**New Shooters Guide**

If you are a new shooter read this guide to be better prepared for your first match. Ask match officials as many questions as necessary so you can shoot the stages safely and correctly. Only go as fast as your skill level allows to complete a stage safely.

**BASIC GUN SAFETY RULES**

These rules apply everywhere all the time, not just on the range.

1. Treat every firearm as if it were loaded.

2. Never allow the muzzle to point at anything you are not willing to see destroyed.

3. Be sure of your target and know what lies behind it.

4. Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are aligned on target.

**RANGE SAFETY RULES**

Failure to follow safety rules, will result in being disqualified…the shooter will not be allowed to shoot any more stages, their score will not count, and they may be asked to leave the range.

**Cold Range**

All Firearms are unloaded until the shooter is called to the line and instructed by the RO to load and make ready.

**Administrative Gun Handling**

\* Do not handle firearms behind the firing line

\* Holstering/Un-holstering of side arms is only allowed in safety areas.

\* You may uncase your long gun behind the line and put them in the rack, or on the table that sometimes faces into the berm. Always be conscious of your muzzle and take care not to sweep anyone.

\* Actions on long guns should be locked open when not being used.

**180 Degree Rule**

There is an imaginary line that runs parallel with the start position on a course of fire. If a shooter’s muzzle comes back past the 180 degree, they will be disqualified as their muzzle is facing up range and is a hazard to others.

**Negligent Discharge**

Defined as the unintentional firing of the firearm while on a course of fire or putting a round over the berms/backstops and will result in being disqualified

**Finger off the trigger!**

The shooter must keep their finger off the trigger while moving through the course of fire unless they are shooting

**Dropped Gun**

Dropping a gun, loaded or unloaded during the course of fire and the loading and unloading process will result in being disqualified. The shooter must maintain control of their firearms at all times. If you do drop a firearm, do not attempt to catch it, as this dramatically increases the possibility of a negligent discharge.

**Transitioning Between Guns on a Multi-Gun Stage**

If a gun is to be grounded the procedure for doing this varies based on stage description. Sometimes it must be completely unloaded, others it may just have the safety placed on in a grounding area.

**RANGE COMMANDS**

The Range Officer issues range Commands. At a local match the range officer might be another competitor filling the spot until he shoots, at major/national matches the Range Officer will usually be the same person for the entire match to ensure everything is run the same for everyone.

This is the order and procedure for the Range Officer to issue commands when a shooter is called to the line

RO Ensures no one is down range

RO: LINE IS GOING HOT!

RO: Shooter do you understand the course of fire?

This is the Shooter’s opportunity to ask any last minute questions or clarifications of procedure.

RO: Shooter, you are clear to take an unloaded sight picture (not required, and sometimes not allowed)

RO: Shooter, you are clear to load and make ready

Shooter Loads and makes ready

RO: Shooter, are you ready?

Shooters gives affirmative response

RO: Stand by….

RO Activates start signal on shot clock.

When the shooter is done, the RO will say “if you are finished, unload and show clear”. The shooter will stay facing down range and unload and show clear to the RO. The RO will visibly inspect the firearms for a clear chamber, tell the shooter to drop the bolt, and dry fire with the firearm facing into the berm

STOP!: If the RO yells "STOP!" immediately stop firing and keep your firearm pointed in a safe direction. The RO may yell stop because something unsafe has occurred or is about to occur.

**START POSITIONS/SHOOTING POSITIONS**

The following are standard start positions most commonly used at competitions.

Free style - being the shooter's choice.

1. Strong hand - in the case of a right handed person this would mean their right hand only, unsupported by their opposite hand. All functions must be performed by this hand alone with the exception of reloading, clearing malfunctions, or unloading.

2. Weak hand - in the case of a right handed person this would mean their left hand only, unsupported by their opposite hand. Draws must be performed using the strong hand, the firearm will then be transferred to the weak hand and firing may commence. Drawing, reloading, clearing malfunctions, or re-holstering may be done with the assistance of the strong hand.

3. Strong hand injured - in the case of right-handed person this would mean their left hand only, unsupported by his/her opposite hand. The strong hand may not be used in any way shape or form, to include reloads.

