

Trapshooting Fundamentals

Shotgun Shooting Fundamentals consist of Position, Mount, Vision and Movement. These four points should become the basis for teaching and evaluating trapshooting. It is important to get the athlete in the correct stance, alignment, and balance to break the target in the appropriate area along its flight path. People come in all sizes and shapes with different degrees of flexibility and movement. Therefore, while we will provide some position guidelines at each post, ultimately, we must determine the proper position for each individual athlete. The components of proper position are foot position, stance, balance, body position in relation to the target path, head position, muscle tension, gun fit and gun mount.



Trap Shooting Tips and Tricks

1. Practice, Pointing, and Shooting

One of the best trap shooting tips is probably aim. Aiming with a shotgun is a lot different than aiming with a rifle. Consider the fact that when you have a rifle, you have a single bullet that comes out of the barrel. That means you have a single projectile to aim. This is very different from the way the shotgun releases the pellets because they have spray. You will notice that rifles have sights, but a shotgun has a bead at the very end of the barrel. The bead is meant to act as a guiding point, but not to line up like you would a rifle sight. That's because of the way the shotgun sprays its pellets when you pull the trigger. You will get a feel for these differences if you take the time to practice shooting at stationary targets at about 10 yards.

2. Keeping your eyes open

You need to try and keep both eyes open, which is harder than most people think. If you've ever shot a gun, there's a good chance you've shot it with one eye open and one eye closed. When you're moving at a moving target, it's better to keep both eyes open in order to track the target accurately. Even still, you'll need to figure out which eye is your dominant eye. When your eyes compete for dominance, it can cause confusion when aiming.

3. Body awareness is a thing

Your body position is extremely important when you're shooting your shotgun. Remember, you're pointing the gun and not actually aiming the gun like you would a rifle. Relaxing your body is going to allow to absorb the recoil safely as well as track the clay effectively. That's because you'll be able to rotate from the waist. Keep your legs slightly bent about hip-width apart with your dominant leg behind you and your other leg in front of you. Your body should be facing sideways in such a way that you can rotate at your waist with the gun pointed safely down the range. Be sure to lean a little into the shotgun.

4. You need to hold the shotgun correctly

It's critical that you hold the shotgun correctly because anything else could result in injury to you or someone near you. You want your shooting elbow parallel to the ground and the buttstock on your shoulder. It's better for you to have the entire buttstock on your shoulder as opposed to part of it. It gives you a larger surface area to absorb the recoil. Your cheek is also part of the way that you hold the shotgun. It needs to rest firmly on top of the stock to line up the bead at the front of the barrel. You shouldn't see any of the barrel and should only see the bead. If you see any of the barrel, then your head is way too high.

5. Complete your follow through

When the clay is launched, you need to be ready to track it with your gun's bead. Swing your shotgun along the same path that your clay is going. That enables you to predict when you need to pull the trigger. There are a couple different methods to decide when to shoot. You can track it with your bead and get just a smidge ahead of it. When you're ready, you pull the trigger and then hopefully hit the clay. Another method is to track the clay bird until your muzzle covers what you can see. The clay should be behind the muzzle from your line of sight. If you pull the trigger then, you'll stand a pretty good chance of hitting the target. After you shoot, continue to swing the shotgun through the arc to complete your follow through.

At Home Shotgun Drills

Before you practice any of these drills at home: 1) have your parents' permission first, and 2) always be sure your shotgun is unloaded before you start the drill.

Vision

Remember: Because we spend a lot of time on computers, smart phones, and other devices, most of the time looking down, we neglect the parts of our eyes that are used when wing shooting. Exercising your eyes at home and as a warmup before practice can help improve your focus and ability to lock on and track a moving target.

