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Elevate past training plateau

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Training with inert bullets

One-Handed Reloading p.11
Every officer needs to know how

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WINTER 2024

Exclusive Officer eHandbook on

FIREARMS TRAINING & TACTICS

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Firearms Training & Tactics eHandbook

Photo: Robert Marulli

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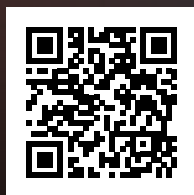
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Exploring Firearms Training & Tactics



Lt. Frank Borelli (ret) is the Editorial Director for the Officer Media Group. Frank brings 20-plus years of writing and editing experience in addition to 40 years of law enforcement operations, administration and training experience to the team.

If you have any comments or questions, you can contact him via email at Frank@Officer.com.

Many moons ago, an article about Firearms Training protocols was the first I ever had published, and it was published in *OFFICER Magazine's* predecessor, *Law Enforcement Technology* magazine. It seems fitting that now, approximately 25 years later, OFFICER Media Group is published a complete ehandbook about Firearms Training & Tactics, the various sections of which discuss the same protocols and approach that first article espoused long ago.

Firearms training doesn't just happen on the range. It doesn't just happen in the classroom. And it doesn't just happen at the beginning of an officer's career, never to be expanded on thereafter. Firearms training starts in the classroom, should move to the range, include projected simulation judgmental scenarios and incorporate tools for force-on-force judgmental training as well. The holistic approach to firearms training has to be embraced to provide the officer with the greatest base of knowledge and experience to call upon when use of force is necessary, and survival/victory is the reward for doing everything right. Unfortunately,

death or serious injury can be the penalty for doing anything wrong.

As you read through the sections, consider what your firearms training program provides... and what it doesn't. What do you need to add? What are you wasting time on? Are there any bad habits that are being trained in or necessary skills that are being neglected? None of us ever wants to find ourselves in a shooting situation but if it becomes necessary, none of us wants to find out that our training was lacking. Even worse, no training officer or firearms instructor wants to see an officer injured (or worse) because of a failure to train. The responsibility we firearms trainers carry is immense and we'd better be committed to it beyond others' ability to understand.

All the articles featured in this eHandbook are by Lindsey Bertomen. Lindsey is a retired police officer and retired military small arms trainer who has been a contributor to *OFFICER Magazine* for years. He teaches criminal justice at Hartnell College in Salinas, California, where serves as a POST administrator and firearms instructor.

If you have any feedback, questions or comments as you read or after you've completed the ehandbook, don't hesitate to email me (frank@officer.com) or our editorial team (editors@officer.com). Tactics and protocols are never static. They are continually evolving and one of the ways they evolve best is when people ask questions, discuss options, voice opinions, disagree and yet still learn from one another. Discussion is mandatory; arguments aren't. Arguments decide WHO is right. Discussions discover WHAT is right. Let's have a discussion.

Stay safe. Train hard. Conflict can be bloody training. Training should be bloodless conflict.

Frank Borelli

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Shooting Rhythm

How to practice changing shooting cadence.

By Lindsey Bertomen

Photo: Robert Marvulli

Every shooter does it. Once a shooter hits the intermediate stage, they establish regular shooting habits. One habit a shooter keeps most of their career is cadence. Cadence is the rhythmic flow of a sound or activity. For defensive shooting, controlling and training shooting cadence can improve survivability.

When a shooter begins to learn to shoot, they first accomplish the fundamentals. They learn to understand the stable shooting platform. Eventually, most shooters will reach a training plateau, a level where it appears that their skills neither improve or diminish. It probably doesn't surprise anyone that many officers will go their entire career at this training plateau, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Many trainers will tell you that the training plateau at which officers reside is sufficient for their career. There is, however, a component that can be changed. One can practice changing shooting cadence.

The Farnsworth Method

Back when I was trying to learn Morse code, I listened to recorded tutorials, and tapped out code using a key and a trainer, which generated a beeping tone when the circuit was completed. For training in Morse code, there is a standard method, where the length of the “dit” and “dah” (dots and dashes) tones are evenly spaced. That is, as the speed of the code gets faster, the transmitted tones, and their accompanying “rests” in between, get shorter.

It was discovered that, at slower code speeds, a person can learn code by picturing the code chart in their heads, and accessing their memory. A ham operator named Donald Farnsworth (W6TTB) invented a method to overcome the 7 WPM (words per minute) ceiling.

Back in the day, in order to graduate to a higher licensing level as a ham radio operator, one had to pass Morse code tests at 5WPM for one level and 13WPM for another. The different levels opened more frequency access for the user.

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The Farnsworth Method requires the learner to pick their desired speed. The characters are transmitted at that speed, and the interval between the characters are trained at a slower speed, until the learner advances. For example, when I wanted to pass the 7 WPM test, I listened to recordings that sent characters (and eventually words) at 13 WPM, with the spaces in between at 7 WPM.

Eventually, I passed the 20 WPM test. I can't do 20 WPM now, which is also a lesson in perishable skills. I have a friend who would regularly converse at 64 WPM using just an automatic keyer and his ears. He used the same training method as shooters who, like professional shooter Max Michel, can fire as quickly as a jackhammer.

Applying the Farnsworth Method

If a shooter wishes to learn to shoot faster, one method is to deliver a group on target quickly, pause, then continue with the next group. Changing the spacing between groups will speed up the overall shooting. Since we are going with a controlled pair, stick with two shots per engagement. Use the pause between the shots to assess the target, and line up the next shot. In an actual encounter, this is, "Is the target still a threat?" Down the road, integrate moving into assessment time.

From 5 yards, fire the controlled pair, pause, and fire again. I have provided a musical score in the images to communicate the rhythm for shooting this drill.

The controlled pair

Doubletap is the term for quickly delivering two shots at the same target, using the same sight picture. It is similar to the concept of the controlled pair, where two rapid shots are fired, except the sight picture is required for the latter. Regardless of the technique, logic tells us that two rounds will likely improve the probability of stopping the threat, or overcoming the ballistic deficiencies of the cartridge.

I used to train doubletap shooting quite a bit. At pistol distances, it has been my experience that firing two shots quickly will often result in bullet holes close together. That is, doubletap shooting is very effective, even with a carbine. However, I do not recommend the doubletap in Law Enforcement. The ability to shoot two quick shots



Photo: Robert Marvulli

is something that can be easily learned, but it should be aimed fire when practically possible.

The popularity of steel plate shooting waxes and wanes, but shooting a plate rack is a good skill developer. Some of the professional shooters I have met will tell you that rapid shooting can help a shooter transition from one target to another. I once was around when Rob Leatham, one of my favorite shooting sports athletes, talked about how the recoil of a shot can actually aid the shooter to transition to the next target.

When we do these drills, concentrate on accurate fire and smooth operation. Speed will come with training. I use a RangeTech Shot Timer, which has a training advantage: The shooting coach can control it with a cell phone, and the timer can stay on the shooter's belt, where it can be heard.

Failure Drill

Logically, the closer one is to the target, the faster a person can engage a target. I recommend starting at 5 yards, a distance from which most shooters can engage quickly without missing. Shooting at different distances is the other reason why we teach controlled pair shooting.

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This drill requires a shooter and a coach. The shooter fires controlled pairs at the center mass of the target. They continue firing in this manner until the coach either indicates the threat has been stopped or the current efforts to stop the threat are unsuccessful. In the case of failure, the shooter has to go for a headshot.

The three commands for this drill are:

- “Threat” Command to engage center mass (The “A” zone, or smallest concentric ring of a combat style target)
- “Failure” Command to engage head shot
- “Cease fire” Command to cease training (Stop shooting or no longer a threat)

The coach initiates the training by calling “Threat”. The shooter begins firing controlled pairs. The coach calls “Failure” randomly, and the shooter has to line up a head shot. Once the headshot is delivered successfully, the drill is over.

As we increase the cadence speed of the double tap, we learn the concept of *acceptable sight picture*. This is when the sights are quickly aligned, but the acceptable level of precision is only that which gets the bullet within the A zone. The bullet holes don’t need to be touching, it just needs to be an effective hit. As the shooter fires, he should listen to the cadence of the sound, and increase this incrementally as the training progresses. The idea is to continue to deliver effective shots, and never increase the speed past that point.

The headshot takes longer to line up, and therefore there will be a delay in the cadence during the failure drill. As the training progresses, incorporate movement while shooting.

At 10 yards, the margin for error for an acceptable sight picture is reduced, and the goal is to work up to the same cadence as the 5 yard shot.

For all of this training, including the headshot, a miss is considered unacceptable. When the shooter misses, restart using a slower cadence.

Subcaliber Training

My favorite type of training is “trigger time”, where I actually shoot bullets downrange. For this drill, I expend a lot of cartridges. There are effective ways to reduce the use of cartridges. Foremost is subcaliber training.

Glock 19 users can get a Glock 44, which is a 22LR version. Again, this is one of those replicas that is just fun to shoot, but with a serious training value.



Photo: Lindsey Bertomen

For SIG P320 users, Sig Sauer makes a P322, which is a 22LR version. The manual of arms and dimensions mimic a P320 close enough, and it is an incredibly entertaining pistol. SIG also has several BB, pellet, and airsoft replicas. Some of these models fit the same holsters, and were designed for specific training tasks. For example, I have a P365 BB gun, which is almost exactly like the real thing. I have used it to safely train for appendix carry, and I recommend this inexpensive product for anyone with a P365.

In fact, Sig Sauer makes some of the finest training tools in the industry. My P365 BB gun has the CO2 cartridges in the magazines. These magazines have valves that seal them when the magazine is dropped, and they contain the BBs. Operation is completely identical to the real thing. When someone asks me to run them through some training drills, I break out the P365 Air Pistol. It allows realistic training, without training scars, while the shooter/coach can maintain a conversation.

