

[The Power of Proper Reset](#)

On rare occasions, when the Super-High Masters cloister themselves for one of their ultra-secret bay-at-the-moon meetings, a few of them might casually discuss the value of **resetting their triggers during sustained fire.**

Trigger resetting isn't all that secret of a technique. Heck, just about everyone I know has heard about this one time or another. None the less I'm surprised that the vast majority of Sharpshooters, Marksmen and Experts appear to be completely oblivious to its use.

It kind of begs the question: If you know it's a useful technique why don't you use it?

My take on that question is it's more about the lack of formal training than anything else.

Let's take a step back. **The process might best be described as pulling through the trigger and holding it in during the follow through, and not allowing the sear to reset. During recovery of the sight picture the shooter stabilizes the gun, and then the trigger is released forward just enough to allow the reset. On subsequent shots an astute shooter only has the sear's spring weight to overcome by easily coming through much like a euro-fifi second stage trigger.**



In day's past, I've actually seen **AMU shooters and a few on the Marine Corps team do some of the same thing with slow fire shots. Personally, I think shooting slow fire this way can be incredibly dangerous.**

But for sustained fire, **what's effectively done is the spring's weight for pre-travel is eliminated for each successive round after the first shot.**

Great caution should be exercised if you've never attempted this technique before.

In the past I've run into a few people whose gun wasn't properly put together and the darn thing went automatic. Actually, I own a beater 1911 that'll run away on me if I attempt this. But for the most part properly assembled guns don't have this problem.

If you're uncertain about your gun, a simple trial method would be to only load two or three rounds in the mag and then apply this technique (with great caution of course). At all times, including a few moments before loading, the gun must be pointed down range. Once you're assured of the gun's ability to function properly and safely, progressively add rounds to the mag one at a time. But most of all, don't assume anything.

As a technique or part of a shot plan, **it can make the timed and rapid fire phases a lot easier to execute.**

Years ago, Don Nygord wrote extensively about having the shooter make a commitment with the trigger when he executed a shot, any shot, including slow fire. That commitment would be for the shooter to hold the trigger in and not allow the reset to occur until after the completion of follow through.

My suspicion with Don's trigger commitment, probably was his subtle way of making this act an ingrained good habit.

[A Little Training for Sustained Fire](#)

I don't know how many times I've heard this, but there's an old saying in the sport: "A match is won during slow fire and lost during rapid fire." It's one of those Yogi Berra sayings, flawed in its delivery but nailed down long before the last word is uttered. He really liked to play with the obtuse and then deadpan the obvious.

No matter how you slice it, competitive shooters need every single point they can lay their hands on. And giving points up on the backend doesn't get anyone anywhere. If you can't master with confidence the backend of a match, don't expect a new rating card anytime soon.

Most new shooters believe the slow fire stage to be the most challenging part to master in our sport. It is one of the more difficult things to master, especially those who attempt to score in the mid-90s consistently. Many times those same new shooters—once mastering those skills—become lulled into a false sense of achievement.

What it really comes down to is you need every single point that can be snagged. Your final aggregate score will clearly be dependent on the backend of the match, just as much as in the beginning. If you're shooting in the mid-90s with your rapid and timed fire targets, please don't assume you'll just get better over time. The rapid fire portion in my opinion is the most difficult phase to perform.



Take caution when trying the drills noted below. All drills require training and its related but necessary time. Nothing is simply going to be handed to you. Don't inset a new technique into your routine during a match until you're confident that it's helpful and productive.

- I firmly believe that an immediate breaking shot as the target turns is incredibly useful. About a quarter of a second after the target turns the shot should break. Many advanced shooters claim they'll start to apply trigger pressure once they notice any target movement or expectation of seeing the target's full face. This leaves you with nine, almost ten seconds for the remaining four shots. Two second one shot drills are the way to accomplish this skill.

