

Remember that safety is everyone's responsibility:

1. Treat all firearms as if they are loaded
2. Always point firearms in a safe direction
3. Keep your finger off the trigger and outside the trigger guard until you are ready to fire
4. Be certain of your target and backstop

Safety at all times must be the first priority

Introduction

This introductory PDF is intended to give newcomers who are interested in our sport an overview of basic skills and procedures however it does not aim to replace training with an instructor. An experienced instructor will spot problems and rectify them before they develop into serious problems, this can never be replaced by reading a manual.

To compete in sanctioned IPSC competitions you are required to be a member of the IPSC Region in which you reside and some Regions also require you to pass a formal assessment. When you make contact you can ask what is required in your Region and see if they can suggest clubs where you can get started. You can find a list of all Regions and their contact details here - <http://www.ipsc.org/ipsc/regions.php>

All individuals who want to participate in IPSC competition must be familiar with the rules which can be downloaded here - <https://www.ipsc.org/pdf/RulesShotgun.pdf>

IPSC

The International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC) was established to promote, maintain, improve and advance the sport of IPSC shooting, to safeguard its principles and to regulate its conduct worldwide in order to cultivate the safe, recreational use of firearms by persons of good character. IPSC disciplines include - Handgun, Rifle, Shotgun, Mini-Rifle and Action Air. IPSC shooters need to blend accuracy, power, and speed into a winning combination. Multiple targets, moving targets, targets that react when hit, penalty targets, or even partially covered targets, obstacles, movement, competitive strategies, and other techniques are all a part of IPSC competition shooting. One of the biggest attractions to IPSC competitions is that the challenges are seldom the same from event to event because IPSC encourages diversity in stage design.

Divisions

All Divisions compete together on the same stages and on the same days in a match, however, when calculating match standings, only Divisional stage scores are compared. Thus, the top shooter in Open on a stage is the measure for all other Open shooters, and likewise for all other Divisions. More information can be found in the rulebook in Appendix D.

There are 4 divisions currently recognised in IPSC Shotgun Competition:

1. Open

Open Division is the shotgun equivalent of top fuel dragsters. The guns have compensators, optical or electronic sights, and almost all now feature detachable box magazines. There is a ten round limit when loading magazines so a loaded chamber start means 11 rounds for box fed guns.

2. Modified

Modified guns can have almost all the same features as Open guns with the exception of detachable box magazines, meaning these guns are tube fed and have a loading limit of 14 rounds as well as an overall length restriction of 1320mm.

3. Standard

These are tube fed guns but unlike Modified, optical or electronic sights and compensators are not permitted. They have an initial load limitation of 9 rounds but interestingly no overall length limit.

4. Standard Manual

Standard Manual is similar to Standard except the guns are not self-loading, which in practice means pump actions, although under-lever or even double barrelled qualify for this division.

Firearms

There are countless choices but looking at what the top competitors at the last WorldShoot used, we can see that the dominant firearms in Standard and Modified are the Benelli M2 and the Beretta 1301. In Standard Manual the Benelli Supernova is very popular followed by the Remington 870. Open is a technology race, with guns derived from Kalashnikov and AR/M4 platforms being made made from scratch or custom tuned in a wide variety of countries.

Ammunition

Some IPSC competitors load their own slug and buckshot ammunition. The primary reason for this is that the cost savings are significant and the ammunition can be tuned to the firearm. This will allow the firearm to perform at its maximum potential. Extreme care must be taken in the reloading of ammunition and it is important not to load ammunition beyond safe levels. All that is required is to achieve the necessary power factor. The components to load birdshot are more expensive than the cost of buying factory loaded ammunition, resulting in most people buying birdshot and then performing tests to understand how it patterns with their gun and chokes.

Power Factor

Power is a requirement in IPSC competition, along with speed and accuracy. The power of a given cartridge is measured by both bullet weight and velocity. The weight of the bullet fired in grains is multiplied by the velocity (feet per second) and the total must exceed certain threshold which are specific to Divisions and shown in the IPSC Rules. The power factor of a firearm for IPSC competition is calculated using the following formula:

Bullet Weight (grains) X Velocity (feet/second) 1000

Power factor is tested at events using a scale and a chronograph, you must ensure that all the ammunition you are using complies with the current rules, this is entirely the responsibility of the competitor.

All shotgun ammunition must make the minimum power factor of 480 but not exceed 750.

Loading Belt

Cartridges or magazines are most commonly carried on a belt worn at waist level although single cartridges can be mounted on the gun or on armbands. When you have established which Division you will compete in you need to read and understand rules 5.2.3 through 5.2.8 in order to comply with specific measurements.

Other Related Equipment

A good shooting bag will allow you to carry the necessary accessories, ammunition, etc to a match, for example:

- Cleaning equipment
- Eye protection
- Hearing Protection
- Current rulebook
- Spare parts
- Paperwork

Safety Area

A designated “Safety Area” at the range is provided for the boxing and un-boxing of your firearm. No ammunition may be handled in the safety area. This area is provided so that the competitor may check their firearm without being supervised by a Range Officer. There will be a designated safe direction in which to point the muzzle of your firearm. You are also allowed to practice mounting the gun, dry firing, reloads (as long as no ammunition is handled), and other activities such as repairs, cleaning, and maintenance.