Shooting Rhythm is one way that shooters can overcome a training plateau, and training using rhythm can make all of us better shooters. 🎯

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lindsey Bertomen, a retired police officer and military small arms trainer, has taught shooting techniques for over a decade, in addition to teaching criminal justice at Hartnell College in Salinas, California. Off the clock he enjoys competing in shooting sports, running and cycle events. He welcomes comments at bertomen@me.com.



Training With Snap Caps

Otis Snap Caps are inert bullets that shooters use in their guns to do certain tasks that require cartridges.

By Lindsey Bertomen

I've been playing with the new Snap Caps from Otis. Otis is well known for gun cleaning kits, and I use my Otis LE Rifle/Pistol Cleaning System on the range all the time.

Snap Caps are inert bullets shooters use in their guns to do certain tasks that require cartridges. They help with safe handling of a firearm, and give gun components a degree of protection. For example, users insert Snap Caps when a hammer needs to be safely lowered, but the mechanism won't allow it without a cartridge and a magazine.

I used to make Snap Caps, using reloading components and silicone glue for the primer pocket. The Otis Snap Caps have more precision, last longer, are easier on the gun parts, and are not confused with real loaded cartridges.

Otis Snap Caps are made of anodized machined aluminum. The firing pin pockets safely cushion the action of the gun.

Years ago, Snap Caps were essential gunsmith items for adjusting trigger pull, insuring the gun cycles, extracts and ejects properly, and even storing the firearm without springs under tension.

There was a time when metallurgy and gun design was such that dry firing a handgun repeatedly was considered unhealthy for a gun because it entailed slamming a firing pin against the frame or slide of a firearm. We used Snap Caps so our guns went "bang" when we pulled the trigger.

Snap Caps are also excellent for making sure the extractors and ejectors work.

Some Snap Caps used to be just aluminum or brass inserts that matched the dimensions of the cartridge. The Otis Snap Caps have some spring loaded "give", which really protect the gun for long term

As guns got better, manufacturers began to drop the warnings about dry firing without Snap Caps. I still won't dry fire without them.

If you just purchase Snap Caps for just dry firing, that's fine. However, the best use of Otis Snap Caps is for dynamic training, doing the same stuff you usually do on the range, only with the occasional induced stoppages.

Backup training

Dry fire should be part of every officer's routine. I have shot my TV thousands of times. Just using Snap Caps for this purpose make them worthwhile. However, my "at home" training goal with them is to improve my revolver reloading speed.

Based on sales lately, revolver use is making a comeback, and many officers are carrying them off duty and as a backup.

Let me encourage you to always have a revolver in your inventory. With the improvements in cartridge design,



Dry fire with a snubnose revolver should be a regular drill for those who use them. Photo Karren Bertomen

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revolver calibers like .38 special and 32 magnum are effective tools. The simplicity and indestructibility of a revolver cannot be disputed.

I often carry a .38 Special and the ammo of 2023 is like the .357 Magnum ammo 30 years ago. For example, DoubleTap Ammunition (doubletapammo.com) makes a 110 grain non +P .38 Special round that does 1175fps (337 ft lbs) in a 4" barrel. It penetrates 14.5" in the FBI heavy clothing test. The +P version does 1250 fps. If your revolver of choice is a .38, consider DoubleTap Ammunition.

I use 5 Star Firearms (5starfirearms.com), or Lyman Competition Revolver speedloaders. Both products are lightweight tools made of machined aluminum. I use the Lyman ones for some revolvers, and the 5 Star for others.

Most of the time, I'll have my revolver and a couple of speedloaders in my pocket, and a speed strip in the other. I practice with Otis Snap Caps daily, and I can almost keep up with an auto in multi target scenarios.

Using Otis Snap Caps, I practice shooting my television daily. I practice reloading under pressure all the time.

Training for this is simple. After separating all loaded ammo from your training area and insuring your gun is unloaded, load a cylinder full of Snap Caps, and fill a speedloader. Using a good shooting stance, engage your television targets until you have fired all of the (training) rounds in the cylinder. Seek imaginary cover, drop the expended Snap Caps, and reload using the speed loader. For a refresher on speedloaders, go to officer.com/20994539.

The Snap Cap Challenge

With your training partner, start with an empty magazine, your duty belt, and two targets, side by side. You're going to shoot a modified Bill Drill, a training drill brought to you by Bill Wilson. Basically, a Bill Drill is a 6 shot drill fired from the holster into the center mass of a target at a given distance. This drill used to be 7 yards at an IPSC style target.

All hits must be in the "zero" or "A" zone, which is the smallest circle in the center of the target. Anything outside of this zone is a failure. Shooters must draw and rapid fire into this zone. In a regular Bill Drill, a shooter must land all six shots in this zone within 3 seconds. Good shooters go 2 seconds. If this is the first time you are doing a Bill Drill, just work on A Zone hits, and worry about time later. If you are wondering, it is a rare day indeed when I get to 3 seconds.

Since this is a Bill Drill, extra credit is given if your duty gun is a WCP 320. Several of my friends have Wilson improved SIG guns, and they are worth every dime.

The Snap Cap Challenge is a Bill Drill, except you do it side by side with your training partner. Before you begin, swap magazines. Each shooter loads the other's magazine with 5 snap caps and 6 bullets, in any order. Return the magazine to the other shooter and begin the drill. Whoever finishes first is the winner.



Tap Rack Target Drill

This is the same type of drill, using the same constraints, including having someone else filling the shooter's magazine. The goal is the same also: 6 "A Zone" hits on the target. I shoot this at a 7 yard target behind simple barricades. One can use the same target set up as the Bill Drill.

Begin with a holstered gun, and a flashlight in the support hand. Draw and fire on the target using the flashlight. When the gun fails the fire, enter a stoppage drill.


We used to use "tap, rack, bang" as the mantra for stoppages. It has evolved to "tap, rack, target" (TRT) because we really should assess before continuing to shoot.

The flashlight forces the shooter to deal with something in their hand while putting the gun back into action. When a stoppage occurs, the shooter tucks the flashlight under the shooting armpit, then goes into the stoppage drill. When the gun is ready to fire, the shooter retrieves the flashlight, and goes back to target assessment.

If you notice, I drag my palm along the side of the gun when doing TRT. Once I slap the magazine, I never lose contact with the gun. This speeds up the drill a little for me.

I also have a "working area", which is chest high, about a forearm's distance from my chest. I always encourage shooters to establish a comfortable area where they can do all of their gun manipulations. Your mileage may vary.

For both the Snap Cap Challenge and the Tap Rack Target Drill, let me encourage you to do these drills with your backup and off duty guns.

For \$15.99 a set, it is a low hanging fruit investment for reinforcing perishable skills. 

One-Handed Reloading

Every officer needs to know how to quickly reload, reload under pressure and reload when injured. **By Lindsey Bertomen**

One of the things I don't practice enough is shooting one handed. It actually should not just be a contingency skill. Practicing shooting and manipulating guns one-handed will develop all other skills. This month we will go over a single aspect of one-handed shooting: one-handed reloading.

Of all the people I know who have been in an OIS, not one of them has told me they wished they had less ammo. We carry extra magazines on our belts for a reason. Every officer needs to know how to quickly reload, reload under pressure and reload when injured.

There are basically two types of reloads in a combat situation: Tactical Reload, and Emergency Reload. A tactical reload is when a shooter has been forced to use a firearm and now they wish to top it off while out of harms way, in case there are additional threats. When an officer performs a tactical reload, they are not under shooting pressure. They are "topping off" their firearm after shooting.

A tactical reload consists of picking up a full magazine and "hovering" it underneath the magazine well of a gun, dropping the questionable magazine into the hand, and inserting a fresh one into the well, using the same hand.

An emergency reload is considered a malfunction because the gun does not fire when the shooter presses the trigger.

An emergency reload is cleared by bringing the gun up, dropping the magazine, inserting a fresh magazine,

and dropping the slide into battery. Some instructors will teach officers to continue to look at the threat while they are reloading, others instruct to look at the gun. I instruct to keep the gun within the periphery and do what is natural.

Some shooters will point out that there is a third reload, called a speed reload. Some use these terms interchangeably, so I will define what I mean. A speed reload is an emergency reload that is performed when there are still cartridges in the magazine, and the slide has not locked back. It is done when the ammo situation may be critical, and the shooter does not let the gun run dry.

I don't make a training distinction between a speed reload and any other reload.

If the emergency reload is treated as a malfunction, and the speed reload is treated as any other reload, which gives them fewer concepts to learn.

While my firearms instructor friends tell me I will get some pushback on this, I don't teach tactical reload.

◀ **It is important to have magazines that drop free of the firearm when the magazine latch is pressed.**

There are several methods to help magazine ejection. One method is to snap the gun outward, as if rotating it on the axis of the barrel. Lindsey's preferred method is to snap the gun downward while pressing the magazine release. Photo: Karren Bertomen



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That is, even if the fight is over, I do not teach holding two magazines in the hand at the same time. I don't have a problem with dumping a magazine in the hand and putting it back on the belt (reloading with retention), as long as the basic motions include bringing the gun up and dropping the magazine, like an emergency reload.

If one hand is incapacitated, the Officer will need to reload one-handed. Incapacitated doesn't necessarily mean injured, it just means it cannot be used at the time.

The one-handed reload is slightly different, and there are simple ways to train it. First, we should try to use a method that incapacitates one hand, but still allows the shooter other capabilities, like maintaining their balance, or catching themselves when they fall.

I use a handball and an ace bandage. I hold the handball, and have someone wrap an ace bandage around it. There are several similar techniques one can use, like having the shooter hold a kettlebell or a briefcase, placing the arm in a sling, or placing the arm in a splint.

