "Go Away", etc.

LFI Standards

LFI Single Speed Drill:

On a Standard B-27 Target (or IPSC if the B-27s are not available)

4 yards - Low Ready, weak hand only, 6 shots: 8 seconds

4 yards - Holstered weapon, strong hand only, 6 shots: 8 seconds

7 yards - Freestyle from ready position, 6 shots - reload - 6 shots: 25 seconds

10 yards - Couch, High Kneel, Low Kneel; 6 reload - 6 reload - 6 shots: 75 seconds

15 yards - Weaver Stance, Chapman Stance, Isosceles Stance; 6 reload - 6 reload, 6 shots: 90 seconds

For Double Speed, its just half the time at each stage, on the same target.

Gunsite Standards

All exercises start with the gun holstered (concealed), facing a single target.

3 yards	1 round	head shot	1.5 sec
3 yards	2 rounds	A-zone	1.5 sec
7 yards	2 rounds	A-zone	1.5 sec
10 yards	2 rounds	A-zone	2.0 sec
10 yards	2 rounds, reload, 2 rounds	A-zone	5.0 sec
15 yards	2 rounds	A-zone	3.5 sec
25 yards	2 rounds	A-zone	7.0 sec

InSights Training Center Standards

All shots fired at 7 yards on an IPSC target.

1" group (measured CTC), slow fire, five shots

Two shots on one target, 0.5 sec between shots

One shot on two targets 1 yd apart, 0.6 sec interval between shots

One shot starting from the retention position (gun held at the pectoral), 0.75 sec.

One shot starting from the draw, 1.5 sec

One shot, speed reload, one shot, 2.0 sec interval between shots

The times should be met on-demand, any time, no warm up allowed.

For an IPSC master, the respective times should be about 0.25 sec, 0.3 sec, 0.5 sec, 1.0 sec, and 1.0 sec.

FBI Pistol Qualification Course

This standard, revised April 1997, is used to qualify both agents and instructors.

Target: FBI "Q"

Ammo: 50 rounds service ammunition

Scoring: In or touching "bottle" are 2 points; misses outside bottle count zero

Qualification: 85% to qualify; 90% for instructors

STAGE I

18 ROUNDS

Starting Point: 25 yard line

Time Allotted: 75 seconds

Start with a fully loaded weapon. On command shooter draws and fires 6 rounds prone position, decocks, fires 3 rounds strong side kneeling barricade position, 6 rounds strong side standing barricade position, and 3 rounds weak side kneeling barricade position.

STAGE II

10 ROUNDS

Starting Point: 25 yard line

Time allotted: 2 rounds in 6 seconds, 4 strings of 2 rounds, 3 seconds each

On command the shooter moves to the 15 yard line, draws and fires 2 rounds in 6 seconds, decocks, and returns to low ready. The shooter will fire 4 strings of 2 rounds in 3 seconds from the low ready (decocked.)

STAGE III

12 ROUNDS

Starting Point: 15 yard line

Time Allotted: 15 seconds

Start at the 15 yard line. On command the shooter moves to the 7 yard line, draws and fires 12 rounds in 15 seconds, to include a reload. Upon completing stage III, the shooter holsters a loaded weapon. Shooter then arranges remaining 10 rounds to have 5 rounds in the weapon and 5 rounds in a spare magazine.

STAGE IV

10 ROUNDS

Starting Point: 7 yard line

Time Allotted: 15 seconds

Start at the 7 yard line. On command the shooter moves to the 5 yard line, draws and fires 5 rounds with strong hand only, reloads, transfers the weapon to weak hand and fires 5 rounds weak hand only.

Agents are requalify four times a year. 1,338 agents have shot a perfect score (the FBI's "possible club").

Federal Air Marshal Tactical Pistol Course (this is the original course)

This course is shot cold (no warm up allowed) on the FBI QIT target

All strings are shot from a distance of seven yards.