- Learn to keep the trigger depressed in the frame after the shot breaks. In this environment the first shot has been released, the hammer is locked back and the disconnecter hasn't reset. Hold the trigger in while you're reacquiring the sight picture and as you make a commitment to manage the trigger. Then slightly release the trigger only enough to allow the disconnecter to engage. Allow your finger to travel no farther forward while maintaining positive trigger pressure. When you're methodically prepared to release the next round, re-pull the trigger. Many will notice the pre-travel will have been substantially eliminated and the remaining amount of trigger weight will feel very light. It's so light it can become extremely easy to release the next round unintentionally. For some, it's way too easy. On occasion the gun may get away from you. To the uninitiated it might appear that you're having an untended double. It takes a little practice. Take the time to dry fire using this method (after the gun has been cleared of ammunition) by depressing the trigger as far back as possible, rack the slide, and then ever so slightly release enough weight to feel and hear the click of the disconnecter engaging. Now you're ready to release the dry round. ... And as an added benefit this technique will help to promote a consistent grip throughout the string.

- During a TF or RF string, learn how to abort a shot during sustained fire. Assuming the first shot was accurately and quickly executed, we have time. And if your sight alignment doesn't look almost perfect—slightly steer the gun away (out to the 6 or 7-ring) and start over again. Good Lord, don't get all caught up in the mental clutter of needing good rhythm, that'll arrive by itself from good shot execution. Be more concerned about "not giving up on the shot." If you normally come down (or up for that matter) on the bullseye start over by replicating the settling in phase. **Simply release the disconnecter when the reticule arrives in the bullseye. Then go for a precision shot.**

Many years ago I posted on how to use one shot drills, and in the process inserted a [video boosted](#) from the AMU. In its raw version it simply shows a shooter (from their own visual perspective) what it looks like to clean a rapid fire target with iron sights. Keep an open mind and think of what it would be like to shoot this target by using the three methods mentioned above.

It explains how some of those shots were executed so quickly and at the same time accurately. Even though you need to keep the trigger moving throughout the string, you can't get the same results by simply pumping it.

[Working the Trigger Part 1](#)

This might be an appropriate time to give one of my ginchy disclaimers: If you're a well skilled Expert or other highly rated shooter, your time might be better spent elsewhere. I wouldn't even remotely label myself a coach, Master (actually I'm an Expert) or an all round Zen thinking bullseye shaman. If anything I might best be described as a highly motivated practitioner of the sport who simply loves the game. These are my personal observations and it would be wise to seek out advice from multiple sources.

Sometimes we all need a refresher—especially novice shooters. The post below deals with only two elements of trigger control: Placement of the finger and timing of the pull.

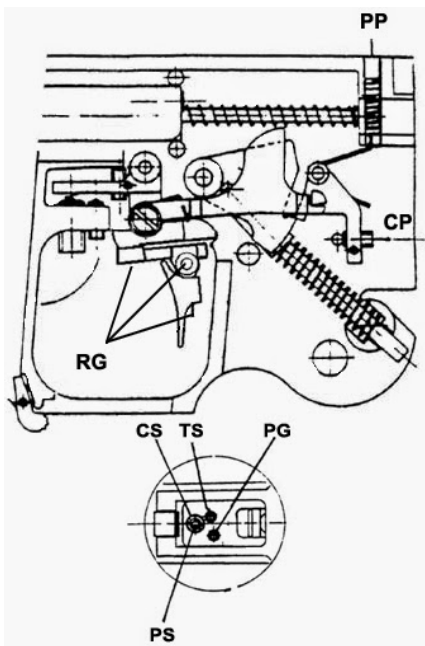
I find it common among bullseye shooters that they forget how easy it actually is to pull the trigger. But for who knows what reason, they try to make the whole process far more difficult than necessary. So let's take a look at two simple but very important elements in the process.

1. Where to Put Your Finger on the Trigger:

There's really only two locations a person can place their finger on the trigger: Either on the pad or on the inside first joint.

Choosing which location to use can become something of a balancing act. Through experimentation a new shooter should determine which method is best for him. And even in this situation one size doesn't fit all; it's really a matter of preference. Regardless, this will take time. You're not going to accomplish this selection in a matter of a few hundred rounds down range.

The wild-card here is if you have a European type .22 or center-fire pistol. More than likely the design engineer intended all shooters to use the pad of their trigger finger. This explains why European guns such as Walther, Pardini, Benelli, or Hammerli have such wide and adjustable trigger shoes.



SP HP trigger design

As well, levering triggers used on International sport pistols, might explain why so many bullseye shooters can't seem to transition from .22 to .45 pistols. Their trigger systems with multiple hinge pins and springs make them much more forgiving. Since two-thirds of our game is generally done with a .45—with its dumb 19th century straight bow trigger system—it's easy to appreciate what a skilled shooter can do after mastering the 1911.

