



SPORTING SHOOTERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) INC.



Information for new
target pistol
shooters

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Basic Training Program In Target Pistol For New Shooters

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to your SSAA Target Pistol Club. This Basic Training Program has been adopted by your Branch Pistol Club Executive, Committee and Range Officers to assist you, as a new member of the club, in receiving an adequate level of initial training covering the safe handling and use of Target Handguns. Along with safety and shooting fundamentals, the training will include some of the legal responsibilities of Target Pistol ownership, basic description of parts and operation as well as range procedures.

Proper initial training will enhance your enjoyment of the sport, by giving you the knowledge and confidence required to build a set of fundamental skills and with practice, the confidence to participate in the activities of the club. The delivery of this program demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that you are able to participate with confidence and safety in all club activities. This program addresses the basic knowledge needed for you to be a safety conscious member of our club.

Prior to undertaking this course candidates must complete a P650 Declaration Form and produce acceptable photo identification as issued by a government department or authority such as a driver's licence, passport etc.

Candidates responding **YES** to any of the questions in section B of the P650 Declaration **MUST** provide written approval from the Firearms Registry prior to commencing the course.

SECTION 1: PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

From the start it must be made clear that this manual is not designed as a coaching manual to assist in gaining better competitive scores or higher levels of accuracy, although some topics may assist in these aims. It is a plain English guide that has been developed as a resource to assist you during your initial safety training as a new Target Pistol Club member.

It is in a simple format and only covers the basics in introductory form. Its purpose is to set some guidelines that can easily be referred to by you. As a resource its use and adoption will assist in ensuring that new SSAA Target Pistol shooters receive a uniform standard of initial instruction.

The information in this handbook is in generic form only and its method of delivery during training is entirely at the discretion of the Branch Pistol Club conducting the training. This is to ensure the necessary flexibility due to time, location, resources and the need to meet your individual needs and learning speed. Although allowing flexible delivery, all subject matter within this handbook will be covered and assessed as part of your initial training. Where available, additional material and or subject matter may be used to build on the information contained within this handbook.

The SSAA (NSW) Inc. Basic Training Program in Target Pistol has been specifically designed for new target pistol shooters and comprises both theory and practical components. The theory information required for the course is contained in this booklet, and candidates are advised to read the booklet thoroughly before attending any training sessions.

The course will include:

- A review of the theory component, with opportunity for the candidate to seek clarification of anything they are not sure of.
- Assessment of the candidate's theoretical knowledge, through administration of an open book multiple choice exam.
- A practical demonstration of safe handling techniques including demonstration of correct sighting techniques and trigger control, followed by hands on practice (using live ammunition wherever practical) and an assessment of the candidate's ability to safely handle a handgun.

SECTION 2: OBJECTIVES

There are three objectives in this training program and Trainee Handbook.

1. First and foremost is the delivery of a training program that will allow you to gain the knowledge and skill, at a basic level, that will ensure your safe and responsible participation in the sport.
2. The second is to provide participants with knowledge of the legislative requirements with which they must comply as a firearms licence holder in NSW.
3. The third objective is that by supplying a resource in an easy to use format for use by trainers and trainees at Branch level, we will gain a uniform standard of training delivery as well as enhancing the confidence and skills of members within all our Branches.

By the end of this course you will:

- Be able to safely and confidently handle a variety of handguns.
- Know the fundamentals of Target Pistol shooting.
- Be familiar with your SSAA Branch or Affiliate Pistol Club's Range Rules.
- Be familiar with the procedures of a competition shoot and the use of range commands.
- Be familiar with your responsibilities as a Pistol Club member.
- Be familiar with your responsibilities as a firearms licence holder in NSW.

SECTION 3: SAFETY RULES

Using a pistol safely

As with all firearms, safety must always be the first concern when handling or using any form of pistol. The need for safety exists wherever handguns are located or used, at home while cleaning, on the shooting range and during transportation from and to home.

What causes firearm accidents?

The cause of all accidents involving firearms can be traced to ignorance and/or carelessness. Ignorance is a lack of knowledge being displayed by a person when they handle a firearm without knowing the safety rules or how the firearm operates and can be classed as a dangerous lack of knowledge. Equally dangerous is the person who, although knowing the correct firearm operation and safety rules, becomes careless in properly applying that knowledge. In both of these cases, accidents can easily happen. But when people practice responsible ownership and use of firearms, accidents do not happen.

The fundamental safety rules

Treat all firearms as if they are loaded

- Always treat all firearms as loaded even when you know that they are not. Never assume that a firearm is not loaded and always visually inspect or “clear” all firearms that you may handle.

Always point your firearm in a safe direction

- It is important that you are always aware of the direction the muzzle (front end of the barrel) is pointing in. While on the range should be at an angle of 45° downwards, facing the target area. In this position, even if it were unintentionally discharged, it would not cause any injury or damage. This general safety rule may have additional restrictions if at an indoor range and as a shooter you should make yourself aware of these if visiting an indoor range.
- You are responsible for being aware at all times of where your muzzle is pointing and **NEVER** point a pistol at another person, even when you know it is unloaded. Don't forget a pistol has a very short barrel and a little movement can move the muzzle through a large arc.

Finger off trigger

- **DO NOT** touch the trigger until the Range Officer has given the command to fire and you are actually ready to fire at the target.

- Always keep your finger out of the trigger guard and off the trigger until ready to shoot. When holding a pistol, a person has a natural tendency to place their index finger through the trigger guard and onto the trigger. When holding a pistol, you must consciously remember to straighten your index finger and rest it along the outside of the trigger guard. With practice this will become an automatic action.

Never load a pistol until you are told to do so by the Range Officer

- You must always keep the pistol unloaded until instructed to load by the Range Officer. When picking up a pistol keep it pointed in a safe direction, with your finger outside the trigger guard. Immediately remove the magazine if fitted and open the action if a pistol or swing out the cylinder if a revolver. Then look into the chamber and magazine or cylinders to ensure all are clear of ammunition and therefore unloaded.
- If you are not sure how to open the action and unload the pistol, leave it alone and get help from a competent person.
- No pistol should be stored in a loaded condition and you must treat every pistol as if it were loaded.

General Safety Rules

The following safety rules should be observed when using or storing a pistol

1. Be sure the pistol is safe to operate. Just like other sporting equipment, pistols need regular maintenance to remain operable and safe. Regular cleaning and proper storage is essential. Have a gunsmith or the Club Armourer inspect it if you are not sure of the pistol's condition.
2. Know how to use the pistol safely before using it. Read the instruction manual or get a competent person, Range Officer or Club Instructor to show you how it operates, its basic parts, how to safely open the pistol to see if it's loaded, and how to remove ammunition from chambers and or magazines. Nothing can replace safe firearms handling.

Don't rely on a pistol's safety mechanism. Like any mechanical device, it can fail. Use it, but don't let it be a substitute for correct safe handling and observance of the three fundamental rules for firearms safety. A defective safety or firing mechanism could result in an accident. Don't play with the safety by changing its position constantly, if the safety is used leave it in the "ON" position until you have been instructed to fire.

3. Use only the correct ammunition for the pistol. Most pistols have the ammunition type stamped on the barrel. If in doubt, ask!

4. Always wear eye and ear protection to protect yourself against the noise and debris that can be emitted from pistols. This is mandatory at SSAA controlled ranges as is enclosed footwear.
5. Alcohol or drugs are never to be used prior to or during a shooting match. Never mix shooting with alcohol or drugs, always be aware of the effects of prescription medication. It is an offence to handle or use firearms whilst under the effects of alcohol or any drug.
6. Store all pistols so they are not accessible to unauthorised persons. All pistols must be stored according to the legislative requirements of section 41 of the Firearms Act 1996. Ammunition must also be stored in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and the legislative requirements. There are specific requirements for the safe storage of pistols, ammunition and the transportation of pistols to the range or a Firearms Dealer or Gunsmith. See FACT Sheets on the Safe Storage page on the Firearms Registry website for detailed information.
7. Be aware that some types of pistols and shooting matches require additional safety precautions, especially when using other than paper targets.
8. Carry out all safety checks of the pistol and any magazines prior to cleaning and always ensure no ammunition is present while cleaning your pistol. While cleaning your pistol use the opportunity to check it for correct function and damaged or broken parts. If a problem is discovered, don't try to fix it, take it to a gunsmith, or return it to the manufacturer for repair.
9. Always be sure the barrel is free from obstructions, as a blocked barrel can cause a serious accident by bursting the barrel or action if a round is fired with the barrel in this condition. Before checking any firearm, you must carry out the correct safety checks to ensure that it is unloaded and pointed in a safe direction.
10. When handing a pistol to another person always be sure that the muzzle is pointed in a safe direction, your finger is off the trigger, the action is open, and the magazine is unloaded and removed, or in the case of a revolver the cylinder is open and empty. If you are handed a pistol that is not in this condition, then carry out the correct safety checks to satisfy yourself that the pistol is unloaded and in a safe condition.

SECTION 4: PISTOL PARTS AND OPERATION

A pistol is a mechanical device and as with any machine, it is necessary to understand how it works before it can be safely used, and its operation mastered. In the hands of a responsible, knowledgeable and safety conscious person, a pistol is safe. In order to begin to understand how a pistol functions, the names and definition of various pistol types and main components must first be identified.

Types of pistol

The three main categories of pistols in use are air, rimfire and centrefire. Target air pistols are most commonly single shot designs although some are available as repeaters. The most commonly used rimfire and centrefire pistols are revolver and self-loading pistol. All pistols consist of three major components: the frame, the barrel and the action. Although both revolvers and self-loading pistols have these three main parts, some of these components have a slightly different function between the two.

Revolver



A revolver has a rotating cylinder designed to contain cartridges. The action of the trigger and/or hammer will rotate the cylinder and fire a cartridge. To understand how this firing process occurs and how to safely load and unload cartridges, it is necessary to first become familiar with the names and functions of the various parts of a revolver.

- 1. Frame:** The revolver backbone to which all other parts are attached.
- 2. Grip Panels:** Are attached to the lower rear portion of the frame. Grip panels are usually composed of wood, rubber, or molded plastic and are attached to the frame with screws. These form the grip (handle) by which the shooter holds the revolver.
- 3. Backstrap:** The rear vertical portion of the frame that lies between the grip panels.
- 4. Trigger Guard:** Located on the underside of the frame and is designed to protect the trigger in order to reduce the possibility of an unintended firing.