Gun Slips

Some venues may require guns to be carried between shooting areas in a gun slip or box, it is a good idea to bring a slip to an unknown venue to avoid any issues.

Firearm Safety Check

It may be necessary or desirable to check the firearm for safety. This can be done at a “designated” safety area, or while under the direct supervision of a Range Officer. To check a semi automatic firearm do the following:

1. While pointing the firearm in a “safe” direction verify that the magazine is empty on tube fed guns (or removed in the case of box fed guns) and the chamber is empty.
2. Close the slide.
3. Pointing the firearm in a safe direction lower the hammer by pressing the trigger.
4. With the hammer cocked and the safety on, press the trigger, the hammer should not fall.

Note - Different action types will have additional checks, you should ensure you are familiar with the platform you are using.

Carrying a Firearm on the Range

The firearm is carried with the muzzle pointed at the sky and the breech flag inserted to show there is no cartridge in the chamber, magazine out for box fed guns or tube empty for tube fed guns. The competitor is not allowed to lower the muzzle or remove the breech flag from their firearm unless in a safety area or ordered to do so by a Range Officer on an active firing line. It needs to be stressed that a properly designed breech flag will not permit ammunition to be in the breech when the flag is fitted.

Filling Magazines/Speed-loaders

The filling of magazines or speed-loaders can be done anywhere except in a designated safety area. If you handle ammunition in the safety area it will result in a Match Disqualification.

Use of the Firearm on the Line

Safety is absolutely essential in our sport and that is why it will be stressed throughout this course. The only time a firearm may be used in competition is when you are under the direct supervision of a Range Officer and you have been given the instruction “Load and make ready”. After loading and making ready the start position is assumed. During the course of fire, the muzzle must always remain pointing down range when shooting, loading or unloading, during movement, during remedial action, or when presenting the firearm for inspection to the Range Officer.

Gun fit

A gun which fits you correctly is vital for performance, particularly when shooting at speed. Most of the good quality shotguns in common use today are adjusted for drop and cast using a shim set which is supplied with each new gun, if you are buying a second-hand gun it is a good idea to ensure this is included. Gun stocks can be adjusted for length by changing the recoil pad or adding/removing spacers. Most gun shops and clay grounds will have someone who can have a look at you mounting your gun and advise on adjustments, an IPSC club coach should also be able to do this.

Stance and Mount

Firing a shotgun rapidly requires a good stance which helps counter the gun’s recoil, key to this is having most of your weight over the lead foot. From there you will need to ensure that you can comfortably index across all targets to be shot from the shooting location. To mount, raise the gun from hip level into the shoulder, pulling the stock into the pectoral pocket of the shoulder while keeping both hands in the same position on the gun. Failing to keep the gun firmly retained in the shouldered position when firing, will make the felt recoil more noticeable and your shooting less accurate:

1. Feet should be in a forward stance, one and a half times shoulder width apart, knees flexed slightly, and body roughly 40 degrees to the strong hand side of the target. For recoil control, the shoulder line should be ahead of the hips with as much weight on the front foot as possible to counter the push back of firing.
2. For correct aim, the cheek should rest on the stock to obtain a true sight line along the top of the barrel to the front bead. If the gun has a sight aperture on the mid barrel, align the gun so the bead lines up in the aperture.

Sight Picture & Aiming

In order for a shot to hit the target (for instance, with a slug) the competitor must aim the gun and give the barrel a definite direction relative to the target. In theory, accurate aiming is achieved when the competitor places in exact alignment, the rear sight with the front bead, and holds them in alignment in the aiming area. In practice not all shotguns have rear sights and alignment may be placing the front bead over the centre of the rib.

When aiming, the front bead is positioned in the middle of the rear sight or rib with an equal space on each side. The front bead is on the same level as the rear sight or rib if the gun is correctly “fitted” for the shooter and the cheek is positioned properly on the stock. Additionally, in Open and Modified, this may vary if a red dot sight is being used.

Correct sight alignment must be thoroughly understood and practiced. It is imperative to maintain “front bead” point of focus throughout the sighting and aiming of the gun. The shooter should distinguish the requirement of front and rear sight aim or for closer targets, especially with birdshot correct mount and front bead only.

Sight Picture and Instinctive Shooting, Both Eyes Open

To know the sights are aligned properly, you must focus on the front sight to confirm it's alignment with the rear sight (if fitted) or rib. This means that you will start focusing on the target and then you will have to bring your focus back to the front sight. Once you have learned how to focus on the front sight, you will learn how to reduce the time required to complete this action. This is a key element to be effective in our sport. By minimising the time required to take a sight picture, you will improve your performance. This technique is called a "Flash Sight Picture".

In order to gain greater speed of engagement with birdshot on closer static targets without no-shoot targets guarding them or on moving targets it is desirable to shoot instinctively by looking with both eyes open at both the front sight and the targets instead of aiming using sight alignment. This type of reflex shooting, similar to the technique used for clay pigeons takes a lot of practice but is very worthwhile and the top competitors in the world today are shooting splits as fast as 0.10 seconds, and is a feat worth watching at a major match as it almost defies belief!