Drill	Starting Position	Time	Total Rounds
One Round (twice)	Concealed Holster	1.65 (3.30 total)	2
Double Tap (twice)	Low Ready	1.35 (2.70 total)	4
6 rounds at one target; no more than 0.6 between shots	Low Ready	3.00	6
One Shot, reload, one shot (twice)	Low Ready	3.25 (6.50 total)	4
Two targets 3 yards apart			
One Round each (twice)	Low Ready	1.65 (3.30 total)	4
Three targets			
180 degree pivot. Turn left, then right			
One round each (twice).	Concealed Holster	3.50 (7.00 total)	6
One Round, slide locks back; drop to one knee; reload; fire one round. (twice)			
	Low Ready	4.00 (8.00 total)	4

QUALIFICATION:

1. **TIME:** Cannot exceed total time for each drill. Example: Drill #1 - 1st time 1.70 seconds, 2nd time 1.55 seconds; Total = 3.25 seconds = Go. Must achieve a "GO" on all stages to qualify for the time portion.
2. **ACCURACY:** Target is FBI "QIT" (bottle). Total rounds fired is 30. Point value inside bottle = 5. Point value touching line or outside bottle = 2. Maximum possible score = 150. Minimum qualifying score = 135.

FLETC (the FAM shoot this one now)

NOTES: Generally Point Shoulder is FLETC speak for a conventional shooting position, my other comments in [brackets]

NEW CITP COUFSE OF FIRE

2 MAGS 6/6

1.5 yds - 2 rds in 2 sec - 3 Facings - Strong Hand Only Ext. Bent Elbow (Emergency Reload/Holster)

3 yds - 2 rds in 2 sec - 3 Facings - Two handed, PT/Shoulder - High Ready - Clean and Holster, 2 Mags 6/6

7 yds - 1 rd in 3 sec - 5 Facings - Two Handed, PT/Shoulder

7 yds - 1 rd in 3 sec - two handed, emergency reload, transfer to weak - 1 rd in 15 sec - 1 rd in 3 second (aimed in position) 5 facings - clear weapon / 2 mags 6/6

7 yds - 3 rds in 6 sec - 2 chest / 1 head, two handed (next facing)

3 rds, 2 chest / 1 head, emergency reload

3 rds, 2 chest / 1 head in 15 second

[I believe this is one string 2/1 reload 2/1 in 15 seconds]

Transfer weapon to strong hand, aim in 3 rds in 5 sec clear and holster / mags 7/6

15 yds - 3 rds in 7 sec - standing strongside barricade

3 rds in 7 sec - kneeling [strongside]

(Emergency Reload)

3 rds in 7 sec - standing weak side barricade

3 rds in 7 sec - kneeling weak side barricade unload a loaded weapon / 2 mags 10/6

25 yds - 3 rds in 10 sec. - one step back and one step off cover, (strong side barricade)

2 rds in 5 sec

1 rd in 3 sec

(Magazine exchange) [tactical reload]

25 yds - 3 rds in 10 sec weak side barricade

2 rds in 5 sec

1 rd in 3 sec

Clear weapons, check it twice, holster, repeat process.

ASAA Combat Master Handgun Qualification (by Chuck Taylor)

This is one of the most difficult pistol courses in the world. Currently, only 12 people hold this rank. It is included here for your interest--this is not an official document.

This test must be shot on an ASAA proprietary target: a camouflaged silhouette roughly the same dimensions as an IPSC target, with an inner torso zone (X ring) of 11 by 13 inches, and an ocular zone (Y ring) of 3 by 4 inches. Hits in X or Y zones count 5 points; on target outside these zones count 3 (major), or 2 (minor) points.

All presentations are from the holster. The test must be shot in this order, in its entirety.

STANDARDS: 2 shots on torso (a 13" x 11" scoring area); once each. 80 points.

1. 1 meter (m), Speed Rock, 1.0 second (sec)
2. 1 m, Step Back, 1.0 sec
3. 3 m, 1.0 sec
4. 7 m, 1.3 sec
5. 10 m, 1.7 sec
6. 15 m, 2.2 sec
7. 25 m, 2.7 sec
8. 50 m, 6.0 sec

SINGLES: 1 shot on torso; perform each a total of five times. 25 points.

9. 7 m, 1.0 sec

PIVOTS and TURNS: 1 shot on torso; perform five times each. 75 points.

10. 90 degree pivot to the right, 1.0 sec
11. 90 degree pivot to the left, 1.0 sec
12. 180 degree turn, 1.2 sec

MULTIPLES: 1 shot each as listed. 5 m. 45 points. Targets 1m apart center to center.

