

# Pistol Shooting: The Art (Part 6)

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Somebody must be reading these. I've gotten lots of good feedback. Thanks. This one should mark half a year. One interesting dilemma is that I'm writing these so far ahead of when they will probably get printed, that I can't really mention current happenings. This particular part I wrote when I got back from the Interservice Matches in Arkansas (June). I observed some things I thought I'd bring up, as well as some little things that can help your match flow more smoothly.

The Interservice Matches are one of the most by-the-book run matches that exist. Attention is paid to each detail, no matter how minor. Some of these minor details can become major and ruin your day, though. Let's use scoring as an example. The official scoring routine is to place an individual shot value in each block provided on the score sheet. The accepted entries are X, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, and M which represents a miss. It is quite common to see X X 10 - - - - - 100-2x or something similar written on score sheets at local matches with no trouble. At the Interservice matches, a proud clean-target shooter was awarded a 30-2x when it was posted by the stat office.

Another time, closer to home, a beautiful 100-8x target was shot by one of my teammates. The scorer from the adjacent team scored it as 100-8x which I, as the verifier for our team, agreed with. However, he wrote on our sheet X X X X X X X X 9 9 100-8X. When we verified the totals, we agreed and the sheet was sent in. The stat office recalculated the score and gave us 98-8x.

Although true, the above examples are of course horror stories in a way, and I'm sure you've heard more. The point is to be aware of habits and to cultivate good ones and discontinue bad ones. It is better to show and follow the "proper" procedures even at the local leagues and matches. But, don't treat beginners too harshly if they err. Just explain the correct way. If they mess up in the leagues, help them to do it right next time. The matches, however, must be run under match rules or there will be complaints and challenges. Let's cover some older stuff and then go over some good habits to start working on.

Do you remember way back when I said that consistency was very important? Consistency is habit; over and over doing the same thing. We want consistent shots, which will form groups. An important factor in consistency is comfort. Remember? Good. One of the most discomfoting things that can happen is to not be ready when asked, "Is the line ready?" Look around at the top shooters and you will most likely see people who methodically perform certain steps, in certain ways, consistently. These are routines they develop for everything from getting a grip to loading magazines, etc. These routines are what keep your heart rate down and allow you to think about what you're on the line to do. In the same vein, if you're not ready, say so. Don't rush to put a string of bad shots down range.

Here are some suggestions to make things easier:

Have enough magazines that you can shoot all 10 rounds without reloading them. Better yet, have an extra in case of a malfunction. Uniquely mark each magazine so you can identify one which causes a malfunction. Also, if possible, set aside any magazine that allows a malfunction until you can work with

it after the match. Additionally, always reload your magazines before scoring. When shooting slow fire using multiple magazines, swap them before you shoot the last round from the previous magazine. For consistency in your grip, replace your magazine between strings without releasing the firearm.

Do not hurry down to the targets or back, or anywhere else for that matter. Even if you put the wrong facer up and everyone is crying because you're taking so long to go change it, take your time; let them cry. It may give you an edge. After all, it is YOUR time. And don't fret about it on the way. Relax, take a stroll, and think about the group of Xs you'll shoot next string.

Establish routines and stick to them. You can make up checklists to aid in these. They should include everything from stance to breathing to grip to loading to shots to recovery, etc. Even during firing I have used mental lists, or chants, from time to time. One I used was - firm grip - center the dot - straight back trigger, firm grip - center the dot - straight back trigger, etc. This can help ward off those stray thoughts while you're concentrating on shooting.

Evaluate and then ignore distractions. I say evaluate because you're going to anyway. Quickly establish that it doesn't affect you and then put it out of mind. If a round goes off prematurely, yours or someone else's, check for screaming. If none, then accept it and continue with the string. If the person next to you is having trouble, check to see if they're hazardous and if not, continue with your string.

When scoring, it is easier and quicker to first count total hits, and then write them down from lowest to highest value. This will allow "consistency" for alibies as well as for normal targets. Additionally, it is normally easier to use the subtraction method to score targets. This is done by counting the points lost instead of the points gained for each shot, and then subtracting the total from 100. Do not do this for your slow fire targets while shooting them. Use your scope only to verify shot placement, not score, for your targets. Check scores down range.

Last for now is keep track of where you are in the match. Don't shoot a perfect timed fire string on a rapid fire target. Well, time to get back out to the league. Come on out and join us. We can chat about those good habits. Have fun consistently.