Reloading one-handed, shooting, or "strong" side

Reloading one-handed isn't complicated. The shooter fires until slide lock, where the slide stays open because of an empty magazine, and drops the magazine. Most magazines will fall free without coaxing. If your magazine does not fall free during training, shake it out. Once the magazine is free, holster the gun, with the slide still locked back, if possible. Draw a full magazine from the belt and insert it. Drop the slide. Assess the target. Shoot, as necessary.

If the slide is not back, it has to be racked. When we train this, we teach to run the back sight against the holster body, or the belt. If the officer is kneeling, we train to run it against the heel of the boot.

Reloading one-handed, or "support" side

In the case of the support side, the activities are similar. In the past we taught Officers to stick the gun in the

► **In order to do a one-handed magazine change, the gun needs to somehow be pinned in a stable location. This is one method where it is pinned behind the knee in a kneeling position. Some shooters are very competent with simply stuffing the firearm into the belt, changing magazines, and releasing the slide by using the slide stop, or the belt. Whatever method is used should be practiced regularly.** Photo: Karren Bertomen



holster backwards after dumping the empty magazine, and shoving in a fresh one.

This practice has to be assessed on an individual basis, depending on the combination of equipment. You see, we discovered that when we reversed some guns in some holsters, they were impossibly stuck. In other cases, guns are equipped with dedicated lights and optics, which don't fit in the holster backwards. Adding lights and optics are a great practice, but many holsters won't accept the enhanced gun spun around.

Instead of sticking it in the holster, the obvious choice is to tuck the gun under the arm, if the injury to the hand allows it. If that's not an option, we train to kneel, and pinch it behind the bent knee, or lock it between the thighs.

Practice

A general rule of thumb on a range is to insure no persons or body parts are forward of the business end of a gun when training. On law enforcement training ranges, a holstered, fully loaded gun, is considered "safe." However, the moment it comes out of the holster, the muzzle has to be pointed downrange, and anything a responsible human is not willing to destroy cannot be between the muzzle and downrange.

It is impossible to tuck a gun under the arm, pinch a gun behind a bent knee, pin it between the thighs, or place a gun in a holster backwards, and adhere to the rules of basic safety. Having said that, dry firing this

◄ **Law enforcement officers should train one-handed regularly. There are several ways to do this, limited only by the imagination. Here, an Ace bandage is wrapped around the hand, which is clenching a handball. With this type of training, the hand can't grab anything, but the arm can still be used.** Photo: Karren Bertomen



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training can only take the skillset so far. Eventually, all firearms skills have to be trained using real bullets.

I dry fire a lot. I recommend that Officers practice firearms kata at about a 80% rate or better. That is, 80% of shooting training should be dry fire, 20% should be trigger time. This means one can practice this skill, but sooner or later, bullets have to hit targets.

How do we do this? Well, first, the instructor/shooter or coach/shooter ratio for this perishable skill must go to 1:1. Range instructions need to include specific safety briefings. The shooter must do the dry fire drill several times slowly, then work at a snails pace with real bullets.

Knee pads, uniform vests, and electronic muffs, or hearing protection that allow Officers to clearly hear range commands are mandatory .

When the gun is placed behind the knee for a reload, it is best to learn it in a manner where the gun is not pointing at the other leg. The most common way to do this is to kneel with only the shooting side knee down.

Advantage optics

A few years back, several well known gun experts were insisting that the back sights of working handguns should be designed to hook on the belt better than the slanted style sights. My friend Rob Pincus designed the I.C.E. Claw, a sight system with a milled concave “hook” in the front, which improves its ability to hook on a belt, or the holster. They turned out to be pretty good sights, and this is a great idea.

Suppressor height sights also work. The latest ones, like my XS Sights Suppressor Height Sights work well at racking the slide, and they are quick to align.

When an optic is mounted on the slide, the optic becomes the tool for racking the slide. My hope is that this article affirms your agency’s need to purchase the best handgun optics money can buy.

The Holosun duty style optics like the 508 and 509 have recessed lenses, overbuilt protection, and heavy duty mounts. I have racked my gun on my Holosun, running it against my holster and belt. Duty work doesn’t eat them up.

I know the temptation for many officers and agencies is to get the least expensive optic for their duty gun. Let’s put this idea to bed right now. Resist this urge and get the optic that is duty rated. My next Holosun is a HS507C-X2, which has an NTOA Silver rating.

Employ the optic

Does the mounted optic increase the ability to fight one-handed? Absolutely.

Most of us shoot from the dominant side all day on the range, and rarely practice on the non dominant side. Being able to resist recoil and controlling the trigger is one thing. Being able to align sights with the non dominant eye is a completely different skillset. Some shooters align



Taller, squared off sights have become popular lately as firearms instructors use the rear sight for racking the slide. This is one of the quickest methods of getting the gun back in the gunfight. There are even sight manufacturers that have designed texturing or protrusions on the front surface of the rear sight for this purpose. The technique is simple here. The rear sight is dragged into the belt until it racks the slide.

Photo: Karren Bertomen

their sights in front of their non-dominant eye, and it works for them. It does not work for me, so I don’t. If it doesn’t work for you either, slightly cant the gun into the dominant eye field of view. Either way, always practice and shoot with both eyes open.

With an optic, eye dominance is less of a problem. Any time the dot is superimposed on the target, the bullet will strike where it is sent. I can do that. My trigger control in my left hand is dismal, but I can definitely address the target with my Holosun 509.

Make it hurt

For training, I use, you guessed it, the One and One Drill, described in the April 2020 issue of *Law Enforcement Technology Magazine* (officer.com/21128477). This is the drill which begins with an empty magazine, and one in the chamber. The Officer fires the cartridge in the chamber, then reloads.

I modify this drill for one-handed magazine changes by shooting from 15 yards. Kneel to reload. After a full box of ammo, the shooter has kneeled and reloaded 25 times. This is training. Training for contingencies is not the fun part of firearms training. It is necessary, and some training should hurt, at least a little. 🏹

Dimension

Agencies can change training dynamics by adding 3D targets.

By Lindsey Bertomen

Over the past few months, we have explored training concepts like Shooting Rhythm, Training with Snap Caps, and shooting and operating One Handed. If there's anything we have gained from these conversations, it's the fact that we need to train regularly and we need to "mix it up" a little.

It's pretty common for law enforcement agencies to have a range of their own, or at least a shared facility through something like an MOU where training can take place. However, the likelihood of this range having motorized or automated targets is very low. In fact, many agencies train regularly on "square" ranges and two dimensional targets.

What kinds of strategies can be used to mix it up a little? One thing that changes training dynamics is adding 3D targets. Using simple three-dimensional targets, three things change: Force Decision Making, Shooter Confidence, and Target Focus.

For this article, I used Birchwood Casey 3D Torso Targets. These are molded relief targets made of recycled material. They are as light as cardboard, and have enough structural integrity to hold up to a lot of hits. These targets are 21.5" H X 14" W X 4.7" D, and are very cost effective. The only thing you need to know is that they take up a little more storage space, and they have the same constraints as regular paper targets, like storing them in a dry place.

Since they are basically recycled paper, one can add extra realism to Birchwood

Casey 3D Torso Targets, like clothing and drawn facial expressions. They can be hung like hanging moving targets, and stapled to a backing. They are incredibly light, allowing for quick range set up, since it's easy to carry 30 of them at a time.

Force decision making

3D targets add a psychological aspect to an officer's training, depending on how the actual training scenario is treated. For example, the training could include instructions to "Pay attention to the orientation of the suspect.

If they are not facing you, and engaging you, use other means than a firearm, until a firearm is necessary." As the scenario moves on, the interaction can change. "She is now raising the muzzle of her gun at another officer. Proceed."

Like any other training, the memorialized dialogue is just as important as the shooting portion of the training. That is, you need to record that your agency toggled between shoot/no shoot scenarios, and likely included a qualification.

When I'm training with these targets, it is easier to see the hits and potential effect of these hits.

In several controlled training studies, researchers found that experiencing the fight-or-flight phenomenon can distort perception of the threat and the overall incident. Critical incident perception distortion is not uncommon, and we can't overlook the fact that

◀ **Training for critical engagements using flat targets can cause shooters to miss threat stopping vital areas.**

Lindsey uses Birchwood Casey's 3D Silhouette Targets . They are made of recycled material, and are easy to mount and carry to the range. Use clothing and other props to add realism. Photo: Lindsey Bertomen



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moderate SNS (sympathetic nervous system) arousal can actually improve alertness, and vigilance. However, gross stimulation can add to the perception distortion. (Andersen & Gustafsberg, 2016)

In the “psychology of the moment”, the officer’s perception that “things are out of control” can increase the distortion. My guess is that training could mitigate the perception, considering that training increases the perception of control. Using 3D targets will likely help the officer’s stress level while in actual incidents, at least the training can’t hurt.

Increase shooter confidence

Recently, the Villa Rica Police Department in Georgia faced some backlash on social networking for using realistic targets that were photographs depicting real human beings. Apparently, the targets included an image of a black man as a target during a firearms safety class for civilians. The full set of this style of target includes depictions of all different kinds of people, representing many ethnicities and genders. The truth is, it is important for agencies to include a good variety of targets for their training, so that all kinds of target scenarios are represented.

Including a variety of targets increases the mental template for good force decision making. If the officer is constantly introduced to different targets and target scenarios, they connect shooting with decision making, which increases shooter confidence.

With three-dimensional targets, trainers can change the orientation of the target, such as facing it 45 degrees in relation to the firing lane, and require verbal commands before engaging. Based on the scenario, the officer can be guided through the scenario, which can include force decision making. For example, if the officer was slicing the pie through a simulated hallway, and the target is bladed in relation to the officer’s axis of advance, one response would be verbal commands and radio communication to dispatch and other units. This is something that is simulated on the range, and clearly documented in the training record.

