

Training Plans

How do you set up a training plan? What is *training*, anyway?

Training is a learning process both for your mind and your body (anyone out there think you can separate them?). Learning theory is pretty well established and basically says that short sessions and lots of them is the most efficient way to learn anything. The U.S. Shooting Team shotgun coach, Lloyd Woodhouse, has the most rational plans that I have heard. He defines "training" as that time spent perfecting each element of the technique (sometimes called "the fundamentals"), this should consume about 80% of your learning time. "Practice" should take about 15% of your learning time and is defined as simulating match conditions as closely as possible, but being able to stop in the middle of or at the end of a series of shots, making an adjustment to come closer to the perfect technique, and then repeating the series or continuing as needed. You'll notice that there is 5% left - and that is the time spent at actual matches.

Three sessions a week for about 3-4 hours per session is a pretty heavy learning load, but it is about what is required on the range for those seeking to become elite shooters. Alternate days should be spent in physical or mental "training" to maintain good physical condition or increase strength, and/or to work on visualization techniques.

One important aspect not commonly recognized is to schedule uninterrupted time and concentrate on a single element. New studies show that if you try to learn *more than one thing in a day*, your learning efficiency goes down! It seems that it takes the mind/body combo some significant time to integrate what it is trying to learn. So, when you "train", pick one element of the technique, focus on it, work to perform it perfectly and don't try to do anything else in that session. Then take a break, for heaven's sake!

Don

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