- 5. The Trigger:** Is located on the underside of the frame within the trigger guard. There is a “hammer” attached to the rear of the frame. When the trigger is pulled it activates the hammer which in turn causes the “firing pin” to strike and fire the cartridge. In some revolvers, the firing pin is attached to the hammer, in others it is located inside the frame.
- **Single-Action:** The trigger performs only one action - releasing the hammer. The trigger does not “cock” the hammer. The hammer must be cocked with the thumb and will stay in a cocked position till the trigger is pulled to release it.
 - **Double-Action:** The trigger performs two tasks. When it is pulled, it will cock and release the hammer, firing the revolver. Most Double - Action revolvers can also be fired in Single - Action mode by manually cocking the hammer with the thumb. The hammer will stay in the cocked position until released by pulling the trigger.
- 6. Barrel:** The metal tube through which a bullet passes on its way to a target. The inside of the barrel is called the bore. The bore has spiral grooves cut into it. The ridges of metal between these grooves are called the “lands”. Together, the grooves and lands make up what is known as rifling. Rifling makes the bullet spin as it leaves the barrel so that it will be more stable in flight and travel more accurately. The internal diameter of the barrel measured between the lands determines the caliber of the pistol. This distance is measured in hundredths of an inch (such as .22 calibre or .45 calibre) or in millimeters (such as 7.65mm or 9mm). The front end of the barrel where the bullet exits is called the muzzle.
- 7. Sights:** There is a rear sight located on top of the rear of the frame and a front sight located on top of the barrel at the muzzle end. These are used for aiming the revolver.
- 8. Action:** The action comprises the moving parts used to load, fire and unload a pistol. The action of a revolver is made up of parts attached to or within the frame including the cylinder.
- 9. The Cylinder:** Holds individual cartridges, which are arranged in a circular pattern. Cylinders usually contain six or five “chambers” into which the cartridges are placed. Each time the hammer moves to the rear, the cylinder rotates and brings a new chamber in line with the barrel and the firing pin, which fires the cartridge.
- 10. The Cylinder Release Latch:** Is found on most revolvers. It releases the cylinder and allows it to swing out, so cartridges can be loaded and unloaded. Most revolvers have an “ejector” (also known as an extractor) and or an “ejector rod”.

Although the operation and location of ejectors and ejector rods may vary, the purpose is the same - to remove cartridges from the cylinder.

Self-Loading Pistols



A self-loading pistol differs significantly from a revolver in its operation. After a cartridge is fired by pulling the trigger the empty “case” is extracted and ejected and a new cartridge is inserted into the chamber. Because this type of pistol reloads itself when fired it is usually referred to as a “self-loading” pistol.

Although the basic operation of a self-loading pistol differs from that of a revolver, it still has all the same major components of the revolver, except for the cylinder. There are also some additional components on a self-loading pistol as well as some differences in the operation of some components, these are:

- 1. Safety:** Operated by a lever located on the pistol’s frame. The safety is a mechanical device designed to reduce the chance of an accidental discharge by, in most cases, blocking the movement of the firing pin or action or both. Since safeties, like all mechanical devices can malfunction, the prevention of an accident is ultimately the responsibility of the individual who is handling the pistol.
- 2. Slide:** Is located on top of the frame. It is located at the rear of the barrel and moves back and forth to chamber a cartridge, cock the action, fire, extract and eject an empty case after firing and reload a new cartridge into the chamber. It also incorporates the firing pin.
 - In some self-loading pistols the slide also envelops the barrel or can be enclosed inside a fixed outer frame in which case you may hear it referred to as the “breach block” or “block”.
- 3. Slide stop:** Also known as a “slide lock” or “slide release” it is designed to hold the slide of the self-loading pistol to the rear. Some self-loading also have a part known as a “de-cocking lever”, which is used to lower the hammer and/or uncock the pistol.

- 4. Action:** As can be seen by the description of the slide (which in many cases can also be referred to as the action) a large number of different mechanical designs exist for self-loading and the actions can vary greatly. Some self-loading pistols have a hammer that strikes the firing pin, in others the firing mechanism may be designed without a hammer. Those models that do not have a visible “hammer” are commonly referred to as “hammerless”, even though the hammer may actually be part of an internal firing mechanism.
- In all self-loading pistols, the first round (cartridge) must always be manually cycled into the chamber by retracting and then releasing the slide. As the slide returns to the closed position, it removes a round of ammunition from the top of the magazine and inserts it into the chamber.
- 5. Magazine:** A storage device designed to hold cartridges ready for insertion into the chamber. It replaces the “cylinder” of the revolver, but unlike the revolver cylinder does not contain the chambers in which the firing process takes place. The chamber in a self-loading pistol is located in the action end of the barrel. The cartridges in a magazine are forced upwards by the magazine spring to be picked up by the slide as it returns under pressure from a “recoil” or “slide spring” to the closed position after being pulled back to cock the pistol.

Types of self-loading pistols

There are four different types of self-loading pistols: Single Action, Double Action, Double Action only and Striker Fired. These actions rely on the function of the trigger for their different operations.

1. **Single Action**, self-loading pistol: The trigger performs a single task, releasing the hammer or the firing mechanism so that the firing pin hits the cartridge.
2. **Double Action**, self-loading pistol: The trigger performs two tasks. It cocks and releases the hammer or internal firing mechanism for the first shot. After the first shot is fired, the movement of the slide will cock the hammer or internal firing mechanism for all successive shots and the trigger will be used only to release the hammer or internal firing mechanism. (Returns to a single-action function)
3. **Double Action only**, self-loading pistol: The trigger will cock and release the hammer or internal firing mechanism on the first and all successive shots. The slide will chamber a new cartridge after each shot, as it does for the other types of self-loading pistols, but it will not cock the firing mechanism.

The cock-and-release action is accomplished by pulling the trigger for each shot. In this way the action of the trigger is similar to that of a double-action revolver. However, in most double-action-only semi-automatics, the hammer cannot be manually cocked to a single-action position as it can in a double-action revolver.

4. **Striker Fired**, self-loading pistol: The trigger serves the function of completing the cocking cycle and then releasing the striker. While technically two actions, it differs from a double-action trigger in that the trigger is not capable of fully cocking the striker. It differs from single-action in that if the striker were to release, it would generally not be capable of igniting the primer. This type of trigger mechanism is sometimes referred to as a striker fired action.

Some self-loading pistols may vary from the above descriptions due to the large variety of mechanical designs available today. Always be sure to carefully read and understand the instruction manual for each pistol. If you are unsure or questions still exist, be sure to consult a knowledgeable person.

Air Pistol



The different methods of powering an air pistol can be broadly divided into 3 groups: spring-piston, pneumatic, and CO₂.

1. **Spring-piston:** Spring-piston guns operate by means of a coiled steel spring-loaded piston contained within a compression chamber and separate from the barrel. Cocking the gun causes the piston assembly to compress the spring until the rear of the piston engages the sear. The act of pulling the trigger releases the sear and allows the spring to decompress, pushing the piston forward, thereby compressing the air in the chamber directly behind the pellet.
2. **Pneumatic:** Pneumatic air guns utilize compressed air as the source of energy to propel the projectile. Single-stroke and multi-stroke guns utilize an on-board pump to pressurize the air in a reservoir. Pre-charged pneumatic guns' reservoirs are filled using either a high-pressure hand pump or by decanting air from a diving cylinder. This design, having no significant movement of heavy mechanical parts during the firing cycle, produces lower recoil.

3. **CO₂:** Most CO₂ guns use a disposable cylinder containing pressurized carbon dioxide, although some, usually more expensive models, use larger refillable CO₂ reservoirs like those typically used with paintball markers. CO₂ guns, like compressed air guns, offer power for repeated shots in a compact package without the need for complex cocking or filling mechanisms. The ability to store power for repeated shots also means that repeating arms are possible.

SECTION 5: USING A PISTOL

As part of the SSAA NSW approved target pistol training course, you will be required to demonstrate that you understand the principles of safe firearms handling. You will also need to complete a practical test before a target pistol licence can be issued. Whilst performing these tasks you must follow the basic and general safety rules at all times.

Due to the short barrel and the fact that a pistol is usually held or used one handed it is possible to point it in an unsafe direction very easily. Unless you are in the process of firing a pistol, it should be unloaded with action open (magazine removed if a self-loader), finger off the trigger and pointed in a safe direction. Get into the habit of safe handling right from the beginning. If you find that you cannot maintain a safe direction with the muzzle of a handgun try changing your stance/body position – it can mean the difference between being very safe in your handling and being a danger to those around you.

The front end of the barrel where the bullet exits is called the muzzle, so being *muzzle conscious* is remaining constantly aware of where a firearm in your possession is pointing. All firearms must always be pointed in a safe direction away from yourself and all other persons. You must remain “**muzzle conscious**” at all times and listen to your instructor.

When you first pick up a pistol, you must check that it is “safe”, that is, that it is not loaded with ammunition whilst maintaining a safe muzzle direction. Pick it up carefully and open the action to make sure that the chamber and/or magazine are both empty. After checking that the pistol is safe, keep the action open so you, and everyone around you, can see and be assured that there is no possibility of it discharging.

You must also be able to demonstrate that you can handle a pistol in a number of situations. When passing any firearm to another person you must keep the action open and the barrel pointing away from you or any other person.

All pistols placed on the shooters bench must be in a safe condition – unloaded, action open and pointed down range. Never place a loaded pistol on the bench unless specifically instructed to do so by the Instructor or Range Officer directly supervising you.

Be aware

Most modern revolvers are fitted with a transfer bar/hammer block mechanism. When uncocking a revolver, you should remove finger from trigger when sear “breaks”.

When unloading self-loading pistols, the magazine is removed first, then the slide is drawn to rear and locked open (if not already locked back after firing last shot). Magazine must also be unloaded – no rounds to be left in magazine. It is vitally important that you visually check that the chamber is empty – there are no second chances.

Hidden dangers (two handed grip)

Position the thumb of your non-shooting hand to avoid danger of injury from the slide when using self-loading pistols.

The cylinder gap of revolver may cause burns or injury to hand or thumb. Keep non-shooting hand away from this.

Remember

- The pistol must be unloaded. You must immediately clear as safe every pistol that you handle.
- The action must be open with the magazine removed when handling a self-loading pistol. The pistol must be pointed in a safe direction when passing it to another person.
- The trigger finger must remain outside the trigger guard at all times until ready to actually shoot.
- Fundamental safety rules must be obeyed at all times.

Malfunctions

From time to time all shooters will encounter stoppages and minor malfunctions. Most will be little more than the failure to feed or to properly eject a round in a semi auto and rectifying either of these can be done by the average shooter in a safe orderly fashion, but sometimes help from an RSO will be required. Even in the case of the simplest malfunction the shooter must remain constantly aware of their muzzle direction and the safety of all present.

If a malfunction should occur during training -

- Always keep your finger away from the trigger and keep the barrel pointing downrange towards the targets,
- Extend your non-shooting arm to the rear to catch the attention of the Range Officer.

Always assume the pistol is loaded and ready to fire even if you believe it to be safe.

DO NOT be lulled into a false sense of security if you notice that the primer has been struck – giving the appearance of a fired round – it may very well be a ***misfire*** or worse still a ***hangfire***. Under no circumstances should you attempt to clarify whether or not the round is live by looking down the barrel from the muzzle.

