

Small-bore Target Shooting

Open Shoots, a Guide

to the Practicalities of Competing

Introduction

This document has been written as a guide to people new to attending small-bore rifle open shoots. It can not hope to be a panacea but it does cover most of the basics of the mundane practicalities that you will need to know for attending a prone small-bore target shooting competition. It is not intended to be a manual on how to shoot, but a few tips are given.

As I only shoot prone I can't advise you on the practical matters of 3P – perhaps a 3P shooter would like to inform me on 3P shooting aspects not covered by this document?

As you can see from the revision note below the contents are not carved in stone the document is constantly under review. If you see an omission or factual error contained within these pages please let me know.

The pages have been formatted with one wide margin and for duplex, back to back, printing so that you save on paper and can put them into a ring-binder or the like.

Latest revision should be available from <http://www.krpc.co.uk/osg.pdf>

Open Shoots, a Guide, Rev. 25

Martin Ives, 19 March 2006

(My proof reader has not been through this version – all typos etc. are my fault.)

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Revisions

22a – Copyright added.

22b – Having been to Eley batch testing the notes on misfires has been amended and extended.

23 – Notes on RCO commands and minor editing.

24 – Edit of serious cock-up in a previous edit regarding cross shots. (I should learn to read what I write rather than think that I'm reading what I have written.) Addition to the part on counting shots, a note on supersonic ammunition and an minor addition in the malfunctions section.

25 – Appleton RC now require you to pick up your empty cases.

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Basics

Safety

Always have a safety flag in the breech of the rifle when you are not actually shooting and the rifle is out of its case or slip. Some clubs require you to use a safety flag, others do not. Get into the habit of always using it. It is simply good sense.

Listen to and obey the Range Conducting Officer, he or she has the authority to kick you out of the competition and off the range. (More on Range Conducting Officers below.)

It is good practice to remove the bolt or action from your rifle when transporting it, and keep it apart from the rifle – NOT in the rifle case. If the rifle is stolen in this state, it is as good as useless and the Police may not be as displeased as they otherwise might be.

Not strictly safety, but it still needs to be emphasised. Always have your Firearms Certificate (FAC) with you when travelling to a shoot. If the police stop you they can take your firearms and ammunition away **immediately** if you cannot prove that you have permission to hold them. (Note: If stopped it may be prudent to inform the police within the first few sentences that you have “an unloaded firearm in the car.”)

Before You Depart

Check that you have got everything that you need to compete. There is a story of an X Class competitor setting off from the north east of England to go to Bisley and getting a very long way down the road before realising that he had left the bolt for his rifle at home. And I know a man that got a ticket for excess speed as he raced home to collect the bolt for his rifle. You have been warned.

Know where you are going. If you have not been to the venue before make sure that you get directions or go with someone who knows the way. I went to a shoot in the north east one time and spent, what seemed like an age, being driven around while the driver and I tried to sort out just where we should be. We never did find the range.

An Average

Unless you are so good that you are shooting in A or X (if you are in A or X you should know everything in this document) you will need to have a completed entry form stating your average and the entry will need to be counter-signed by your club captain or secretary. The average should be for short range cards unless otherwise stated. Some clubs will accept a note stating your average if you do not have an entry form.

You should note that for some clubs you will need to submit an average for the last 10, or even 12, competition cards that you shot. Others may want an average for the best five of the last six team cards that you shot.

If you are taking a note from you club and don't know which average the hosting club will want, take note of you average calculated as an average for the last ten cards and best five of the last six and take a witnessed comprehensive list of the last dozen scored cards, the score and the competition details, and then your average can be worked out on the day if the organisers use some other method.

“But I've only just started and have not shot any competition cards that have been scored.” Then you will need to shoot a dozen cards and get them scored by a member of your club, preferably the stats or competitions officer or a committee member, and get the club captain or secretary to witness the scores as being correct.

What to Enter

At most events you will probably be shooting a number of competitions concurrently. Enter an inside (indoor) shoot and you will most likely be entering an aggregate competition, the sum of your scores on all the cards you shoot, and one, two or more other competitions which comprise of one or more of the cards that you will shoot.

At an inside shoot of six cards, a number of clubs seem to use cards 1 and 2 and 3 to 6 for the minor competitions. (Dumfries run an odd one where the third card counts twice in the minor competitions – Comp 1 is cards 1, 3, and 5, Comp 2 is cards 2, 3, 4 and 6.)

