

# Etiquette rules for trapshooting

By WILL O. TARMIGAN

Our sport, passion, avocation and life mission in shooting is governed by a set of rules as laid out in the ATA Rulebook. It is also subject to a number of rules of etiquette. What is all this intended to accomplish? Simply put, the idea is to give every shooter the maximum opportunity to break every target possible every time, and to make our sport safe and enjoyable even when our scores are not what we know, or think, they should be.

So what are these written and unwritten rules?

Rule 1 is the old "Golden Rule" we all should have learned at a very young age: treat every other shooter, and all volunteers and paid help, the way we expect to be treated.

Here's a new one. Leave your \*%&^%& cell phone in the car. If you just can't live without it and just have to have it with you, mute it and leave it in your shooting bag. If you must keep it on your person, mute it and leave it alone until you are off the field. Recently some folks have actually been using their phones on the line. Nothing is that important.

If you are a smoker, please keep it away from the other shooters on the squad off the line. Don't smoke on the line unless you are sure the rest of the squad is good with it.

Make sure you understand where your assigned trap bank is located. Be behind that bank well in advance of your turn to shoot. Forcing others to wait for you is most inconsiderate and holds up all the following squads. This applies to every sub-event as well. We all get delayed from time to time,

but some shooters seem to make it a habit. Some venues dictate a specific amount of time a squad will wait for a shooter, after which he/she may have to resquad. Under the rules, a shooter is allowed to make up a maximum of one post on the first trap before being required to resquad or join the squad on the second trap and make up the first trap after the squad finishes. Just like Mom said, keep in mind, "The whole world doesn't revolve around you!"

Do not lean over each time to pick up a shell out of a box on the ground. Have your shells where you don't have to bend over and get one. A vest, shell pouch or box carrier is a necessity. Besides, bending over to pick something off the ground forces blood to your head and can affect your vision and how you see the next target. The same applies to a dropped shell; leave it on the ground until you are ready to move to the next station.

Do not raise your gun until the shooter ahead of you has fired. Avoid unnecessary movement on your post, which might distract or interfere with another shooter.

Remain on your post, standing facing the trap quietly, until every shooter has finished. Then—and only then—move to the next post (or off the trap, if that was your last post).

While shooting handicap: before leaving for the next post, move the voice release to the correct yardage marker for the shooter moving to that post. This is simple courtesy and has become commonly accepted shooter etiquette. If all shooters follow this practice, squad movement is smoother.

Time your shooting to establish a "squad rhythm." Constantly changing the amount of time it takes you to shoot or taking an inordinate amount of time to call for a target is very distracting to other shooters.

Call for your target in a clear voice; do not call so loudly that you trip the voice release on an adjacent trap.

If you are the leadoff shooter, do not call for a target until you have checked and ensured all members of the squad are on their posts and ready after each change of post.

Never change posts with a shell or empty in your gun.

When going from Post 5 to Post 1, turn to the right to avoid "sweeping" the squad with your muzzle or bumping barrels with the shooter coming from Post 4. Walk behind the other shooters. Why anyone would want to walk in front of four shotguns escapes me.

Load only one shell at a time, except for doubles. If a delay occurs, unload your gun. Close your action only when on station and facing the trap. Do not close it in a way which may be disturbing to other shooters. If you shoot an autoloader, try closing the action immediately after another shooter has shot to avoid activating the voice release.

If you call for a target and do not get one, take your gun off your shoulder and start over. Repeating "Pull, pull, pull," only resets the built-in delay in the voice release system. Besides, the distraction is not likely to enhance your shooting.

Do not allow ejected shells to hit or annoy other shooters; if you shoot an autoloader, equip it with a shell catcher or deflector.

There should be no unnecessary talking on the line. When not on the line, keep your voice down while other squads are shooting. Remember, other shooters on the squad and on adjacent traps deserve to shoot undisturbed.

Coaching is not allowed on the line.

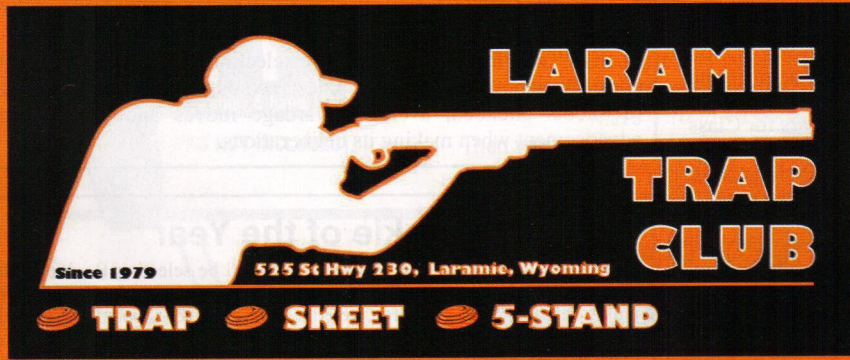
Be a sportsman at all times. If you are shooting well or poorly, others are aware of it. You don't need to brag; by the same token, if you are having a bad day, accept it without complaint or displays of anger. Don't do anything that might interfere with or distract other shooters.

Do not overreact to a missed target. Shooters who throw shells, mumble, curse not so quietly, etc., when they miss don't help themselves and create a distraction for other shooters.

Observe all safety rules. Do not point your gun in the direction of other shooters, even if you think it's unloaded. On the line, keep your gun pointed at the ground, in the air, or at the traphouse. Off the line, keep your action open and your muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Treat every gun as if it is loaded.

Shooters are almost always happy to have you look at their guns if you ask permission first. Do not pick up another shooter's gun from the rack and handle it without asking.

Above all, have fun, and keep Rule 1 in mind.



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