One common malfunction is a misfire. This is when the pistol does not discharge when the trigger is pulled. In this case, wait at least thirty (30) seconds before opening the action as the round may go off unexpectedly. Again, make sure that you always keep the barrel pointed downrange towards the targets .

Stuck live round

Another possible malfunction is when a cartridge case becomes stuck while cycling the action or after firing. These jams are normally straightforward to clear, however special care is needed if a live round becomes stuck in the chamber. In this case make sure the barrel always remains pointing downrange towards the targets and immediately call the Range Officer. **NEVER** attempt to remove a stuck live round by putting a rod down the barrel from the muzzle.

The removal of a stuck live round should only be attempted by a qualified Range Officer, while the range open condition exists – no one forward of firing line. Under no circumstances should any attempt be made to remove a stuck live round other than from the chamber end only. **DO NOT** attempt to force the live round from the muzzle end with a rod or similar tool.

Cleaning

You should learn how to clean and maintain your pistol. This will help prevent your firearm from malfunctioning, as well as improving your accuracy. Most pistol manufacturers, gunsmiths and cleaning equipment suppliers have information about correct cleaning procedures.

- Ensure that your pistol is **UNLOADED** prior to cleaning.
- Have the appropriate cleaning rod, brushes, mops, jags and patches for the calibre.
- Field strip the firearm so that components can be thoroughly cleaned and lubricated.
- Particular attention should be taken to ensure that the bore of the firearm is clean and lubricated.
- To inhibit corrosion, prevent degradation and maintain the accuracy of a firearm it must be cleaned on a regular basis, especially after firing.



SECTION 6: PERSONAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Lead risk

Lead risk is a very real danger when shooting and must be treated seriously. Always wash your hands after shooting or handling firearms and ammunition. Remember that shooting involves handling lead as well as cleaning solvents known to be harmful to humans, both directly and as vapors. Never eat, drink or smoke after shooting unless you have washed your hands.

Hearing protection

Hazardous noise levels are a very real danger when shooting and must be treated seriously. Always buy and use the best available hearing protection.

- Ear plugs – These are cheap and highly portable (easily fit in a pocket) and can be effective when used correctly. However, they are usually only made for a one-time use.
- Molded plugs – These are made from high-grade silicon, they are molded to fit your ear exactly and will last for many years. Their perfect fit makes these plugs very effective.
- Ear muffs – Are easy to use and provide good protection. Ear muffs with the highest rating are recommended.
- Electronic or amplified muffs – These are ear muffs with noise limiting electronics that are designed to cut loud impulses. They will still allow you to hear conversation while cutting out the noise of shooting.

Eye protection

When choosing shooting glasses, nothing is more important than impact protection and barrier protection against projectiles. Lens color, fit, etc. are all important, but no eyewear is worth owning if the lens won't properly protect your eyes.

Since self-loading pistols and revolvers can sometimes spit small lead particles and burnt powder to their sides, you need some decent protective glasses. They need to be able to withstand impacts from ejected shell cases or worse and also wrap around your

face enough to prevent irritants and particles from entering under your glasses from the sides. It is important that all shooters invest in strong, high quality, eye protection.

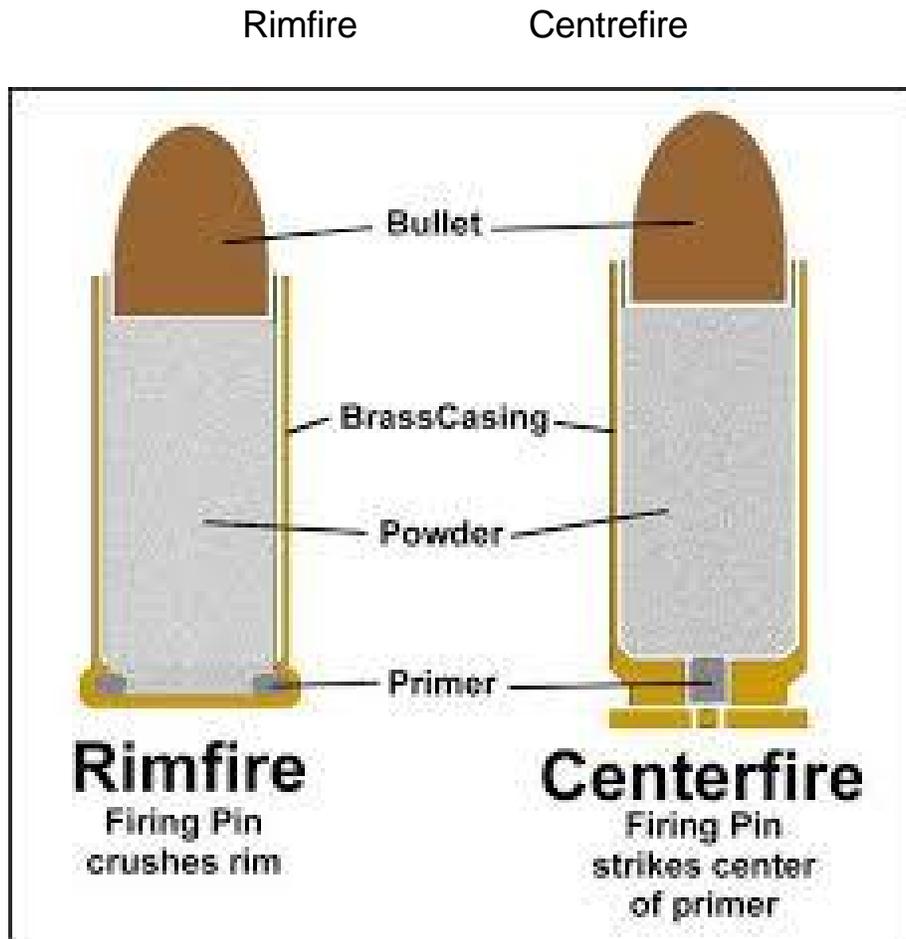
Enclosed footwear

Enclosed footwear must be worn whenever shooting pistol. Range surfaces may vary, and weather conditions can affect the range surface, so shoes should be comfortable and provide a solid grip on a variety of surfaces and weather conditions. Sandals, thongs or other open footwear are not acceptable when shooting pistol. Enclosed footwear must always be worn.



SECTION 7: AMMUNITION

The major components of a complete round of ammunition (cartridge) are the case, primer, propellant and the projectile.



Case

The case of most modern cartridges is made from brass. Shotgun cases are made of brass and/or plastic. Centrefire cartridge cases can be reloaded by replacing the primer, powder and projectile with components appropriate for that calibre and intended use. Information on safe reloading is contained in reloading manuals available from most firearms dealers.

Primer

A primer is a component of pistol, rifle and shotgun rounds. When struck with sufficient force by the firing pin, a primer reacts to produce heat which ignites the main propellant charge thus creating high pressure gas which pushes the projectile from the barrel. Many different cartridge priming methods have been tried since the 19th century, but only rimfire and centrefire survive today in target and sporting use.

Propellant

As used in firearms, a propellant is a low explosive of fine granulation which, through burning, produces gases at a controlled rate to provide the energy for propelling a projectile. Modern propellant powders are nitro cellulose based and are referred to as “smokeless” due to the very small amount of smoke produced upon firing. The original “gunpowder” was a mixture of sulfur, potassium nitrate and charcoal which produced a huge amount of smoke when fired.

Projectile

In the case of firearms, the projectile is the “bullet” that exits the muzzle when the firearm is discharged. A rifle or pistol fires a single projectile whereas a shotgun fires multiple projectiles also known as pellets or shot.

Rimfire Cartridge

Rimfire cartridges use a thin brass case with a hollow bulge, or rim, around the back end. The rim contains the priming compound, while the cartridge case itself contains the propellant powder and the projectile. It is called a rimfire because instead of the firing pin of a gun striking the primer cap at the center of the base of the cartridge to ignite it as in a centrefire cartridge, the pin strikes the base’s rim. Once discharged, the rimfire cartridge cannot be reloaded.

Rimfire cartridges are limited to low pressure calibers because of the thin case required to allow the firing pin to crush the rim and ignite the primer. Although once available all the way up to up to .56 calibre, modern rimfires are now limited to a small number of calibres including the well-known .22 long rifle, .22 short, .22 Magnum and .17 HMR. The low pressures mean that rimfire firearms can be very light and inexpensive, which has helped in their continuing popularity.

Centrefire Cartridge

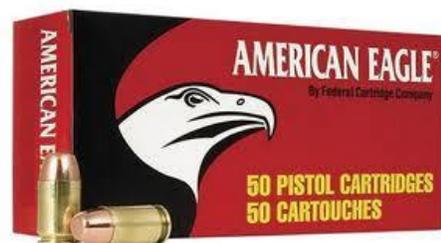
A centrefire cartridge has the primer located in the center of the cartridge case head. Unlike rimfire cartridges, the primer is a separate and replaceable component. Almost all pistol, rifle and shotgun ammunition used today is centrefire.

Centrefire cartridges are tough and reliable because the thicker metal cartridge cases can withstand rougher handling without damage. The stronger base of a centrefire cartridge is able to withstand much higher pressure than a thin rimfire cartridge and it is this pressure that gives a bullet higher velocity and greater energy.

While centrefire cartridge cases are complex and expensive to manufacture, the individual cases can be reused after replacing the primer, gunpowder and projectile.

Non-Explosive Powered Firearms

Air pistols do not use gunpowder, primers or cases. However, they are defined as a firearm in the NSW Firearms Act, so are subject to the same controls as all other firearms. Air pistols use either compressed gases or a compressed spring to launch a small lead projectile, commonly called a pellet, from the barrel.



Calibres – what do the numbers mean?

This can be a really confusing issue to new shooters, in fact many longtime shooters have a problem coming to grips with descriptions and terminology used to identify and name caliber of ammunition. Looking at it very simply, the number used to define a caliber refers to the bullet diameter, either in metric form e.g. 9mm or in the older Imperial measurement where 1 inch is broken up into 100 parts and the caliber is described as part of 100 e.g. .38 calibre (being 38 out of 100).

Be aware that many different case shapes and sizes may share a common bullet diameter, but they are not interchangeable. If in doubt always ask a knowledgeable person.

Use of incorrect ammunition

Be Aware - It is possible to chamber and fire ammunition that is incorrect for a firearm, and that doing so may very well cause serious injury or death to the shooter and bystanders. Shooters must only use the correct ammunition for any firearm. Most firearms have the ammunition type stamped on the barrel.

Faulty ammunition

Factory ammunition is made to high international standards and it is not often that you will find a faulty product. The most common source of faulty ammunition is old, poorly stored ammunition that has suffered contamination by oils or solvents, or ammunition that has been reloaded by an individual.

Using old or poorly stored ammunition may result in either a misfire or hangfire. If a problem is identified cease shooting immediately and advise the Instructor or Range Officer.