Range Commands and Procedures

The approved range commands and their sequence are as follows:

- "Load and make ready" (Make Ready for starts with an unloaded firearm)
- "Are you ready?"
- "Stand by"
- BEEP - the start signal
- "Stop" - only used if something goes wrong, maybe a stage problem, maybe competitor problem!
- "If you are finished, unload and show clear"
- "If clear, hammer down, open action"
- "Range is clear"

These range commands are spoken in English worldwide in IPSC competitions. They are the only range commands allowed to be used in sanctioned competitions.

You may only remove your safety flag and lower your firearm when the "Load and make ready" command has been given by a Ranger Officer. If you un-flag or lower your firearm before this command is given, you will be disqualified from the competition.

Load and Make Ready

- On the command "load and make ready" the competitor will lower the firearm from muzzle up.
- With the firearm pointed down range with the "trigger finger outside" of the trigger guard.
- Loads cartridges into the magazine tube or inserts a magazine.
- If not already done so, works the action to chamber a cartridge.
- If not already engaged, applies the safety.
- The competitor now has a firearm in the ready position that has the safety on and is loaded to full allowable capacity within the division rules.
- At all times during this procedure, the firearm should be pointed down range in a designated safe direction.
- At all times the trigger finger is outside of the trigger guard.

Are you ready?

After loading and assuming the start position, the Ranger Officer will ask "Are you ready?" If you are ready you do not have to respond to this question. If you are not ready, indicate by saying, "not ready" in a loud clear voice.

Stand By

“Stand by” is the signal to the competitor that the start signal will be forthcoming.

Start Signal

This signal may be a beep from the timer, the appearance of a target, or some other form of visible signal. Alternately you may have to start yourself by releasing or pressing an activator.

If you are finished, unload and show clear

When you are finished a course of fire, the Range Office will ask; “If you are finished, unload and show clear”. At this time you will have your finger outside of the trigger guard. Now you unload the gun while keeping the firearm pointed safely down range.

Next you will clear the live cartridge out of the chamber by racking the action. Note: It is strongly recommended to not cover the ejection port with your hand while you are racking the action. If a cartridge were to go off, you could be injured.

If possible, lock the action open keeping the firearm pointed in a safe direction, present the firearm to the Range Officer for inspection.

If clear, hammer down, open action

This is the command that is issued after the Range Officer inspects the firearm, making sure that it is unloaded. Note: The competitor is ultimately responsible for making sure that the firearm is unloaded at this point

The competitor then will close the action of the firearm, point the firearm in a safe direction and pull the trigger, causing the hammer to drop on what should be an empty chamber. This will insure that there is no possibility that the firearm will be returned to a rack or gun slip with a live cartridge in the chamber. If for some reason a cartridge was overlooked and was in the chamber of the firearm, it would be discharged safely down range.

The competitor will then open the action and insert a chamber flag, raise the muzzle skyward and return the firearm to the gun rack or gun slip.

Range is clear

When the Range Officer issues the command “Range is clear”, it is safe for all individuals to proceed down range.

Loading, Reloading or Unloading

When loading, reloading or unloading during a course of fire, the competitor's fingers must be visibly outside the trigger guard except where specifically permitted and the firearm must be pointed safely down range or in another safe direction authorised by a Range Officer.

Reloading (Stationary)

During the course of fire, you may be required to engage so many targets that it will be necessary to reload your firearm. When you are reloading, it is to your advantage to be moving, if necessary, to the next shooting position. This will save time, which will result in improving your overall score. The following technique can be used for a stationary reload or while on the move.

- Start with the firearm up on target as if you were going to engage it.
- Simultaneously,
- Move trigger finger outside of the trigger guard.
- Manipulate the gun into the desired position, for loading.
- Your loading hand is moving to the first cartridges (or magazine) on your belt.

- The loading hand grips the cartridges with the thumb on the top rim and gripping fingers wrapping around the body of the stacked cartridges (or magazine to guide it to the magwell)
- Use the lead cartridge to push past the floor plate and use the thumb to push the cartridge stack into the magazine tube, and clear of the shell latch.
- For Open, insert the magazine into the magwell opening and press the magazine firmly into the firearm.
- When the gun is remounted and you have the correct sight picture, you can return your finger inside the trigger guard to fire.
- NOTE: Your trigger finger cannot be inside of the trigger guard at any time during the reload procedure. The firearm must be pointed in a safe direction at all times.

Reloading (on the move)

- When reloading on the move you need to ensure that your trigger finger is outside of the trigger guard and that the firearm is pointed in a safe direction at all times as you move.
- Initially when you start practicing this technique, take your time. Do not rush. Once you are familiar with this technique, natural speed will develop.

Weak Shoulder Shooting

It may be necessary to shoot, gun mounted on your weak side. This could be because of an awkward lean around a barrier or stated in the written stage brief as a requirement. When you practice this you will begin in the same manner as you would for freestyle using your normal stance, but reversed.

How you disengage the safety on your firearm will be dependent on location of the button / lever, generally, the weak hand would disengage the safety on the start signal.

- The firearm should be brought to a mounted position.
- Be aware that you will now be aiming with the other eye.
- Your trigger finger can now move inside the trigger guard.