Thumb Figure Eights Drill: Form your hand into a fist, but with your thumb sticking out, pointing up. Extend your arm with your hand held above the shoulders (so that you are looking up), move your hand in a figure eight motion, focusing on your thumbnail; move only your eyes. You can also use a marker to make a dot on your thumbnail for something smaller to focus your eyes on. You should do this at home and as a warmup at practice before it is your turn to shoot; 1-3 minutes, several times a week. It is also very important to shoot with both eyes open; your focus, ability to track the target and see it clearly, and your brain's ability to calculate lead will all be improved, plus you will have better balance and a wider field of view.

Bullet Drill: Set three shotgun shells (three shell boxes, three soup cans, three of anything) 8 to 10 inches apart on a table. Standing 2-3 feet back, mount your shotgun so that it is pointing toward the right-hand bullet while your eyes are looking at the center bullet; both eyes should be looking to the left-hand side of the barrel to see the center bullet. Lower the shotgun and then remount it so that it is pointing toward the left-hand bullet while both eyes are looking at the center bullet; they should be looking over the top of the barrel to see the center bullet. Lower the shotgun and repeat, 3-5 minutes, several times a week.

Mount

Remember: Having a correct and consistent mount are important parts of proper wing shooting technique that helps give you a solid starting point each time you move on a target. The head should stay erect, with the comb held against the cheek and the butt pressed into the shoulder. Move the gun to your face; DO NOT move your face to the gun (this includes "nestling" into the comb). This is discussed in more details with pictures on page 5.

Mirror Mount Drill: In front of a mirror, slowly mount the gun; focus more on doing the mount correctly, less on the speed. Move the gun to your cheek; the comb should come into contact with your cheek before the butt touches your shoulder. Now check the mirror: is the bead lined up directly over your dominant eye? If not, move the shotgun, while keeping your head still, until the bead and dominant eye are lined up. Hold this mount for a count of 5 seconds, and then slowly lower the gun. Repeat for 2-3 minutes, several times a week.

*If the bead of the shotgun does not line up with pupil of the dominant eye, the cast and comb height may need to be adjusted for the firearm to attain consistent alignment when mounted. Thinking of the dominant eye as the back sight, cast is the left-to-right adjustment (windage) and comb height is the up-down adjustment (elevation). At a bare minimum, the shooter should be looking flat down the rib of the shotgun. Cast and comb height can be adjusting using several commercially available products or by employing services of a professional gun fitter.

At Home Shotgun Drills

Movement

Remember: Correct movement involves moving the torso at the hips, with the arms locked in position after the gun has been mounted. However, many shooters will move the gun with their arms, pulling it out of the proper alignment they had when they mounted the gun.

Flashlight Drill: You will need a Mini Mag Light for this drill; the AA flashlight for 12ga, and the AAA flashlight for 20ga. You may need to remove the choke from your shotgun and/or wrap the flashlight with electrical tape to ensure a good fit. Focus the flashlight beam to the smallest setting. Without mounting the gun, hold the shotgun at the ready with both hands; place the light on the seam between a wall and the ceiling. Focus your eyes on the light; mount the shotgun as you move the light down the seam to the corner. You should move from the hips to make the light move down the seam, not your arms. When the light reaches the corner, the gun should be mounted correctly. Dismount the shotgun and return to your starting point at the midpoint of the wall. Now repeat the process, moving to the opposite corner. Repeat for 3-5 minutes, several times a week. This drill simulates a “low gun” mount, where the shotgun moves to intercept the target and is mounted where at the target breakpoint (where the target is shot; in this case, the corner).

An added component of this drill is that it is also a practice for focusing on the target (the light) and not the gun. Remember that our eyes can only focus on one thing at a time; if you focus on the gun, you are more than likely going to miss the target. Practice focusing on the light as you practice gun movement, seeing the barrel and the bead with your peripheral vision.

Mental Training

Below are several ways of preparing for practices and competitions mentally. It is important to keep a good attitude and think constructively about performances at practice and competitions, as well as learn to focus mentally and shut out distractions. Incorporating these suggestions into home and team practices can help prepare your mind for the stress of competition and for achieving the goals you have set for yourself.