Reloaded ammunition can give a number of different results depending on the knowledge and skill of the person reloading it, and the quality of components used. Ammunition should only be reloaded by knowledgeable competent persons.

A common problem with reloaded ammunition is where the round is fired without a sufficient powder charge to force the projectile from the barrel. If a problem is identified cease shooting immediately and advise the Instructor or Range Officer.

It is important to be alert. If you are shooting and the last shot that you fired sounds odd or different from the others stop shooting immediately and seek assistance from the Instructor or Range Officer.

SECTION 8: RANGE SAFETY

An approved SSAA range is one of the safest places to enjoy shooting. Standard SSAA range commands are used to control the shooting and maintain uniform safety practices.

Range Officers

The overall person in charge of a club's pistol range is the Club Captain. They have people assisting them called "Range Officers". These people's primary duty is the control of all shooting and associated activities on the range.

The Range Officer is responsible for running the range in a safe manner, in accordance with the Branch Range Rules, the NSW Firearms Act and the conditions of the Range Approval Licence. This includes:

- controlling the range by means of clear range calls and the use of flags or other danger indicators provided;
- ensuring firearms are cleared before allowing anyone forward of the firing line;

- sighting a member or visitors' firearms licence before allowing them to shoot;
- collecting Range Fees and following local Range Rules set by the Branch, and
- ensuring that all shooters are adopting and using procedures that guarantee the safety of all present.

The Range Officer has total control over range activities and acts as a representative of the SSAA Branch controlling the range at the time.

Anyone who refuses to comply with the rules of the range, or a command given by the Range Officer may, at the discretion of the Range Officer, be asked to leave the range.

The Range Officer is generally the person who conducts the matches at the range and is the one who gives the verbal instructions to shooters on the firing line and during the course of a match - "Range Commands". The purpose of these range commands is to provide clear, concise instructions, in a standardised form to all shooters. Range commands and instructions must be obeyed by all shooters on the range, in order to ensure the safety of all personnel on the range.

Clearing pistols on the range

All pistols are to be cleared as safe by the Instructor or a Range Officer before removal from the bench/firing line. This is a major safety rule and applies to all members (and visitors) using an approved range.

All pistols presented for clearing should be in a *Safe Condition* - that is, *action opened, unloaded*, magazine removed or cylinder out wherever possible and *pointed downrange*.

Range Commands

During training or competition all shooters **must** wait for specific commands from the Instructor or Range Officer before moving to the firing position, handling or loading pistols or commencing fire. Any unauthorised action will be with dealt immediately and may lead to the shooter being asked to leave the range. Further disciplinary action may follow if the failure to comply poses a serious breach of safety.

SSAA Branch Pistol Club Range Officers running club competitions will use '*Range Commands*' appropriate to the competition or activity being shot.

The following are generic Range Commands that must be known and understood by all SSAA Branch Pistol Club members:

- "*THE RANGE IS OPEN*" no one is to go forward of the firing line.
- "*PREPARATION TIME*" shooters to the bench or detail make ready.
- "*LOAD (how many?) ROUNDS*" called as appropriate for the event.

- “ARE YOU READY?” shooter to advise if not ready.
- “START” or “COMMENCE FIRE” or whistle blast – you may start shooting.
- “STOP” or “CEASE FIRE” or whistle blast – you must stop shooting immediately.
- “UNLOAD AND SHOW CLEAR” – remove magazine, open action and unload – show Range Officer.
- “THE FIREARM IS CLEAR” for removal from the bench or firing line.
- “THE RANGE IS CLOSED” no handling of firearms.
- “FORWARD SCORE AND PATCH” only used in certain competitions.
- “CEASE FIRE! CEASE FIRE!” This may be called by the Range Officer or any member in an emergency situation. All shooting is to cease immediately – no exceptions.

When visiting a new range ensure you report to the Range Officer and make yourself aware of the range commands in use.

The following is an example of Range Commands that may be given during a competition.

COMMAND	PROCEDURE
<p><i>“PREPARATION TIME”</i> OR <i>“SHOOTERS TO THE BENCH”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shooters move to the bench. ○ Pin up target and move it forward. ○ Take pistol from case/bag and prepare equipment. (<u>DO NOT LOAD</u>).
<p><i>COMPETITION BRIEFING</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Range Officer will advise you of the course of fire for the competition being conducted.
<p><i>“LOAD”</i> You will be told how many rounds to load</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Load only the amount directed by the Range officer. ○ Keeping the pistol pointing down range towards target at all times. ○ Once loaded shooters may establish stance and grip. ○ Whilst waiting for the command to start, the shooter may practice taking aim at the target or wait with the pistol pointing down range towards target - not at the floor.

<p><i>“SHOOTERS, ARE YOU READY?”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you are ready to shoot, do not reply. Pistol should be in the ready position. ○ You may cock hammer or release slide at this time. ○ If you are not ready, call out <i>“Not Ready”</i> in a loud clear voice. After 15 seconds, the Range Officer will repeat the question. If you have a problem of any kind, hold your pistol pointing down range towards target and hold your non-shooting arm out behind you in order to alert the range officer, who will attend to you.
<p><i>“COMMENCE FIRE” “START” or WHISTLE</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This may be a verbal command such as “fire” or “commence firing”, or another signal such as a whistle blast or the action of the targets turning towards the shooters. As the signal to “fire” may change due to the type of match to be shot, you should ask the range officer prior to the match if unsure. ○ Upon this command or signal you may take aim and start shooting. ○ When you have completed your course of fire, place pistol on the bench in a <u>“SAFE CONDITION”</u> and await further instructions from the Range Officer.
<p><i>“CEASE FIRE” “STOP” or WHISTLE</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stop shooting immediately. ○ Finger out of trigger guard, pistol pointed downrange towards target and await further instructions from the Range Officer. ○ Don’t assume that the range officer is just calling the completion of that particular sequence of fire. The range officer may have seen a situation that you are not aware of that could lead to a breach of safety if left to continue, or some other activity that calls for the immediate cessation of shooting.
<p><i>“UNLOAD & SHOW CLEAR”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If using a self-loading pistol - Remove magazine, open action and safely unload any live rounds from pistol. Unload magazine and present pistol and magazine for clearing keeping muzzle pointed downrange. ○ If using a revolver or other pistol - Hold the firearm so that the Range Officer can look into and inspect the chambers of the cylinders for a revolver, or the chamber of any other pistol. ○ On some ranges it may be easier and safer for the RO to clear firearms if you place the handgun in a <i>“SAFE CONDITION”</i> on bench then step back from the firing point.

SECTION 9: THE FUNDAMENTALS OF PISTOL SHOOTING

To shoot a pistol accurately, it is first necessary to learn and understand the fundamentals, or basic essential components of pistol shooting. These fundamentals are:

- *Stance*
- *Grip*
- *Breathing Control*
- *Sight Alignment*
- *Trigger Squeeze*
- *Follow Through*

These fundamentals must be properly performed every time a pistol is fired.

Determining the best shooting hand

Before any practice can be carried out, or indeed a shot fired, the shooter must first determine which hand will be used to grip and fire the pistol. Generally, it is recommended that a shooter use the hand which is on the same side of the body as the dominant eye.

Determining which is your dominant eye

A quick and easy method of determining which is your dominant eye is as follows.

- Extend one arm out in front of yourself.
 - With both eyes open raise your thumb or align your index finger on a distant object.
 - Close the left eye and observe the location of the object.
 - Now open the left eye and close the right eye and observe the location of the object.

It is likely that when you closed one eye or the other, the object disappeared or appeared to move to one side or the other.

The eye that kept the object stationary in the view window is your dominant eye.

The Fundamentals

Each of the above fundamentals must be studied in detail.

1. Stance

Proper stance is essential in order to shoot a good accurate shot.

- When learning any stance, the following basic steps must be followed:
- Carefully study and practice adopting the correct body position that will be shown to you by the instructor.
- Practice the stance with and without holding a pistol.

- Practice obtaining and maintaining the correct grip.
- Adjust your body position so that the pistol points naturally at the target when you raise your arm to take a sight picture.
- A variety of positions can be used when shooting a pistol. Three basic pistol positions will be examined after you have an understanding of the fundamentals. These are the Benchrest position, Two-handed standing and One-handed standing.



- Feet should be shoulder width apart and parallel.
- Non-shooting arm secured close to body.
- Stance should be straight with head held upright.
- Elbow and wrist of shooting arm straight.
- Eyes in line with sights



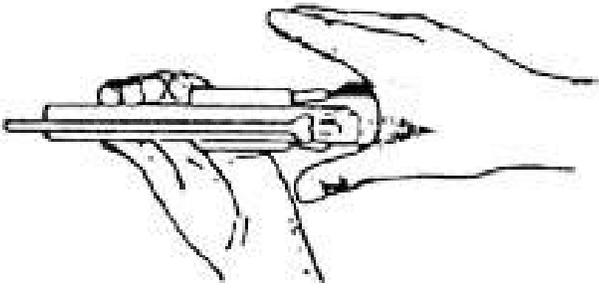
- Feet shoulder width apart.
- Angle between line of shoulders and line of arm is 12° to 20°

2. Grip

To achieve a proper grip:

- Keep the pistol pointed in a safe direction and your fingers away from the trigger. Using the non-shooting hand, place the pistol in the grip of the shooting hand.
- Fit the “V” formed by the thumb and index finger of the shooting hand as high as possible on the backstrap of the frame.
- Align the pistol so that it forms an imaginary straight line from the muzzle, along the barrel through the wrist and forearm.
- Grip the pistol using the base of the thumb and the lower three fingers of the shooting hand.
- The pressure of the grip should be directed straight to the rear.
- Hold the pistol firmly, but without exerting so much pressure that you are straining or causing your hand to shake.
- Your index finger should be placed along the outside of the trigger guard or frame of the pistol, not on the trigger. Always keep the index finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
- The thumb should lie relaxed along the side of the frame at a level above that of the index finger.

- Uniformity is the most important feature of a proper grip. The grip should be the same each time the pistol is handled.
- This knowledge should be applied when practicing the basic pistol positions.



- Spread the hand and push the V as high as possible into the back of the grip.

- The fingers between first and second joints should be along the front of the grip. Thumb and fingertips relaxed.