Movement With A Firearm During A Course of Fire

NOTE: During movement, if you are not engaging a target, you must keep your trigger finger outside of the trigger guard.

The best position for the trigger finger during movement is to have it anchored alongside of the frame or receiver. This allows the competitor to maintain better control of the firearm and a more reliable control of the muzzle direction. Another advantage of this technique is that the trigger finger can be clearly seen outside of the trigger guard.

It is recommended although not mandatory that you engage the safety during movement.

The firearm should be held at the ready position as shown for short movements. By keeping the firearm at the ready position it will save you time when you engage your next target.

There is a trend in IPSC events to have more rearward movement in the courses of fire. Several techniques can be used to move through this type stage safely and a club coach will help you.

Low apertures

It is important when shooting from a kneeling position that your finger should be outside of the trigger guard while you are getting into position. There are several different techniques that can be used to shoot kneeling. The most common one that you will see is the following:

- From your stance, drop down on your strong knee.
- Note that the trigger finger is outside of the guard during the transition.

- The back, hips, and front foot of the competitor are perpendicular to the target. You should not be twisted to your strong hand side.
- To handle the recoil of the firearm, the competitor can lean into the firearm.

Another option is a low lean, done by placing feet more than shoulder width apart and dropping your bottom as low as required (or possible!) between your knees.

- One of the advantages of not going down on one knee is that if you are required to move to another area to engage targets, you will be able to quickly move to a new position.

For very low apertures it may be necessary to go fully prone or use some of the more modern versions of prone where a two or three point contact is employed. You will need to consider belt equipment placement and should also be aware of muzzle angle and sweeping while getting into and out of very low positions.

Barricade shooting

This can be greatly simplified if the competitor takes the attitude that there is no barricade. The firearm should not touch any part of the barricade. If you allow the ejection port or charging handle to come into contact with the barricade, it can cause your firearm to malfunction.

Stand as straight and in balance as you would if there were no barricade in front of you. If you are going around the right side of the barricade, bend your right knee and follow the firearm around the barricade onto the target.

If you need to go around the left side of the barricade, bend your left knee, counter-balance with your right leg and follow the firearm around the barricade onto the target.

Some targets may require you to mount the gun on your weak shoulder, this is a similar process to strong shoulder approach, but in reverse.

Keep back as far as possible so you are not crowding the barricade.

If it is necessary to lean on the barricade in order to be able to see a target, make sure that the barricade can support your weight. You can check this when you have your walkthrough on the stage. Remember that if the barricade is outside the demarcated shooting area you will receive penalties for touching it with your body but not with your gun. Barricade shooting is all about smoothness and balance. You want to avoid getting yourself into an awkward position because this can impact how well you are able to engage the targets.

Turns

When practicing turns, you must be conscious of your muzzle direction before you mount the firearm. Always make sure that you are facing down range as the firearm is mounted. Keeping the strong leg as the pivot point will allow the competitor to keep the hand/firearm relationship the same as was practiced earlier in this manual for the mount. When you turn, always plan your turn so that your stance is properly completed as you come up onto aim at the first target.

90-Degree Turn To Weak Side

This is done in the following sequence:

- Look in the direction of the target.
- Step forward with your strong foot or back with your weak foot (fault lines may dictate which way), turning your shoulders along a 45 degree axis, pivot your feet and bend your weak knee slightly to complete your stance.
- Simultaneously, push the muzzle toward the target to be engaged as you get into a mounted position.

- If your safety is engaged this is the time to turn it off, making your firearm ready to fire.
- The trigger finger should remain straight along the side of the receiver until the stock reaches the mounted position
- You begin establishing a sight picture as you “firm up” the mounted firearm with your cheek on the stock. When your mount is complete, you should have established your sight picture.
- Press the trigger until the firearm discharges.

90-Degree Turn To Strong Side

This is done in the following sequence:

- Look in the direction of the target.
- Step across your strong foot with your weak foot or move your weak foot behind your strong foot (again depends on fault lines), turning your shoulders along a 135 degree axis, pivot your feet and bend your weak knee slightly to complete your stance.
- Simultaneously, push the muzzle toward the target to be engaged as you get into a mounted position.
- If your safety is engaged this is the time to turn it off, making your firearm ready to fire.
- The trigger finger should remain straight along the side of the receiver until the stock reaches the mounted position
- You begin establishing a sight picture as you “firm up” the mounted firearm with your cheek on the stock. When your mount is complete, you should have established your sight picture.
- Press the trigger until the firearm discharges.

180-Degree Turn

Essentially, 180-degree turns are not much different to 90 degree turns, although from an up-range facing start the stage brief may suggest what hand begins on the firearm. The most important thing that you need to make sure that the muzzle remains in a down range direction as you turn and mount the gun.

This is done in the following sequence for Weak Hand Trail starts:

- Push off with your strong foot hard enough to complete the turn while moving the weak foot across the strong foot toward the target, pivoting both feet ending in your shooting stance.
- Simultaneously, move the gun forward toward the target with the weak hand and grip the stock with the strong hand. Complete the grip by moving the weak hand onto the fore end.
- Establishing a proper grip is the most crucial element of the mount. Make sure that you have established a good grip on the firearm while moving through the turn.
- As you face the target, bring the gun into the mounted position.
- If your firearm, has a manual safety, this is the time to turn it off, making your firearm ready to fire.
- You begin establishing a sight picture as you “firm up” the mounted firearm with your cheek on the stock. When your mount is complete, you should have established your sight picture.
- Press the trigger until the firearm discharges.