What I found in training was the increase in confidence level of shooters when the Birchwood Casey 3D Torso Targets are part of the scenario. Students learn where and how to engage these targets quickly, even if they are completely bladed on the range. In



Lindsey designed a quick scenario where the officer must make decisions. From cover, the target on the left may not be able to engage the officer behind cover. Which target does the officer engage first? The correct question is, “Which is the greatest threat?”

Photo: Robert Marvulli



It is understood that perception distortion during a critical incident is inevitable. One way to mitigate this distortion is to spend plenty of trigger time, changing distance, elevation, and orientation.

Photo: Robert Marvulli



Training should include high and low targets, shooting behind barricades, and getting dirty on the ground. Without challenging dimensions, the training program is not complete.

Photo: Robert Marvulli

“real life” there are few times when an officer is presented an ideal view of the threat. Adding the challenge of dimension is a confidence booster.

Target focus

One of the drills I use in regular instruction is the *el Presidente*. For those unfamiliar, the great Col. Jeff Cooper used this drill regularly. The shooter stands at the 10-yard line facing away from the targets. The range setup consists of three torso targets set about shoulder width apart. On the threat command, the shooter turns, draws and fires two rounds into the A zone (center mass) of each target, then reloads and repeats the pattern. A completed course will have four hits in each target.

When I have students do this drill, there is something everyone has in common, including me. If we don't train this one regularly, we tend to shoot toward the outside of the targets, on the outer targets. That is, when engaging the target on the left, shooters will tend to shoot to the left of center.

Using a three-dimensional target changes this drill. After shooting flat targets, three-dimensional ones encourage the shooter to place shots differently. Otherwise, the shots that land on the target could potentially miss, or fail to interrupt the threat.

Using the Birchwood Casey targets regularly causes the shooter to place their shot based on the orientation of the target. The added dimension re-routes the focus to the threat stopping potential, rather than the goal of hitting the target.

Run the *el Presidente* in its conventional manner, but turn each target on its axis 45 degrees to the right or left, arbitrarily. It is ok if shooters slow down a little to engage. Remember, the goal of this drill is accurate fire over speed.

Once the *el Presidente* has been run a few times, go to “headshots only”. This is quite a challenge, and I have been known to miss, or deliver only a “grazing shot” a few times.

The other 3D training that will help shooters is the opportunity to add distance, from 25 to 50 yards, to their regimen. As the shooter moves away from the target, tiny adjustments make large changes in the critical impact area.

A step further

If your agency is able, I recommend learning to shoot uphill and downhill with 3D targets. One thing that I do is tilt the targets towards and away from the shooter by shoving things under the base. Add time constraints. Vary the distance. Above all, keep training. 🏆

Movement

Law enforcement officers generally don't have the luxury of stopping, setting up a good shooting platform, and delivering accurate fire.

By Lindsey Bertomen

This article, we are talking about movement. There is plenty to be said about movement and shooting, but this article will cover only two different aspects: movement in confined places, and shooting while moving.

A few weeks ago, I was talking to someone who shoots at IDPA events. If you're not familiar with the IDPA, it is the International Defensive Pistol Association. Participants shoot scenarios that are designed to simulate self-defense and real-life encounters. This organization is great training for CCW holders worldwide.

We were comparing notes. I was looking at drill and exercise designs, and talking about the square drill, which we will look at just a little bit. After looking at the design of the drill, he asked me at what point was the shooter supposed to engage the target. I explained to him that the shooter continues to engage the target. Our conversation outlined the differences between police training and standard CCW training. Competitive shooters usually run up to a shooting position, establish a good platform, and engage. When we train police officers to move and shoot, we generally do not teach stopping the movement in order to shoot, unless we are behind cover.

Many handgun competitions do have something in their rules that require the competitor to keep moving, but this is widely interpreted. Competitors generally move up to a shooting position behind cover, then stop to engage.

If you have experienced the emphasis in my writing over the years, you probably know that I like to view tactical situations in one manner: an officer is continually moving toward cover. If they are not behind cover, they should be moving to cover. Law enforcement officers generally don't have the luxury of stopping, setting up a good shooting platform, and delivering accurate fire. Because of this, it is important for us to train for moving and shooting simultaneously. In order to do this, we have to

▶ It looks like Lindsey is moving forward in the photo, but he is moving backward. This entails keeping the feet low to the ground while moving, in order to feel for tripping hazards.

look at continually establishing a solid shooting platform while on the move.

Please don't misunderstand this. IDPA training is outstanding, and my IDPA friends can pretty much embarrass me on their IDPA range. I have a tremendous amount of respect for this, and similar shooting sports, and encourage people to engage there. I do not, however, teach marksmanship. As Lou Chiodo, of Gunfighters Ltd, and author of Dynamic Training Concepts, told me years ago, "I teach fighting with a gun."

Movement in tight quarters

Early in my career, I thought every building search was going to be one of two things: Going through a residence serving a warrant, or responding to empty warehouses during commercial alarm calls. It only took a couple of weeks on duty to figure out that I needed to get good at maneuvering in tight quarters. During that time, I searched for an armed and dangerous suspect through a vineyard that bordered an orchard. Another time I served a warrant in a house where a person with a mental disorder had dozens of discarded mattresses in each room. Days later, I searched for an assault suspect through a fabricating plant where an entire warehouse of racks of steel rods and plates were arranged randomly. He worked there, and the weapon used on the victim was a (gulp) steel rod.

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In tight quarters, it's a bad idea to stick the gun out into an area that the officer lacks control. Maneuvering skills have to be combined with slicing the pie skills. Done correctly, the officer is constantly capturing real estate, moving from cover to cover.

Close quarters drill

For this drill, I used barrels that can be moved or adjusted to make it challenging. One time, while using this drill, all we had were pallets, and it worked out great. The barrels are arranged in a diamond so that one point of the diamond is closest to the line of targets. Arrange the barrels in the diamond close enough so the shooter has to move sideways to go from one point to another. This is not a "one size fits all" drill, so move the barrels in or out as needed. Set two targets up about 5 to 7 yards away, perpendicular to the furthest and nearest points of the diamond, and at least a yard wider than the width of the diamond.

I want to be clear that, like many other trainers, I did not invent this, or any other drill I use. I do modify them considerably, but smarter men than me have developed them.

The shooter begins by entering through the opening in the rear and snaking around to the front barrel. From the left side of the barrel, he shoots the target on the right side. From the right side, he shoots the left target.

It sounds simple, doesn't it? The first thing one will notice is that they can no longer use a fully extended shooting posture. Extending the gun and hands past the area of the officer's control is a recipe for disaster. This



If the scenario is set correctly, the gun cannot be extended, so "low ready" or something similar will not cut it. This is a compressed high position, similar to, but not the same as, what we commonly call "Position SUL". The purpose is to allow for good gun retention, but maintaining readiness. Photo: Robert Marvulli



The way to train for movement in tight quarters is to create a scenario where officers have to "snake" their way to the place where they can engage a target. In this drill, Lindsey set the barrels wide enough to for the shoulders, then he pushed them closer. Photo: Robert Marvulli

kind of maneuver requires some kind of compressed ready position.

Consider this: While the officer is negotiating the tight squeeze, can he engage a target that presents itself during the maneuver? That is, if a right-handed shooter had to slide the right shoulder forward (because it was so tight he had no choice) could he engage a target in front of him? In tight quarters, whatever shoulder is forward dictates the side from which the officer holds the gun.

One of the big differences between competitive shooting and police training is the use of cover. In competitive shooting, it's generally considered OK if 50% of the body is behind cover when the shooter is engaging a target. In law enforcement training, the goal is to get as much of the body behind cover as possible.

That is the purpose for engaging opposite targets on the close quarters drill. In order to shoot the target far to the side of the diamond, officers must inch their way around the side of the barrel until they are able to engage, going no further. Regardless of if the shooter is left-handed or right-handed, the gun has to be fired with the hand outside of the barrel. That is, if the shooter is on the left-hand side of the barrel, engaging the right-hand side target, he must be firing with the left hand.

The other part of this drill is the oblique angle of engagement. If the targets are parallel to the rest of the target line on the range, they are perpendicular to the bisection of the diamond shape. A shooter firing on such an oblique angle to the target must fire toward the near side of the target in order to hit it center mass.

Consider this: Lindsey is a right-handed shooter with right eye dominance. Shooting left-handed is difficult, but can be



This drill is set up so the shooter has to engage the left target from the right side of cover, and the right target from the left side of cover. The targets are placed about 10 feet to the left and right, creating a challenge of maintaining cover while engaging. Photo: Robert Marvulli



This compressed position keeps the Officer behind cover, but allows for a quick extension for the shot. Photo: Robert Marvulli

done. Using left side to sight the gun will cause a different point of aim than using the right side. We can't say, "using the left eye," because Lindsey uses both eyes to engage targets with a handgun. However, eye dominance has a tendency to take over. Lindsey has to position the gun to allow for right-eye dominance.

Compressed ready position

There has been a lot of conversation about the "Position Sul" position. Position Sul is a low ready position where the gun is carried close to the body. Engaging is simply a matter of pushing the gun out into the sighting plane. Law enforcement officers need to be familiar with this type of compressed position, as it increases gun retention, but doesn't compromise readiness.

If you look at the photos accompanying this article, you'll find that the compressed position has the firearm on the level with the sternum. This is like what is described above, except the gun is higher. There are a lot of different names they get thrown out when it comes to ready positions. For example, most instructors will call a "high compressed ready" position when the gun is near the sternum, muzzle pointed forward. The position to which I am referring here has the muzzle pointing down.

For this particular drill, the compressed ready position requires the officer to lean forward a bit, but still keep the center of gravity above a line drawn between the two feet. This is accomplished by keeping the knees bent while moving. If this is done correctly, the feet never cross of the bore line of the muzzle. That is, don't point the gun at your feet.