You may also be eligible for Junior, Ladies or Veteran competitions if they are being run.

When shooting outside (outdoors) you may get an option to enter a number of open competitions. There may also be confined competitions which restrict entry to individuals from a specific county or area.

You may also be able to enter an “Own Start” competition in which you specify the number of points you expect to drop. When shooting the card(s) you must try to drop exactly the number of points you specified before you started to shoot. You will be required to specify a start within a few points of your average. Needless to say if the own start is being run concurrently with a gun score competition you should shoot to the best of your abilities.

There may also be pairs and team competitions, in which you must make pairs and team entries before the first member of the pair/team commences shooting. At some venues the pairs and team competitions may be run as “Handicap” competitions, X/A class being scratch shooters and the other classes being given a “start” of a number of points.

Actually Competing

RCOs

When you attend an open shoot, the range will be under the control of a Range Officer or more correctly a Range Conducting Officer (RCO). It may be that the size of the shoot requires two or more RCOs to “police” the range during the shoot.

The primary responsibility of the RCO(s) is to ensure a safe shoot. They are also there to see that everyone gets an opportunity to compete fairly. The RCO is not God but he/she is not far away as far as the competitor is concerned.

Please listen carefully to announcements made by the RCO and comply with all safety instructions immediately! Failure to comply with an RCO’s instruction, or unsafe handling of your rifle, could result in you being stopped from competing, being excluded from the range and quite possibly reported to the police and/or NSRA/NRA (if your safety infringement is sufficiently extreme.)

Depending upon the shoot, and prevailing rules, the RCO will, before commencement of shooting, probably make you aware of some, or all, of the following;

- ◆ The course of fire, time permitted to complete the course of fire.
- ◆ Start and stop signals and what he will do should he/she need to call an emergency cessation of fire, and what you should do in that event.
- ◆ Firearm handling and other local safety issues.
- ◆ What to do with shot cards.
- ◆ What he will do in the event of a range malfunction.
- ◆ What you should do in the event of an equipment malfunction/failure.

If you do not hear what the RCO has said, or do not understand, ask the RCO to repeat his/her instruction or ask a fellow competitor. If you are wise you will have listened to the RCO for the detail before you are due to start shooting, that way you will know the form before you get down to shoot.

Malfunctions

A malfunction is generally when your rifle or other piece of equipment suffers a catastrophic failure that results in further participation being unsafe or impossible. Failures on your part to put the sights on your rifle, or falling off during a detail (I've seen it happen), or insert the bolt cannot be regarded as equipment failures – they're simple “brain failure”. A round halfway down the barrel or trigger failures can be regarded as malfunctions.

However, a broken sling or a scope self-destructing may well be generally considered equipment failures as well. A failure along these lines will leave you at the mercy/discretion of the RCO/Club or event organisers. You may find that some RCO will permit you an incident of brain failure but please don't bank on it.

If you have a failure during a detail you should, if you can, make your rifle safe and then get the attention of the RCO, normally this will be achieved by raising your trigger arm to a point where the RCO can see it. It is also possible that you could have an equipment failure some time before the start of a detail, in this event find the/a RCO and tell him/her about your problem.

Again, generally the RCO will, upon seeing your signal mid-detail, make a note of the time remaining for the detail and then come to find out what your problem is. If the RCO considers you to have an equipment failure he will give you time to rectify the failure, if it is a failure that is it possible to recover from. Once you have rectified the problem you will, probably, be given an appropriate amount of time to complete your card.

Inside Competitions

For a shoot that is held inside (indoors) all you need to do is turn up, before you are booked (also known as squadded) to shoot (if you made a prior booking.) Despite the fact that attendance at indoor open shoots may be in terminal decline, it is always best to book a firing point rather than just turning up (As a general rule an inside shoot will have far fewer firing points than an outside.) Depending on your routine, your arrival time could be as little as 10 minutes or as much as an hour or more before you are due to shoot. If you are prudent, it will always be considerably more than 10 minutes.

Besides your normal equipment and sufficient ammunition, the only other thing you will need is a device for keeping time. Most clubs these days require you to shoot 2 cards of 20 counting shots, with unlimited sighters in 15 minutes. Some clubs will give you 17 minutes for the first detail.