The reverse logic could be used with the current setup for Marvel uppers. All these shooters pretty much gave up on their Euro-guns. Figuring the grips angles can now all be the same. But it still requires the skill to master a proper pull for a 1911 trigger.

I can see the logic in this. Euro-guns are almost too easy to shoot and might hold a lot of novice shooters back by retarding their skill levels. Skills that are required for the back 2/3's of a match.

For those shooters who made the investment and dedication to use .22 conversions—whether they know it or not—committed themselves to shoot better across the course with a far less sophisticated and unforgiving trigger mechanism.

Good for them. I believe most will profit from such a move. They're going to force themselves into learning how to shoot a 1911 type pistol.

For the past 8 or 9 years Brian Zins has made a concerted effort to promote using the trigger-finger's first joint to facilitate a Zins' grip. In doing so most shooters might require a short trigger for their 1911, to accommodate the hand being slightly rotated over the front strap. It's a substantial change from a traditional in-line grip.

A Zins' grip can feel dramatically different. But this may explain why you see so many 1911s on the line with short triggers.

I've seen novice shooters get casual advice from more advanced shooters about finger placement. Some might suggest the new shooter place their finger on the trigger where they want it located; then grasp the pistol to accommodate that finger's location.

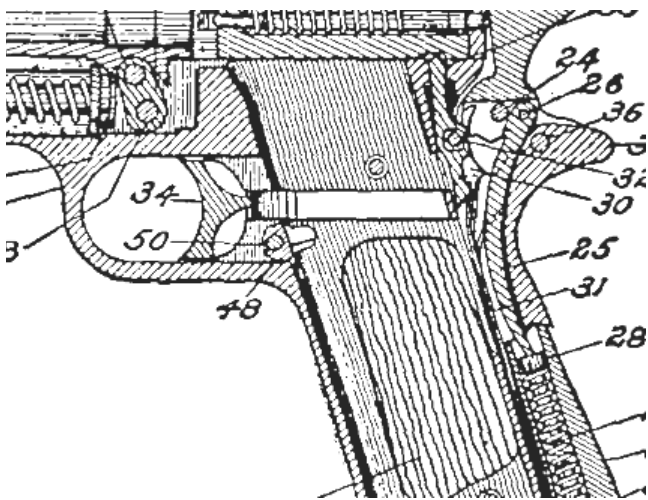
Well, that might be good advice for some or a potential disaster for others. Only experimentation will tell. This is where a new shooter would be wise to have two different guns (one possibly borrowed). Over a period of time a shooter should give each setup—standard or short trigger—enough live-fire time to make an informed decision.

2. Pull and Timing:

There's been a lot written about timing and pulling the trigger. Unfortunately I believe a lot of new shooters seem to confuse pull time with the other elements of the shot process, such as recovery. And if that's the case, a shooter is working too many things simultaneously.

Good trigger execution and follow through is a completely separate process than settling in or recovery. It's only one part of the shot process.

The consensus of skilled shooters that I've known appear to promote a simple and deliberate pull. Obviously it's easier said than done. The AMU has some information about this in their publication [The Army Marksmanship Pistol Training Guide](#). Here's a quote to give you a better idea:



1911 trigger diagram

“In order to fire a controlled shot the shooter must learn to increase the pressure on the trigger positively, smoothly, gradually, and evenly. This does not mean, however, that the trigger must be pressed slowly. It must be pressed smoothly, without interruption, but the release of the trigger must take no more than 2 to 5 seconds. Numerous accurate rapid fire strings of five shots in ten seconds are fired in a cycle that allows only one second or less to employ the principals of correct trigger control.”

Yeah, pressing slowly equals bad.

Am I suggesting you can go out there and just yank things around? Heck no. But many new shooters don't know the difference between a controlled pull, staging the trigger and chicken finger. You'll need to release the round anywhere between ½ to 5 seconds.

Make no bones about it, in this context timing means: from the time one initiates the actual trigger pull (after the take-up) until the time the shot is released.