Lindsey establishes a good shooting platform BEFORE sticking anything out of cover. Photo: Robert Marvulli

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The compressed ready position is appropriate for close quarters maneuver, but it is also a good strategy to have when a firearm is the tool, and the area is crowded. In the compressed ready position, an officer can move quickly, maintain good balance, and fire accurately.

The close quarters drill is a great way for a shooter to get to know his strengths and weaknesses, in a brutally honest way.

Square drill

The square drill has been in use for years to train shooters to move and shoot. It only requires a stationary target and four traffic cones. The cones are arranged in a box about 10 feet wide with the closest side parallel to the target about 5 yards away.

The shooter begins the drill from any corner, walking clockwise around the perimeter of the square. Shooters need to continually move, engaging the target with at least two rounds from each side. They may not stop at any time during the drill.

One can vary the course by requiring a magazine change, or a minimum number of shots.

For any shooter who has not done this course before, it won't take long to figure out that the inclination is to stop and establish a good shooting platform before shooting. The purpose of this drill is to learn to continually move to a good shooting platform by keeping the feet low to the ground, bending the knees, and walking heel to toe.

Walking backwards is tricky. If the shooter has to face the target throughout the movement, at some point they have to walk backwards. The movement goes toe to heel, and it is almost a shuffle. If a person can shoot without stopping, they will always be able to establish a shooting platform, regardless of the tactical situation.

If your agency is not including movement in training, consider these inexpensive drills. They don't burn a lot of ammo, and an officer can find out a lot about himself by just moving and shooting. 🎯



Looking down at the ground is inevitable when moving backwards. The glance cannot interrupt the flow of moving and shooting. Photo: Robert Marvulli

On the square drill, the object is to shoot while moving, and flow from shot to shot.

Photo: Robert Marvulli



Shooting Accurately

By Lindsey Bertomen

When agencies train with handguns, it is usually within 25 yards. This is within the design intention of the handgun. However, we regularly put ourselves into scenarios that require longer shots. We should train for that.

Longer shots? How do we do that? Imagine the typical high-risk vehicle stop. As a minimum, we try to keep a car vehicle length away for such a stop. If there are multiple Officers involved, this can be 1.5-2 car lengths. Add the distance of the rear of the suspect vehicle to the front passenger compartment, and we are already at 15 yards. Consider the stand off distances we have in active threat scenarios (a classroom from corner to corner can be 15 yards, then add the width of a hallway), or consider the distance between the curb to the front of a house in many urban environments.

Even though statistically the handgun engagement distance is close, if we looked at all of the threat templates out there, officers would carry their carbines everywhere. The truth is, we should be ready for that long shot with a handgun.

Every once in a while, train with your duty gun from 25-50 yards.

▲ Lindsey uses an “old school” M1911, and carries one too. Here he is practicing trigger technique. It is a meditative process of pressing the trigger slowly to the rear, imagining he is trying to touch his nose with his trigger finger.

Photo: Lindsey Bertomen

Ballistics

My EDC load is the SIG SAUER 9MM, 124GR, ELITE V-CROWN, JHP cartridge. I can shoot it accurately out of all my 9mm guns, including the pocket-sized ones. In my M18 with a 3.9 inch barrel, it has a muzzle velocity around 1165 fps. At 50 yards, the calculated velocity still between 1100-1000 fps. Even after 100 yards, it still is above 1000 fps. Bullet drop is approximately 1” every 10 yards, give or take. This means that, even after 100 yards, a shot aimed at high center mass of a threat is still an effective, and ballistically capable, shot. If

you are sitting there with your sniper data thinking cap on, you should know that a 10 mph full value wind at 100 yards will cause very little deflection for this type of shot.

Respiratory Pause

When I taught small arms in the military, the mantra was B.R.A.S.S., This was the acronym for Breathe, Relax, Aim, Slack, and Squeeze. Succinctly, shooters were taught to take a normal breath and let it out, relax the muscles of the body, aim using proper aiming techniques, removing the trigger slack, (the amount of mechanical slack that has to be overcome before the gun will fire), and squeezing the trigger by steadily increasing the pressure. This mantra was originally developed for precision fire, but it can be

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easily applied to any type of shooting. Understanding this routine begins with the fact that the preparation for the shot, which is BRASS, and the follow-up from the shot is actually more important than the moment that the person fires the gun. That is, understanding the integrated act of shooting a gun is more about discovering and correcting inconsistencies of shooting.

The breathing part of the shooting requires that the shooter understands the breathing cycle. Most people know that breathing includes inhaling and exhaling. In between and inhale and an exhale is the respiratory pause. The respiratory pause between exhalation and inhalation is actually the moment in time that the body is most relaxed.

The simple concept of respiratory pause breathing is this: if a person times their shot after exhalation, and before inhalation, their shooting will be more consistent. If a shooter practices respiratory pause shooting, they have removed at least one factor from the list of factors that can cause a shot to be misaligned.

Whenever I taught this portion of shooting training, I got asked how a shooter can fire many shots and still be able to accomplish respiratory pause breathing. The short answer is a person can invoke respiratory pause, but not without training. However, simply seeking respiratory pause is enough to improve shooting. The next time you get on the range, learn to exhale, then squeeze the trigger. Eventually, one can induce the cadence of exhaling and squeezing the trigger. It is possible to fire multiple shots after exhalation.

How does one train for this? Use the same training technique that elite forces use to calm their body under extreme stress. It's called square breathing. Square breathing is a meditation technique that uses the same duration for each side of the breathing cycle. Since there are four sides to a breathing cycle, it is "square". Begin with five second "sides". Inhale for five seconds, pause for five seconds, exhale for five seconds, and pause for five seconds. Practice this daily. Eventually, you can work yourself up to 10 second sides.

Besides creating a meditation form, square breathing gives a practitioner awareness of the autonomic parts of bodily functions. Creating relaxed intervals in the body helps settle the body when it is time for action.

Trigger Training and Single Action Shooting

When I teach trigger control to improve accuracy, I always tell shooters to imagine that they are pressing the trigger with their finger in an attempt to touch their nose. That is, the trigger finger should press straight back, not to one side or the other.

In the past two years, there has been a resurgence of single action only handguns, built along the original design of the M1911. The original design has been modernized, like the Staccato line of 2011 handguns, and the Springfield 1911 DS Prodigy Handguns.



If officers train with a handgun past 25 yards regularly, it can improve their overall shooting ability. One of the skills one can improve is respiratory pause breathing. If the shooter can control breathing, it can improve one component of the integrated act of firing. Photo: Lindsey Bertomen

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I have shot both lines of guns and I can't decide which products I like better. One thing that Law Enforcement discovered quickly: Many agencies who have adopted these products have reported higher qualification scores. Besides the fact that both Staccato and Springfield Armory use match grade barrels and tight tolerances for these guns, they have much better triggers than most duty guns. Many products boast "match grade triggers" in their guns, but these really are match grade.

I liked the recoil and torque dampening of the Staccato XC frame and the weight and balance of the Springfield Prodigy, but I would rather not be forced to select between

the two of them. I like them both. I would put either of them on duty in a minute. When I carry a single action handgun, however, it is a 45, not a 9mm.

The trigger on the modernized single-action design is only one thing. It releases the hammer which ignites the cartridge. Triggers on striker fired guns typically carried on duty retract the striker slightly before the gun is fired. The difference is subtle, but a single-action hammer fired gun is generally easier to steady, and therefore easier to shoot at longer distances. All other things considered, I am more confident in my hostage rescue shot with my 1911 than any other handgun in my inventory.

Optics can be an advantage

An optic generally superimposes a dot or an image over the target. Where the image lies is where the bullet should strike. Because a shooter can maintain target focus without the secondary task of aligning the sights, the target is always in focus when the shooter is engaging. This means that anyone with any type of astigmatism in their vision will have an advantage at longer distances using an optic, provided the dot is superimposed in the focal plane.

I run a Holosun 509, which has a 2 MOA dot inside a 32 MOA circle. If I were shooting a target at longer than normal handgun distances, this is my choice. However, a sighting system on any gun is always a compromise. Sometimes that 2 MOA dot gets washed in bright light on some targets even after adjusting. Some products have dots as large as 8 MOA, which can cover some targets at 25 yards. However, the most common is a 2 MOA sight.

I generally set the optic to 15 yards. Using a 9 mm cartridge, a 15 yard zero will only give a drop around 3.5 inches from that zero at 50 yards.

A RDS is useful when a person struggles with eye dominance, but there really isn't any significant advantage if a person is trained on iron sights.

Combat sights are for up close

If you examine the sights commonly used on a duty handgun, you'll find that they have evolved into more than just aiming devices. Many of the



One of Lindsey's favorite single action handguns is the Springfield 1911 DS Prodigy. It features 17 and 20 round magazines, and the option of adding an optic. The introduction of this gun can increase the qualification rate of any agency.

Photo: Lindsey Bertomen

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better products have hook-like ledges on the leading edge of the rear sight, designed to be used as aid to slide racking. Generally front sights are designed for high visibility, and repeated holster use.

Modern combat sights differ from older handgun sights by their precision and adjustability. If we look at the difference between the size of the front blade and rear notch in today's handguns, it is rarely more than .1-.125". As few as 40 years ago, the front sights on most handguns were little slivers, and the rear sights were little trenches. Some experts considered the handgun was suitable for bad breath distances only.

Modern handgun sights are much better quality. Most are adjustable, highly visible, and made with a precision that is constantly improving. The aftermarket sight industry is highly competitive, and consumers are becoming very discerning. This is probably the only upside of governmental permissive lawlessness: the gun industry is very strong, and firearm consumers are becoming more educated.

Because handgun sights are much better, shooting at a further distance is much more attainable.