Again, depending on the club you may be given “preparation time” immediately to prior to shooting when you may shoulder the rifle but not load it. Some clubs allow “Dry Firing”, when the rifle may be fired WITHOUT loading a round into the chamber.

One or two clubs still seem to run shoots where you shoot one card at a time. (Seems crazy to me when you will have to shoot 20 counting shots in one go when shooting outside, but what do I know.)

I suggest that you record an estimate of your scores (preferably on paper). Errors in scoring and in the recording of scores do, occasionally, happen. If you challenge a score you need to be confident of your scores. Challenges normally require a fee of £1-2, returned if your challenge is upheld. (More on Scores, Scoring and Position towards the end of this document.)

When everyone has finished shooting clean up your brass and when instructed clear the firing point.

Most clubs will make the effort to provide refreshments for competitors. But they can be very variable in quality. When you eat is up to you. Some people will not eat until they have finished shooting, others don't worry about it. (If I am hungry and I have more than half an hour before I'm to shoot I will “take on fuel”.)

Outside Competitions

Shooting outside is a whole new “ball game” so I have split the information into blocks for ease of understanding.

Safety - Additional outside specific information

Do not leave your rifle unattended at any time. If you need to use a toilet when your kit is not on the firing point, ask someone you know to keep an eye on it or lock it in your car. Make some attempt to make it secure from theft. At some venues you may see other people abandoning their rifles - **do not follow suit!** Your rifle is your responsibility if you fail to demonstrate due care to the security of the rifle you could lose your right to keep it.

If shooting at an open shoot, the Range Control Officer will normally brief the shooters on any special safety rules and the commands that will be used during the shoot. You need to know what the start, stop and emergency stop commands/sounds are. Some ranges will use whistles, hooters and/or voice commands.

When shooting outside you must not walk forward of the firing point until given permission to do so by the RCO, probably using the command “Change targets.” When he/she calls “No more targets.” you must NOT walk forward, but it is okay if you are already part way down the range to continue on and set your targets.

Occasionally a wind flag may be in your line of fire. Flags may only be moved by an RCO or when given permission to move the flag by an RCO. (More on this below.)

Having put your rifle together and placed it on the firing point **do not touch it** until you receive the command from the Range Conducting Officer to “Start”, “Commence Shooting”, “Commence Fire” or a start signal. “Start” and “Stop” are now the preferred commands as there is a reduced possibility of misunderstanding Start and Stop as compared to Commence Shooting and Cease Fire.

Additional Kit

When shooting outside you will need, in addition to your usual kit and timepiece, a pen (not water soluble, water soluble will wash off in the rain) and some “Bulldog” or “fold-back” clips to secure to cards. You should have a minimum of 16 strong clips.

The wind can blow target cards off target frames, if you are judged to have used insufficient clips or clips that are judged “unsuitable” to secure your cards, you could be excluded from the competition! You must use a minimum eight clips to secure a 100 yard card, if you do not want to run the risk of exclusion from a competition. But that is eight clips not 16, I hear you say. Read on, all will become clear.

Arrival Time, Targets and Course of Fire

When attending an outside shoot give yourself a bit more time than for an inside shoot. I have never attended an indoor shoot where I have had to “make up” my own cards, and I have never attended an outside shoot where I have not had to make up my own cards. (I am informed by a proof reader that his range always makes your cards up for you, but I suspect that this is unusual.) You will probably also have to book firing points (see Range Etiquette – Right and Left-Handed below) and do more walking between car and ranges, so give yourself a little extra time.

How you mark up your cards is dependent upon the shoot that you are attending. Also dependent upon the shoot is the number and types of cards you will shoot. Some clubs will give you stickers others require you to do everything for yourself. More on this later.

The competition course of fire will be published in the programme for the event. It may be as little as 60 counting shots, but more normal is 80 or 120 counting shots – a total of two to

three hours shooting. A detail outside will be of 20 minutes duration with ten minutes turn round time (two details an hour.)

It is very much personal preference as to which range to shoot first, 50 metres/yards or 100 yards. For my own part I like to do the 100's first, but the choice is entirely up to you. However, as wind and/or light conditions generally have a greater effect at 100 yards you would be wise to consider wind and light before committing to one range or the other. It is normal to give yourself at least an hour break between ranges.

If the competition(s) are squadded you will have no choice, you must shoot on the appointed firing point at the appointed time at the appointed range – make sure that you are there and ready to compete!