3. Breath Control

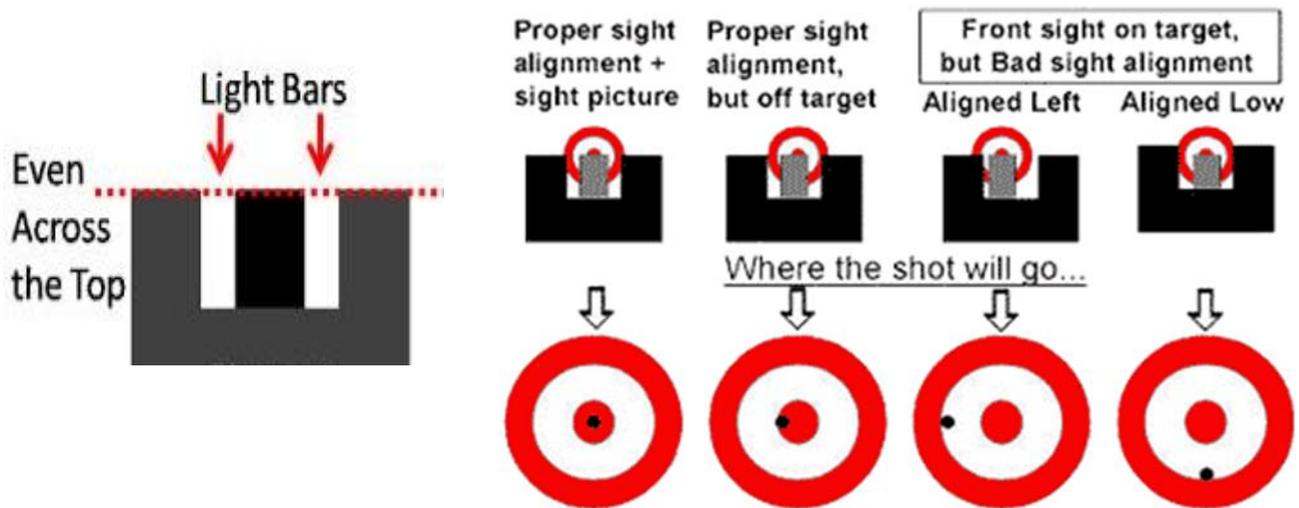
In order to minimise body movement, the breath must be held while firing.

- Before each shot, take a breath, and then let out enough air to be comfortable and hold the remaining breath while firing the shot. Because firing will usually occur within a few seconds, there should be no difficulty from lack of oxygen.
- However, if the breath is held too long, muscle tremors may start. If tremors begin to occur, take the index finger off the trigger while keeping the muzzle pointed in a safe direction, lower the gun to 45°, relax briefly, take a few breaths and begin the firing cycle again.
- As the pistol is lifted towards the target take in a slightly more than average-sized breath. When the sights are lowered into the white aiming area release a little of the breath held and hold your breath until the shot is fired.
- For a single precision shot do not hold for longer than 10 seconds.

4. Sight Alignment

Sight alignment is the relationship of the front and rear sights.

- The eye must be lined up with the front and rear sights and the sights positioned so that their alignment is correct.
- Proper alignment of the two sights means that the top of the front sight is even with the top of the rear sight. The front sight must also be centered in the notch of the rear sight so that there is an equal amount of space on each side of the front sight.
- Hold in white area below the black.
- Focus on the front sight ONLY.
- Maintain a steady balanced sight picture.



5. Trigger Squeeze

This is a difficult skill to master since it involves a very fine motor skill. It involves taking up any initial slack in the trigger mechanism before moving the trigger rearward in a controlled and decisive way. Naturally, pistols and triggers are all different, but in order to refine your skills, you will need to understand the characteristics of your trigger. If you pull the trigger rather than squeeze it, you will move the gun and the point of impact.

- Start to apply trigger pressure as soon as the sights come down into the aiming area of the target.
- Trigger finger continues to apply steady pressure whilst shooter concentrates on sight picture and waits for shot to break.
- If the shot does not break within 8 – 10 seconds, lower the pistol, relax and breathe, then try again.



- The trigger finger should be clear of the grip and not touching the pistol other than at the trigger.
- The trigger should be pulled straight back with the pressure on the first half of the pad of the finger.

6. Follow Through

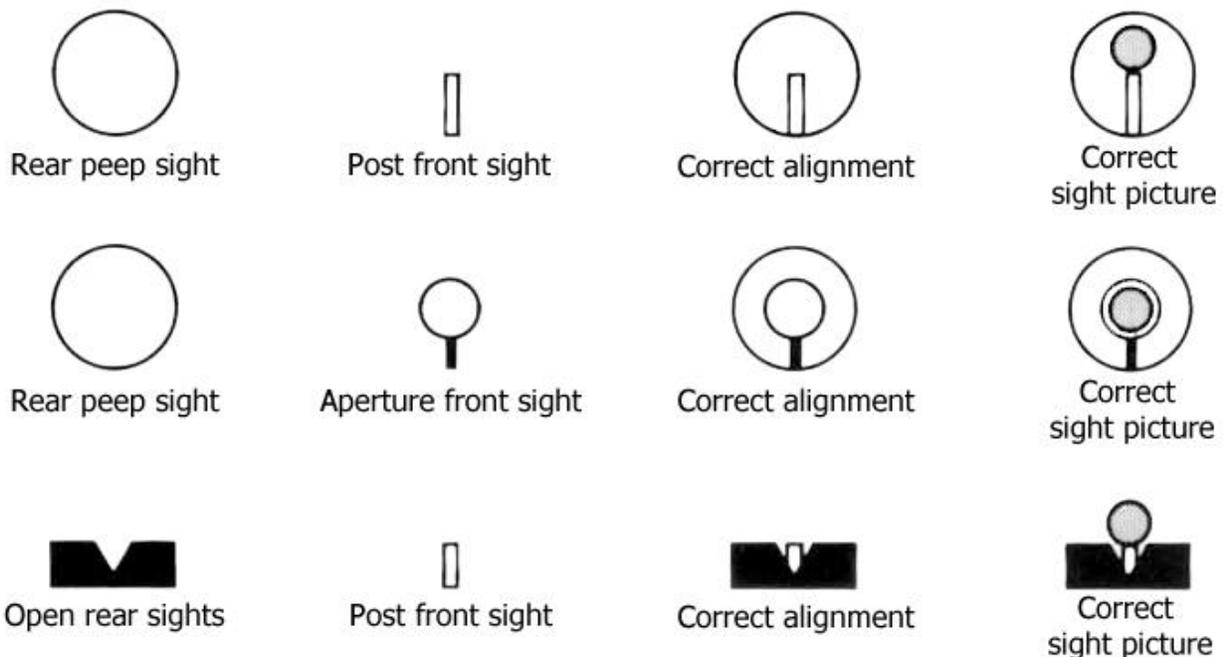
Follow through allows us to prepare for the next shot. Recoil will cause a disturbance of the sight picture which should return as the gun springs back into place, but this can only happen if your stance and grip are correct. You should learn to study the sight picture after firing. Follow through is about being just as aware of what happens after the shot as before. You will also be gently allowing the trigger to return to its original position during follow through.

- As the shot breaks continue to focus on sight picture.
- After recoil sights will return to position held before the release of the shot.
- Hold this sight picture for 1- 2 seconds before lowering arm.

The sight picture at instant of shot breaking will indicate probable position of shot on target.

The Sight Picture

Correct sight alignment is the key to accurate shooting. Angular misalignment of the front sight with the rear sight introduces an error that is multiplied with distance.



To fire an accurate shot, it is essential to concentrate on the front sight while squeezing the trigger. The eye is capable of focusing clearly on only one object at a time. It cannot keep the rear sight, the front sight and the target in focus at the same time. When the eye is focused properly for a shot, the front sight should appear sharp and clear, the rear sight should appear a little less sharp and the target should look blurred.

No shooter, no matter how expert, can hold a pistol in a firing position without some movement. This movement is called the “arc of movement”. The very best that any shooter can do is to keep the arc of movement at a minimum, it cannot be eliminated.

While maintaining a correct sight picture the shooter should gently squeeze the trigger while concentrating on minimising the arc of movement.

Dry Firing

This is the “shooting” of an unloaded firearm. It is useful in practicing marksmanship skills and allows a new shooter to concentrate on sight alignment and trigger squeeze without being distracted by the noise or recoil of live ammunition.

Dry firing is a good training exercise and can be practiced at home by picking out a point on the wall and going through a firing sequence. Dry firing practice will provide an opportunity to the new shooter to become familiar with properly applying good shooting fundamentals, especially trigger squeeze and sight alignment.

Always be absolutely certain that the pistol is unloaded and that it never points in the direction of any other person. Don't forget, you must obey all firearm safety rules whenever handling a pistol, even when dry firing.

It is recommended that snap caps are used when practicing dry firing to avoid possible damage to your pistol. Dryfiring rimfire firearms without snap caps will inevitably cause damage to the firing pin and/or chamber mouth.

Common Shooting Errors

Most shooter's problems result from the failure to properly apply the two most important shooting fundamentals: sight alignment and trigger squeeze. However, other factors may also cause a shooter to have problems in properly delivering a shot to the target.

Pistol Correction Chart (Right Hand)



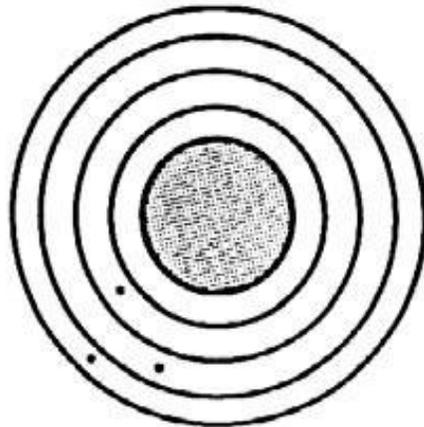
Pistol Correction Chart (Left Hand)



Illustrated in this section are eight common errors committed by many pistol shooters. Study the bullseye target pictures and the accompanying text carefully - the solution to a troublesome shooting problem might be found here. (Be aware that explanations other than the ones suggested here may also apply to the illustrated problem). Shooters who are having problems should seek advice from a pistol instructor or coach.

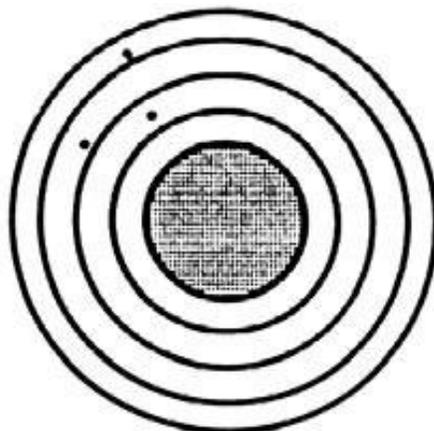
The shooting situations pictured below assume that the pistol and ammunition are functioning correctly, that the pistol sights are adjusted properly, and that the shooter is right-handed. (The shot groups for a left-handed shooter will appear on the opposite side from the shot groups illustrated).

FIGURE 1



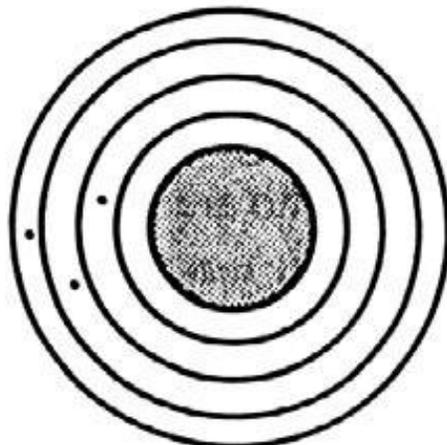
This pattern is caused when the shooter jerks the trigger, causing the front sight to dip low and to the left before the bullet leaves the barrel. To correct this type of error, the trigger must be slowly SQUEEZED until the shot fires, being careful while squeezing not to disturb the sight alignment and sight picture.