Malfunctions

These vary with different guns but the common types are as follow:

1. Failure to feed into breech - often caused by badly shaped cartridges and can be reduced by inspection and/or gauging of ammo prior to a match.
2. Failure to extract - this can be caused by a worn / broken extractor or by fouling of the chamber, the likelihood of both these reasons can be minimised by good gun maintenance.

3. Double feed - this is where a tube magazine gun releases 2 cartridges instead of 1 from the magazine, there are a variety of gun specific reasons that this may occur and (also gun specific) remedies. You will need to be able to remedy this in any case and should find out the best way for your own gun.

4. Failure to insert cartridge(s) far enough into tube magazine while loading - an operator induced problem which prevents further loading. The simplest way to resume loading again is often to shoot (assuming at least one target is visible from the place where this occurs), failing that you must rack the round out of the chamber to feed the errant round in and let you load again.

Types of Ammunition

Shotgun differs from all other IPSC Disciplines by having 3 types of ammunition; Birdshot, Buckshot and Slug, all of which must make the same Power factor (PF480), here are the main points to remember:

1. Illegal ammunition types include armour piercing, incendiary, hard shot inc steel if shooting steel targets; using any of these will result in a DQ.
2. Only 1 type of ammo is used on each stage – birdshot / buckshot / slug – never mixed. Be sure what type you have brought to stage on your belt, in pockets or elsewhere, this is potentially a DQ, in particular if you use slug where you should not.
3. Paper targets may be shot with slug or buck.
4. Steel and frangible targets may be shot with all 3 types of ammo.
5. Minimum distances to metal targets or hard cover vary; slug 40m, bird & buck shot 5m
6. On paper targets be sure you know how many scoring hits are required as this may vary.

Chokes for Practical Shotgun

The choke is a tapered constriction placed at the muzzle of a shotgun barrel, it reduces diameter below that of the bore and its purpose is to shape the spread of the shot in order to facilitate shooting at various distances and target types. The majority of information about chokes is from research undertaken by clay shooters and while this data can help us in practical shooting we need to expand on the idea to make it more relevant to practical shotgun.

The basic principle stays the same for all birdshot shooting although different guns with different chokes and different cartridges will all produce slightly different results. This diagram showing shot pattern spread in centimetres is a good starting point to understanding how we can use chokes in practical shotgun – basically no matter what choke all the patterns end up at 100cm in diameter if we let the shot run far enough down range – Cylinder Choke makes a 1 metre pattern in just 25 metres where Full Choke needs 40 metres to be the same diameter.

Let's break our objectives down for birdshot stages in practical shotgun and consider why choke is important:

1. The majority of birdshot targets in practical shotgun are steel
2. Most steel plates and poppers are scoring targets – we need to hit these with enough shot from the pattern to make them fall.
3. There may also be penalty targets in close proximity to the scoring targets – we need to keep shot away from these to avoid knocking them over.
4. We may also encounter frangible targets (clays); some will move, some are static but all will be scoring targets as frangible no-shoots ceased to exist in the 2019 rule book.

There is one underlying principle governed by the rules for stage design which we need to look at before going any further. All stages must be set up so that the scoring targets can be sufficiently hit to fall (or break if they are frangible) without incurring penalties and this must be possible with standard match ammo in an open choked gun with a barrel no longer than 66cm.

There is only one way to know how much pattern your gun produces with different chokes and ammo, that is to shoot it at a test target. We use rolls of wallpaper and some clay ranges have a metal plate you can paint for this purpose but you need to shoot the cartridges you will use through the chokes you will be using in your own gun. Sorry to say there are no shortcuts here, of course you can take a guess and get stuck into some matches to see what happens but this is probably a slow and expensive way to get the data.

If you are going to buy ammo at a match because you are flying and you can't take enough within the 5 kg CAA limit then you would be best to get some cardboard boxes and a test range at the venue to see what you bought actually makes in terms of pattern. This sounds extreme but many shooters have been caught out in this way and you don't have to test every choke at tiny distance increments but you should try a few combinations to see how what you bought at the match compares to what you normally use at home.

How much shot do you need to get on target to score? With steel it's all about energy, heavier steel targets like larger plates or poppers can need quite a bit of shot, quite a high percentage of the entire pattern in extreme cases, so more shot on target is always more certain to score. Also remember that the further away a target is placed the more your shot will have decelerated on the way, this reduces the energy delivered when it arrives. Finally the angle the target sits on its base affects the required energy, if you are in a match where the shooters do the reset then look out for targets with a big forward lean as these will need to be hit harder. If you are at a match with resetting crews then look at the targets closely during walkthrough, if in doubt go right over and look at them side on, you are allowed out of the shooting area when you are on walkthrough. The only way to succeed, despite these variables, is through experience and you should put different targets at various ranges and experiment with setting them to various lean angles when you practice.

