

Creating your Personal Training Plan

The following information serves as a basic introduction to the fundamentals of effective shooting skills. It provides you a means to perform a self-assessment as well as generate a personal training plan for practicing techniques to improve your abilities. Please note, this a collection of information, but not necessarily a complete guide. ALWAYS apply the techniques presented here with the **4 Safety Rules in Mind:**

1. Treat all firearms as if they are loaded
2. Never point a firearm at anything you are not willing to destroy
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on target and you have made the decision to shoot
4. Be sure of your target and what is beyond it.

This guide is set up with an introduction to best practices for each skill addressed. Additionally, we have included techniques to try out as you train on your own

Training on the Range

These are suggested ways to train on your own. You can perform some of this training off the range if you choose. If that is your choice, you **MUST** ensure you are using an **UNLOADED** firearm, **UNLOADED** Magazines, and **NO AMMO** is present in the room in which you are training. **CHECK, DOUBLE CHECK, and TRIPLE CHECK!** You may also perform some of the training with a Blue Training Gun. Otherwise, we recommend you perform this training on the range.

Grip

Grip technique is essential and fundamental. If your gun's grip does not feel comfortable in your hand, you may wish to examine alternative grips, or other firearms. Working on good grip, with the wrong firearm, is like trying to adjust your steps in the wrong size shoe. You might be able to temporarily overcome an issue, but you are still going to get blisters!

Good Grip:

- Hand is high on the backstrap
- Firm controlling grip, is essential for effective gun handling
- Sight picture and sight alignment remains steady
- Effectively absorbs recoil
- Successfully discharges spent casing on a semi-auto
- Successfully rechambers next round
- Successfully places firearm into battery on semi-auto

Grip too weak:

- Negative consequences on marksmanship
- Ineffective recoil absorption
- Malfunctions with cartridge ejection
- Malfunctions with chambering next round

Grip Uneven:

- Bullets strike target erratically, inconsistent shot placement

Training on the Range

Examine the effects on your target by doing the following:

1. Intentionally set your grip too tight and fire and then try a weaker than usual grip.
2. Try aligning the sights and change grip pressure to see where the front sight moves.
3. Make adjustments in your grip force and discover the setting that is comfortable and produces the least amount of front sight movement.
4. Focus your grip placement first with your dominant hand. Ensure you are high on the backstrap.
5. Place support hand palm (under right-hand thumb) against the frame
6. Compress your palms together

Stance

A proper stance is the foundation to shooting well, whether you choose an isosceles or a weaver stance, or a modified stance of your own. Options include facing forward, strong leg to the side and rear of weak leg, or squared-off stance with feet slightly wider than shoulder width, knees slightly bent, with your body squarely facing the target. Slight lean forward or straight up and down, do not lean back.

Effective Stance:

- Slight bend to the knees keeps you flexible and responsive
- Body facing straight aligns you with the target
- Shoulders relaxed avoids muscle tension and fatigue
- Core balance maintained to respond to the recoil
- Feet shoulder-width apart or slightly wider than shoulder-width for balance

Ineffective Stance

- No bend to the knees
- Not facing target
- Shoulders hunched and tight
- Core not balanced

Did you know? You can learn a lot about stance by watching others shoot.

Take a look at our best marksman in the group, how do they stand? Try their approach and see if it works for you.

Semi-Auto Handling

If you shoot semi-automatics... start here... if you shoot revolvers, feel free to read, but this section doesn't apply

Maintaining control and operating features safely and with competency is key. Confidence in the following allows you to focus on the more challenging aspects of marksmanship. Magazine manipulation, safety manipulation and working the slide should be 2nd nature to you. If it's not, consider making this an early goal to achieve in your training.