Pre-Shot Routine: Developing a pre shot routine to help your mind focus and shut out distractions can help improve your ability to compete and shoot well under pressure. A pre shot routine varies from person to person and can be anything you want it to be; a word, a phrase, a verse, stretching, etc. It is up to you to decide on what will help to focus your mind on the task at hand; it is also up to you to practice getting your mind focused when you use your pre shot routine. When doing any of the at home drills, practice working your pre shot routine into them so that you are more accustomed to it when you go to live fire practices and competitions.

Shooter’s Journal: A shooter’s journal is a tool used by Olympic shooters to help them record their progress and thoughts, from both practices and competitions. When using the journal, record your pre shot routine, the goals you have for this season, when and how long you practiced any of the home drills, what weather conditions were at practices and competitions, your scores, and your personal thoughts. It is important that entries in the journal are constructive and positive. Reading over negative thoughts before a practice or competition will in turn cause you to think negatively; all too often, what we think becomes reality. So, get in the habit of viewing your practices and performances constructively and write these thoughts down in the journal.

Visualization: When you are unable to physically practice, or right before you mount your shotgun and call for a target, get in the habit of visualizing yourself at competition. Throw in as many details as you can to make it life like; the weather, the sounds, the smells. Visualize yourself seeing the target emerge, its flight path, etc. See yourself using the correct technique, locking onto and busting the target. Even visualize the tiny pieces falling to the ground, or the target being turned to powder! Remember that what we think and feel have a direct impact on what we do, so visualize yourself positively, performing techniques correctly at practice or competitions, as part of your mental training.

Gun Mount & Drills

The prime objective of a gun mount is to bring the gun up to the dominant eye first, placing the comb under the cheekbone. The secondary objective is to place the stock butt plate back into the shoulder pocket, which is no more than a platform to keep the gun in place. This is normally the reverse of what our brain tells us in the right thing to do.

The most efficient, effective and consistent way to bring the gun up to the eye (the back sight) is to use both arms *in unison* lifting the gun with a parallel action. To practice this properly and to overcome the natural temptation to lift the gun with the back hand only, you must begin with the gun parallel to the floor, with the toe of the stock, your back hand elbow and the top of your hip *all in a line* forming the starting point. Then push the gun away from your body (to do it right and it feels as if you must exaggerate this movement) as you start to raise your arms — keeping the head still as the stock comes up in line with the cheek. Draw the gun back (creating a reversing piston action) — this should then bring the gun up to the face first and then back into the shoulder pocket second.



1.

2.

3.

4.

If you raise your trigger hand elbow up to 90 degrees as you mount the gun, you will create the maximum width shoulder pocket for the stock to sit in. The lower your elbow is, the smaller the area becomes, and this increases the instability of the gun, creating the opportunity for bruising to your upper arm. The maximum width shoulder pocket for the stock to sit in. The lower your elbow is, the smaller the area becomes, and this increases the instability of the gun, creating the opportunity for bruising to your upper arm.

You should practice the gun mount for a minimum of ten minutes, three times a week or more. It takes approximately 2500 repetitive movements before it becomes lodged in you muscle memory and you can carry out the action without conscious thinking.



On the Left – Proper Parallel Elbow Shoulder Pocket. On the Right – Elbow to Low, No Shoulder Pocket.

Stance and Body Movement

The stance should be a position of the body that muscle and joints allow for smooth, quick movement in any direction without undue tension in the legs, back, shoulders, or arm muscles. The knee opposite the gun shoulder may be slightly bent, with the rearmost leg straight but not locked. The upper body should lean forward only from the waist up. It should be aggressive but controlled. Another variation is to bend the just forward knee slightly with the rear leg straight. Bending both knees has the following disadvantages as it can become tiring since all the weight is supported by flexed muscle and must be maintained at the same angle to prevent unintended changes in gun elevation.