FIGURE 2



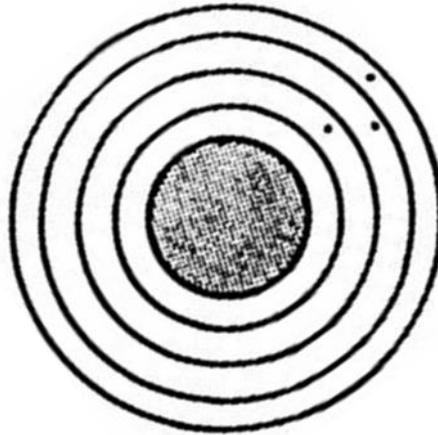
This target shows the effect of "riding the recoil" - the shooter anticipates the recoil and makes the pistol recoil before it really happens. This type of pattern can also be caused by improper follow-through: the shooter releases the trigger finger too soon and may flip the finger forward, causing the front sight to rise to the left. Errors of this nature will usually produce shots in the 9:30-12 o'clock zone.

FIGURE 3



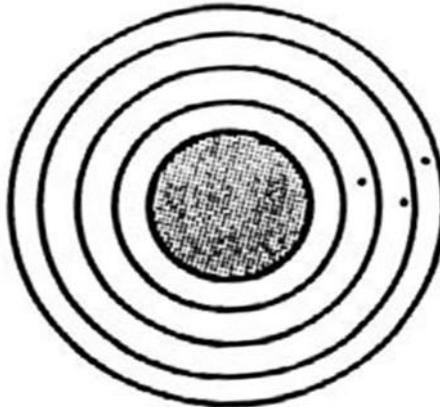
This pattern is created when the shooter does not properly place the index finger on the trigger. In such cases, the shooter has a tendency to squeeze the trigger at an angle instead of straight to the rear. This improper squeeze causes the muzzle to shift to the left, with the shots striking in the 8:30-9:30 o'clock zone.

FIGURE 4



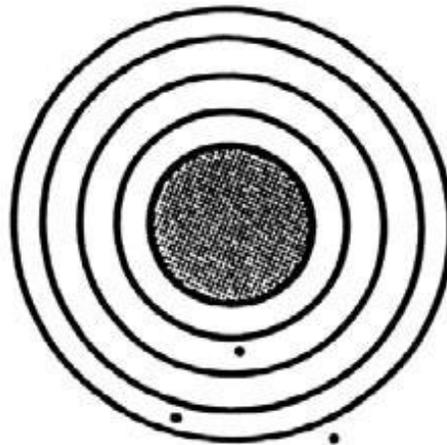
In this example, the shooter has “heeled” the shots high on the target. This error is caused by anticipating the shot and, at the last moment before firing, giving the pistol a slight push with the heel of the hand. The front sight moves up to the right and the bullets strike the target in the 1-2:30 o'clock zones.

FIGURE 5



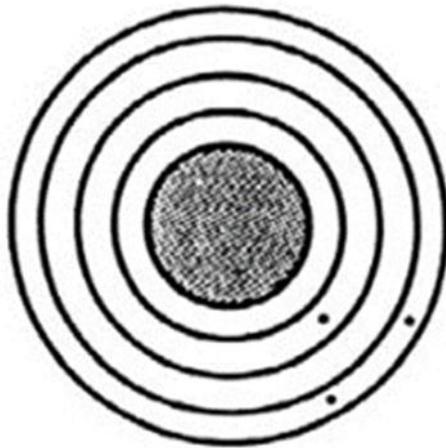
The shots in this target are strung over to the 2:30-3 o'clock zone and are caused when the shooter “thumbs” the pistol. Just as the shot begins, the shooter pushes the right thumb against the side of the frame, causing the aligned sights to move to the right.

FIGURE 6



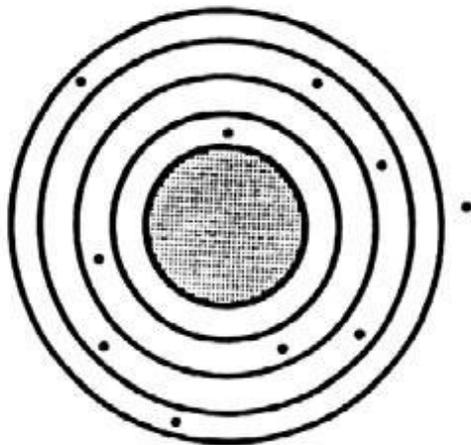
The shot string shown here in the 5-6:30 o'clock area is caused when the shooter “breaks” the wrist - another form of anticipation. The shooter expects the pistol to recoil at a known instant and tries to fight or control this anticipated recoil by cocking the wrist downward. The shooter may subconsciously believe that the recoil can be lessened by holding the wrist down. This shot group can also be caused by a shooter who relaxes too soon.

FIGURE 7



This target illustrates what happens when a shooter's grip tightens as the trigger is squeezed. This target area is known as the "lobster" area - just as a lobster's claw clamps together, the shooter's hand clamps or snatches at the last second. This movement caused the front sight to dip low and to the right, pushing the shots to the 3:30-5 o'clock zone.

FIGURE 8



Such a target may be caused by the shooter's Inconsistency: changing the grip between shots, focusing on the target instead of the front sight on some shots, failing to align the sights properly, etc. This pattern could also be caused by a new shooter's lack of holding strength and a resultant large arc of movement.

The pattern shown in Figure 8 is frequently produced by a beginning shooter. A new shooter usually does not consistently repeat on particular error, but instead commits many different errors. The result is a target with shots scattered in many places.

To improve pistol skills, shooters should carefully and periodically review the fundamentals of pistol shooting to determine if they are violating any basic principles.

SECTION 10: SHOOTING POSITIONS

One-handed standing position

The one-handed standing position is used in many competitive pistol shooting matches. Because only one hand is used when holding the weight of the pistol, there is not as much support as with a two-handed standing position. The one-handed position is required in these competitive events because it is more challenging than the two-handed position. However, this position can be easily mastered with practice and the use of the correct technique and position.

Keeping the pistol pointed down range at 45° with the finger outside the trigger guard, hold the pistol using the correct grip in the right hand:

1. To establish a natural point of aim, position the body at an angle of approximately 45° to the target with the right side of the body closest to the target.
2. To find if you are in the best position, raise the right arm in line with the target then turn your head away, rotate the arm in a small circular pattern. Stop the motion when you feel your arm is in a comfortable position, “natural position”.
3. Now turn your head back towards the target. Look at the target and if your hand is pointing towards the centre of the target area, a natural point of aim has been established.
4. If the hand is not pointing at the centre of the target area, move the left foot and pivot the right foot until the hand is pointing correctly. Turn the head away and repeat the arm rotation and pointing steps again. Keep repeating these steps until a natural point of aim has been achieved.
5. Once you have confirmed a natural point of aim, ensure your body is positioned with your feet shoulder width apart, weight evenly distributed, and legs straight but not tense. Your body and head should be erect but comfortable.
6. When raised, the right arm should be fully extended with the wrist and elbow locked in place.
7. The left hand should be relaxed and placed in a pocket or hooked in a belt or waistband. If the left hand is left hanging by the side it can become a distraction and can also affect the stability of your shooting position.
8. You are now ready to bring the pistol up to eye level and commence a firing sequence.
9. Other shooting positions can be used successfully in addition to those described in this section and with experience you will become familiar with them. However, the one-handed and two-handed standing positions are the ones more commonly used.

Two-handed standing position

The two-handed standing position is perhaps the easiest position for a new shooter. Both hands will be used to support the pistol when shooting, making it easier to hold the pistol steady.

While keeping the pistol pointed down range and your finger off the trigger and using the proper grip, take the pistol in your right hand as previously shown.

After correctly gripping the pistol in the right hand, there are two different methods that can be used to support the right hand.

1. First Method: Rest the bottom of the grip portion of the frame and the heel of the right hand in the palm of the left hand. Hold the fingers of the left hand firmly up along the side of the right hand.
2. Second Method: Place the heel of the left hand against the heel of the right hand. Rest the thumb on top of the right hand. Wrap the fingers of the left hand firmly around the fingers of the right hand.

Face the target squarely with the body directly in front of the target and position the body in the following manner:

- Place your feet shoulder width apart with body weight distributed evenly.
- Keep legs straight, back bent slightly backward, head erect, and arms fully extended.

After taking the above position and while using a proper two-handed grip, bring the pistol up to eye level. The pistol should point naturally at the centre of the target.

Weaver Stance

This stance is designed to reduce muzzle jump and recovery time and enhances the shooter's ability to draw and index targets at speed. One foot is placed behind and to the side of the other, the body is positioned at roughly a 45° angle. The shooter's right arm is straight, and the left arm is bent to compensate for the angle of the body.

The legs are slightly bent, stomach and buttocks muscles lightly flexed, and the head centrally aligned. The feet are positioned in a walking stance, with the off-side foot ahead of the strong-side foot. A right-handed person will have the right foot angled out to the side and further to the rear. Most of the weight will be on the left foot, with the knee slightly bent. The shoulders will be leaned forward over the left toe. The right foot behind will help catch the force of recoil, as well as allow for rapid changes in position. A left-handed person will have the right foot forward.

The fingers of the support hand are wrapped into the grooves of the dominant hand. Both thumbs relaxed and parallel.

Isosceles Stance

If viewed from above, the arms and chest of the shooter appear to form an isosceles triangle, which gives the stance its name. This is a very versatile stance used by many competitive shooters as it offers stability as well as mobility and may be used for shots at varying distances that require a high degree of accuracy.

The shooter faces the target squarely with feet apart at shoulder width (or slightly wider) with toes pointing towards the target. Arms are fully extended with the gun in the middle of the chest. There's a slight lean forward and some bending of the knees.

The Isosceles Stance passively absorbs the recoil of firing a pistol using the shooter's skeletal structure, rather than active muscular tension, as occurs in the Weaver Stance. A wide arc of engagement is possible when using this stance.

Sitting - Benchrest position

The fundamentals that have been explained can best be applied by using the Benchrest position as the introduction to pistol shooting. This position permits the use of a sandbag or other object to support the hands and the pistol at the proper height and allows the shooter to concentrate upon proper sight alignment and trigger squeeze.

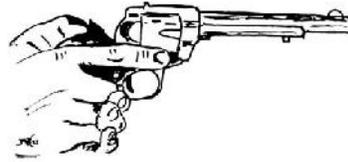
The guidelines for gripping and operating the pistol are for a right-handed shooter; left-handed shooters should make appropriate adjustments to these guidelines.