Magazine:

Good Manipulation:

- Use your non-dominant hand to hold the magazine when loading

- When loading your magazine, push the magazine upwards as you push a cartridge with your dominant hand into the magazine
- Do not gently insert magazine into firearm, tilt firearm to the side (aiming safely downrange), place magazine within magazine well, tap or slap magazine into firearm so it is firmly seated
- Confirm magazine is firmly seated

Poor Manipulation:

- Switching firearm from your dominant to support hand to insert magazine
- Not firmly seating magazine into firearm, no slap/tap
- Not confirming magazine is firmly seated
- Tilting muzzle in an unsafe direction

Safety:

Good Manipulation:

- Using thumb of dominant hand to switch safety on or off
- Maintaining firearm safely down range, not angled while manipulating safety
- Ability to find and manipulate safety without looking at the firearm
- Ability to manipulate safety without tilting firearm

Poor Manipulation:

- Using thumb or fingers of support hand to switch safety on or off
- Not maintaining firearm safely down range, angling it left or right while manipulating safety
- Needing to look at firearm to find and manipulate safety
- Needing to tilt firearm to manipulate safety

Did you know? Whether your firearm has a traditional safety, grip safety or trigger safety, or none... the number one safety feature is YOU! Following the 4 rules of firearm safety is the most reliable safety feature available!

Slide:

Good Manipulation:

- Racking the slide consistently and effectively
- Fully racking the slide back
- Freely allowing the slide to snap forward
- Avoiding any coverage of the ejection port with your hand/fingers
- Able to lock slide back in a controlled, safe way

Poor Manipulation

- Inconsistent manipulation
- Not fully racking the slide back
- Riding the slide (maintaining grip and pressure on the slide with your hand, slowing the forward movement as a result)
- Not avoiding coverage of the ejection port with your hand/fingers
- Struggling to lock slide back, uncontrolled muzzle direction

Training on the Range

While maintaining control of your firearm (Unloaded/No Ammunition nearby), aimed down range/safe direction, complete and repeat the following until you're confident you are doing it correctly and at the speed you wish to perform:

- With thumb of dominant hand, release magazine
- Load magazine – confirm it's fully seated
- With thumb of dominant hand, flip safety on and off
- Rack slide back using push-pull method and/or
- Rack slide back using archery/sling shot method
- Lock slide back

Natural Point of Aim

Is your stance natural? Did you know that if you aren't using your Natural Point of Aim (NPA), you are working against yourself? If not using a stance within NPA, over the course of your shooting it is highly likely your shots will drift in the direction of the body instead of on target.

Shooting using your NPA:

- Body works with your sight alignment and sight picture
- More comfortable maintaining your stance

Shooting against your NPA:

- Body works against maintaining your sight alignment and sight picture
- Muscle fatigue
- Course of fire moves off target

Training on the Range

Take your position, sights on target – then close your eyes. Lower the firearm to the ready position – raise it again to sights on target. Repeat this sequence two or three times before opening your eyes. Has the gun drifted left or right? If so, maybe the first position was not the natural point of aim. Move in the direction (right or left) to re-center your body on the target. Repeat the NPA exercise until you open your eyes and your firearm is on target.

Sight Alignment

Sight alignment is all about your gun's sights – front and rear. The goal in aiming is to get the Point of Alignment to equal the Point of Impact (POA = POI). Alignment is achieved when your eye(s) are lined up with the Front and Rear Sights and the sights positioned so that the alignment is correct. Proper sight alignment of the two sights means that the TOP of the Front Sight is vertically centered in the NOTCH of the Rear Sight, so that there is an equal amount of white space on either side of the Front Sight post. It also means that the TOP of the Front Sight is LEVEL horizontally with the TOP of the Rear Sight.

Shooting with Sight Alignment

- Increased chance of hitting the target where you want the bullet to hit
- Increased safety – hitting your intended target and nothing else
- Ammunition conservation

Shooting with Poor Sight Alignment

- Hitting the target left, right, up or down of the intended location on the target
- Decreased safety, increased danger of not hitting your intended target
- Wasted ammunition

Training on the Range

Unless you have difficulty seeing, achieving sight alignment is usually not an issue. What is an issue is achieving alignment and then MAINTAINING alignment as you squeeze the trigger. Working at a speed that works for you, focus on this and only this critical aspect (But of course keep SAFETY IN MIND ALWAYS) of the firing sequence. Capture your sight alignment with the targeted areas of the target, return to a ready stance, raise your arms into the firing position, achieve sight alignment with the target, and repeat until you achieve muscle memory.

