

Pistol Shooting: The Art (Part 4)

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Yes, I'm back again. How many parts, you ask? I'm not really sure. I'll probably keep going until the editor tells me, "Enough already!" You can have an input on that. Let the editor or myself know how you feel about these. OK, in the last article I told you that this time I'd get back to hands on, so... How has the wall been working? Come on, have you really spent enough time in front of it? (Say, "No! One can never spend enough time in front of it!") Good answer.

The wall is one of your best teachers, but there are others. I'll introduce one here. I know you've really been wanting to get out to the range and make some noise. Well, here's where I say, "Let's go!" But, wait! I'm going to throw in a wrench. On the way to the range I want you to pick up some "dummy" rounds for whatever gun you plan to practice with. What do you mean, "What's a 'dummy' round?" OK, OK, you're right, there are some folks who haven't heard that term yet. I'll explain it.

A "dummy" round is a cartridge without primer or powder. It has the casing with a bullet in it only. They are used for training. **THEY ARE FOR USE AT THE RANGE ONLY!** I say this because they look like real rounds, which means real rounds will look like those "dummies." If you play with them at home and mix them up, you are going to shoot something and give our sport yet another bad review. OK, back to the rounds. You can make some yourself if you reload by not adding the primer and powder. Just push a bullet into the case and it's ready.

Once you have some "dummy" rounds, and of course some live ones, head for the range. Put up a blank piece of paper. That's right! A blank piece of paper, such as the back of a target. Now, take two "dummy" rounds and three live rounds, mix them up and without looking, place them in the magazine or cylinder. Now without determining which round is which, load the gun and come up onto the paper just the same as you've been doing with the wall. Bring back the trigger as you did at the wall. One of two things will happen: If you have a live round under the hammer, it will make a hole in the paper; If you have a "dummy" it will not make a hole in the paper. Very important here. Please visualize what I'm going to describe. The purpose of this exercise is to reinforce proper trigger action. When the live round goes off, it will hide the trigger action. When the "dummy" round doesn't go off, it will display the trigger action. When the sights stay aligned, you had good trigger action. This is why we're using a blank piece of paper. Better concentration on the sights. Black spots just confuse the whole issue anyway.

Let's work on some mental stuff here. Notice how I worded the last paragraph. I spoke about the sights staying aligned as being good trigger control. This is what's important. By thinking of what we do right and duplicating it, we will improve faster. If the sights do misadjust, stop and if possible, refire the "dummy" round again, making sure the sights stay aligned. If for some reason you can't get the sights to stay aligned, clear the weapon and do some dry firing until you can. Now remember the way that it worked when correct. When they stay aligned, stop and mentally go over everything you did and especially visualize how the sights stayed aligned.

By now you should be noticing a group of shots on your paper. If there get to be too many, change the

paper so you're not tempted to look there while shooting. Remember you must concentrate on sight alignment, especially focusing on the front sight or dot, while bringing the trigger straight to the rear. What's the single most important task at hand? That's right, trigger control. Let's review a bit.

How about some questions: What will give us hits in the same hole time after time? You're right, consistency in everything we do to execute a shoot. OK, what can help you to obtain consistency? Right again, comfort. If you sand down goose bumps, do you have dimples when they go away? Get you on that one? I know, I haven't covered it yet. How much of this shooting sport is mental? Good answer. All right, enough for a moment. The "dummy" round exercise is great any time you just can't get a handle on those flyers or wide groups. Don't forget to work with your blank wall just as much, though. Remember to keep your focus on the front sight or dot, not looking for defects in the wall surface. Time to change the subject again.

I've been promoting practice pretty heavily so far, but now I'm going to cover competition a bit. If you plan on being competitive, you will need to go to as many competitions as you can. This may sound as though it need not be said, but competition is totally different from practice. Many shooters go to a match to compete. To do well, you must go there to shoot. If you focus on the result too hard, you won't be able to focus on the task at hand - shooting. Visualize winning and good scores before the match. While you're shooting, don't worry about scores. You'll get one when it's finished. Concentrate instead on making every trigger press the same. Concentrate on keeping the sight alignment proper. Focus on the front sight, or the dot. These are the things to be concerned about while you're shooting. Now, the reason to go to as many matches as possible is to make them into practice sessions. When you can let go of the need to compete, your scores will make you competitive.

I've rambled along pretty well again. Let me summarize a bit and head for the league. Remember to keep practicing with a blank wall. Work on a clean fast trigger that doesn't disturb the active sight picture. Work at the range with some "dummy" rounds. Start getting into as many competitions as you can. Make those matches into practice sessions. Till next time.