On each station the athlete should assume a relaxed, but aggressive, balanced position. The athlete's center of gravity should remain between his feet. The weight difference between each leg should be about 60/40, favoring the side opposite the gun shoulder. Think, "Nose Over the Toes." The swing should rotate smoothly around the central axis and not lunge at the targets. Balance must be maintained such that the athlete can smoothly change the direction of the swing when shooting doubles.

Upper body movement alone is not good enough to ensure proper lead and follow through. Both the upper and lower body should move in unison with the target. The body must be aligned so that the athlete can smoothly swing with the target's flight line from the beginning position until the gun completes its swing. When the body is not in the correct position the athlete will begin to bind-up as the body approaches the extremes of its movement limits. This, in turn, causes the swing to slow or stop, and the correct lead is lost. In many cases the athlete may not notice this binding/slowing while shooting at targets. A poor beginning body alignment greatly increases the chance for a lost target.

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Position and Alignment

It is very important to be in the exact same position each time the athlete shoots at each specific post because misalignment affects the time it takes to get to the target, where the target breaks, and the ease and completeness of the swing and follow through. This is also important when troubleshooting mistakes. If the athlete is always in the same position, their performance can be evaluated from a baseline, faults identified, and improvements recommended. If the position is moving around at each shot, it is more difficult to pinpoint errors and make useful, lasting corrections. Each athlete should determine his/her own Natural Point of Alignment (NPA). This will be used to locate the optimal body orientation on each trap post.

The position of the head in relation to the ground plays a role in our ability to keep our balance and visually center our attention on an object. When we are shooting, we need to maintain our eyes level to the ground and our head firmly against the stock. This is one reason we should not roll the head over to the stock. If the head is forced too far down onto the stock, the eyes must look upward which is not an efficient use of the eye muscles. The head should remain erect.

Muscle tension creates fatigue, impedes the quickness and smoothness of muscle movements, and impairs the ability to concentrate. The most likely places this tension occurs is in the shoulders, back, neck, arms, and face of the athlete. Causes include poor stance, improper mount, poor gun fit, overly aggressive behavior, and performance anxiety. Relaxation and breathing exercises can help to reduce tension. Improper stock length or the balance of the shotgun can influence the athlete's position. In the athlete's attempt to compensate for a poorly fitting gun, stance, balance, head position, and muscle tension may be affected.

If the athlete is not correctly aligned at a post, their body may be overly coiled or extended at the moment the target is called. This tends to have an adverse effect on the gun mount because of the tensions in the body. It may show up as jerky movements and difficulty in putting the gun on the target. The objective is to be relaxed and balanced as the gun is being mounted. This means that during the time from the start of the gun mount until the gun reaches the face the upper body remains in a neutral and balanced position.