Shot Follow Through

You've already heard a discussion on respiratory pause breathing. This is training and activity before the press of the trigger. The other part of this is activity after the press of the trigger. We call this shot "follow-through". This is the act of simply maintaining the aim, the breathing pattern, and trigger hold, all the way through the firing cycle. Once the shooter has settled from recoil, the shooting cycle begins again. A discussion on shot follow through and shooting rhythm can be found here: <https://www.officer.com/training-careers/specialized-training/article/53057560/shooting-rhythm>

How to train

I know that the logical method of training is to take the duty gun to the rifle range and practice there. Let me encourage this. Shooting the gun at longer ranges can improve confidence, and help improve qualification efforts.

Note: I used to tell trainers to maintain qualification scores, but I am "old school" about this. Officers should know how well they are shooting and maintain their own



The smartest thing a person can do is to use a steady rest to make a longer shot. Although it looks like Lindsey is resting the gun on the vertical pole, he is touching the pole with his knuckles. The optic is a Holosun 509, one of Lindsey's favorite handgun optics. It has a 2 MOA dot inside a 32 MOA circle, perfect for a duty gun. Photo: Lindsey Bertomen

qualification scores. However, the agency qualification transcript of record should just read "pass" or "remediate". The chances of a qualification score to be used against the agency is relatively low, but it exists. For the sake of discovery, I generally tell trainers to maintain "pass/fail" records for sworn members of an agency.

Training Fleas

As a military small arms trainer, I was the guy with the bad luck who was tasked with pre-qualification and qualification for senior staff officers in the army. In one of my classes, I had 2 general officers, and about a dozen colonels. One of the drills I presented was a 50 yard M9 pre qualification. I am from the "aim small, miss small" training school.

When I was asked why I was having the class fire an M9 (Beretta M9) at 50 yard targets, I dismissed the question with a question of my own: "How does one train fleas?" Since the CSM nearby didn't tackle me for insubordination, I went on with my explanation. A flea can jump over 90 times their height. When flea circuses were once popular, trainers would put fleas into a Mason jar, close the lid, and leave them there for a week. After that, fleas never jump higher than the lid. Conversely, if a person is given a handgun and trains at 50 yards all the time, 25 yard shooting would seem like "normal".

When I got done with class, almost everyone shot a perfect score in regular qualification. 🎯

Get Off Me

The fight is up close, and it is measured in milliseconds.

By Lindsey Bertomen

Can you deliver a point-blank shot at an attacking target without shooting any of your own body parts in the process? If I am being completely honest here, I didn't feel I knew enough about the topic myself. The photos accompanying these articles make me look pretty good, but I had to get some training to get there.

Fortunately, I am smart enough to surround myself with people who do know about these things, and I'm smart enough to ask questions. After "studying up" on the topic, I called my friend Gene Whisenand and he ran me through the techniques that Trident Firearms Academy uses for close quarters defense.



Fighting with a gun at "bad breath" distance takes practice. Before live fire, Lindsey rehearsed the sequence several times without live fire before attempting this with real bullets. It is strongly suggested that this be done with a subcaliber training device like an airsoft gun before attempting live fire. Photo: Gene Whisenand

Over the course of five years, 2015-2019, nearly half of the officers killed in the line of duty engaged from less than two yards. If we were to extend that to three yards, the number goes to a little shy of 70%. We have known this rule for years, even when I was living in a patrol car. The fight is up close, and it is measured in milliseconds.

Take that motivation, and consider this: Within the distances I mentioned above, people miss. Reading some of the actual incidents, I found that some of them are actually disengagements. That is, the officer had already been in physical contact with the suspect, and now, disengaged, it went to guns.

Any time I have practiced for an on-duty gun grab, the goal is to keep the gun away from the suspect, shooting side hip and leg back. Generally, we accomplish this by stepping back with the gun side leg. This makes sense: I want to get away from the threat. I want to keep my gun out of reach of the attacker.

Scrutiny of one's peers is very powerful. We can only speculate, but motivation to train against "gun grabs" ranges from "I do not want any harm to come to me today" to "I don't want to be shot with my own gun." If you were to ask me, motivation from the latter is more powerful.

Stepping back from contact distance may give an advantage to the attacker, because distance equals time. In this case, we are giving up drawing or engaging time that we don't really have. We are already inside of "bad breath" distance, so the most survivable option is to engage. The quickest response wins.

Whenever an officer enters any fight, they always have to start in second place. There are only two ways to overcome second place in a gunfight: Extreme luck or extremely consistent training. A couple of training sessions per year is not the answer. If I were to write the training plan for every officer, it would include a minimum of 200 rounds of focused trigger time, five hours of threat recognition/force decision making and 4-40 hours of Jiu-Jitsu per week. My choice in Jiu-Jitsu is small circle, but I have great respect for the Gracie BJJ schools. By the way, some studies suggest that Jiu-Jitsu-trained officers have fewer use of force complaints (Anyaso, 2020). Did Lindsey just say 40 hours?

FIREARMS TRAINING & TACTICS

When we teach responding to an armed threat in CCW classes, we teach students to respond with a “submissive” looking response: hands up, palms out, head slightly down in a partial crouch. For an on-duty officer, this is the “interview” position: hands in front of face, slightly bent knees, bladed upper body. From there, the non-firing hand goes to the head, the firing hand to the gun.

Addressing force decision-making here will definitely go beyond the scope of this article, but the part we do know is the fact that the criminal will always have the tactical advantage. That is, the officer’s legal activity will always be reactive. It is important that all other aspects are proactive. That is, officers must train, maintain a fitness level, use the best equipment and practice a lifestyle that encourages emotional stability. For the purposes of the technique describe here, the officer has already been forced to deliver a lethal response.

Like all training, this skill has to be practiced until the officer can automatically deliver rounds on target.

When we teach CCW topics, we acknowledge that it is hard to prevent people from penetrating our personal space. We have a social zone, where we allow even strangers, and an intimate zone, where we allow people we know. Law enforcement officers are trained to conduct business at a modified social zone. A person can cover the distance between a person’s social zone, from 4-12’, to the close quarters 1.5-4’, inside of a second.

Given the milliseconds an officer has to react to a threat, and the fact that the response can only be reactive, officers are limited in which factors that they can change. These are things we can improve: Recognizing pre-assault indicators, mental preparation and preparing an effective response. Learning to instinctually draw and fire in a defensive posture will reduce the effective response time.

The draw

Most of us train to orient the muzzle toward the target immediately after it clears the holster. In a standard draw sequence, the gun then moves toward up and forward, toward the center of the body and into the sighting plane. While the shooting hand is moving the gun out and up, the non-firing hand meets it during this movement, completing the two-handed grip.

With a suspect at contact distance, moving the gun to the centerline and away from the body makes it easier for an assailant to disarm the officer. The close quarters draw keeps the gun against the body in a protected position.

The close quarters draw sequence begins with the officer achieving a master grip and unlocking all safety devices on the holster. The officer draws, as before, including pointing the muzzle towards the target as soon as it clears the holster. Rather than punching the gun out, it goes straight up to chest level, so the butt of the gun is on the side of the body, contacting the area of the pectoral on the shooting side. The gun takes on a natural cant, making the top of the gun further from the chest than the bottom of the gun. This natural cant also prevents the retracting slide from banging against the body.

I found that it was easier for me to accomplish this movement when I tried to get the gun as high as I could toward my armpit.



After training with his “finger gun,” Lindsey ran the drill slowly. In this photo, notice that the gun has already cleared the holster. The muzzle should be further oriented toward the target. Photo: Gene Whisenand



The non-firing hand stays on top of the head until the officer creates enough distance to extend the gun in front. Some shooters lace the hand toward the back of the head, which is all right. Create a good base with the feet, and shuffle, or take small steps in the retreat. Photo: Gene Whisenand



The gun naturally cants against the body allowing the slide's movement to the rear without interruption. As long as the gun is against the body, the orientation with the torso can aim the gun. Our team is fortunate to be able to use Safety First Shooting Association's River Oaks Firearms Training Center to practice shooting and movement techniques. This range gives us plenty of room for movement to practice. Photo: Gene Whisenand



It is important to shuffle or take short steps backward while retreating. Anything behind the shooter is "uncaptured territory." That is, everything is a tripping hazard. Practice repeating diagonally, or in an arc, if the dimensions of the range allow it. Moving backwards while shooting can only be trained with actual trigger time. Photo: Gene Whisenand

The non-firing hand goes to the top of the head. This doesn't just keep it out of the way-making it more difficult to shoot one's own body parts. It also protects the face and gives the officer a hard exterior near the head.

With the gun in contact with the body, the rounds are "aimed" by orienting the trunk with the target, in the same manner as a tank being attached to its turret. I found that, as long as the heel of the gun stays on my body, I could put bullets on target accurately. Even moving in an arc around the target, I could center mass the target every time.

For those who have law enforcement experience before the 1990s era, the draw is not much different in concept from the old "speed rock," a quick draw where the officer drew and flung his shoulders back and shot from the hip, except this technique is designed for a stable and mobile base.

Movement

In order for this to work, officers must orient themselves toward the threat. The purpose of this draw technique is to get away. Therefore, the officer must attempt to create distance. The most logical retreat is straight back. If the range has the correct type of backstop and dimensions, add moving in an arc, where the aggressor is the vertex. I am fortunate to be able to train at Safety First Shooting Association's River Oaks Firearms Training Center, which has open training bays for this purpose. We are grant funded, and open our facilities to law enforcement training. Our range design allows for this kind of movement.


Gene Whisenand emphasized the importance of dragging one's feet when retreating, or taking small steps. Tripping over backwards would be disastrous in an armed encounter, and even worse if the decision to fire was not made, and the startle response took over.