Courses of Fire:

- ◆ English Match is a total of 60 counting shots at 50 metres
- ◆ Scottish Match is a total of 60 counting shots at 100 yards.
- ◆ Dewar is a total of 40 counting shots, 20 shots at 50 metres/yards and 20 shots at 100 yards.

If a match is quoted as double one of the above courses of fire, you can assume it is twice the number of shots at each distance. Again, depending on the competition, you may be required to use backers.

Backing targets are blank targets, used behind your normal aiming targets. There are two reasons for using backing targets. The first reason is to help the see your shot holes and the second is as a competitor's aid to help the scorer determine any cross shots (cross shooting is the act of shooting onto another competitor's card) and backers can be very useful for seeing multiple shots through the same hole.

A backer can be either an unprinted piece of target card or, to save on expenditure, a used/shot card that has the shot holes covered, on the back of the card, with sticky labels and that is then hung back to front. (Appleton RC use virgin backers at 100 yards and cut down shot 100 yard cards at 50 yards/metres). In all cases the backer is placed on a frame up to about a metre behind your target card. That is why you need 16 clips, eight for the target card and eight for the backer.

Marking up your cards will require you to make the card identifiable as yours by affixing a label/sticker or writing your competitor number and/or name on your target. You will also need to write on your firing point number and the number/time of the detail, on which you shoot the card. Write the firing point and detail information on the backers if you are required to use them.

At Bisley and the Scottish ensure that you put the correct labels/stickers on your cards. Get it wrong and you'll be sending money on replacements and have the embarrassment of explaining to the RCO why you have the wrong label on your card.

If you fail to put a label on your card at Bisley or the Scottish and you will have to go out to your card, with everyone watching, to affix the label(s) before the detail can start!

The cards should be marked **before** you put the card up to be shot. There are small boxes on the left side of the target card in which to write the detail info. Where you write the competitor information is dependant upon the club at which you are shooting. **Please listen to the club officials and write your details or place the stickers in the requested position.**

Just because it is your first detail it does not mean that you write detail one on your cards – I've seen it and more than once. **Ensure that you have the correct information for the firing point and detail written on your cards.**

In the case of national open competitions, “The Scottish” and “Bisley”, you are required to use a backer. You are also required to put your sticker(s) on the top of the card and write your firing point number and detail number twice on the card, in the boxes on the left hand side of the card, and once on the backer. Despite the fact that the Range Officer tells the people on the firing point this every single detail, some people still fail to do it. Once all cards have been hung, and before the detail starts, the RCO will strike through all the stickers on the cards, so that no extra stickers can be added or removed after shooting.

Another note for national meetings, ALL targets must have stickers, even practice cards. Practice stickers can be bought from the “Stats Tent” and ALL shot cards must be handed into stats. Even practice cards.

Firing Points – Setting up on and clearing from

Never attempt to move your equipment onto a firing point during a detail! The back of the firing points may be very well defined or not defined at all. As a general rule if the back of the firing points is not defined do not go within five metres of the firing line while shooting is in progress. If the back of the firing points is defined do not cross the line while a detail is in progress.

The delineation of the firing point you are to shoot on can be very vague. There should be, if nothing else, a number on the ground that corresponds to a number over a target frame at the butts.

Each competitor should have the same area in which to set up and shoot from, ensure that when you move your kit onto the firing point that you do not encroach on another competitor's firing point.

At the end of the detail, or before if ALL around you have finished shooting, move your kit to the back of the firing point. This will enable the person coming on to shoot, to start setting up as soon as possible, once the end of the detail is called.

Please see more on this subject toward the end of this document under Range Etiquette.

Hanging and Removing Your Cards

As already stated, outside you will have a 10 minute period between details in which to hang/put up your card and get ready to shoot, or in which to change your cards if mid-way through a course of fire.

I suggest that you are best advised to put your cards up as soon as you can. If the Range Officer calls “No more targets” and you have not got your card up, you will not be permitted to shoot the detail. You can get your rifle and yourself ready even after everyone else has started shooting but you can't put a card up.

Take care in where you place your clips. If you put them in the wrong place they can effect your sight picture – try to keep your clips as far from the target diagrams as practicably possible as shown in Fig. i.

Most of the time six clips will be fine at 50, but in high winds you may need eight.