Many years ago the late Don Nygord used the word "aggressive" to describe what he thought a deliberate trigger pull should feel like. And as well he was a big believer in pulling the trigger the entire way back, holding it into the frame, until after recovery of the sight picture was reacquired.

Once the sight picture was reacquired, the shooter would slightly let off on the trigger to allow for it to reset.

There are several benefits to keeping the trigger in the frame after releasing the round. The first being less movement of the trigger to obtain a release on subsequent shots. And the other is being able to promote a consistent grip throughout a sustained fire string. Don believed this was nothing more than a good habit to be applied to all trigger pulls, slow fire or sustained.

Since I mentioned chicken finger, a process we're all well acquainted with, good trigger timing helps to eliminate this scourge. A shooter must keep in mind chicken finger is a process where the mind desires to make everything in the shot process flawless; it's intertwined with anticipation of yet to occur errors. Possibly a better way of expressing this is: a shooter is subconsciously trying to make a shot too perfect, and in the process is fearful they'll just screw things up.

In Part II I'll review several drills one can use to help promote a good trigger pull. And as well I'll provide some drills that'll hopefully help us stay away from some bad habits.

Sadly, I think there are a lot of people dry firing with little purpose. And a lot more not knowing what feedback they should be looking for.

[Finesse with Sustained Fire](#)

Since the last post dealt with sustained fire I thought I'd ratchet it up a notch. There's an old Bullseye saying: "A match is won during slow fire and lost during rapid fire."

Kind of like stating the obvious isn't it? Ya need all the points you can lay your hands on and who wants to give up any at the backend. Most newbies find the slow fire phase as one of the most challenging parts to master but at times one can be lulled into a false sense of security with scoring 94 to 97 points on a sustained fire target. Many will assume that time by itself will increase those scores.

Since there's plenty of texts dealing with slow fire in the blog, let's look at some advanced sustained fire techniques.

A few words of warning, these items are somewhat of a radical departure from traditional shooting. They're not generally noticeable by watching a skilled shooter, but what the hey, they're a set of handy techniques that may be useful in the future. Caution should prevail if you believe they're worthwhile; practice them for a substantial amount of time before trying to use them cold at a match.

- As mentioned in previous posts, I firmly believe that an immediate breaking shot as the target turns is incredibly useful. Less than a quarter of a second after the target turns, the shot should break. Many advanced shooters state that they'll apply trigger pressure once they notice any target movement on anticipation of seeing the full face. This leaves you with nine, almost ten seconds for the remaining four shots. One shot drills are the way to accomplish this.

- Learn to keep the trigger depressed in the frame after the shot breaks. In this environment the first shot has been released, the hammer is locked back and the disconnecter hasn't reset. Hold the trigger in while you're reacquiring the sight picture and as you make a commitment to manage the trigger, slightly release the trigger only enough to allow the disconnecter to engage. Allow your finger to travel no farther forward while maintaining positive pressure, and when you can make a shot commitment, re-pull the trigger. What you'll notice is all of the pretravel will have been eliminated and the remaining amount of trigger weight might be something like only a pound, its very light. It's easy to release a shot like this, and for some, too easy. On occasion the gun can get away from you, to the uninitiated it might appear that you're having an untended double. It takes a little practice. Dry fire using this method (after the gun has been cleared of ammunition) by depressing the trigger, rack the slide, and then ever so slightly release enough weight to feel and hear the click of the disconnecter engaging.

- During a TF or RF string, and after utilizing the above two techniques, learn how to abort a shot during sustained fire. Clearly we have time now and if your sight alignment doesn't look almost perfect—slightly steer the gun away

(out to the 6 or 7 ring) and start over again. Don't get all caught up in the mental clutter of needing good rhythm, that'll arrive by itself from good shot execution; be more concerned about "not giving up on the shot." If you normally come down (or up for that matter) on the bullseye start over and replicate the settling in phase and simply release the disconnecter when it arrives in the bullseye, then go for it.

Sometime ago I posted on how to use one shot drills and in the process inserted a [video boosted from the AMU](#). In its raw version it simply shows a shooter (from their own visual perspective) what it looks like to clean a rapid fire target. Keep an open mind and think of what it would be like to shoot this target by using the three techniques mentioned above. All three can be clearly seen in their application.

It would explain how some of those shots were executed so quickly and at the same time accurately. You can't get the same results by pumping the trigger.