

Improving Hold and Trigger Manipulation

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The following was excerpted by another member from a post to the [Bullseye List](#) by me (Ed Hall) in response to a third lister's questions regarding problems with holding and releasing his shots.

Session #1: Grip and Sights

My first suggestion is to do some work at home with completely empty guns and a blank wall. Get a comfortable stance and bring the gun up to its normal position with your eyes closed but facing the gun. Now, without moving anything, look at the scope. Can you see the dot? If so, skip to the next paragraph. If not, look at what it would take to be able to. If it's just a matter of raising or lowering it, do so. If it would take more, stop everything, adjust your grip, etc. and start over. Do this until you can pretty much come up in front of you and see the dot in the tube without adjusting anything. What you're working on here is finding a repeatable position that gives you the most natural "feel."

Next, practice holding the gun out and studying the dot. Compare its redness to the wall color. Now compare it to the circle of the scope. Now look for any dirt, etc, on the lenses and note how the dot becomes fuzzy if you start looking at the rearward glass. Last, notice how little movement there is when you reference the dot to the circle of the scope tube. Do this a few times each for about 20-30 seconds. Then do a couple where the only concentration is in keeping the dot to tube relationship the same.

Spend some time with this exercise and then take a break. That's enough for one session.

Notice that you haven't dry fired anything, just studied the sighting system and your hold. Although I'll be adding progressive sessions, you should go back to earlier ones often and try to note how they may change as you progress.

Session #2: Holding (not so) Steady

This time make a line on a piece of paper and place it vertically oriented on the wall at the proper height for your hold. Move close to the wall, just a few inches away. Work on holding the dot on the line for 20-30 second intervals. Then take a break. When you come back, orient the paper so that the line is horizontal and work with it the same way.

Take a longer break.

Notice that you still haven't dry fired anything, just studied the sighting system, and your hold again.

By now you have a pretty good idea of what the sights look like when they aren't disturbed. You will be aware of the natural movement that you have at the gun. You should also notice that the dot to tube relationship does move, but not a considerable amount. You should be able to pretty much hold the dot centered in the tube against the blank wall.

Session #3: Trigger Pressure and Sight Alignment

OK, now we'll add the trigger part. Head for the blank wall again. Make sure the gun is empty! Also use some sort of chamber protection (snap cap, empty case, rubber band, etc.) if needed for your .22. Bring the gun up just like before and study the dot as before. Now apply some pressure to the trigger. Don't pull all the way through, just apply "some" pressure. Study the dot. Did it stay where it was in the scope or did it move around different from the holding exercise? Work with this for a while until you can apply pressure, hold it, and then release the pressure without disturbing the natural movement you saw from the first two exercises.

Take a break.

I know, you added the trigger, but you still didn't dry fire. That's OK, we'll get there. What I would like you to be able to do, is to judge your application of the trigger, using the sighting system, working at the gun only.

Session #4: Learning the Trigger

We're going to be a bit different now. Take your gun to a favorite easy chair. Make sure it is empty! (the gun!... well maybe the chair too!). Also remember if anything is needed to protect the chamber. Grip the gun with your non-shooting hand and place it in your shooting hand. Make it ready to dry fire.

Without aiming it, but while keeping it pointed in a safe direction (of course), and still holding it with both hands, dry fire it a few times paying attention to the "feel" of the release. Make the application determined, but not fast. It should take about one to two seconds to release the hammer.

After a few dry fires like this, find a comfortable position with your arm resting on the chair in a safe way that you can see the dot. Now you can work with just the trigger. Find a way to start the trigger and then move to concentrating on the dot until the hammer falls. Work with the trigger this way until you can drop the hammer without disturbing the normal movement of the dot.

Take a break.

Session #5: Dry-Firing and Sight Alignment

This time move back to the blank wall, verify your empty gun again, and work with the trigger in the same way you did from the chair, but now studying the dot to tube against the blank wall. Work with this until, again, the normal dot movement is not disturbed.

OK, now pack up your stuff and head to the range.

Session #6: At the Range

Shoot your match, practice, etc. working with the relationship of the dot in the scope. Let the target fuzz a bit. This will help cut down on perceived movement. Work on starting the trigger, concentrating on the dot to tube relationship, and being patient. If anything breaks your concentration, stop and start over. Remember that if you question whether you've held too long, you have.