Please ensure that you put your backer up with your firing point and detail information to the front and at the top.

Once the detail has finished and only after the Range Officer has told you to “Change targets”, walk forward to change your cards.

You will need about four hands to achieve this task in high winds! (In high winds it may be advantageous to come an arrangement with another competitor whereby you help each other hang the cards.) The paper used for the targets is designed to give clean shot holes and to do this it needs to be made with short fibres which results in a weak, very easily torn, paper. Take care when handling your target card, particularly when wet.

You must then hand your shot card in to be scored, it is venue-dependant as to how you do this. Ensure that the backer is the right way round and the top is upper most – make the scores life a little easier please.

At a number of places you should give your card to a Range Officer. At others you may be required to return them to a given point, as instructed by the Range Officer. At the Scottish and Bisley meetings you have to take the cards to the “Stats Tent” or to other small tents at the back of the firing points.

Wind Flag Alignment

Once your cards are up you should check the flag alignment. With your shooting mat in place, lie down to see that there are no wind flags in your line of fire – **do not pick up your rifle!** You need to do this before the start of the detail. No one is going to move a flag once the detail has started. If there is a flag in your line of fire contact an RCO as soon as you can and ask him/her if they will move the flag for you or ask if you can move the flag.

If you have to move the flag ideally you will get someone to move the flag while you are on your shooting mat to check the alignment. Be careful not to move the flag into another competitors line of fire.

Shooting the cards

When shooting outside in open competition you will very probably be shooting on the “Three Card System.” At 50 yards/metres you will have two sighting diagrams and four scoring diagrams in three rows of two columns. (When shooting American 50 yard/metre targets, you only get one central sighting diagram.). At 100 yards you get only one sighting diagram and two scoring diagrams in a single column as shown in Fig. i.

The top diagram(s) at all distances are used for sighting with the lower ones counting for the competition. If you look at the most NSRA cards you will see a dotted line indicating the target area. Do not “drop” any shots into the target area while you are getting sighted in, you will lose ten points with each shot! Remember that any stray shot in the scoring area, will require one less shot that you can put in the black – you should have a total of 20 shots in the target area, no more and no less.

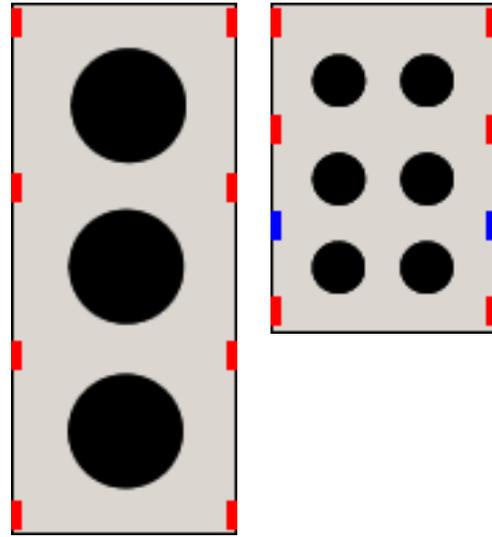


Fig. i

Changing your sights

In practice you will only need to go up a little when changing from 25 yards to 50 yards/metres – six to 12 clicks. (The sights on my 2013 are an exception in that I need to 25 clicks in going from 25 to 50 and another 100 to get to 100 yards.)

But you will need to go up handfuls when moving from 50 yards to 100 yards (the bullet drops around eight inches or 200mm over the extra distance.) If in doubt, put some extra elevation on! You will not lose points for shooting at the top of the target, but you will if you shoot below the sighting diagram and into the target area. (I have done it. Ten points lost with the first shot, on a card that finished a 187. Would have been in the hunt for a trophy but for the ten points lost.)

Also, remember that if you shoot with a cant to your rifle, and you do not have a cant adjustable back sight you will need to go sideways as well as up or down when changing target range. And the wind can have a huge effect over 100 yards be ready to put handfuls of windage on.

How much you need to go up when changing distance is down to your sights. Parker Hale sights on a B.S.A. Martini Mk II may only need 20 clicks or so when going from 50 to 100. Fine division Anschütz sights and the like, could need 80 plus.

