

## Building Your Technique - II

By now, your position should be pretty well established, so as promised, we will take the next step in building our technique and discuss *breathing*. Hey, what's to discuss? Everybody knows how to breathe, right? as usual, however, there are good ways and better ways—particularly if you are shooting.

The first things to understand are your physiological needs and how the body treats breathing (it has its own agenda going here and shooting wasn't hardwired in to be part of it!). The brain and the eyes are two of the biggest users of oxygen and darned if those aren't two of the most important organs used in shooting. So, we have to be sure they are getting lots of it. Another thing to consider is that the "out-of-breath, gotta breathe" feeling is NOT due to lack of oxygen, but due to the body detecting an excess of CO<sub>2</sub>. When we take these facts into account and add them to the need to not be moving while we deliver a shot, the framework of our breathing technique emerges. Other things to consider are the fact that really full lungs tend to compress the heart and change its beating rate and yet an expanded chest can help support the gun.

The first step in breathing for shot delivery is to PURGE the lungs of CO<sub>2</sub>. Most of us only use about 1/2 the lung's capacity while breathing "at rest." CO<sub>2</sub> is heavier than air and sinks to the bottom of the lungs. To purge it, we need to make a deep exhale and push all of the CO<sub>2</sub> out. The second step is to take a deep inhale—fill the lungs all the way up. *As we do this, we lift the gun—letting the expanded chest help.* The third step is to make a normal exhale". This will take the pressure off the heart and as we do so, we lower the gun into the aiming area. Then, I like to "top off the tank" by taking a normal inhale. Now we are "full" of fresh oxygenated air, empty of CO<sub>2</sub> (which promptly starts building up again) and in the aiming area ready to deliver the shot. Here we can fine tune by making a controlled small exhale to let the gun settle into the exact area we have chosen as our aiming area. The chest actually is helping support the gun. You must experiment to find the point that is just right for you. Now we become still, "holding" our breathe while the shot is delivered. Finally, we make a normal exhale and lower the gun to the bench and begin "normal" at-rest breathing while we relax our eyes, body, and mind during the "rest" phase of the shot cycle.

Once more:

Step 1: Deep exhale

Step 2: Deep inhale, lift gun as we do so

Step 3: Normal exhale to relieve pressure on heart

Step 4: Normal inhale to "top off" (maybe even a bit MORE than "normal")

Step 5: Tiny, controlled exhale to fine tune "support" position for the gun in aiming area

Step 6: Still (hold breath) while shot is delivered (and until after bullet hits target—"follow through")

Step 7: Exhale normally while lowering gun to bench

Step 8: Normal respiration while resting between shots.

Who would have thought "breathing" requires all those steps? this routine now must be folded into your technique by slow, careful, exact repetition until it too becomes "natural". As with everything else, consistency is your goal.

*Don*

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