13. 2 targets, 1.2 sec
14. 3 targets, 1.5 sec
15. 4 targets, 1.8 sec

HEAD SHOTS: 1 shot per command. 45 points.

16. 5 m, 1.0 sec. Perform a total of 4 times.
17. 7 m, 1.2 sec. Perform a total of 5 times.

AMBIDEXTROUS: 1 shot on each target. 30 points. Time limit 6.0 sec. Perform once.

18. 7 m; candidate draws, fires 1 round at each of 3 targets, speed loads, transfers gun to weak hand, then fires 1 more shot at each target weak hand unsupported.

HOSTAGE: 1 shot each. 5 times each. 7 m. 50 points. Time limit: 1.2 sec each.

19. Head shot on felon past left side of hostage's head. Perform a total of 5 times.
20. Head shot on felon past right side of hostage's head. Perform a total of 5 times.

ODD ANGLES: 60% obscured by cover. 1 shot each. 7 m. five times each. 50 points. Time Limit: 1.2 sec.

21. Target looking around right side of cover.

22. Target looking around left side of cover.

Next is the weapon handling phase. No points are earned, only deducted.

SPEED LOADING; NO SHOOTING. LOADING ONLY:

Deduct 5 points for each overtime. Perform a total of five times. 1.5 seconds each. Possible total deduction of 25 points from shooting score.

TACTICAL LOADING. NO SHOOTING:

Deduct 5 points for each overtime. Perform a total of five times. 4.0 seconds each. Possible total deduction of 25 points from shooting score.

MALFUNCTION CLEARANCE DRILLS. NO SHOOTING:

Deduct 5 points for each overtime. Perform a total of five times within time limits listed below. Possible total deduction of 75 pts from shooting score.

A. Position One (Failure to Fire): 1.0 sec

B. Position Two (Failure to Eject): 1.0 sec

C. Position Three (Feedway Stoppage): 4.0 sec

Qualification:

Possible total is 400 points. You need 360 points (90%) to pass. Penalties are as follows:

5 points are deducted from score for each occurrence of the following offenses:

Premature start/"creeping"

Overtime shot. If caused by a malfunction and candidate properly clears it, no penalty.

Hit on hostage or object designated as cover.

Overtime speed load, tactical load or malfunction clearance.

To officially earn the rank, this test must be administered by Chuck Taylor. For more information, contact The American Small Arms Academy.

THE EL PRESIDENTE – Design attributed to Jeff Cooper

In general, it has become standard to generically refer to any drill involving two shots each on three targets, a reload, and two shots to each target again, as an "El Presidente" but the real "El Presidente" is a very specific drill, at specific distances, as listed below. All of the elements listed must be present, or you're just firing twelve shots at three targets.

THE ORIGINAL DRILL

From concealment. Three targets 10 meters (11 yards) away and 1 yard apart (some sources state 3 yards), all of same height. Back to targets, hands above the shoulders, handgun concealed. On start signal, turn and fire twice at each target, reload and fire two more times at each target, all while using real concealment, and a "real" duty gun and other equipment, using full charge service ammo.

The American Handgun Institute standard was a "pass/fail" score of 10 seconds or less with all A-zone hits. If a shooter had any hits outside the A-zone, the procedure was considered a "fail."

If you shoot any variation of this other than how it is listed, it is not a "real" El Presidente. With the advent of shooting sports, there seems to be a tendency to shy away from "pass/fail" exercises, so most people simply score as appropriate for the individual sport in which they compete.

It should also be noted the drill was not intended to be tactical. It is simply a shooting drill that tests skills such as drawing from concealment, pivots, reloading, and reengaging targets after a reload.

Added note: 10 seconds is a really good time for this drill, IF SHOT AS ORIGINALLY INTENDED. Yes, some people can shoot it much faster, but of all the claims I've seen, I've never seen anyone shoot it AS INTENDED, at the CORRECT DISTANCES, with the PROPER EQUIPMENT in much less than 10 seconds. See the following article for an opinion about that: <http://www.rremphis.com/op028.html>

THE DEMI-PRESIDENTE – Designer unknown

Same target setup as the El Presidente. On signal, turn, draw and fire two shots to each target, reload, then one head shot each. 10 seconds or less is considered a good time.

