

## “Easy Clean Target Drill.”

I'll take a 25 yard sustained fire target and across the top list the numbers 1, 2, 3, and so on until I get to 6. My long term goal is to shoot 6 consecutive clean sustained fire targets. I don't use a turning target or for that matter change the target. I'll intentionally but easily shoot “just good shots,” in five shot strings—stop—and then do it again. After ten rounds I'll go down range, inspect the target (no scoping) to make certain that I've shot ten, 10s then strike out the number 1. I'll repeat the process after every ten shots and go down range and strike out the next number. I've only gotten to an equivalent of 4 and ½ targets (nine strings) before things fall apart. I'll intentionally but easily shoot “just good shots,” in five shot strings—stop—and then do it again. After ten rounds I'll go down range, inspect the target (no scoping) to make certain that I've shot ten, 10s then strike out the number 1. I'll repeat the process after every ten shots and go down range and strike out the next number. I've only gotten to an equivalent of 4 and ½ targets (nine strings) before things fall apart.. I refer to it as the “Easy Clean Target Drill.”

Why do drills like this? Well, from a practical perspective there are six sustained fire targets in any match phase; the process here is to give the shooter confidence that they MAY be able to clean a substantive number of sustained fire targets in any single gun phase. Believe me, it's more about confidence building than attained skill.

The other part is I've actually made it easier by not having targets turn and I also give myself unlimited time. I'm not shooting slow fire, the trigger is always moving and shots are going down range in sustained fashion. Granted it's much easier to accomplish than a match target but your subconscious doesn't know the difference. When you're not under the pressure of a time limit or a match, shooting consecutive 10s is much easier. I've even had others time me, and currently, I never run out of time. The bottom line is: it becomes a habit to shoot a lot of consecutive 10s.

It feels easy, and it should. Well, what you learn is...it is! And in the process, I dreamed up a drill that mimics a game that's fun too.

Shooting relaxed, easy 10s into a sustained fire target should never feel like a rushed process. [Although, I should mention that I use two second, one shot turning target drills immediately before and after to keep on track of getting the first shot off into the 10 ring.] I've accomplished two things: I'm acquiring the skill to shoot a lot of consecutive 10s and; when I arrive at a match I know what I'm capable of doing

without pushing myself. It feels easy.

For those who are marksmen or sharpshooters, consider just shooting consecutive 9s; simply shoot all the shots into the black.

**A deliberate and uninterrupted trigger pull, while not disturbing the gun's sight alignment requires not only an excellent grip but most importantly, a very rigid wrist. Herein lies the secret.**

What most shooters don't know is the need to tighten up the wrist's tendons to replicate the same grip angle and maintain it consistently throughout their course of fire. Unfortunately the human wrist isn't a lockable joint but it's possibly the most critical area of 'the grip' that'll fail and here's why:

1.0 Independent trigger pull can't be accomplished by some type of hybrid grasping alone, if anything excessive grip pressure will only make the index finger more influenced by the excessive pressure exerted by the other three fingers on the front strap.

2.0 Should pressure or resistance of one's wrist change noticeable between shots, the trigger's movement to the rear and follow through will yield different results. This is generally more pronounced during sustained fire and may as well have a similar effect during slow fire, but in most cases will not be detected until you score the target.

3.0 Repeatable recovery is compromised if the wrist's resistance isn't identical. Good tension in the wrist will help retard heeling and jerking the trigger, a poor wrist will allow that gun to point in almost any direction especially during follow through.

**Jerking the Trigger:** Want to guess what causes this? It's anticipation again! This time we could refer to it as "anticipation of loss." We're so fearful we'll lose that perfect dead center 10-ring hold; the shooter will push or snatch the shot. This is a classic example of when you should "accept your minimum arc of movement." There are a few things that can help overcome this, one of which is embracing good dry-firing drills. Dry firing on a blank wall (yes, a blank wall) while watching the sights for any trigger, wrist or flinching problems. Eight to ten minutes a day will get most people over this in a few months.

Another drill would be just dropping the hammer. This is a drill that most people aren't aware of, and for some, it'll seem a little too simple to be effective. Take your gun with appropriate snap cap or safety plug and just drop the hammer. Don't raise or level the gun, in fact, don't even look at the gun, with a firm grip continue to cycle the weapon and drop the hammer over and over again. Five minutes in duration everyday is adequate. What happens here is you'll become much more familiar with the feel of the trigger's release. You will have more confidence when you actually need to pull the trigger with a live round.

1. **The Classic Blank Target Drill.** This drill is all about trigger control. Place a full sized target backwards in the frame at fifty yards. You shouldn't be able to see anything on its face; no bullseye or scoring rings. Then shoot 10 slow fire shots on it for a minimum group. Simply shoot at the center of the target. What the shooter needs to do is pretend they're dry firing, but the gun's LOADED. Every attempt should be made to make each and every release well executed.

This drill forces you to know what your actual spread is during slow fire. Over the course of several weeks, you'll slowly start to see an improvement in group size. Don't look through the scope during this drill, put it away. And if for some reason you can see a pattern while shooting, never start chasing holes. You want to walk up to the target to see your results.