With frangible targets one pellet can do all you need but getting the centre of the pattern closer to the target is more certain to score. Tighter chokes produce smaller diameter patterns by making longer shot strings. This is good news on fast swingers because the pattern diameter may be quite small but the longer shot string gives the clay on the swinger a chance to run into some of the shot if you place the start of the string a little ahead of the path it travels, this is called leading, you shoot ahead of the target's leading edge.

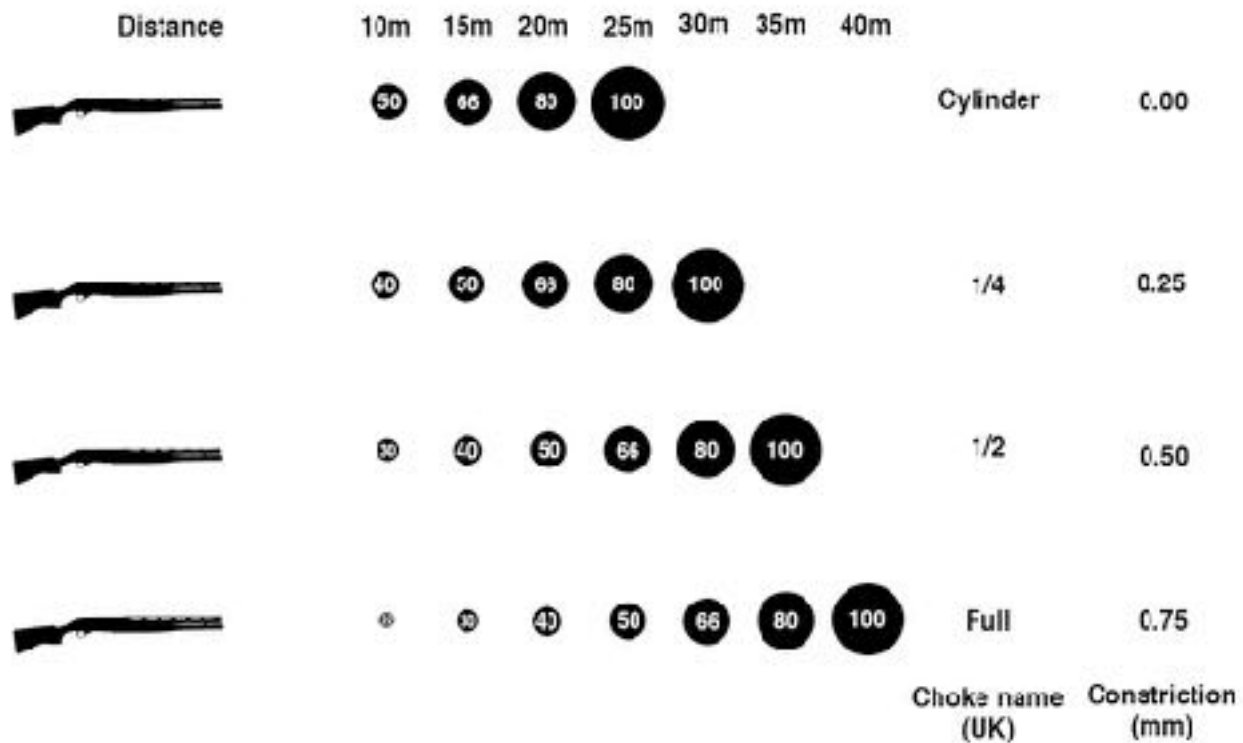
How little shot on target can get me a penalty? Penalty plates and poppers can fall with surprisingly few pellet strikes and of course you should always look if a penalty target is down to make sure there are pellet strikes but one general rule is that hitting a target higher tends to exert better leverage and is more likely to topple it over.

How on earth can I remember all this under pressure during a stage? You won't, so the key to success here is twofold:

1. Train effectively by using different target scenarios that help you develop instinctive abilities when it comes to shot placement.

2. Plan your shooting positions well when you do have some time during the briefing and walkthrough period.

The process of aiming off will be cognitive at the start as you ask ‘where should you shoot to put the pattern in the right place’ but this develops with practice into a very subtle, completely subconscious, change in split times where the splits rise a little in target arrays which include penalty targets and reduce back down in the parts of the stage with exposed scoring targets. Watch a really good shooter, like a single digit world ranked guy, and you will notice tiny time differences in the splits as the targets differ in proximity to penalties.



What choke to use for slugs? This should always be the most open choke you have available and most not be tighter than 1/4 for most slugs. You can not squeeze a solid slug into a different shape in your choke, if you try the slug and choke will go downrange together leaving a badly damaged barrel behind them. If you are in any doubt cut a cartridge open and try the slug, including any cup it may sit in, by pressing it through the choke you intend to use. If you need more pressure than one finger can exert then you need a wider choke.

What choke works best for buckshot? This is dependant on the configuration of the buckshot cartridge but you should be aware that buckshot does not conform to choking the same way as birdshot and after a certain constriction it will stop getting any tighter in pattern and will instead start to produce flyers. The only way to select the right choke for buckshot is to test every choke you can get your hands on with the buckshot ammo you will be using. You must find the choke which gives the smallest possible group with no flyers outside the main pattern, this will give you good scoring hits as well as avoiding collateral damage to nearby penalty targets of the type often found on buckshot stages.

