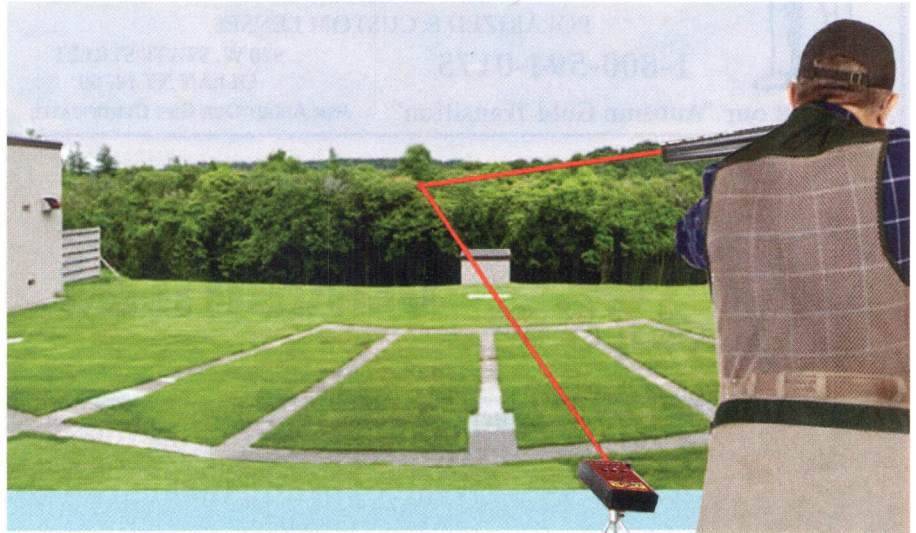


## Tools Of The Trade

**A**s a professional instructor for around three decades, I always begin a shooting lesson or clinic with the rules of safety, followed by an explanation of the basic fundamentals of the sporting game. We talk safety until each student gets it and is on the same page, but you'd be surprised at how many shooters—novice, intermediate, and even advanced—don't really understand the basics of playing our sporting game. I guess that's why we have such a wide variety of skill levels.

I fully understand how important it is for a shotgunner to be as perfect as he can be with every element of a shot sequence. After all, it is possible to be perfect through 50 pairs of targets. It is just very difficult for the human mind and body to be that perfect given the targets, backgrounds, weather, nerves, and shooting partners you have to deal with every time you shoot a round of sporting.

I've always said that to be perfect, a shooter has to first visually acquire his target. Once the target is plainly visi-



Perfect for practice, Robert Louis Company's 9' x 54" skeet/trap banner is available to complement its laser products.

ble, he has to *consistently* be able to insert the gun in exactly the same spot to initiate the shot sequence. Sounds easy enough, but when you're trying to do this with a moving target against a changing background, the task can be a bit more formidable than some might imagine.

I tend to work with lots of shooters who have been playing the game for a while but find themselves stuck in a rut. Their scores seem to fall in that 60 to 70-plus range. On occasion they light up the scoreboard with a higher tally, but shortly thereafter they're back posting the same old average.

The vast majority of those shooters are making silly little fundamental mistakes that cost them targets. More often that not the mistake is mechanical. Too many shotgunners are missing gun mounts and insertion points, not by much most of the time, but enough to change their approach to the shot.

Keep in mind that distances in missing with a firearm are exponential from the muzzle of the gun to the target. What this means quite simply is this. If you are off a small amount with the required lead to break a clay, the distance you are wrong is compounded significantly as the range to the bird increases. That's why it is so important to be perfect with your setup, visual focus, and insertion point. Remember that there

are four places to miss a target: over, under, in front, or behind. It is possible to have the perfect forward lead on a target and miss it over or under if your insertion point is slightly high or low.

I distinctly remember when we changed the gun mount rule for sporting clays. Like skeet, there was a time when the gun had to be visibly off the shoulder before the target was visible. I can live with the free-mount rule that allows shooters to mount the gun prior to any shot in English sporting, but as a target setter, I have ways to drive those of you who do it on every shot nuts.

You will find that when shooting from a totally mounted position, the muzzle of the gun tends to be steered with the trigger hand. When it's off the shoulder a bit, the steering is done with the fore-end hand. I can assure you that with practice, you can better insert the gun using the fore-end hand to lead it.

So what can you do to ensure those perfect mounts and insertion points? For years I suggested lots of gun mount practice as long as the mounts are performed correctly. Standing in front of a mirror with your *known* to be unloaded shotgun, start with the muzzle under the chin and push it to the nose as you lift the buttstock to the face. Do sets of 20 to 25. You feel it, but you'll be building muscle memory.

You can practice with a small flash-



The Ultimate Practice Shooting System by Robert Louis Co. is available with two lasers for the most beneficial training sessions.

light inserted into the muzzle of the unloaded gun. Put it on the smallest spot and see if you can insert the gun to objects on your wall. Try pushing to the line formed between the ceiling and wall. Hit the line with the insertion point and mount and follow the line. It's tougher than you might think.

If you *really* want to practice this most efficiently and have a lot of fun at the same time, invest in the Robert Lewis Company's Laser Shooter or newer LaserPro systems that actually let you do everything I've been talking about—and then some. What I like most about this shooting practice system is that it allows you to work on shots of different angles and speeds, just like you would have on a clays course or trap or skeet field, and it is available for all gauges of shotguns.

***"Too many shotgunners are missing gun mounts and insertion points, not by much most of the time, but enough to change their approach to the shot."***

The system also helps you with gun fit since you can project a light beam onto a screen when the gun is mounted and the trigger is pulled. A proper fit as well as a perfect mount and insertion point to a stationary target with a red dot center will cast the light beam exactly where you are looking. If the mount is bad or the gun fit is wrong, you see it instantly on the target.

This newer LaserPro model actually projects one or two moving laser targets onto a wall. By standing eight to 10 feet from the wall, you can practice shooting at the moving target. By squeezing the trigger, you can project a light beam exactly where your shot would hit. You simply turn on the projector and watch the targets fly across the wall. Your visual pickup must be perfect, as does your insertion point. You can move the gun forward for lead, squeeze the trigger, and follow-through. You will be able to see how precise you are with your mechanics. Now that's innovation. What a great tool to work with new shooters, ladies, and kids at home—not to mention how much the practice will help experienced shotgunners. The unit can be raised or lowered to offer a wide variety of sporting-like presentations.

If you want to take things a bit further, Robert Louis Company also offers trap and skeet wall-mounted range banners that give you the feel of actually being on the range. I've always said that some of the best practice for sporting is on trap and skeet fields. After all, most of the targets we shoot in some way replicate the targets seen in those games. For more information on the Laser Shooter or newer LaserPro systems, contact (800) 979-9156; [www.shotguncombogauge.com](http://www.shotguncombogauge.com).

I remember some years ago when Andy Duffy won his first NSCA National Championship and he commented that leading up to the event, he did 500 gun mounts a day. He obviously had his reasons, and if being perfect with your mechanics and insertion points is important to you, consider putting in a little extra time practicing them at home. Exciting new tools are now available to make you perfect, but it's up to you to make it all a reality.

Marty Fischer of SportShooting Consultants Ltd. (P.O. Box 207, Rincon, GA 31326; 912-826-0072; [www.martyfischer.com](http://www.martyfischer.com)) consults as a course design and marketing specialist as well as teaching wingshooting as an NSCA Level III Instructor. Inquire about his sporting clays shooting and bird hunting videos, and check out his T-N-T Outdoor Explosion television show each week on the Pursuit Channel ([www.tntoutdoorexpllosion.com](http://www.tntoutdoorexpllosion.com)).

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