1. Sit behind a bench or table and face the target.
2. Keeping the pistol pointed down range with your finger off the trigger, place the pistol in your right hand while taking a proper grip on the pistol as previously explained and practiced. After correctly gripping the pistol in the right hand, place the heel of the left hand against the heel of the right hand.
3. Rest the left thumb on top of the right thumb and wrap the fingers of the left hand firmly around the fingers of the right hand.
4. Fully extend both arms in front of the body with the hands (not the pistol) resting on the sandbags.
5. Position the pistol so that it points naturally at the target.

Holding a Revolver



Two-handed grip
for a double
action revolver



Cocking a single
action revolver
with thumb of left
hand

Holding a Semi-Auto Pistol

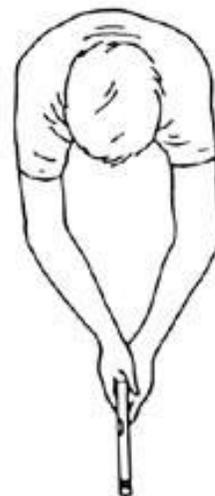


Two-handed grip
for a semi-auto

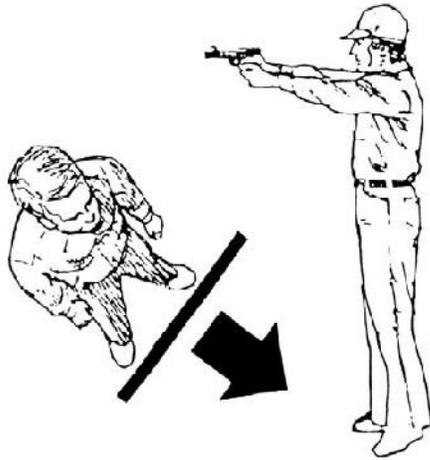


When holding a
semi-auto keep
thumb clear of
slide on recoil.

The farther the centre line of the gun shifts from body centre, the more recoil will destabilize the stance.

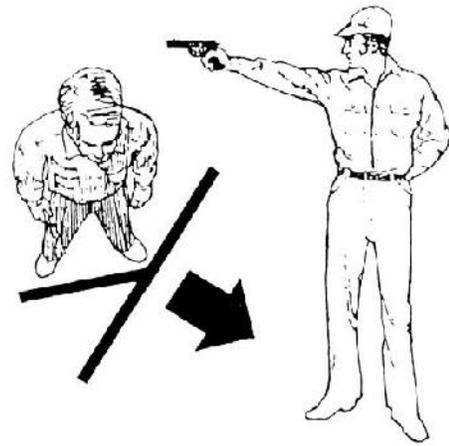


Two handed Shooting Position



Direction of target

One handed Shooting Position



Direction of target

SECTION 11: EXERCISES

Single shot exercise

Loading and firing of one shot at a time at the centre area of a blank target. A total of five shots will be fired.

For a revolver, load only one round into the cylinder. Remember that the cylinder will rotate when the hammer is cocked. In order to load the chamber that will be rotated into the firing position when the hammer is cocked, it is necessary to know in which direction the cylinder will turn. This direction is not the same for all revolvers. Use single-action mode by cocking the hammer. Don't use double-action mode for this practice.

For a self-loading pistol, load only one round into the magazine. Don't try to bypass the magazine by manually inserting a round directly into the chamber. If the cartridge is not seated properly in the chamber, it is possible for the slide to hit and ignite the primer and hence the powder as the slide returns to its forward position.

Relax and don't rush, concentrate on keeping the sights aligned while squeezing the trigger slowly to the rear. Remember that the firing of the shot should come as a surprise. Fire the total of five shots under the control of the trainer and/or range officer. When finished carry out the correct unloading and clearance procedure and when directed by the range officer inspect the target.

Five shot precision exercise

This exercise will involve the loading and firing of five rounds in the pistol. All five rounds will be fired at the centre area of a blank target. If using a revolver that has more than five chambers, be sure to close the cylinder with an empty chamber under the hammer.

As in the single shot exercise, be sure that when the cylinder rotates that a loaded chamber will rotate into the firing position when the hammer is cocked. If using a semi-automatic pistol, load all five rounds into the magazine.

Once again fire all five shots onto the target with the blank side facing you, relaxing between shots and concentrating on trigger and sight control. To be a good shot you must be consistent and always perform the fundamentals correctly, the same way and in the same length of time.

By using this consistent technique, good rhythm can be achieved. The rhythm pattern that is used in slow fire shooting is achieved through practice and this will be the same pattern that will be used in rapid fire shooting. The pace will quicken, but the pattern will remain the same. When the exercise is finished carry out the same safety checks as you did in the previous exercise.

Rapid fire exercise

Load and fire five more rounds in quick sequence, once again onto a blank target. The exercise is completed when all five shots have been fired. When finished carry out the correct unloading and safety checks.

Sight Adjustment

If shots are consistently grouping away from the centre of the target, it may be necessary to adjust the sights so that the bullets will hit the centre of the target.

Always move the rear sight in the same direction that the bullet impact on the target should move to be on the point of aim. For example, if the shots are hitting to the right, move the rear sight to the left. If the shots are hitting high, move the rear sight down. After making the adjustments, fire five more shots to see where the bullets are impacting. If necessary, make further adjustments to the sights and repeat the grouping shots until the bullets are impacting at the point of aim.

Practice

The above exercises will provide a basic initiation to pistol shooting. However, to improve or maintain shooting skills, it is necessary to practice on a regular basis.

Shooting at a bullseye target is a good way to practice marksmanship skills and the scores that are shot can be recorded and monitored for improvement.

You should now have a level of competence and confidence that will allow you to commence improving your skill levels through practice and continue to enhance your knowledge and enjoyment of the sport of target pistol shooting.

SECTION 12: PISTOL CHOICES

For new target shooters the best pistol with which to learn the fundamentals is a .22 calibre target pistol. The fundamentals are the same for all pistols, but the .22 calibre pistol offers many advantages. It has minimal recoil and noise and the ammunition is inexpensive, which allows for greater practice. Most .22's are very accurate, and they are relatively cheap to purchase.

Either a revolver or self-loading pistol may be used during basic marksmanship training, although a self-loading pistol offers more versatility and is easier to master. If a revolver is chosen, it would be preferable to choose a double-action over a single-action, but it should be fired in single-action mode whenever possible. By shooting in single-action mode, less pressure will be needed to pull the trigger and it will be easier to concentrate on sight alignment and trigger squeeze.

Once your competency levels, accuracy and confidence have improved, you can then start to look and inquire with other shooters as to other types of pistol and their suitability for various matches and competition.

SECTION 13: NSW FIREARMS LEGISLATION

Course participants are advised to make themselves aware of the General Legislative Requirements available on the Home Page and Licence page of the Firearms Registry Internet site at <https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/services/firearms>. Study of these General Legislative Requirements should be included in pre-course reading by all candidates.

Firearms Licences

The *NSW Firearms Act 1996* makes it an offence to possess or use a firearm without an appropriate licence or permit. Applicants for a firearms licence must be at least 18 years old and must satisfy the Police Commissioner that they have passed an approved course in firearms safety, and that they have a genuine reason for having a licence and they are a fit and proper person to have possession of firearms.

It is the responsibility of all firearms licence holders to be aware of and comply with the firearms laws of NSW and any other state that they may travel to or through. It is an offence to contravene the conditions on the licence.

NOTE: Personal protection or the protection of another person does not constitute a genuine reason for possession and use of a firearm. Additionally, the protection of property does not constitute a genuine reason for possession and use of a firearm, other than for the genuine reason of Business Security Industry.

A licenced target pistol shooter may only use his/her pistol for target shooting at an approved range for the purpose of competition, practice or as otherwise noted in clause 33 of the Firearms Regulation 2017. Pistols may **not** be used for hunting.

All target pistol licence holders must remain a financial member of an approved pistol club and meet the appropriate attendance requirements to maintain the licence.

When applying for a firearms licence in NSW you must:

- Be a NSW resident (or about to become a NSW resident).
- Be 18 years of age or over.
- Complete a firearms safety training course.
- Confirm that you are able to meet the safe storage requirements for the category of licence concerned.
- Be a fit and proper person and be able to be trusted with possession of firearms without presenting a danger to public safety.

You can apply for a firearms licence online at Service NSW (www.service.nsw.gov.au). To complete your online licence application you will need:

- A MyServiceNSW Account linked to the NSW Police Force.
- Firearms Safety Training Certificate.
- Supporting documents for your Genuine Reason and Special Need.
- A credit card for payment of the licence fee (if applicable).

Personal history checks are conducted on all applicants to ensure that provisions within the legislation, including provisions with respect to public safety are met. Certain criminal history may prevent a person from obtaining a firearms licence in NSW. A licence cannot be issued if:

- A person is subject to an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO), or for 10 years from the expiry of the AVO.
- If a person is subject to a good behaviour bond for a prescribed offence.
- If a person is subject to a firearms or weapons prohibition order.
- A person has been convicted within the last 10 years for an offence prescribed by the regulations.

A prescribed offence is a conviction for offences involving firearms or weapons, prohibited drugs, violence, offences of sexual nature or involving fraud, dishonesty, stealing, robbery or offences relating to terrorism.

It is an offence to supply false or misleading information in relation to an application for a firearms licence.

Probationary Pistol Licence (PPL)

A Probationary Pistol Licence (PPL) is a firearms licence issued to a person who has never held category H firearms licence for the genuine reason of Sport/Target Shooting.

A PPL authorises the licensee to possess and use a registered pistol for the purpose of participating in shooting competitions and activities at a club approved for those activities by the Commissioner.

- A PPL does not authorise the acquisition of a firearm during the first six-month term of the PPL.
- A PPL does not authorise the possession or use of a prohibited pistol.
- A PPL is issued for a period of 12 months.

Applicants for a PPL are required to complete an initial 'Pistol Safe Handling Course' conducted by the pistol club. The 'Pistol Safe Handling Course' completion certificate will be forwarded to the Firearms Registry by your club.

Restrictions on Probationary Pistol Licence (PPL)

For the first 6 months of the term of the PPL you cannot possess or use a pistol unless:

1. You are on the pistol shooting club premises, and
2. You are under the supervision of a person who holds a full category H Sport/Target Shooting Firearms Licence.

For the second six months of the PPL you can only be issued with two Permits to Acquire and these will only be issued if you have successfully completed the 'Pistol Safety Training Course' conducted by the pistol club for which you are a member and you have completed 3 recorded competition shoots to the satisfaction of the pistol club captain. The 'Pistol Safety Training Course' is in addition to the 'Pistol Safe Handling Course' completed during the licence application process.

During the second six months you may acquire no more than two pistols, any one of which is:

- a centrefire pistol, or
- a rimfire pistol with a calibre of no more than .22 inch, or
- an air pistol with a calibre of no more than .177 inch, or
- a black powder pistol.