First Match, What to Expect

Nervous about your first "public performance?" Most people are! Relax and enjoy it! This sport is fun! Moreover, everyone you meet had a first match too; we've all been there. The competitors and Range Officers that you will meet at competitions are friendly and helpful with new shooters. We all enjoy IPSC, and want to get you started right. Matches are just as much social gatherings as shooting contests.

If this is your very first match, please walk. Don't run! Forget about speed at this time! Walk through the match - it's the smart move. You will see competitors who move and shoot very fast. They have been doing this for years. Don't try to imitate them. Do not expect to become a Grand Master on your first match. Such persons have years and thousands of rounds behind them. The only person to beat is you. Speed will come with practice and experience. To be good at this sport, you have to pay your dues, learn the fundamentals, and be able to apply them on demand. Think safe and smooth. Concentrate on getting all "A" hits. Think about what you are doing at all times. If you have questions ask an experienced competitor or Ranger Officer. People in our sport are always willing to help another competitor especially if they are new to our game.

Practical Shooting is very much a mental game. Concentrate on learning safe gun handling practices - speed will come with practice and experience. Finally, concentrate on controlling your gun. Always pay attention to your muzzle direction and to where your trigger finger is!

Your First Match Needs

When you come to your first Match, you will need to bring a minimum contingent of equipment. Don't go overboard initially. Your first match equipment should include:

- Firearm
- Loading belt
- Magazines (if you shoot in Open Division)
- Ammunition as specified for the match plus 25% extra of each type
- Eye and Ear protection
- Clothing, that is suitable for the season
- Knee pads
- Water and food

You also need information about the event you want to participate in and in many IPSC events, advanced registration is required.

Always try to arrive early at the range on match day. The extra time will give you an opportunity to walk around the range and examine the stages before the match begins; and make some new shooting friends, too.

Range Etiquette

When attending an IPSC competition you should expect to spend the whole day at the event. If the event finishes early, that is a bonus. By planning to be there for the day there will be no need to rush. IPSC events are hosted by volunteers and they will be expecting everyone to assist them to make the event a success and run in a timely fashion.

Since you are new, you are probably wondering what you can do to help?

Ask the Range Officer on the stage what you can do to assist them. Help is always required for picking up empty shell cases, patching targets, setting steel, etc. It is always a good idea to let the Ranger Officer know that this is your first match. If you have a question or are unsure as to what to do, then ask the Range Officer. Only go on to the stage once the Ranger Officer has given the "Range is Clear" command. Do not touch a target until it has been scored, and stay out of way of the competitor who is preparing to shoot the stage. That is their time to prepare, please respect it.

Registration

When you arrive at the range, proceed to the registration area, and sign in for the match. Smaller events typically use self-squadding and you stay with that squad as you move from one course of fire to another for the entire match. If you plan to shoot with someone that you know, then try to sign-in at the same time. If you do not know anyone at the match, then mention this to the person coordinating the sign-in, and he will recommend a shooter who can guide you through your first match.

If advance registration is required, then the scheduling is normally already done when you arrive at the event. Changes to a published schedule are normally not done. When submitting your match entry, make a note on it that you are a new shooter, and the match directors will squad with a group of competitors that can assist you.

Most clubs, officials and competitors go out of their way to accommodate new shooters, so do not be afraid to ask for help. Everyone is there to assist you, and wants your first match to be safe and fun.

Score Sheets

Once you have signed-in, you will receive a score sheet that contains scoring information for each course of fire. Complete your name, competitor number, division, and other pertinent details on the score sheet. The score sheet is collected at the end of the match, and someone will key the information into a scoring program WinMSS that generates the results.

Squads

There is usually a squad on one stage at a time, and each squad holds a similar number of shooters. For example, if there are 48 shooters signed-in for the match, there will be 6 squads that consist of 8 shooters per squad. The ideal number of people on a squad is eight to ten, but there can be as many as 12 competitors. You will be assigned to a squad, and you are required to stay with this group throughout the whole match.

Schedules

All IPSC events are exercises in time management, and it is not just while you are shooting. The match directors work out timeframes in order to run the match efficiently. It is important that you show up on time, and that your squad completes the stage within the time allotted to them.

Always stay with your squad and follow the published schedule. If you do not, and your squad shoots stages out of order it will cause problems for everyone.

Stage Brief & Walk-Through

You arrive at the stage, with your squad, and the officials on that stage will read a written stage brief and then give you a timed walk-through of between 3 and 5 minutes for the squad. This is your opportunity to look at all the different angles and positions in which to shoot that particular stage. You are allowed to walk around the course of fire to see where the targets are placed.

During this time the range officers will collect your squads score sheets and setup a shooting order.

What happens on the stage

Once the walk-through is completed, then it is time to start shooting the stage. There is a Range Officer (RO), sometimes a Chief Range Officer (CRO), and usually a Scorekeeper at each stage. Sometimes one RO will do all of these jobs. If three are present the RO runs the timer, the CRO oversees the stage and the scorekeeper scores and calls the shooting order of the competitors.

The Scorekeeper calls out the name of the first, second, and third shooter. The first shooter is called the "shooter," the second shooter is "on deck," and the third shooter is "in the hole." When it is your

turn to shoot the stage, remember your training. Be safe, and most importantly do not try to set any speed records. Focus on safety and hitting the targets.