As a little aside, I suggest that you have a “crib-card” to tell you which way to turn your sights to go left/right and up/down, until you are entirely happy with adjusting your sights. The last thing you want do is finish up turning the sights the wrong way. And once you know the approximate number of clicks for 50 yards, 50 metres and 100 yards, write this information on your crib-card. If in doubt, look at the card. Even International shots have been known to turn the sights the wrong way.

Getting sighted in

I suggest that you need to be bold when getting sighted in. When changing your sights do not do it by a click at a time. Be prepared to change the sights by ten or 20 clicks possibly more in one go! Don't be afraid of putting on or taking off “handfuls of clicks.”

You may need to take your time getting sighted in. Don't rush onto the scoring diagrams, you have 20 minutes to play with and at a push you should be able to get rid of all 20 counting shot comfortably within three minutes and with surprising accuracy, providing that you are not scoping each shot.

However, if you're happy with where the shots are going on the sighter do not mess about on the sighter. Get onto the scoring diagrams and get the card shot. You do not want to be caught by the conditions changing if you can avoid it.

When adjusting for windage you will need to increase or reduce elevation as well and changing the windage. Why, because the spin of the bullet has an aerodynamic effect causing the bullet to rise when the wind is from the right and fall when it is from the left. The effect is not huge but it is there. If you have to put handfuls of windage on you will, almost certainly, need to change the elevation.

Counting shots

Having sighted in, remember that you are shooting 20 counting shots. Put five shots on each counting diagram at 50 and ten on each diagram at 100 yards. Any misplaced shots will get you penalty points – e.g. cross shooting on yourself. That said, if you are in doubt at to how many shots you have on a card, if you shoot a card and still seem to have one round left to fire, shoot it at the card.

Better to lose a few points because of an extra shot than ten points because you have only 19 counting shots. In the case of extra shots on the card the 20 worst shots count and a penalty for each extra shot.

I advise that you implement a system for tallying your shots, be it with an ammo box or as I do with two boxes of ammunition. A system where by you don't have to count your shots because you start each detail with twenty "counting" rounds, rounds separated from your sighters. With separate boxes you can close your sighters box when you are sighted in and ready to start your match. With such a system you are less likely to put extra shots or too few shots on you cards.

Reading your card

Remember that it is one shot at a time. Get a bad shot, learn by it if you can, then forget it. It's gone and you can't get back the lost points. That said, when you are shooting outside you are shooting groups. If groups are in the wrong place – not in the middle of the diagram – change the sights to move the group into the middle. Read your card!

Watching the Wind

This is a subject for a document by itself, one that I am not qualified to write, but I will make a few notes here. To shoot successfully outside, it is imperative to learn to "Read the wind." It may be helpful for you to watch other shooters to see what the wind is like, when they fire and the results they get.

Get behind a competitor and position your scope so that you can see their card. Watch the flags for when their shot is fired, then look to see where it went. What you can't hope to know is if the competitor is having a good or a bad day and whether he or she is "shading" or "aiming off". But watching another competitor may give you some idea as to what the wind is doing.

Remember also that it is not only the strength of the wind that counts, but the direction. A wind of the same strength from two o'clock, will affect the flight of the bullet differently from a wind at three or five o'clock. You must watch for the subtle changes in the wind.

Don't simply rely on the flags! Feel what the wind is doing around you. It could be that you are in the middle of a gust while the area between you and the targets, is not. Wind on the bullet as it leaves the barrel of your rifle is going to have far more effect on your score, than a wind that catches the bullet a few metres from the target. In conditions of very light or no apparent wind, it can be helpful to observe the direction of the "mirage" through your spotting scope.

Changing Wind – "Sitting it out"

It is inevitable that you will just get have got sighted in and the wind will change making your sight settings useless. Be prepared to "Sit it out". Wait to see if your wind conditions will come back. Keep an eye on your clock but don't rush into making changes to your sight settings, like as not your wind will come back. And when your wind does come back don't mess about – get the card shot.

Light

Changes in the level of light can impact on your shooting. The refractive index of the air changes with temperature. As a general rule – "Light up, sights up. Light down, sights down." If your shot group moves vertically and the light has changed, you will know what is going on. The changes in refractive index are, in part, due to the density of the air changing with temperature which changes how easy it is for the bullet to pass through the air. Colder air equals more bullet drop. *Please see the Light Caveat at the end of this document.*

Going Back onto the Sighter

Unless the competition rules prohibit it, be prepared to go back onto the sighter if things are going "pear shaped". The wind changes, you lose position, you have a malfunction. What ever the cause, if you are not shooting to the level that you were just a few minutes earlier, go back onto the sighter if you think it will help you.