Sight Picture

This is not the same as Sight Alignment, rather it is the next sequence of sight management. Once your sight's are aligned and on the target, place your entire visual focus on the FRONT SIGHT. The Front sight should be clear, and the rear sights AND target should be slightly blurry.

Shooting with Sight Picture

- Increased accuracy
- Increased safety – hitting your intended target and nothing else
- Ammunition conservation

Shooting with Poor Sight Picture

- Decreased Accuracy
- Decreased safety, increased danger of not hitting your intended target
- Wasted ammunition

Training on the Range

Like Sight Alignment, unless you have difficulty seeing, achieving Sight Picture is usually not an issue. What is an issue, is achieving alignment and then MAINTAINING focus on the Front Sight as you squeeze the trigger. Working at a speed that works for you, apply your sight alignment skills and prioritize focusing on your Front Sight (Keep SAFETY IN MIND ALWAYS) during the firing sequence. Capture your sight alignment

and sight picture, return to a ready stance, raise your arms into the firing position, achieve sight alignment and sight picture, and repeat until you achieve muscle memory.

Trigger Finger Placement and Squeeze

Your mom may have told you to watch where you stick your finger! The same goes for the sport of shooting. If you are working with a firearm that fits your hand, you should easily be able to place your finger in the trigger guard and on the trigger in the most effective way. If you struggle with this, you might want to look at changing your backstrap or grip, or even trying another firearm. One size does not fit all! Did you know we offer a personal Firearms Fitting service? That's a great way to find the firearm made just for you! Also note, where your finger is on a semi-automatic differs a bit than if you are shooting a revolver. More trigger pad on a revolver is recommended than is typical for a semi-automatic.

Effective Trigger Placement

- Ease of squeeze
- Ability to feel the trigger reset after firing
- Less horizontal/vertical movement during the moment of fire

Ineffective Trigger Placement

- Difficulty squeezing the trigger
- Inability to feel the trigger reset after firing
- Jerking the trigger
- Significant horizontal/vertical movement during the moment of fire

Effective Trigger Press

- Press is easy
- Speed of press is consistent and maintained all the way back and beyond the time the firearm fires
- Press flows through with no anticipation of shot being fired

Ineffective Trigger Squeeze

- Press is difficult (Check finger pad/joint placement)
- Jerked or inconsistent force application, speeds up or slows down
- Anticipates the shot and moves the firearm up, down, left or right

Did you know? Sometimes when a shooter does everything right, their first shot will be their best, but degrades afterwards. If this is the case, trigger control is your issue! Anticipation of the recoil and noise dramatically effects trigger control and after the first shot, you are more likely to be anxious about it. This effect can wear off after firing more rounds.

Training on the Range

With an UNLOADED FIREARM (Triple check this!) and the firearm pointed safely down range, get into your stance and firing position, with your finger on the trigger. You will be accomplishing a dry fire. Pull the firearm back to your midline with your finger still on the trigger. Tilt the firearm to the right or left to examine where your finger pad is in relation to the trigger. Is it forward, centered, or is more of just the tip of your finger on the trigger? You want from the center of your finger pad to the first joint of your trigger finger on the trigger.

Maintaining your firearm down range, watch your finger squeeze the trigger all the way back. Does the direction of your muzzle veer right or left? Adjust your finger placement and try again until no veering occurs. That is the right spot for you on that firearm.

Focus on feeling the reset of the trigger. As you fire, you should feel a distinct “reset” of the trigger. That location in the course of the trigger pull remains the same. Once reset, you can allow the trigger to move forward to its starting position and squeeze again.

Dry fire exercises. If your firearm has a flat space near the front sight, place an empty casing and conduct some dryfire exercises (use dummy rounds if you are concerned about your firing pin). Again ENSURE YOUR FIREARM IS NOT LOADED WITH ACTUAL ROUNDS! You want the casing to remain on your firearm, upright until you fully squeeze the trigger back.

Personal Assessment

Working with an instructor is one of the best ways to assess and customize your learning, but you can do quite well for yourself by working on your own. Becoming a proficient shooter is a journey. The first step is assessing where you are and then determining where you want to be and how you are going to get there.