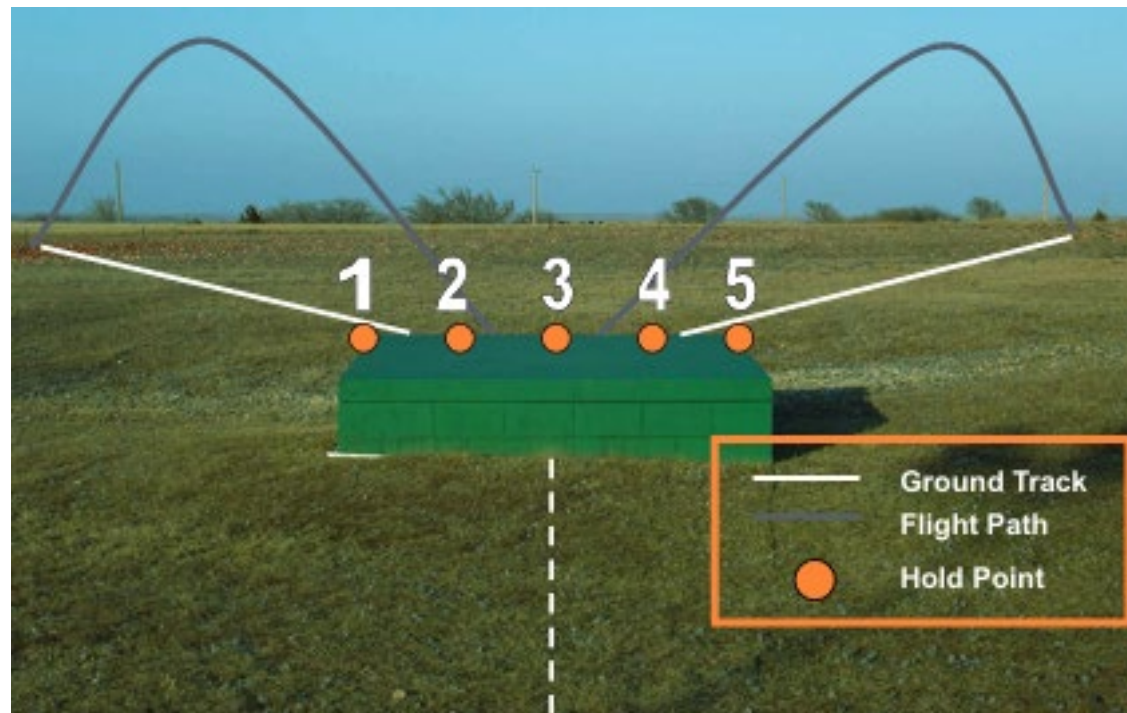
Gun Hold Point



The Gun Hold Point is where the athlete points the gun when calling for a target. Gun Hold Points for trap athletes vary widely from those holding at the lower rear of the trap house to those whose guns are parallel to the ground and everywhere in between. The lateral position of Gun hold Points also vary greatly among different athletes.

The Gun Hold Points described below are recommended for beginning trap athletes. They are usable for both right-shoulder and left-shoulder athletes without modification. They are easy to learn and easy to teach. They help keep the athlete's Eye Hold Position separated from the gun and encourage swinging with the target's flight path rather than cutting across the target's path (trapping the target). Gun Hold Points may be changed to accommodate individual shooting style and reaction times or anomalies in the trap house size or trap machine placement

- Post 1 – On the far-left corner of the trap house roof-line.
- Post 2 – One half of the way from the left corner to the center of the trap house roof-line.
- Post 3 – In the center of the far roof-line.
- Post 4 – One half of the way from the center to the right far corner of the trap house roof-line.
- Post 5 – On the far-right corner of the trap house roof-line.

