

New Shooter Orientation

Rule one: Safety first, last and always.

Rule two: Have **FUN!**

Keep your muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times. That means when you are off the shooting line your pistols stay holstered and your long guns stay muzzle up with the action in an open position.

When you go to the loading table, keep your pistols and long guns pointed toward the berm while you load them. Shotguns stay empty until you pick them up on the stage. Holster your loaded pistols and keep your loaded rifle muzzle up with the hammer down on an empty chamber. If you have to leave the loading table for any reason, put your loaded handguns on the loading table first – muzzles pointed into the berm.

The scorekeeper will call your name when it is time for you to load your guns for the stage. The posse marshal will call “next shooter” or “shooter up” when it is your turn to shoot. You will stay at the loading table until called by the posse marshal to proceed to the shooting line. Keep muzzles up and stage your long guns as directed in the racks on the stage. **VERY IMPORTANT-** if you drop a loaded gun, you are through for the day. If the dropped gun is empty, it's only a stage DQ, but it'll still ruin your day, so be careful!

The marshal for your posse will be running the timer on that stage. When you come to the shooting line, the posse marshal will ask if you understand the course of fire on the stage. **NOW IS THE TIME TO ASK QUESTIONS IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.** Or, if you are not comfortable with part of the stage, say so. Don't be shy about asking questions or expressing your concerns.

The posse marshal will then ask if the “shooter is ready”. You signify by saying you are ready, or not ready. When you are ready to shoot the stage, the marshal will say “stand by”. After a second or two, the timer will beep. That's when you draw your first gun and start shooting.

At this time it would be wise to meditate on the wisdom of Judge Roy Bean - “You can't miss fast enough to win.” Or as Wilford Brimley put it in Crossfire Trail, “if you slow down a mite you will get a more harmonious outcome”. So **THINK!** A miss costs you five seconds, and a procedural penalty is ten seconds. Draw your first pistol and point it down range. It has to be raised up over 45 degrees before you cock the hammer. Get a good sight picture. Squeeze that trigger. Cock it, fire it. Repeat. Again. Once more.

At this point, we'll demonstrate the correct procedure for drawing a pistol from a cross draw holster in order to avoid breaking the 170 degree plane. Move your foot so that the cross draw pistol is pointed down range **BEFORE** it is drawn. Then, keeping the pistol muzzle aimed down range, turn back to face the target. This is commonly referred as the “cross draw dance”. If you wear a cross draw holster, you must do the cross draw dance.

(Note to R.O. - Check new shooters at this time for proper angle on holsters – greater than 30 degrees.) You must also do the cross draw dance to return the pistol to the holster after shooting. Take the step, holster, turn back around. That goes for the loading table and the unloading table, too. Keep that muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times. Failure to perform the cross draw dance will get you disqualified from the stage you are shooting. Multiple infractions can get you disqualified from the match.

Sometimes even cowboys have a bad day. You might have what we call a “squib load”. You squeeze the trigger and the gun goes pop! instead of bang! **STOP SHOOTING IMMEDIATELY!** You had a round with no powder in it. There’s most likely a bullet stuck in the barrel now and if you shoot again, the gun could blow up in your face. The marshal might hear a squib, even if you don’t.

If the marshal grabs your arm and says STOP!, or CEASE FIRE!, do so immediately. Carefully place the gun on the ground with the muzzle pointing down range. (preferred method) or hand it to the marshal, who will put it in a safe position for you. If this was your last round, it’s a miss. If it was your second round, its four misses. Either way, it beats a face full of scrap iron.

Getting back to the stage, now it’s time to shoot your rifle. Pick it up from the rack and while keeping the muzzle pointed in a safe direction, place the butt on your shoulder first and then work the action. Engage the targets as directed and leave the action open. Put the rifle back in the rack and pick up the shotgun. Keep the muzzle pointed down range and load two rounds. Shoot the targets. Load two more. Shoot them.

Now it’s time to go to the unloading table. Pick up your guns and walk to the unloading table, keeping the muzzles up and in a safe direction. Place the long guns on the table pointing in a safe direction and work the actions for the cowboy at the table. Let him see inside so he can see that they’re empty. Now pull out the pistols and unload them too. Don’t forget to do the dance with that cross draw! Holster your empty pistols and carry the long arms to the gun cart. Keep the muzzles up. Make sure the actions are open, too.

Some times we have to reload rifles and pistols at the stage. Make sure you don’t break the 170 degree line when handling the guns. (Note to R.O.- demonstrate 170 degrees at the stage, again)

If you shoot a double barreled shotgun, watch the barrel carefully when you open it. If you shoot a Schoefield pistol, don’t let the barrel droop! Roll the gun over when you break it and keep that muzzle down range.

When you’re moving around, don’t cross in front of the loading table. Always go in front of the marshal and the scorekeeper. (Pass between the marshal and the targets.)

Here are some other points to ponder:

- ◆ Never holster a cocked gun. Once it's drawn and cocked, that round must be shot before re-holstering the gun.
- ◆ Don't ever move with a cocked gun - basketball traveling rule applies.
- ◆ Treat every gun as if it was loaded.
- ◆ This range uses a flag system. A YELLOW flag means finish the course of fire that is in progress and then cease fire. The RED flag is a signal to cease fire IMMEDIATELY!
When under a cease fire order or red flag, firing must stop. Shooters are to ground weapons in a safe direction. Shooters at the loading and unloading table are to stop handling guns and ammunition until the line goes hot. GREEN flag means all conditions are go again.
- ◆ Accidental discharges can result in a disqualification from the stage or the match depending on how close the impact is to the shooter.
- ◆ Ammunition dropped on the ground is considered "dead". Get another round from your person.
- ◆ A firearm malfunction is only an alibi on the first round of the stage.
- ◆ A long gun that falls after being placed in a rack can incur penalties up to a DQ from the match. A properly placed long gun that falls due to a stage prop malfunction is not a penalty.
- ◆ Failure to engage or violating "Spirit of the Game" is a 30-second penalty.

Time to shoot. Safety glasses and ear plugs in place. If you are using a cross draw holster, get the piece that fits that holster with five rounds of ammunition, your rifle with five rounds and your shotgun with four rounds.

Proceed to the loading table.