Read each statement and select the description that best reflects your level of agreement with that statement. If an area does not apply to you (Semi/Revolver) skip it.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My grip is excellent and needs no further improvement.				
My stance is balanced, relaxed and facilitates my ability to shoot successfully.				
I am capable, proficient and confident in loading and unloading a semi-automatic magazine.				
I am capable, proficient and confident in my ability to consistently and safely rack the slide of a semi-automatic.				
I am capable, proficient and confident in my ability to manipulate my manual safety.				
I am capable, proficient and confident in my ability to lock my slide back.				
I am capable, proficient and confident in loading a revolver.				
I am capable, proficient and confident in unloading a revolver.				
I am capable, proficient and confident in decocking a revolver.				
I consistently stand in such a way that I am in alignment with my natural point of aim.				
I consistently acquire and maintain sight alignment through all phases of fire.				
I consistently acquire and maintain sight picture through all phases of fire.				
I am consistent and effective in the placement of my trigger finger on the trigger				
I am consistent and effective in my trigger squeeze.				

Goal Plan

Goal:

Steps/Techniques to Achieve My Goal:

Schedule/Due Date:

Goal:

Steps/Techniques to Achieve My Goal:

Schedule/Due Date:

Goal:

Steps/Techniques to Achieve My Goal:

Schedule/Due Date:

Addendum:

Grip

Semi-automatic

1. Place the firearm in your dominant hand so that the flesh of the web of that hand is pressed and snug toward the top of the grip
2. Ensure the alignment of the barrel of your gun and your arm is straight
3. Check to ensure you do not see a break in the wrist

Revolver

1. Place the firearm in your dominant hand with it pressed all the way into the web of your hand, high on the backstrap.
2. Ensure the top of the barrel of the gun is in line with your forearm which should be in line with the "V" created by your thumb and index finger.
3. Ensure your trigger finger lies flat along the frame of the gun and does not enter the trigger guard.
 - For Single Action revolver shooting, in which you must cock the hammer to chamber each round, the proper grip on your gun has your thumb placed high on the side of the frame so it is free and has easy access to cock the hammer.
 - For Double Action revolver shooting, in which there is either no external hammer to cock or cocking the hammer is not required, the grip is the same, but the proper gun grip has the thumb is dropped down to grasp the handle to provide maximum leverage for the longer, harder trigger pull of a double action revolver.

For a proper two handed grip, the second, non dominant hand simply will wrap firmly around the shooting hand. This steadies the grip, allows for proper trigger pull and helps to absorb recoil and prepare for another round. The thumb of the supporting hand can be placed on top of the strong hand thumb and in the case of a single action revolver, be used to pull the hammer back.

Racking Slide Back Techniques

Push Pull Method

1. Identify which hand is your support hand and which is your dominant hand.
2. Turn your body sideways so that the shoulder of your support hand is facing down range.
3. Grasp the firearm with your dominant hand, aimed downrange
4. Ensure your trigger finger is outside the trigger guard and along the frame of the firearm
5. Using your support hand, grasp slide with heel of the hand, and arc your hand so your four fingers arch over the slide and grasp the other side of the frame.

6. Do not cover the ejection port of the firearm with any part of your hand/fingers
7. NOTE – Stay aware of your trigger finger, this movement has a tendency to unconsciously cause your trigger finger to naturally clasp as well, which might move the trigger finger from along the frame into the trigger guard/near the trigger.
8. Holding the firearm firmly, bring the firearm to your midline
9. Brace the elbow of your dominant hand in your side
10. Drive, or punch forward firmly, your dominant hand, forward while holding the slide firmly in place with your support hand so that the firearm itself does not move, just the slide.
11. Once slide is pulled back to its rearmost position, release the slide completely. Do not follow or ride the slide with your hand. The slide must slide unrestricted to properly chamber the round.