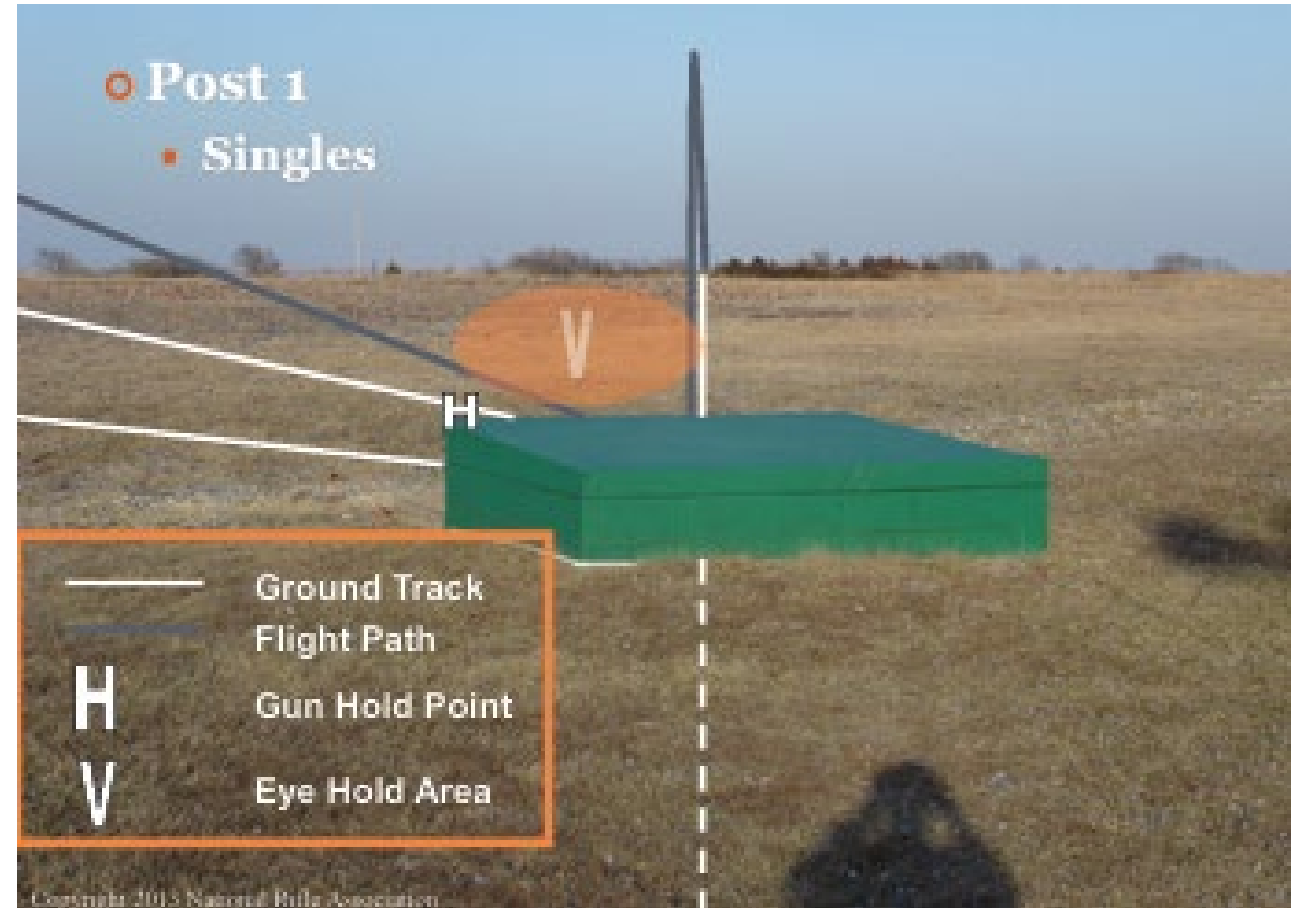


Post 1

BODY ORIENTATION — The athlete's body position should be oriented such that he/she can comfortably swing beyond either extreme target angle presented without excessive muscle strain. The athlete should position themselves so that their natural point of alignment (NPA) is in the middle of the trap field at the distance where they normally expect to fire. This will allow them to smoothly swing to any target and will permit a good follow-through.

GUN HOLD POINT — The recommended gun hold point at Post 1 is at the far-left corner of the trap house roof. Athletes should not move the gun from that point until the target is clearly seen and its direction determined.

EYE HOLD AREA — On Post 1, all the thrown targets will initially appear in an area about four feet wide and two feet above the trap house roof as shown. With an athlete's 'soft' secondary vision placed in this area, targets will be quickly seen and their direction quickly determined. Shift only the eyes; keep the face firmly on the gun. Remember, an incoming wind will make the targets rise; tail winds will cause the targets to fly lower.

