

The Fix:

Pistol Precision

By George Harris

THE PROBLEM

Your pistol shoots right on at close ranges but very low at distance. You're starting to think the bullet drops 2 feet at 25 yards.

THE SOLUTION

With standard pistol cartridges and self-defense ammunition, the bullet drop is at most only a couple of inches at 25 yards. You should be able to zero the pistol up close, where you are able to hit accurately (let's say 10 yards), and expect a hit at 25 yards within an inch or two of your point of aim.

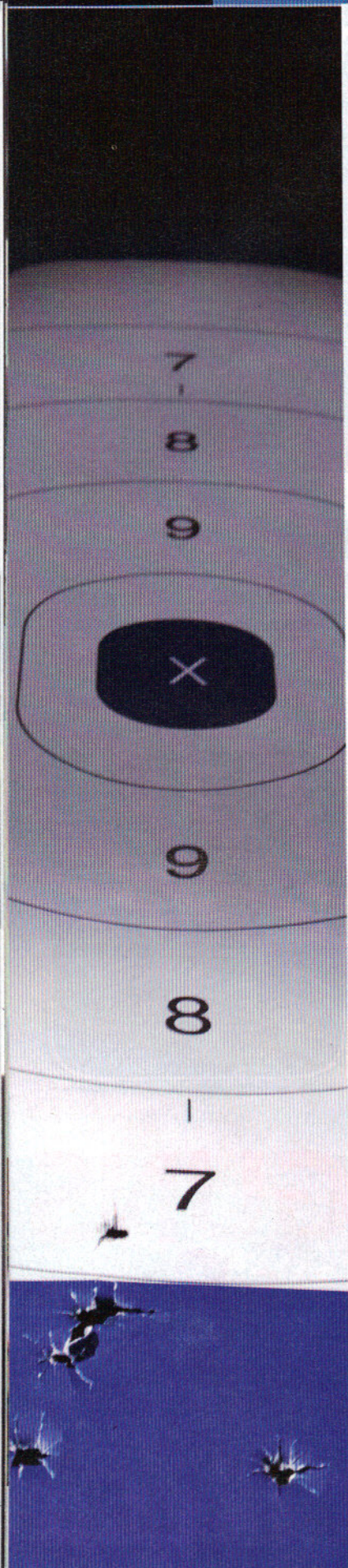
It seems you have a classic case of looking at the target rather than the sights when shooting at distance. If you are looking at the sights and seeing them on the target at the moment the bullet exits the muzzle, the bullet will travel in a relatively straight line to

the target and impact very close to the intended location. However, in order to see the target, you have to lower the gun just enough to see over the sights, and geometry works against you. Dropping the muzzle causes your shots to impact lower and lower on the target as the distance increases.

Let's establish a couple of parameters when you are diagnosing your shots on target. If the muzzle is on target when the bullet exits, you will hit the target. Your hands and eyes need to work together to make that happen. It's simple when you think about it.

◀ **A cure for the problem is to** practice the Wall Drill, followed by the Bullet Hole Drill for live-fire verification. Once you can competently perform both of these on demand, your performance will skyrocket. Both drills will stay with you for the rest of your shooting life and will be handy in fixing deficiencies in your performance when they rear their ugly heads.

The Wall Drill trains your eyes and hands to work together so you will see what you need to see and feel what you need to feel to deliver a



good shot. All you need is an unloaded handgun and a clean, vertical surface, like a wall, in an area where there are no distractions.

After checking—twice—to be sure the pistol is unloaded, assume your shooting position with the muzzle as close to the wall as you can get it without contact. Focus your eyes hard on the front sight, so deeply you can see the small irregularities on its face. You should be looking at the front sight through the rear-sight notch, with a secondary awareness of the rear sight. Your eyes will automatically center the front sight in the rear-sight notch.

Now that you know what you need to see, the next step of the Wall Drill teaches what you need to feel. Again, check to be sure your pistol is unloaded. Start with your normal two-hand grip, and disengage the frame-mounted safety if present. Press the trigger until the hammer falls or the striker releases. When that fall or release takes place, the relationship of the front sight to the rear-sight notch should not change. If it does, the muzzle moves at the moment of discharge in a live-fire condition and the bullet hits somewhere other than intended.

Unintentional sight movement

is a product of inconsistent grip pressure and/or improper manipulation of the trigger. In general, by adding a little more pressure with the support hand and loosening pressure with the strong hand, you can manipulate the trigger more smoothly. A good place to start is by applying 40 percent of the total pressure on the pistol with your strong hand and 60 percent with the support hand.

Again, maintain visual attention on the sights. The goal is to operate the trigger through full release without any change in the relationship of the front sight to rear notch. ►



Shooting the Bullet Hole Drill is ▲

nothing more than going to the range and practicing the Wall Drill with live ammunition and a target. Post a plain piece of cardboard or paper 10 feet from the muzzle, aim at its center, and shoot one shot. Place the front sight on top of the first bullet hole and fire the next shot. Focus all of your visual attention on the front sight while maintaining the grip pressure and trigger movement you learned at the wall. At discharge, if you stuck to the plan and didn't peek, your shots will touch. Fire a five-shot group at first, and move on to 10-shot groups as you progress.

If your groups are round, your hands are performing as practiced. If not, spend some more time on the wall. Group sizes in the area of an inch mean your eyes are doing their job as well. Groups will grow as your eye focus transitions toward the target, which is what you want to avoid.

When you get back to the ►

25-yard line, use the same technique. Put your sights on the target, then concentrate your visual attention on the front sight until the shot is released. As long as your grip and trigger pull don't disturb the relationship of the sights, low shots at distance will be a thing of the past. S

During his 40 years of military service, Harris earned both the U.S. Army Distinguished Rifleman Badge and Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge. He co-founded and directed the SIG Sauer Academy in Epping, NH, before going on to serve as president and CEO of International Firearms Consultants, where he continues to teach firearms-related subjects on a variety of levels.