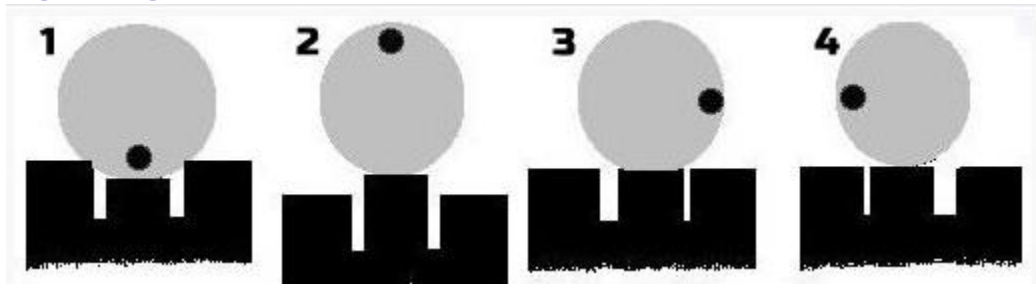
Sling Shot/Archery Method

1. Grip the pistol firmly with your dominant firing hand
2. Keep your trigger finger on the frame outside of the trigger guard
3. Keep the firearm safely pointed down range
4. Keep the firearm upright
5. Keep the firearm resting slightly above your waist level and in close to your body for better leverage.
6. Use your thumb and index finger of your support hand in a “V” position to grasp or pinch the back of the slide on the serrations
7. Quickly pull it to the rear, like you are shooting a slingshot or a bow.
8. Let go of the slide

Locking Slide Back

1. To lock the slide to the rear you have to push up the slide stop lever with your dominant hand's thumb, as you rack the slide backwards with your support hand and before it travels forward
2. If difficult, shift your dominant hand around to the left (for a right-handed shooter) so you can lift up the slide stop lever with your dominant thumb.
3. Shift your grip at the same time you are using your support hand to rack the slide rearward pushing up on the Slide Stop Lever with your thumb at the same time.
4. Have your thumb locate and rest on the slide stop lever in preparation for shoving the slide stop up when the slide gets rearward.
5. You want to be prepared to move the stop upward quickly without holding the slide back while you locate the stop.

Sight Alignment



1. Front Sight is **TOO LOW** – so **LOW** hit on Target
2. Front Sight is **TOO HIGH** – so **HIGH** hit on Target
3. Front Sight is **SKEWED to RIGHT** – so **RIGHT** hit on Target
4. Front Sight is **SKEWED to LEFT** – so **LEFT** hit on Target

Trigger Placement and Control



Finger placement for semi-automatic

Finger placement for revolver

Drills Once Fundamentals are Solid

There are a ton of drills you can find on the internet, but one of the best things you can do for yourself is focus on what skills you are trying to develop and then create drills that test those skills. Here are a few as a sample”

Rapid Fire Drill

Range: 3yd

Target: torso center mass bullseye, head shot

Start position: gun on bench

Rounds fired: based on magazine capacity

This drill is a speed drill focusing on acquisition and marksmanship with speed.

The drill begins with the shooter quickly assuming firing stance and readiness. First half of magazine should be shot at center mass as quickly as possible, round after round. The second half of the magazine should be aimed at the head, again as quickly as possible, round after round. If you have someone to time you, that’s a great way to advance.

1-Reload-2

Range: 5yd

Target: torso center mass bullseye

Start position: gun aimed in on target

Rounds fired: 3

This is a close-range drill that should allow you to practice your reload and re-acquisition of the target as quickly as possible. Remember, don’t go so fast that you miss the target.

The drill begins with the shooter aiming at the target, finger on the trigger. On the start signal, fire a single round at the target. Then perform a reload and fire two more rounds at the target. If you have someone to time you, that’s a great way to advance.

Moving Across the Target

Range: 3yd

Target: Multi Numbered Target with targets on the left and right side of standard body target outline or any target with multiple target areas displayed

Start position: gun aimed in on target

Rounds fired: 18

This is a close-range drill that should allow you to practice gaining sight alignment, sight picture and trigger control. Fire 3 rounds to the top right target area, fire 3 rounds to the head, fire 3 rounds to the top left target. Shoot 3 rounds center mass. Fire 3 rounds to the bottom right target area and finish with 3 rounds to the bottom left target. Reload and reacquire as necessary. If you have someone to time you, that’s a great way to advance. Once you can complete this drill with all shots on target, increase distance to 5 yds