

SOUND SHOOTING POSITION

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A sound shooting position is made up of a number of elements. These can be identified as: natural point of aim, consistency, balance/support, comfort, and (for every competitor) legal.

These elements are common to all shooting positions. The amount of detail may also change as a shooter's skill increases. But the basic elements do not change.

Natural Point of Aim (NPA):

What makes up NPA and how to check NPA??? Put simply, the NPA is precisely where the rifle is pointing when you are not using your eyes to force it to the target. The radar systems we have (ie eyes) always help guide us to the target, much like a heat-seeking missile. We can be bluffed into thinking that the body is holding the rifle on the target, when all the while it is the eyes that are doing most of the work.

Testing this out is simple - Set up your position with your eyes open and really be sure that you are right. Complete this a few times to ensure your correct position and dry fire a couple of times. Then take the rifle out of your shoulder.....breath twice.....and start the process over again....but this time do the whole thing with your eyes closed. Just before you are about to take the dry-fire shot, open your eyes and note where the rifle is pointing:

- **If you are roughly on target**.....congratulations!!!! Your body was indeed in command and your eyes only complement your NPA.
- **If you are close to the target**.....good!!! More work needed on paying attention to the little things. You can improve by working on the feel of your position.
- **If you are not even close to the target**.....oops!!!! Your eyes are in charge and often coerce you into thinking that the rifle barrel is pointed towards the middle. Wriggle around and more dry fire practice for you.

Consistency:

Shooters must consistently duplicate the same shooting procedure every time they assume a shooting position. Improved consistency = improved performance.

One of the keys to shooting a small group is consistency. That means consistency in everything you do. It means consistency in position of the body, the feet; consistent muscle tension in the legs, back, arms and grip; consistent positioning of the stock into the shoulder the degree of canting, and the head on the stock, even down to the clothes you wear - have your "shooting clothes" as distinct from your "normal clothes". The entire shooting process needs to be the same from shot to shot, day to day. Everything has to be done the same way, every time. As the skill level improves, work on being able to consistently produce the new skill.

Changes that your coach may recommend need to be recorded in the diary and worked in over time so that they become part of the habit. Changes need practice so that they become consistently part of your model shot process.

Have a checklist and stick to it. When you dry-fire at home or on the range, be just as consistent with your process and position. Dry firing is the training of the body and mind to produce your best shot on demand.

Balance/Support:

For the prone shooter, support is greater than balance. For all other positions, balance is the keyword. To be in harmony with the body to produce the skill required of a position shooter (air or .22) needs work and adherence to some basic guidelines.

- A body without muscle stress will perform for longer periods at a higher level
- Positions can be achieved or reworked to promote muscle support and better balance.
- A fit body has extra reserves that can be directed to better balance.
- Balance can be practiced at home - ask your State Coach for some balance exercises, or contact the writer.
- Dry firing is an excellent way of training your muscles and your brain.

Comfort:

Comfort is important and necessary to a good shooting position. When a match is to be conducted over 3-4 hours, or even the 20 shot detail, those in pain will soon lose their ability to stay in touch with what they are doing, and moreover lose their desire to try. There should be a balance between comfort and reliable performance technique. Sharp pain in any area of the body should be investigated - talk to your coach about it and together find a solution.

Legal:

Competitive shooters' positions must be legal that is, positions must conform to the rules for the disciplines as set by the ISSF and TRA. Check with your local ISSF or TRA Judge.....obtain a ISSF Rule Book to be sure of your rights and responsibilities.

Now, over to you - have fun