Cross Shooting

You should not do it! If you do it by accident it will cost you points and it possibly indicates an error in your technique. **If you cross shoot on purpose you will be disqualified.**

Please read this carefully as you will, inevitably, accidentally cross-shoot and be the recipient of cross shots. It is important that you understand what to do when it eventually happens.

When you shoot onto your target all the shot holes in the target and backer will align perfectly. If you cross shoot onto another competitors card, or they cross shoot onto your card, the hole made in the target will not align with the hole in the backer, there is a parallax error. Experienced scorers can tell where the cross shot has come from very easily.

If you are the offender – If you cross shoot on to another competitors card and know that you have done so, **do not put 20 counting shots on your own card!** Only shoot a total of 20 counting shots, regardless of which card they finish up on. Extra shots on scoring diagrams will cost you yet more points.

If you know that you have cross shot, apologise to the recipient of your error at the end of the detail and mark your card with the details including the recipient firing point number to tell the scorer where the shots went. If the recipient of your error is willing, get him/her to make a note on his/her card regarding your cross shots.

If you are the recipient – If someone cross shoots onto your card, **continue to put all 20 counting shots onto your own card!** The cross shots are not your problem, except that you can get degraded information on how you are shooting. Otherwise cross shots are a problem for the cross shooter and the scorer.

If you know that you have received a cross shot, but no one owns up, still make a note on you card to the effect. If you are shooting without a backer this one can get a bit tricky. It is not unknown for the odd competitor to cross shoot and either not know that they had done it, or not own up.

Don't forget with cross shots, the all holes in the card and in the backer will not line up perfectly. Got a bad shot on your card that can't possibly be you - check it to see if the holes line up. Sadly most of the time all will line up perfectly.

You may wish to paint your clips so that you can more easily identify your card. (Not permitted in the USA.)

Scoring, Scores and Position

Scoring: Don't forget that inside cards are outward gauging – if the shot hole crosses the line it is out and you get the lower value. Shooting outside, the cards are inward gauging – if the shot hole is outside the line, but still touching, the shot is in and you get the higher value score.

Scores: How your scores are displayed after you have finished shooting, is club/event dependent and there seem to be as many ways of presenting the scores as there are clubs (the system used at Camp Perry in the USA is a total mystery to me.)

Normally the scores will be listed by class. Some clubs will show the points scored whilst others will show the points dropped e.g. 192 or 8. When shooting outside you may also see an "X" count score for the number of "X ring" or "carton" bulls (the ring inside the 10 ring of the target diagram) that have been scored on 100 yard cards. At the Appleton Rifle Club "American 1200" you will also see an X count for the 50 yard cards.

Appleton is technologically advanced, with the results being shown on easily accessible computer monitors. Most other events you attend will have a paper printout of the scores or a hand written results table. Please note that some clubs/event organisers try to keep the results as current as possible, others can be a little slow in publishing your scores.

Position: Tied scores. Most clubs these days seem to use the “Count Back” system to resolve tied scores. The count back system works as follows. Should two competitors have the same total for the cards in a given competition the person with the best last card will win. (Two competitors on a total of four points dropped, Fred Bloggs on 2 and 2 and Jane Doe on 3 and 1. Jane gets the place/win because she only dropped one point on her last card where Fred dropped two.)

When shooting outside and Xs are being scored the X count will be the primary means of resolving ties not count back.

Where a place can't be resolved by count back or X count, graduated gauges can be used. A series of gauges that get progressively larger, are used to score the cards again, until one score is better than the other.

Range Etiquette

Please show consideration for your fellow competitors. As said previously, don't spread into other competitors firing points.

As soon as you finish shooting, replace your safety flag in the breech of the rifle. If you have finished shooting and you have people around you who are still shooting, you may remove your rifle from your shoulder and put it down. Otherwise, you should not move. **Do not start to clean up your empties, recharge your ammo box or anything else that may be a distraction to the people who are still shooting.**

Once the people either side of you have finished shooting, preferably at least two people on either side have finished shooting, you may withdraw to the back of the firing point. While competitors continue to shoot, you should keep your movements and noise on the firing point to a minimum. Do not move your rifle at this stage, only remove your rifle when ALL the competitors around you have finished shooting or at the end of the detail.