Backwards movement must be practiced, and this is another skill that needs to be done with a training tool before live fire. As the officer retreats, the gun can be extended. There is a point when the gun should be raised fully to the sighting plane. The fluid transition to sighted fire can only be trained with actual trigger time.

Things you should know

I am particular about mental alertness when training. I found this training to be exhausting, even if the sessions were only a couple of hours. If you are a law enforcement trainer, use frequent breaks, and rehearse without live fire after these breaks.

The first time you try this, hopefully after a full session of no live fire, you will realize that muzzle blast is inherently dangerous. Use eye protection that covers the eye well.

At close quarters distance, my first inclination is to jam the draw, deliver an empty hand strike, or something similar. Let me encourage this behavior. Depending on the situation, your PDWs (personal defense weapons) are often the best choice. Your best agency asset is to have the defensive tactics instructors sit down with the firearms training staff and plan this training. 



Vehicle Ops & Ambush Mitigation

Photo: Robert Marvulli

Spoiler Alert: Some techniques here may give the reader pause. Some were not designed for live fire exercises. Don't train with live fire when using the non-live fire techniques described.

By Lindsey Bertomen

Depending on the nature of their assignment, an officer on patrol can spend around 50% of their time at work in their patrol car. A patrol vehicle is often seen as a means to get the officer to the call. It can, however, be a bad place to be during an ambush.

This article is about some simple knowledge an officer can have about vehicle ops. It has some pointers about safety. It cannot possibly be about ambush mitigation, because the topic is too broad. For example, who would ambush an officer? Before we can talk about ambush mitigation, we need to see if there is something in common amongst those who would shoot an officer. If there is a common ideology, we should identify it, and address it.

Officer in a stopped vehicle is a fixed target

Once the vehicle has stopped, the officer is a fixed target. This sounds like a no-brainer, but you are hearing this because of the second part of the rule. You see, the only reason I would shoot from a vehicle is if I am forced to shoot from a vehicle. The idea is to avoid shooting from a vehicle.

If a person arrives to a scene driving a car, it is predictable where that person can be found in that car when it stops.

It takes about the same amount of time to turn a key and put the car into gear as it does to draw and fire. Unfortunately, the acceleration of a vehicle does not match that of a projectile. A person attempting to drive away from gunfire from a stopped vehicle may be better off engaging and exiting.

Drive through an ambush

We have some lessons learned information from our recent military conflicts and training. If a threat presents itself, and the vehicle is rolling, we generally train to drive through an ambush. Depending on the nature of the threat, it may be time to literally drive through the ambush.

In the policing industry, we know that every application of force can be controversial. In case anyone has not noticed, social networking has produced thousands of use of force experts, infectious disease experts and, most recently, international policy experts daily. If you think that shooting an armed suspect will produce an outcry from these experts, imagine what driving one over will do. Let me reiterate: It is tactically sound to use a vehicle against a lethal and imminent threat, provided it meets the criterion for this level of force.



The other part of this strategy is the logic of driving toward the threat, as opposed to driving parallel to or away, because it minimizes exposure to the threat.

Only parts of your vehicle can be considered cover

Not long ago, I took a door I had rescued from a truck to the range and shot it. It came from an older truck, and the steel was somewhat thicker than vehicles manufactured more recently. I wanted to see what cartridges could breach a door. I was surprised to find that a standard .380 bullet went through the door, and part of the window mechanism, lodging in the 2"x4" on which I had propped the door. It probably would not have done as well, had the window been down and the bullet had an extra layer, but this was an eye opener. The heavy steel was no match for a 9mm or a 45. As the angle became more oblique, the protection increased. Some handgun cartridges can shoot through cars, door-to-door.

Officers should consider vehicle protection in levels. The most reliable protection is the engine block. Keep that between yourself and the potential threat. Bear in mind that the engine block is only a percentage of the fixtures

▲ Figure 1: Learn the dynamics of shooting with a canted muzzle. When shooting from a vehicle, there are few opportunities for firing with a completely vertical gun. Photo: Robert Marvulli

▲ Figure 2: Use training devices. In this case, it is an ASP Red Gun. Photo: Robert Marvulli

under the hood, and it is a good idea to see how much engine actually resides there. The next level down is the layers of protection in the full length of the car. That is, if one were to shoot through the grill, missing the engine block, all the way through to the trunk. The third level, lowest of all, is the protection afforded by the doors and single layers of body design of a vehicle. This level is slightly increased by adding obliqueness of the angle, as in standing in the open door of a car, similar to a traffic stop position.

It is a good idea to explore the effects of ricochet on bullet behavior, which is a very unpredictable science. In many cases, the ricochet angle is much shallower than the original angle of incidence. The effect looks like this: A bullet fired into concrete, even along a concrete wall, will tend to stay parallel to that wall after striking. Some tactical units train their personnel to avoid moving close to walls because of the risk of bullets "clinging" to them after striking them. The same could be said about shooting rounds under a car. The rule here is to be cognizant of the under surface of the vehicle, which does not provide cover unless it is behind tires.

If one is seeking cover behind a car, any shots that impact the ground in front of the car could send a



3



4

ricochet, debris, or a destabilized bullet off the ground, the width of that car. The only viable cover is behind the tires.

By this time, the reader should be thinking that the patrol car really isn't much cover. This isn't exactly true. Many of us have seen times when bullets have passed through barriers surprisingly well, whereas other instances not so well. What we should conclude is that a vehicle is not predictable cover, and some areas are better than others.

The draw is different

Shooting from a vehicle is completely different from shooting on your range. Not all law enforcement ranges in the world have room or access to add a vehicle for training. Because of this, many officers are fortunate to see vehicle ops, a completely separate, perishable skill, in their training schedule once a year.

In order to draw from a seated car seat, the strong-side hip has to move away from the seat back. To do this, the

▲ **Figure 3:** Some firearms instructors teach moving the gun horizontally across the dashboard when drawing from a vehicle. The fastest method is to draw it straight toward the target. **DO NOT train this method with a live gun. Live fire training can be done by using two chairs. Note the manner in which the feet are placed to twist the body and the non-firing hand on the chair.**

Photo: Robert Marvulli

▲ **Figure 4:** With the trunk still slightly twisted, the shooter tends to have a canted gun. The feet are braced in the interior of the vehicle. The goal here is to get out of the vehicle. Photo: Robert Marvulli

officer has to have the strong side foot slightly forward, and the support side foot slightly to the side, and almost underneath the seat. At the same time, the officer obtains a good master grip and begins to release the retention devices of the holster. The officer rotates his body forward, and away from the seat back on the strong side. This is a trunk twisting motion.

Patrol vests work best when they are facing the threat, slightly canted. They are most vulnerable when the area under the armpit is exposed. Twisting forward and rotating toward the threat improves survivability.

Anyone who has shot vehicle glass, been around vehicle ops training when windshields are shot, or looked at a scene post shooting that involves glass knows that eye protection on patrol, whether one needs glasses or not, is required for the job. Wear good wrap-around eye protection. If you want a recommendation, I suggest WileyX WX Gravity glasses with the facial cavity seal. They can be worn like regular glasses, and the seal

can be added quickly for call-outs, or (as I learned working in Emergency Operation Centers-EOCs) ground-guiding choppers.

Like every gun presentation, the action is deliberate and smooth. There is only one way to initiate practice with this, and that is either with a shooter-coach inspected empty gun, or using an ASP Red Gun. The photos accompanying this article uses both, by the way. As a rule, we use safe guns, training guns, “finger guns” to set up the photos, and remotely fired cameras in photos that face the muzzle.

There are two ways to present the gun, once it has cleared the holster. The first method is to point the gun straight out, toward the dashboard, raising it to the level of the top of the steering wheel. Once the gun is out, the gun is turned horizontally, in a manner that causes the palm of the shooting hand to point straight down. The officer continues the travel of the gun so it now travels toward the driver side window, still canted horizontally, magazine base pad facing the passenger side, sights toward the driver side window. Once the gun arrives at the point where it can be safely pointed out the window, the officer returns it to vertical and assumes a two-handed grip.

The first method is the recommended method of training for shooting out of a driver side window for a right-handed shooter. If you notice, at no point in time does the officer cause the muzzle of his gun to cover any of his own body parts.

In the second method, the officer draws in the same manner. When the gun clears the holster, he brings it directly to the target. When we train using this method, we are careful to keep the finger out of the trigger at all times, pressing the trigger only when the gun is pointing at the target. DO NOT USE A LOADED GUN OR LIVE FIRE when training in this method. Practice the draw with a Red Gun or similar tool, then shoot from the window after safely setting up a shooting position.

If you want to build speed in your draw practice, use an Umarex T4E product that matches your duty gun.

The logic behind this training

Vehicle ops includes drawing and firing from challenging quarters. The safest route is to carefully draw, as in the first method above. This is a good training philosophy, as there is nothing wrong with training presenting from the holster separately.

The problem, however, is when the shooter is put under time pressure. First, some holsters don't readily release from a seated position, nor do they draw unless the gun is completely clear from the seat. Second, if we break this training down and do it realistically, officers do different things seated in their patrol car than they do anywhere else. For example, we found that, instead of placing the hand on the chest, as in a

standing “square range” draw, many of us found we ended up with our non-firing hand on the door handle, opening the door. This is good, and we will get to this in a minute.

We can't get around this: The quickest draw goes from the holster to the target. The officer's actions are divided: Get some rounds on target, and get moving out of the kill zone, while attempting to create a more oblique angle with the door. The more viable way to get this done is to draw in a straight line, and have the hand on the door handle, opening the door.

I also have looked at my holster collection to see what duty holster works best for vehicle ops. Holsters with jacket slots, which get the gun slightly away from the body, and safety devices that allow a straight draw, rather than changing the gun's direction when drawing, work best.

