

THE PREPARED CITIZEN

MASTERING IRON SIGHTS FOR THE PERFECT SIGHT PICTURE

FOR CONSISTENT ACCURACY AND HITS



| THE
CARRY GUY[®]

ARE YOU READY?[™]

The Carry Guy Complete Manual: Mastering Iron Sights for the Perfect Sight Picture

Safety First

Always keep the firearm pointed in a safe direction. Keep your finger off the trigger and outside the trigger guard until your sights are on the target and you have decided to shoot. Treat every firearm as loaded. Be sure of your target and what is beyond it. This material summarizes standard training practices from NRA fundamentals materials, NRA Shooting Sports Journal and related publications, Handguns Magazine instruction, and common defensive and competitive curricula. It is not a substitute for in-person professional training. Dry-fire only with a verified unloaded firearm and no ammunition present.

Who This Is For

New shooters learning fundamentals. Experienced shooters whose groups open or string with iron sights. Anyone who wants consistent hits without relying solely on optics.

What Proper Aiming with Iron Sights Is

Aiming consists of two distinct elements. Sight alignment is the relationship between the front and rear sights. Sight picture is the placement of those aligned sights on the target. A perfect sight picture combines correct alignment with the correct hold on the target while maintaining focus on the front sight. The human eye can focus sharply on only one plane at a time.

When to Apply It

On every aimed shot, live or dry. During presentation once the gun reaches eye level. For both precision and defensive shooting (with appropriate hold). Consistently so the picture remains the same shot to shot.

Where to Practice

Safe range with proper backstop for live fire. Controlled environment with verified unloaded firearm for dry fire. Use targets that allow clear visual feedback on alignment.

How: Complete Instruction for the Perfect Sight Picture

1. Establish Sight Alignment (Equal Height, Equal Light)

Look through the rear sight notch. Center the front sight post in the notch so equal space (light) appears on both sides. Align the top of the front sight level with the top of the rear sight. This is the standard description in NRA materials and most pistol instruction. The front sight is the critical element; misalignment here moves the point of impact more than minor variations in where the aligned sights sit on the target, especially as distance increases. (Sources: NRA fundamentals, NRA Women, Handguns Magazine, USAMU-related guidance.)

2. Acquire the Sight Picture

Place the aligned sights on the intended point of impact on the target. Two common holds exist:

- Center hold (combat/defensive hold): top of the front sight covers the center of the desired impact area. Common on many fixed-sight defensive handguns.
- 6 o'clock hold: top of the front sight sits just under the bottom of the bull or aiming area so the full target remains visible. More common in precision/bullseye work. Your firearm's zero and intended use determine which hold produces point-of-aim/point-of-impact. Test and confirm at the range. (Sources: NRA materials, Shooting Illustrated, USA Carry, Handguns Magazine.)

3. Focus

Focus sharply on the front sight. The rear sight will appear slightly soft and the target blurrier. This is the standard teaching because the eye cannot keep all three planes sharp simultaneously. Maintain this focus through the trigger press. Some instructors allow a softer focus for very close, large targets where speed matters more than precision, but the front-sight-focused picture remains the foundation. (Sources: multiple NRA-related articles and standard marksmanship texts.)

4. Eye Dominance and Both Eyes

Align the dominant eye behind the sights. Many instructors recommend both eyes open for better situational awareness and reduced fatigue; others find closing the non-dominant eye improves clarity for the individual. Test which produces a clearer, more consistent picture for you.

5. Hold and Break

Maintain the aligned picture while pressing the trigger. The sights will move slightly; accept a small wobble rather than chasing perfect stillness. Break the shot while the picture is acceptable. Follow through by keeping the front sight in focus as the gun recoils and returns.

Common Errors and Effects on Target

- Front sight high in the notch: shots impact high.
 - Front sight low: shots impact low.
 - Front sight left in the notch: shots impact left.
 - Front sight right: shots impact right.
 - Focusing on the target instead of the front sight: alignment degrades and groups open.
 - Inconsistent hold (mixing center and 6 o'clock): vertical stringing.
- Alignment errors grow with distance more than small picture variations.