However, you must not possess a centrefire and rimfire pistol at the same time - section 31(3C) of the *Firearms Act 1996*.

Minors Permits

The applicant must be aged between 12 and 18 years of age and the permit will be issued subject to the consent of the parent or legal guardian of the applicant. Proof of legal guardianship is required.

This permit authorises the minor to possess and use firearms under the direct supervision of a firearms licence holder for the purpose of receiving instruction in the

safe use of firearms or competing in shooting events. This permit does not authorise the acquisition of firearms.

A minor's permit will expire when you are 18 years and 3 months of age. An application for a firearms licence will be forwarded to you before the expiry of your minor's permit.

Participation requirements for Pistol Sport/Target Shooters

A Category H licence holder must be a member of at least one approved pistol club and must, during each compliance period, participate in a minimum number of shooting activities of an approved pistol club. Note, the person must participate in at least 6 competitive shooting matches as part of the required minimum shooting activities.

There are three kinds of pistols for the purpose of minimum participation requirements:

- Air pistols
- Centrefire pistols
- Rimfire pistols

The number of different kinds of pistol a person has during a compliance period is the number of different kinds of pistol registered in their name during the compliance period. For example, if a person has 3 x air pistols, 1 x centrefire pistol and 2 x rimfire pistols registered during the compliance period, the person has 3 kinds of pistol for the purposes of determining their participation requirements.

The following table provides the participation requirements for pistol sport/target shooters, taking into consideration the types of pistols owned:

Amount of Pistol Types Owned (Air, Centrefire, Rimfire)	Minimum No. of Shooting Activities for <u>each</u> pistol kind per Compliance Period	Total Minimum No. of Shooting Activities per Compliance Period
1	6	6 (at least 6 must be competitive shooting matches)
2	4	8 (at least 6 must be competitive shooting matches)
3	4	12 (at least 6 must be competitive shooting matches)

Acquiring and Disposing of Firearms

All firearms (other than some particular types of antique firearm) must be registered, and all transfers of ownership must be processed through a licensed firearms dealer. Before acquiring a firearm, you must have an appropriate firearms licence and a permit to acquire that type of firearm. Application forms for permits to acquire are available from clubs, firearms dealers or by emailing the NSW Police Firearms Registry at

firearmsenq@police.nsw.gov.au. The legislation imposes a 28-day cooling off period for the issue of a permit to acquire, however the waiting time has been reduced in certain situations.

When selling or disposing of a firearm you must sell it to an authorised firearms dealer or a licensed person with an appropriate permit to acquire and the transfer must be processed through a licensed firearms dealer. Unwanted firearms can also be handed in to a Police Station. An unlicensed person who comes into possession of a firearm must immediately surrender it to a police officer.

- Unregistered firearms must be immediately surrendered to police. It is unlawful to be in possession of an unregistered firearm.
- It is an offence for a person to possess or use a firearm without the authority of a licence or permit.
- A person must not supply, acquire or use a firearm that is not registered.
- It is an offence if the firearm is used for any other purpose than the genuine reason for obtaining the licence.

Acquiring and Disposing of Ammunition

You cannot purchase or possess ammunition unless you are over 18 years of age and hold a licence or permit authorising you to possess or use a firearm that takes that ammunition. All ammunition sales and purchases must be conducted through a licenced firearms dealer or the Club Armourer, or ammunition may be purchased from the holder of an Ammunition Purchase and Sell permit (e.g. sports store).

When you go to the firearms dealer or club armourer to buy ammunition, you must take:

- Your current firearms licence or permit authorising you to possess the firearm for which the ammunition is being purchased, and
- Your pistol registration papers.

Storage of pistols

All licence holders in NSW are subject to the general requirement for safe storage of firearms under section 39 of the *Firearms Act 1996* (The Act). Any person in possession of a firearm must take all reasonable precautions to ensure the firearm is kept safely, is not lost or stolen and does not come into the possession of an unauthorised person.

In addition to this general safe keeping requirement, there are specific legislative requirements for the safe keeping and storage of firearms for Category C, D & H firearm licence holders and these may be obtained from the Safe Storage page on the NSW Police Firearms Registry website.



Section 41 of the Act provides mandatory minimum requirements for the safe keeping and storage of firearms held under a Category C, D & H licence as follows:

- When a firearm is not actually being used or carried, it must be stored in a locked steel safe of a type approved by the Commissioner that cannot be easily penetrated.
- The safe must be bolted to the structure of the premises where the firearm is authorised to be kept.
- Any ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a separate locked container of a type approved by the Commissioner.

Failure to meet these requirements is a serious offence carrying heavy fines and the possibility of imprisonment.

Storage of ammunition

Ammunition must be stored in a locked container, separate from the firearms. - sections 40 (1)(d) & 41(1)(c) of the Act. The ammunition storage may be separate altogether or may be a separate locked compartment or receptacle within the firearms safe storage receptacle or safe.

The ammunition container must be made of plastic, wood, metal or steel which is sturdy and not easily penetrated (i.e. cash box/ammunition box) and be fitted with a lock which is either:

- An internal locking mechanism (i.e. cash box or similar) which is operated by means of a key, combination lock or other similar locking mechanism (i.e. pin number), OR
- Locked by the use of a hasp and staple (or similar) and fitted with a padlock.

NOTE: The key to the lock/padlock must not be kept within the firearms receptacle, or within the immediate vicinity.

Transportation of Pistols

All pistols must be conveyed unloaded, with the ammunition kept in a locked container separate from firearms. They must be rendered temporarily incapable of being fired (e.g. by removal of the bolt/firing mechanism or the use of trigger locks) or must be kept in a locked container that is properly secured to or is within the vehicle.

Reasonable precautions to prevent loss or theft would include the security of the vehicle in general; security of the vehicle when left unattended and how long the vehicle is left unattended. Leaving firearms unattended overnight or for extended periods of time without added security or locking the vehicle in a secure compound would not be considered to be reasonable precautions to prevent loss or theft.

Handling firearms during this course whilst unlicensed

The Firearms Act 1996 gives authority under section 6B for unlicensed persons to participate in directly supervised shooting activities such as *'Try Shooting'* at an approved range, and approved firearms safety training courses such as SSAA Basic Training Program in Target Pistol for New Shooters for the purpose of obtaining a target pistol licence. A P650 personal history declaration must be completed prior to the commencement of the course.

Further information on the P650 personal history declaration is available on the Firearms Registry Internet site at <https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/services/firearms>.

Penalties for Breach of the Act and Regulation

Penalties for breaching the Firearms Act or Regulations are severe, ranging from suspension or revocation of a licence for a period of 10 years, to imprisonment for up to 20 years.

Remember that the law requires all pistol clubs to report any member that does not complete their training within the first six months after the issue of Probationary Pistol Licence, as well as fully licensed members who do not comply with attendance requirements, to the NSW Police Firearms Registry for immediate cancellation of their licence.

SECTION 14: WHAT TO DO ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS COURSE

Complete your application attaching the "Pistol Safe Handling Course Completion" form – do not delay. It will take approximately six to eight weeks to receive your licence. If you are having any difficulties with your licence application contact the club captain immediately.

- The first eight months of club membership is considered to be your training period. This takes into account the time taken to reach the end of the first six months of your probationary licence.

- Read all paperwork thoroughly.
- If you do not understand what you must do, or are uncertain at any time, you should contact the Club Captain.
- You must complete your training to be eligible for a full category H target licence.
- The club will not sign off on a PTA until all training has been attended and completed successfully.
- You will remain a “Trainee” member until the completion of the first six months of your PPL.
- You must complete a minimum of three trainee shoots after the receipt of your PPL but prior to the end of the first six months.
- Club guns and ammunition will only be issued on the firing line under the control of the Instructor or Range Officer conducting the club event until you have completed training and are in the second six months of your PPL.
- You must notify the club captain if you cannot make the appropriate attendances.
- Remember that the law requires all pistol clubs to report any member that does not complete their training within the first six months after the issue of Probationary Pistol Licence to the NSW Police Firearms Registry for immediate cancellation of their licence.

SECTION 15: ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

The competency of each new shooter completing this course of study will be assessed through a series of questions and by observation of the student.

The theory component of the Assessment will consist of one exam with multiple choice answers.

The practical component will consist of an assessment of the student conducted both in the classroom and on the range. It will include observation of the student’s adherence to correct procedures for handling firearms, and their knowledge of firearms parts and function and will be conducted over the duration of the course.

Both the theory and practical components must be completed satisfactorily to pass the course. In the event that a student disagrees with the assessment outcome, the matter

should be raised first with the assessor. If the student subsequently wishes to appeal the assessment, a written request should be forwarded to the club secretary.

SECTION 16: PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT GUIDE (100% pass required)

The practical assessment is to be conducted over the duration of the training period.

Scope of assessment

- Personal safety.
 - Candidate wears eye & hearing protection and suitable footwear.
- Conduct correct safety checks.
 - Candidate keeps finger out of trigger guard.
 - Candidate maintains safe muzzle direction.
 - Candidate demonstrates ability to clear pistol safely.
 - Candidate inspects pistol for defects.
- Pistol parts and operation.
 - Candidate to correctly identify and explain the function of the various pistol components.
- Load and unload firearm.
 - Candidate to correctly demonstrate loading and unloading of both revolver and self-loading pistol
 - Candidate maintains safe muzzle direction during the load/unload process
- Correctly follow range commands. Use nominated firearms. Clear unused ammunition from firearm.
 - Candidate to explain and demonstrate the ability to understand and follow range commands
- Shooting exercises and range safety.
 - Candidate to demonstrate and explain the action to be followed given the command “*Ceasefire*”.
 - Candidate to demonstrate the correct procedure to be followed for the instruction ‘show clear’.
 - Candidate to demonstrate safe carrying of a pistol to and from the firing line.
- Basic maintenance and inspection. Safe storage of pistol after use.
 - Candidate to demonstrate the correct procedure of clearing a pistol for cleaning.
 - Candidate to explain basic maintenance procedure.

SECTION 17: IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

SSAA (NSW) Inc.

For general shooting and club related information SSAA (NSW) Inc. can be contacted at:

- Postal address: PO Box 1001 St Mary's NSW 1790
- Phone: (02) 8889 0400
- Website: <http://www.ssaansw.org.au/>

NSW Police Firearms Registry

The Firearms Registry Internet site has a range of information including legislative information and FACT Sheets which are invaluable to licence holders. Please visit the NSW Police Force Firearms Registry website at:

<https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/services/firearms>.

The Firearms Registry can be contacted via email

firearmsenq@police.nsw.gov.au

or via the Customer Service Line: 1300 362 562.

SSAA (NSW) Inc. wishes to thank and acknowledge the NSW Police Firearms Registry for its contribution to this training material by making available the information on legislation on pages 39 to 45.