

## Building Your Technique

Not that we discourage the attitude that "If I had a better gun, I'd shoot better" (after all we ARE in the business!), but the truth is that hard work on a sound technique is the real way to boost your performance. The problem is the "hard work" part - nobody enjoys that nearly as much as seeing holes appear in paper 10 minutes after you arrive at the range. Still, once you decide that you are serious you will not mind the effort as the results begin to appear. In building your technique, you might as well start at the ground and work up. I like to use the analogy of building a house: You need a good, strong, well designed foundation to support the rest of the structure.

The first idea to dispel is that of finding your "natural stance". While your physical makeup will have to be factored in (I had one student who had engaged in "Kendo" for years - he was so muscle-bound he could NOT hold his arms out straight!) your stance should be based on basic principles and then MADE "natural" by repetition. Almost all elements of a good shooting technique are compromises and we see that in choosing a good body position: The placement of the feet is a compromise between stress on the ankles and legs and the desire to have the widest possible platform for stability. The commonly stated rule of thumb that the feet should be about as far apart as the shoulder width is a good starting point. Next, we must choose how to orient our feet. Again, the oft heard "45 degrees to the firing line" is a reasonable starting place. The feet are set as if along the sides of a triangle - toes out, heels in with the firing line being the base of the triangle and a line through the feet converging behind the shooter as the apex. We choose something near this angle as the best compromise in reducing strain on the body as we divide the 90 degrees to be subtended between the mechanically inefficient 'facing the target directly on' and the quite efficient 'feet parallel to the firing line' positions. If we were to stand with the feet parallel to the firing line (and some early shooters did!) we put enormous strain on the neck trying to twist the head around enough to sight down the barrel line and we also constrict the carotid artery which is supplying oxygen to the eyes and brain. This is not a good, so we start with the feet as above and subtend the remaining 45 degrees or so by twisting at the hips and ankles about 20-25 degrees and by turning the head for the remainder of the way. Now we have stabilized the back and have distributed the strain throughout the body leaving the neck arteries free and the neck muscles only mildly extended. The head is erect, of course, and so the balancing organs feel correctly oriented.

I recommend you choose a place at home to do your dry firing where you can place and leave tape markers on the floor in the above relationship to the aiming mark on the wall. This way you can step into place exactly the same way each time you begin your dry training. Very quickly your body will "learn" this position/stance and it will become "natural". Don't be afraid to mark your foot position with chalk or tape at the range and even during the match, either! In a long match, it is recommended you take breaks (or, you may have no choice during scoring breaks.) It is very nice to be able to just step back into the exact place and thus eliminate another possible variable. I have seen shooters at world level matches do this, so ignore any odd looks and be confident you are in "your" stance.

We'll go on from here the next "Note".

*Don*

[Back to Notes](#)