A shooter who can't manage their group size will never do well during slow fire. As well, it forces the shooter not to chase their shots or use Kentucky-windage. It reinforces the process of good trigger control regardless what's seen within the sight picture.

- 2) **The One Shot Drill.** As mentioned above one shot drills work handily for anyone not getting their first shot off timely and accurately.

At the 25 yard line, simply set the target timer for a 2 seconds face. Your mission is to release one round into the 10-ring. It should be done leisurely but without hesitation. Be emotionally prepared on the firing line but don't force anything.

Sounds simple enough, right? Just keep doing it until you can shoot 10 consecutive shots, one shot at a time, into the 10-ring. And if you can't, just keep at it until you can.

Expect to fail. But once you mastered this drill not only will your sustained fire scores increase, so will your confidence while on the short line.

3) **Shooting Thru the Donut Hole.** Regardless whether you're using a .22 or .45 this drill enhances your ability to quickly get up to speed on the short line.

Cutout the 10-ring from several sustained fire repair centers. Then place one on the backer at 25 yards with a corresponding hole. Yes, daylight should be seen through the target. Then go about and shoot a turning target set. Aim into the open area in either timed or rapid fire fashion.

Your goal is to try and avoid hitting the 9-ring.

Most novice shooters are quickly surprised to find out the vast majority of their shots fly right through that big gaping hole. And it does look like a big hole by simply viewing it from the firing line.

Many shooters using this drill discover their skill levels are much better than currently perceived. And it's a confidence builder that easily translates to future matches.

3) **Shooting 30 Second Timed Fire Target..** In a practical sense, the shooter should be given all the time in the world so they don't feel rushed. Simply have the shooter shoot 5 well placed shots without any real time constraints. The shooter's main concern should be to maintain good grip pressure throughout the string and little else. They shouldn't be concerned about scores, just the performance of good sequential releases. And the process should be done leisurely but with confidence.

4) **Extended Magazine Drill.** While still using a 30 second target face, employ a 12 round mag and instruct the shooter to shoot all 12 with what they perceive as a timed fire rhythm.

Many shooters consciously or unconsciously count the remaining number of rounds in the mag. The afflicted shooters will ever so slightly and progressively release his grip with the pistol on anticipating the end. Others simply feel pressed for time. These drills help them to get over both those problems. And they're forced to maintain a consistent grip until the slide locks back, no matter how long it takes. A simple but helpful twist on this same drill is to have someone else secretly place different round counts (provided

there's always more than 5) in different mags much like a ball and dummy drill. The novice will then have to adapt to different elapsed shooting times, and as well, be encouraged to concentrate on what's necessary: By performing reasonably well but not perfectly, the beginning, middle and (the best part) the end of the string. The shooter should be encouraged to make each round and its recovery feel the same from start to finish.

Not caring or knowing when the end is, allows the shooter to simply concentrate on the necessary tasks that are required.

**5) Slow Fire Follow Thru Drill.** The shooter would be instructed to shoot slow fire, but with a twist. After the round leaves the barrel they are to force themselves to follow through, reacquire the sight picture and let the sights settle on the 10-ring while taking up the trigger's slack; making themselves physically and emotionally prepared to immediately shoot another slow fire shot. ... Then they put the gun down. The shooter should be encouraged to do this all the time as part of their typical routine or shot plan.

Good recovery habits of any kind will promote a natural tendency on the part of the shooter to always be at-the-ready with the next round, even during sustained fire.

After a typical dry firing session try holding the gun on a blank wall, and after settling in, try to obtain a motionless dot or sights for twelve seconds. Take up the weight of the trigger to help settle the sight but don't drop the hammer. For those who have never tried this, *it ain't easy*. Take a break—then repeat the process a total of three times. Your goal is to get an almost motionless sight picture for twelve seconds, during three different attempts, within a fifteen minute window.

For those of you who have never done any holding drills, my guess is the typical shooter who dry fires every other day and adds this to his routine might expect to see positive results after about two to three weeks. Some shooter's might actually get better benefits by alternating their dry fire drills on one day, then use holding drills on a subsequent day.

Assuming you've accomplished the drill above and wanted to progress, a shooter would extend their reps to four, and later on to five, and so on. It's fairly important that you don't actually extend the holding time but progress with ever increasing

reps.

During the process you'll be developing the deltoid and triceps muscles in your strong shoulder. This is the source of most shooter's steadiness and fine motor abilities to center a shot. More reps develop these muscles and eventually the process becomes easier.

A slightly different drill is to take the pistol in your strong hand, level the gun and dry fire a shot as soon as the gun becomes steady. Drop the gun to your side and repeat the process. Make a commitment initially to do this ten times. As you become more proficient with this drill extend the number of reps to fifteen or seventeen times. What's occurring here is twofold: you're developing those same arm and shoulder muscles to manage the weight of the gun; and you're also developing a quick release much like one does during an initial sustained fire shot.