You will be expected to clear up your empty cases. Always make an effort to clear up your brass, but do not delay someone coming onto the point by clearing up brass.

When you are at the back of a firing point please keep the noise down. If you smoke please ensure that your smoke will not be blown forward over the shooters – the smell of tobacco smoke can be very distracting for some competitors.

Turn your mobile off or set it to silent, most ranges specify **OFF**.

Right and Left-Handed

When booking a firing point you should consider which hand/shoulder you shoot with/from. Right-handed prone shooters lay with their legs to the left and left-handed people lay with their legs out to the right. In practice, so that individuals don't end up kicking each other, this means that left-handed people shoot on the right-hand end of the range and right-handed individuals use the rest of the range. If you shoot from the left shoulder you should tell someone as much when making an entry to a competition.

You will find that most organisers of inside shoots will squad for which hand you use, as will many outside shoot organisers. In some cases you will find that a few firing points on the right-hand end of a range are reserved for left-handed competitors.

If you shoot from the right shoulder, and there is no firing point allotment by the organiser, please don't use an extreme right-hand firing point if other firing points are free. You may cause other competitors problems by using an extreme right-hand point. Forcing a left-handed person to use a firing point that would have been fine for you but not is for them.

And 'lefties', do the converse. Use points on the right-hand end of the range. Don't book a point in the middle and then complain when a right-handed shooter interferes with your concentration by kicking you or invading your firing point.

Other Stuff

Ammunition

Ensure that you take enough ammunition with you, for the shoot. It is very probable that you will use much more ammunition for sighting outside, than you would inside. Take plenty! You can always use the unused stuff another day. As a “rule of thumb” take at least twice the course of fire, e.g. if the shoot is a double English Match of 120 shots, make sure you have at least 240 rounds of ammunition with you.

Note: Appleton RC prohibit the use of supersonic ammunition, other ranges may have similar rules. If you use supersonic ammo I suggest that you enquire of the shoot organisers before you attend if they object to its use.

Misfires

Very occasionally you will get an odd round that fails to fire. You can try cocking the bolt up and closing it and see if the round will fire at second time of asking. Or eject the round and reload it with a different section of the rim up and try again. (Personally I don't, if it won't go first time I put the round to one side.) If it still does not fire you should eject the round and put it somewhere safe. Remove the head before you dispose of it. And don't forget – you need a full compliment of shots on your cards – misfires don't count!

If you shoot Eley Match or Tenex you can put the round back into its original, batch numbered, packaging and take it to “Mr Eley” at Bisley or “The Scottish” and he may give you a box or two to replace the duff round providing that the striker mark is deep enough.

You should not leave any live ammunition on the firing point when you clear it! Even ones the seem to be duds.

Note: An increase in the number of misfires, particularly after changing brand of ammunition, could indicate a problem with the bolt of your rifle. Disassemble the bolt and clean it thoroughly and put it back together with a light coating of gun oil – not dripping wet and not, as I have seen, with the firing pin/striker packed in grease!

If the misfire problem persists you will need to get your rifle to a gunsmith. If you own an Anschutz you can take it to the very obliging gentlemen from Anschutz who come to the Bisley meeting each year.

Location and Notes

You may wish to make notes about how to get to the range and the range for future reference. Keep a record of your scores and the conditions to see if you improve from one year to the next. Also note any range or organisational peculiarities so you will be fully prepared for them on your next visit to the range.

Thank you

You may also wish to thank the shoot organisers before your departure, it takes quite some effort to mount some shoots and it does no harm at all to let them know that their efforts have been appreciated. You may also like to tell other shooters of venues that you have enjoyed and encourage them to compete at other ranges.

My thanks must be made to those people who have acted as proof reader/editor and contributor to these pages. They know who they are – your input has been most welcome. Thank you!

Light Caveat

One reviewer of this work, an X class shooter of many years standing I believe, says that the notes I have written on light only applies to blade sights. But another X class reviewer suggested additions to my original text which I added. And I third has told me that he finds the complete reverse of "Light up, sights up".

Personally I believe that the light levels changing can require a change in the elevation of the sights. However, what ever the truth is about changing light level the following does hold true.

If you find the centre of your group moving off the centre of the target diagram do not be afraid to change your sights to correct the error.