Drills

- Dry-fire presentation: bring the gun up, acquire equal height/equal light, place on a safe aiming point, and press while watching the front sight.
- Live-fire slow groups: focus only on alignment and front-sight focus; record results.

- Distance progression: confirm the picture and hold that keeps groups centered at 5, 10, and 15–25 yards.
- Error drills: deliberately misalign left/right/high/low and observe the shift so you recognize the cause.

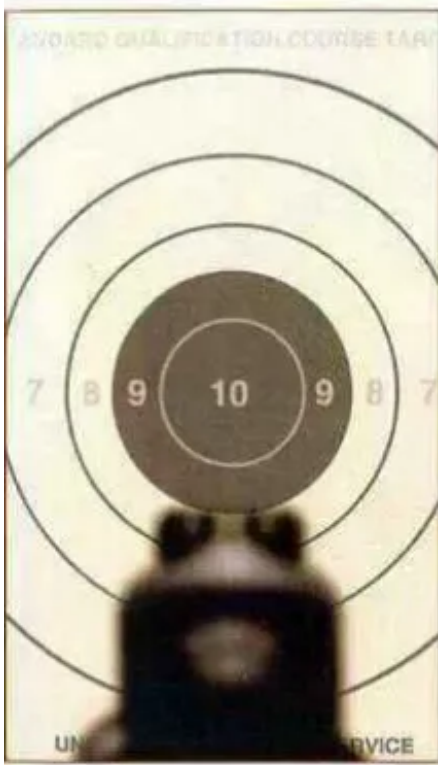
Special Considerations

Sight radius (distance between front and rear) affects how precise alignment must be. Different sight designs (fiber optic, night sights, different notch widths) change the visual cues but not the equal-height/equal-light principle. Left-handed shooters use the same alignment rules. There is not universal consensus on the single “best” hold for every gun and shooter; center hold and 6 o’clock hold both appear in documented instruction depending on the firearm’s zero and the shooting application. Individual vision, lighting, and distance further affect what “perfect” looks like. Confirm zero and preferred picture on your specific handgun under professional supervision.

Conclusion

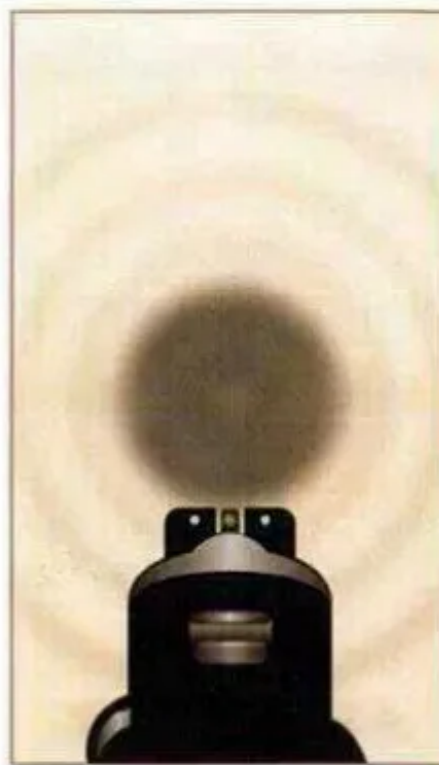
A perfect sight picture with iron sights is correct alignment (equal height, equal light) placed on the target with sharp focus on the front sight. Master this and groups tighten, hits become repeatable, and you understand exactly why shots land where they do. Practice deliberately and verify with live fire and qualified instruction.

For hands-on training go to www.thecarryguy.com.



INCORRECT

Shooter Focused
on Target.



INCORRECT

Shooter Focused
on Rear Sight.



CORRECT

Shooter Focused
on Front Sight.