4. Weak hand injured - in the case of right-handed person this would mean their right hand only, unsupported by his/her opposite hand. The weak hand may not be used in any way shape or form, to include reloads.

5. Kneeling - defined as having a minimum of one knee on the ground.

6. Prone - defined as body horizontal to the ground (knees, thighs, and navel must touch the ground).

7. Surrender (starting position) - defined as facing downrange, hands empty with wrists above the shoulders.

8. Tactical (starting position) - defined as shooter facing downrange with rifle in both hands, buttstock at hip level on strong side with muzzle pointing downrange at eye level.

9. Alert/Low Ready (starting position) - defined as shooter facing downrange rifle in both hands, buttstock in strong shoulder, muzzle downrange at navel level.

10. Ready (starting position) - defined as shooter facing downrange, rifle in both hands buttstock in shoulder muzzle downrange at eye level.

13. The default starting position for all COFs that do not have a clearly defined starting position is Alert/Low Ready.

**PREPARING TO SHOOT A MATCH**

A match is not the place to find out if your equipment functions or not, or if your firearms are sighted in. Coming to a match unprepared is a sure way to have a bad time.

Before a match do the following:

1) Make sure your Rifle and Pistol all feed ammunition reliably from all of the feeding devices you are using. Make sure the ammunition you are using works reliably and groups decently. Do not switch brands of ammunition before a match without reconfirming zero and function.

2) Zero your rifle and know holdovers and bullet drop for it out to 200 yards. Know how high you need to aim at CQB distances to make a head shot to accommodate for sight off set.

3) Be prepared to shoot your handgun from 0-25 yards at varying sizes of targets.

4) Always Bring More ammunition than you need to a match. Always bring cleaning equipment and spare parts if you have them.

Skills you can practice at home, before practicing any of these make sure your firearms are unloaded, and no live ammunition is present!

1) Reloads from standing, kneeling, and prone.

2) Getting into shooting positions from standing, kneeling and prone.

3) Drawing your pistol

4) Going from port arms and low ready to on target.

5) Practice clearing malfunctions just in case your equipment doesn't work 100%.

**BUILDING SKILL THROUGH COMPETITION AND INCREASING PERFORMANCE**

Shooting competitively induces degrees of stress not found in purely recreational shooting. The stress of trying to do your best to beat other people and the clock counting every second you are shooting, will make you perform differently than if you were shooting the same scenario just by yourself. Through experience you will become acclimated to this stress and it will no longer concern you as much, if at all.

Increasing speed is a natural by product of repetition and economy of motion. The more efficient you are in your movement and gun handling, the faster you will be. Reloads for your firearms should always come from the same locations. Ideally all your firearms should be similar in handling and operating characteristics to each other as switching between them will not require as much readjustment. The more you shoot and compete, the more second nature most of the tasks involved in doing so will become.

Equipment should be used to compliment skills you already have, not make up for skills you are lacking.

Increased performance should never be achieved through sacrificing reliability in your equipment. Equipment that works all the time will allow you to sometimes beat superior shooters who’s equipment does not work all the time.

**MINDSET**

Develop the will to prevail despite adversity. Everyone has a bad stage because things didn’t go according to plan. How you overcome this adversity is what will separate you from other competitors. Do not give up as long as you are able to continue shooting. Clear malfunctions, make your semi auto operate manually if need be, stay in the game. If a particular target is too difficult to hit and you’ve done your best to engage it, move on if you must to complete the course of fire.

Think fast and solve problems. The more shooting you do competitively, the easier this will become as you experience different problems and learn more solutions.

Take responsibility for your performance. It is easy to find excuses as to why you shot poorly on a particular stage. Maintenance, reliability, and accuracy of your equipment are your responsibility. If it does not perform well, do not use it. If you lack ability in a particular skill, acknowledge this and practice that skill more. Exercise good sportsmanship, people who cheat or bend the rules for the sake of winning are only cheating themselves of out improving their skills.

You are only competing against yourself. If your skills continually improve and your scores continually improve be pleased with your accomplishment even if your placement is last every time. You should never leave a match feeling that you gained nothing.