

How To Make Your New Pistol User-Friendly

New generation target pistols come with a startling array of adjustments. Tuning to taste can be bewildering, especially for newer shooters. Here are a few hints to make life easier.

The Grip

There are several aspects of the grip that are interrelated and may take a while to sort out completely. Many pistols now have adjustable rake angle, some even have a small amount of cant and rotation available. This is not something that you should leap into as soon as you unpack the box. It will take a little while to learn the feel of the pistol, and from there it will be easier to judge your most natural wrist position.

As in many cases a middle of the road approach is sensible at first. An upright grip is more difficult to maintain a locked wrist. An acute angle of rake will sorely stretch the tendons that require free movement to work your trigger finger. So somewhere in between lies an excellent starting point.

Make the gun comfortable in your hand. Take your normal shooting stance. Raise the gun while looking straight out in front of you, or close your eyes if you don't trust yourself not to cheat. When the pistol is pointed roughly at target height, take a look at how it is pointing. Ideally you should be looking straight down the sights. If not, it may be time to start adjusting the rake until it does. But as I said before, I'd get familiar with it by shooting a few targets before leaping in to make adjustments.

Don't make the mistake of clamping the palm shelf too tightly against the base of your hand. If you make your hand too snug it is very difficult to judge how tightly you are holding the grip. In a worst case scenario the tension felt in a tight grip will give the impression of a firm grip while the gripping fingers are actually quite limp. This can be disastrous, as a firm grip is needed to maintain a good hold on the target.

Remember that on hot days your hand will swell up. Don't be afraid to adjust the palm shelf accordingly. That's why it's adjustable.

Trigger Position and Adjustment

Here is a critical adjustment that can easily be misjudged.

Most triggers these days are two stage. At the very least they have a certain amount of takeup. When I see shooters adjusting the trigger shoe position most make the fatal mistake of leaving it too far to the rear. They set it so that the trigger finger is comfortable and in a position to pull straight back – but without taking the trigger back to the point of release. That, after all, is where it's most important to have that ideal relationship between finger and trigger. So by the time they have taken up the trigger slack their finger is beyond its ideal angle and starting to push to the left on release.

Try to avoid angling the blade of the trigger shoe. It was a fashion a few years ago, especially in Free Pistol, but applying pressure anyhow but in a direct line rearwards is not likely to be successful. Shooters with shorter fingers should make every effort to modify the grip or perhaps have another shoe manufactured rather than attempt this.

Target triggers these days have a great deal of adjustments. The best rule of thumb is, until you have had considerable experience with the gun, don't be tempted to mess with them.

Most triggers will have a relatively light first stage, and more than 50% of total trigger weight on the second stage. Contrary to popular belief, a lighter trigger does not make for easier shooting. If that were the case Free Pistol scores would be at least as high as Air Pistol. So by loading up the first stage to make the second stage relatively lighter it may seem to be an advantage. It may also cause you to consciously fire, waiting on the brink of release for a good sight picture and tweaking it at the last. Best of luck if you do.

If you try somebody else's trigger and swear it is better, bear in mind that while shooting another gun that you are NOT used to, you will concentrate on the basics and possibly shoot better. Once or twice.

Try not to wear out your trigger adjustments by constantly striving for "the perfect trigger". Like an honest lawyer, it's a myth that doesn't exist. Try instead to create the perfect trigger release technique.

I know I may be in the minority here, but I like to set the trigger stop so there is little or no movement of the trigger shoe after the shot breaks. I find that if I don't do this, and my trigger pull is anything but perfectly straight back, I will kick shots to the

side without seeing it happen.

Sights

A lot of discussion has gone into what the ideal front sight width is, how much gap there should be on either side, and whether to aim at six o'clock, sub six or center. There is no correct answer. If you manage to concentrate on the sights while they are holding nice and tightly in your aiming area and have the gun go off without upsetting anything, it will be a ten.

Should you feel you **MUST** have a front sight the same width as the black, most factories offer a 5mm blade, which will come close. Don't close in the rear sight too much at first, as a tight gap will have a similar effect to a long sight radius.

New shooters should consider shortening their sight radius. Most pistols have several positions on the barrel shroud for attaching the front sight, and some models offer a sliding rear sight. By shortening the radius (distance between front and rear sight) the apparent movement is lessened. This makes for more confidence in the hold. Consequently this makes it much easier to have the confidence in squeezing the trigger and having a smooth release of the shot. As the new shooter builds strength and attains a better hold, the sights can be slowly moved apart again.

I do notice that Steyr airguns have a very shallow rear sight notch as they come from the factory. It is well worth considering loosening the lock screws and dropping the plate at the rear so you have a deeper sight picture. This is especially important on ranges with low light.

Balance

The attachment of weights to a pistol is very personal. I like some weight forward of the trigger guard as it gives me a little more stability in my hold. Others like to have more weight toward the rear of the gun. The only way to find out what will work is through experimenting.

Now whether it be with weights, grip angle, sight widths or whatever, it is important that any of these changes be done in a methodical manner. Take notes of what you have changed and try it for a reasonable amount of time. Make one change at a time. By recording the results you will know if it has been a success. If you rely on memory you will probably have to make the same experiments several times to reach the same conclusion. Our time on this planet is limited. Save yourself the frustration.

Velocity

The factory has spent hundreds, probably thousands of hours to discover the most accurate velocity for your pistol. Not your particular pistol admittedly, but that model of pistol. You might conceivably hit on a speed that will give an nth of a millimeter better group. You might also have been better spending your time learning how to shoot.

If your pistol is a pre charged or CO2 late generation model and you notice that even in Edelman targets the holes are not clean, it might be a good idea to check the velocity. Otherwise, leave it alone.