THE TACTICAL PRESIDENTE – Designer unknown

Same target setup as the El Presidente. On signal, turn, draw and fire one shot on T-1, one shot on T-2, two shots on T-3, perform a reload, then fire a head shot on T-2, then a head shot on T-1.

In other words: One - one - two - reload - headshot – headshot A good time would be 10 seconds or less. This drill was designed to try to make the "El Presidente" more tactical.

THE VICE-PRESIDENTE – Designer unknown

Same setup as the "El Presidente" but targets at 7 yards instead of 10 meters. Begin facing targets. On signal, draw and engage each target with two shots each, reload and fire two each again. A good time for this would be 7 seconds or less.

SQUARE DRILL – Designer unknown

Develops ability to shoot while moving in a variety of directions. The drill combines multiple targets with shooting on the move and allows you to move in multiple directions during a single drill.

Create a square on the ground about 6-8 yards on a side. You can either paint/tape/mark the square, or just visualize it. Then you put three IPSC/IDPA targets evenly spaced approximately 3 yards from the front (down range) edge of the square. Engage the targets while moving along the edges of the square, two shots on each target for each 'leg' of the journey. E.G., two shots while moving forward, two while moving right, two while moving backwards, and two while moving left. You can also throw in diagonals if you want to get fancy.

STREET SURVIVAL TEST 2000 – Designed by Jim Higginbotham

Concealed equipment, 2 IDPA targets 1 yard apart edge to edge*

1. 5 yards: two rounds on T-1 in 1.50 seconds or less
 2. 5 yards: two rounds on T-2 in 1.50 seconds or less
 3. 5 yards: two rounds on both targets in 2.50 seconds or less
 4. 10 yards: face left, turn, fire 1 round on each target in 2.25 seconds or less
 5. 10 yards: face right, turn, fire 1 round on each target in 2.25 seconds or less
- Total rnds = 12 TTL par time = 10 seconds

-5 PTS FOR EA. MISS

SCORE = 1000 / (TTL TIME + .5 SEC FOR EA. POINT DOWN)

EXAMPLE -5 pts. down in 12 seconds = 1000 / 14.5 = 69

*indoor range allowance (targets 6" apart)

- Score = 900 / (ttl. time + .5 sec for ea. point down)

Expert = 95 or better.

FBI DRILL – Designer unknown. This is a variation of a drill used by Jim Higginbotham.

One target, 5 yards, start from the ready. The idea is to have 6 A-zone hits in under 3 seconds. Once you reach this level, you can go to concealed carry, then you can reduce the size of the A-zone or move the target further away. Use regular IDPA scoring with .50 seconds per point down.

THE BILL DRILL – Designed by Bill Wilson

It has become standard to call any drill involving drawing and firing six shots to one target a "Bill Drill." However, the original drill was more than just that. According to Bill Wilson, this is the original "Bill Drill."

One target at seven yards. All A-zone hits or it doesn't count.

String 1: Fire 6 shots for the smallest group possible. No time limit.

String 2: Fire 6 shots with about .50 splits between each shot.

String 3: Fire 6 shots as fast as you can.

THIRTY ROUND SELF DEFENSE PRACTICE DRILL – Designed by Ken Hackathorn

Use one standard IDPA target. Gun in holster, unless otherwise indicated.

1. 5 yards, 1.5 seconds, from low ready, one shot to the head, 4 times.
2. 5 yards, 2.0 seconds, from holster, one shot to head. 4 times.
3. 5 yards, 2.0 seconds, from low ready, strong hand only, two shots to body. 3 times.
4. 7 yards, 2.0 seconds, facing left, from holster, two shots to body. One time only.
5. 7 yards, 2.0 seconds, facing right, from holster, two shots to body. One time only.
6. 7 yards, 2.0 seconds, face target, from holster, two shots to body. One time only.
7. 7 yards, 4.0 seconds, while retreating, three shots to body. 3 times.
8. 10 yards, 3.0 seconds, gun on target, round in chamber, change magazine and fire one shot to body. 3 times.
9. 10 yards, 3.0 seconds, gun on target, slide open, change magazine and fire one shot to body. One time only.
10. 15 yards, 2.5 seconds, one shot to body. 6 times.