Number One holster on the “Best for Duty” list is the Gould & Goodrich Triple Retention Duty Holster (K391). It allows a fast, smooth, straight, mid-ride, draw. It has a rotating hood, but also gives immediate security when the gun is re-holstered. I can draw it as quickly as a holster with no retention device. To me, it looks and sounds space age, but is at home on traditional duty wear.

Hand on door


Normally, during the draw, the support hand goes to the chest. Most of us train using this method regularly. The logic behind it is simple. It prevents the shooter from shooting their own hand. The test of time pressure suggests that the officer will reach for the door handle and brace himself when twisting anyway, thus placing his hand near the door handle.

It is almost a given for officers using optics that are a little higher off the receiver to consider offset with a long gun. There is also a little offset with the RDS on a handgun. This is a reminder for officers to not shoot something dear to them because of offset, or anything, for that matter.

How to train

Live fire drills can duplicate vehicle ops by using two chairs. After practicing the draw using non firearm training devices, set the chairs up so the back of one is in the same place as a closed door. The shooter should be perpendicular to the targets. Rotate into a draw position, and practice safe drawing. Fire on the targets with the non-firing hand on the simulated door handle.

From this position, shoot with a slightly canted gun, with the magazine base pointing toward the shooting hand side. When shooting with a twisted trunk, the shooter will slightly cant the gun.

If your agency has a range on which officers can drive and come up shooting, use it regularly. The training is worth your while. 



Milo Range

Shoot/No Shoot Scenarios

Since humans form concepts inductively when it comes to scenarios, having officers of any training level train by scenario is valuable. **By Lindsey Bertomen**

Across the country, most of range training is on square ranges, shooting two-dimensional training targets. If your agency is fortunate enough to have a range with three-dimensional or moving targets, your agency has made a great investment. Most others have simple ranges. It is important to vary the training, and make it effective. One thing every agency needs to do: Incorporate critical decision making into the training.

Critical decision making can include several tasks for policing. On a simple level, the use of shoot/no shoot scenarios can be added to any training plan. The next level should be treating de-escalation as a perishable skill and adding it to regular range sessions.

Mental health and use of force

Right now, we are living in a society that is trying to normalize mental health crisis and adult temper tantrums. The numbers suggest that 1 in 4 arrests involve a mental health issue and at least 12% of all people entering the mental health “system” are introduced to it by the police. It appears that this rate has increased over time.

Law enforcement officers are likely to encounter a person in mental health crisis on a daily basis. Unfortunately, these incidents tax resources that some agencies do not have. For example, most officers have to “sit” with the subject during evaluation and finding bed space, if the evaluation ever even gets to that point. This takes an officer out of commission for that time.



Lindsey creates basic scenarios by adding photos on targets, using a glue stick and a printer. Users have to shoot, move and communicate on the range. Photo: Lindsey Bertomen



Kudos to Krate Tactical (kratetactical.com) for providing Lindsey with a “Shoot him in the leg” target. Photo: Lindsey Bertomen

This is another problem with mental health cases. Officers don't just see a subject once and the issue is resolved. They see mental health patients, often the same patients, over and over again. Sometimes the officer's presence is instantly triggering, forcing the officer into split second decisions. Other times, the same person is docile, depending on their condition. In some cases, a mental health professional may even do an over-the-phone screening, sometimes by the officer having to hand that person his cell phone.

Even if the officer has done all they can do to negotiate and de-escalate in a given situation, they are often forced to exercise a lethal force option. This isn't something we can readily communicate to the “Why don't you shoot him in the leg?” public, but our training needs to include this fact also. Otherwise, officers exercising force options would never find closure on some incidents.

Social perception and threat

In an experiment on social perception of threat, scientists showed computer generated faces to research subjects, and asked them to decide which faces appeared “threatening.” These faces were designed by the researchers, and ranged from “threatening” to “harmless.”

Subjects were shown fewer and fewer threatening faces over time. Subjects tended to expand their definition of threatening. The number of threats a subject had perceived depended on how many threats the subjects had seen lately. In another study, it was found that experienced officers make better decisions and shoot more accurately than rookies, given the same potentially lethal encounter.

The truth is, training in decision making, both threat and de-escalation, improves the overall response for law enforcement officers. The best thing an agency can do is to provide their officers with a wide variety of training scenarios, and integrate this training into an officer's career survival plan.

Using simulators

One way for officers to be subjected to decision making is to use simulators. There are complete solutions that offer a variety of situations and training solutions. One complete solution is the MILO Training Solutions theater (faac.com/milo/solutions). They offer a number of options, including a 180-degree and even an almost 360-degree theater, giving officers full training immersion into a scenario. The training scenarios are incredibly realistic and they approach all kinds of situations. Since these solutions cover other municipal functions, like passenger bus training, fire, and EMS training, agencies can leverage their grant-based funding from different sources for a simulator.

Since humans form concepts inductively when it comes to scenarios, having officers of any training level train by scenario is valuable. Training inductively means that

FIREARMS TRAINING & TACTICS

a person can form general principles or conclusions from a specific, or even detailed, experience. This is the guiding principle for placing a rookie on FTO, by the way.

For example, the general layout of a scenario cannot be duplicated, simply because of varying landscape, but the idea of the scenario is duplicated internally. While on FTO (centuries ago, by the way), I once was dispatched to a possible DV case on a second story of an apartment complex. The victim had reported that the suspect may harm himself. When I ended up talking to him, it was on the balcony. I positioned myself between him and a possible suicide route, which was the railing.

After the call, my FTO asked why I stood where I stood. I told him I wanted to prevent him from jumping, if he intended to jump. He asked me, “What if he intended to take you with him?” I carried that lesson throughout my career every time my call overlooked something that otherwise would be called scenic.

Use a variety of targets

On a square range with paper targets, I use printed photos of hands holding cell phones and guns to provide a mix between “shoot” and “no shoot” targets. I cover these targets with stacked barrels or target stands, where the Officer has to walk up to the scenario. All scenarios require verbal commands. If you learned anything from *Three Skills Every Officer Should Have* (Officer.com/21233801), practicing effective verbal commands should be integrated into shooting and negotiating.

Your range can be improved using the same stuff IDPA clubs use: Walls made of 2” x 4” frames with snow fencing stretched across them. These create safe barriers, because they allow anyone to be able to see if someone is down range. Two walls attached at 90 degrees are self-supporting, and they don’t blow over in the wind.

I use three basic targets, pasted on a IPSC cardboard target: Gun, Phone, and Hands Up. Using the most basic setup, Officers can face away from a target until they are given the “threat” command, where they turn around and engage.

Your training is only as good as your AAR

Without some sort of dialogue following a training scenario, the training really doesn’t have any value. An After Action Review must begin with an open dialogue such as, “why did you do that in that manner, officer?” Everyone should be encouraged to participate in an AAR. This is where inductive learning is very important. During an



Besides negotiating, other decisions have to be solicited from training. For example, what if the “shoot” target is in front of the “no shoot?” Photo: Lindsey Bertomen

AAR, sometimes the discussions can go off topic.

For example, during one AAR in which I participated, we were talking about making shooting decisions, and the topic of crime victims. The facilitator let everyone digress a little, and someone was talking about what happened after a shooting in a domestic violence case. They were saying that victims of personal crimes, including those related to DV cases, have just experienced a complete loss of control in their environment. If the officer wishes to establish any kind of relationship with the victim, they have to allow the victim to reestablish some control. I asked how they would do that. The facilitator told us that asking simple questions like, “May I sit down here?” allows that person to have a little control of their environment. I never imagined that I’d hear one of the most powerful pieces of investigative advice in a firearms class. If the AAR flows from topic to topic, let it, within reason. Have particular training goals, and take opportunities to lead your training group toward these goals.

Have a multi-echelon approach to training

Multi-echelon training is an approach where training participants participate in their aspect of training, or in their capacity, as part of a larger training mission. Agency critical response teams participate in multi-echelon training all the time. For example, during a training session, the hostage negotiation team may be working on their equipment or negotiation skills, while the precision shooters are practicing wind doping.

The training doesn’t necessarily have to be limited to a single agency. For example, in a municipal organization, city fire can be working on training updates for an engine, the police department can be working on pre-positioning rescue assets, while other officers can be doing qualification. The training goal for a multi-echelon project could be something like responding to a mass casualty incident.



Targets with different shapes and configurations can break up the “square range” monotony. The training presented is only as good as the AAR. Photo: Lindsey Bertomen


Two final rules

All training should be task oriented, not time oriented. Down time determines the length of time for non-structured events. When it comes to training, there is one rule that every coach knows: Never walk away from a failure. When a basketball coach has their team practicing foul shots, the final shot always has to be a score. This way, no player walks away from a failure. It is the same for shooting training. Every training session, regardless how problematic, must end in a pass. This doesn't mean that everybody passes automatically. This means that every training session is task oriented, not time oriented. The task is completed until it is completed correctly.

Without documentation, the training never happened. That is, every training session needs to be documented.

The document must be organized in a manner that demonstrates that the particular goals of the training were completed. All police training is discoverable. The manner in which it is recorded should take this into consideration.

Having said this, because it's about the level of detail in training documentation. The particular tasks of the training need to be outlined. While it is reasonable to score every qualification, the final score is based on pass/fail. This is a lesson learned for some agencies whose exceptional or dismal marksmen have had to use the firearms in the course of their duty. When it comes to liability, all training needs to be simply pass/fail.

Every Agency can, and should, train regularly. The training should be varied, and goal oriented. 



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- Investigation
- Tactical

Our NEW online portal includes:

- Top navigation broken out into channels and learning pods.
- Easy-to-access courses in a variety of formats from videos, educational sessions, and interactive courses.
- Completion certificate based on time spent or quiz scoring.
- Downloadable content for future reference materials.
- Ability for users to reach out to sponsors via website, email or phone.
- Single sign on for users to track their training path.

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