Scoring the stage

After shooting the course of fire, follow the scorekeeper and the RO as they score your targets. The RO calls out the hits, misses, no-shoots and the procedural errors that you earned shooting the stage. The scorekeeper notes the data on your score sheet and totals all the hits, misses, no-shoots, etc. If you hit a metal no-shoot be sure to inspect it to make sure it wasn't a wad strike rather than pellets which knocked it over, no-shoot steel is painted to facilitate inspection, if no pellets are visible there is no penalty.

Once the Scorekeeper has completed the score sheet, you will be asked to review the document. If you have any questions, or want clarification on anything, then ask before you sign off on the document. A score sheet signed by both a competitor and a Range Officer is conclusive evidence that the course of fire has been completed, and that the time, scores and penalties recorded on the score sheet, are accurate and uncontested.

The signed score sheet is deemed to be a definitive document and, with the exception of the mutual consent of the competitor and the signatory Range Officer, or due to an arbitration decision, the score sheet will only be changed to correct arithmetical errors or to add procedural penalties under Rule 8.6.2.

What next?

Now is the time to prepare for your next stage; check your equipment, load your belt with the correct ammo for the next stage (bird, buck or slug), and get your gear ready. Once you have prepared everything for the next stage, you will need to help your squad and the officials tape targets, pick up spent shells, etc. Helping to tape and clear up keeps the squads moving and prevents delays in the match.

End of the Match.....

At the end of the match, proceed to a Safe Area if you need to break your gun down for a travel case and store the rest of your gear. The stages are dismantled, and all the props are put away. Please help tear down the match if you are shooting on the last day. If everyone does a little then no one has to do a lot. While tear down is occurring, someone is entering the scores into the computer (unless the event was scored on electronic tablets) to calculate the final positions of every competitor. Results are normally made available within the hour.

Scoring

"Comstock" – Unlimited time, stops on the last shot, unlimited number of shots to be fired, stipulated number of hits per target to count for score.

A competitor's score is calculated by adding the highest value stipulated number of hits per target, minus penalties, divided by the total time (recorded to two decimal places) taken by the competitor to complete the course of fire, to arrive at a "hit factor". The overall stage results are factored by awarding the competitor with the highest hit factor the maximum points available for the course of fire, with all other competitors ranked relatively below the stage winner.

Scoring Policy

- Unless otherwise specified in the written stage briefing; on paper targets the best two hits will be scored, metal targets must fall to score and frangible targets must break to score.

- If the bullet diameter of a hit on a scoring target touches the scoring line between two scoring areas, or the line between the non-scoring border and a scoring area, or if it crosses multiple scoring areas, it will be scored the higher value.
- If a bullet diameter touches the scoring area of overlapping scoring targets and/or no-shoots, it will earn all applicable scores and penalties.
- Radial tears radiating outwards from the diameter of a bullet hole will not count for score or penalty.
- Enlarged holes in paper targets which exceed the competitor's bullet diameter will not count for score or penalty unless there is visible evidence within the remnants of the hole (e.g. a grease mark, striations or a "crown" etc.), to eliminate a presumption that the hole was caused by a wad, ricochet or splatter.
- The minimum score for a stage will be zero.
- A competitor who fails to shoot at the front of each scoring target in a course of fire with at least one round will incur one procedural penalty per target for failure to engage the target, as well as appropriate penalties for misses (see Rule 10.2.7).
- Hits visible on a scoring paper target or no-shoot, which are the result of shots fired through the rear of that or another scoring paper target or no-shoot, and/or hits which fail to create a clearly distinguishable hole through the front of a scoring paper target or no-shoot, will not count for score or penalty, as the case may be.
- Moving targets which present at least a portion of the highest scoring area when at rest (either before or after initial activation), or which continuously appear and disappear for the duration of a competitor's attempt at a COF, are not disappearing and will always incur failure to engage and/or miss penalties.
- Moving targets, which do not comply with the above criteria, are disappearing and will not incur failure to engage or miss penalties unless a competitor fails to activate the mechanism which initiates the target movement before firing the last shot for that course of fire.
- Stationary targets which present at least a portion of the highest scoring area, either before or after activation of a moving and/or concealing no-shoot or vision barrier, are not disappearing and will incur failure to engage and/or miss penalties.
- Targets which present at least a portion of the highest scoring zone each time a competitor operates a mechanical activator (e.g. a rope, lever, pedal, flap, door etc.), are not subject to this section.

Score Sheets

A score sheet is one of the most important documents at an IPSC event. A score sheet signed by both the competitor and a Range Officer is conclusive evidence that the course of fire has been completed, and that the time, scores, and penalties recorded are accurate and uncontested. The signed score sheet is deemed as a definitive document. It is extremely important as a competitor that you make sure that a score sheet is filled out properly. Both the competitor and scorekeeper sign it at the end of the stage. When you verify a score sheet you should check for the following:

Competitor & Stage numbers written on the score sheet?

Are the numbers readable?

Are the totals correct?

Have all rounds been accounted for?

Conclusion

That's all, hopefully reading this has been helpful and you are now feeling enthusiastic enough to join your IPSC Region, find a club and get started in IPSC Shotgun.