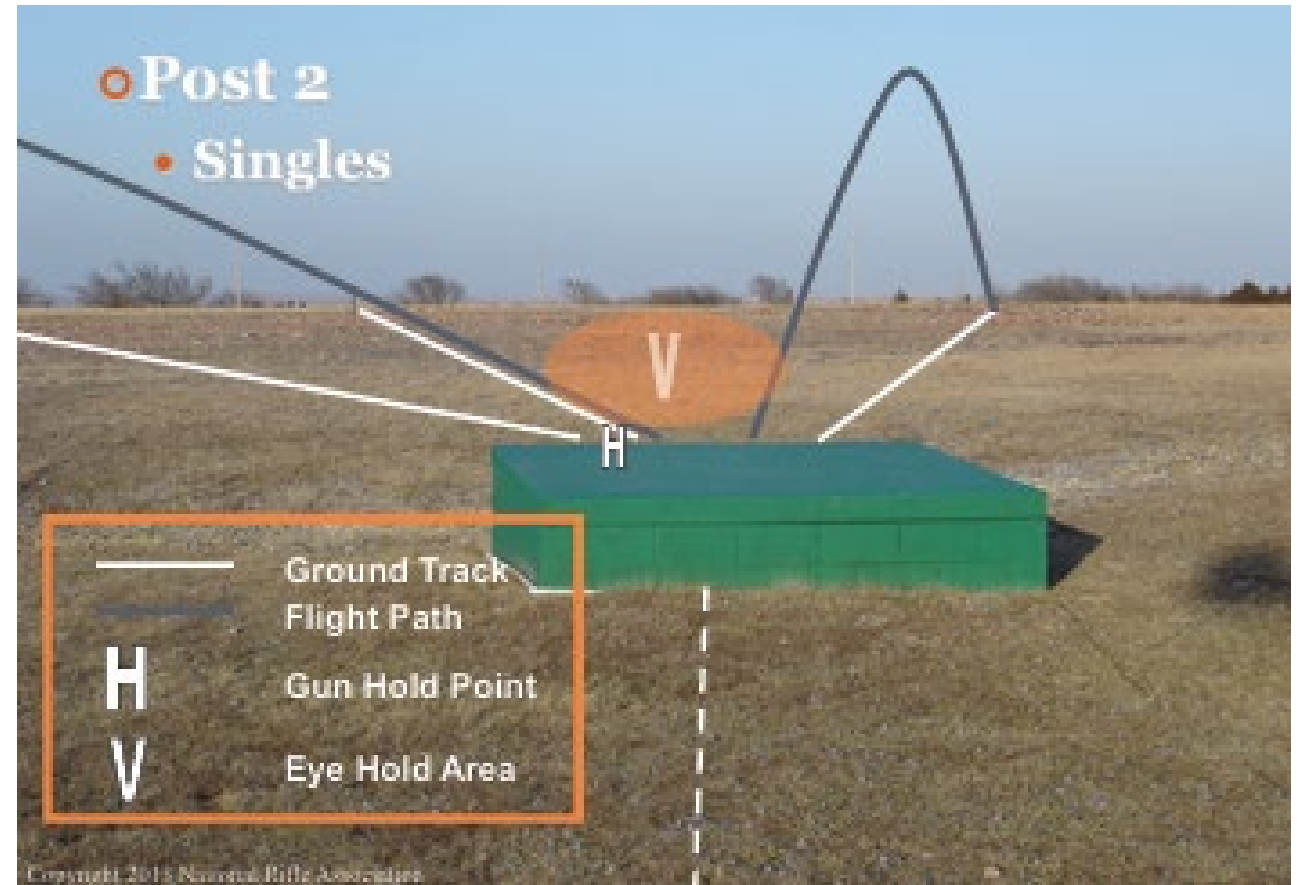


Post 2

BODY ORIENTATION — The athlete's body position should be oriented such that he/she can comfortably swing beyond either extreme target angle presented without excessive muscle strain. The athlete should position themselves so that their natural point of alignment (NPA) is in the middle of the trap field at the distance where they normally expect to fire. This will allow them to smoothly swing to any target and will permit a good follow-through. Generally, the athlete's body will be turned slightly more to their right than the position used on Post 1.

GUN HOLD POINT — The recommended gun hold point for Post 2 is on the far roof-line, half-way between the left corner and the center of the roof. Gun hold positions may be varied slightly depending on trap house dimensions or the trap machine's location. Not all trap houses are the same size, and sometimes the trap machine is not located in the center!

EYE HOLD AREA — All emerging targets are still seen within an area about four feet wide positioned two feet above the trap house roof, but as shown, on Post 2 this area is located about a foot farther to the right of that eye hold area used on Post 1.

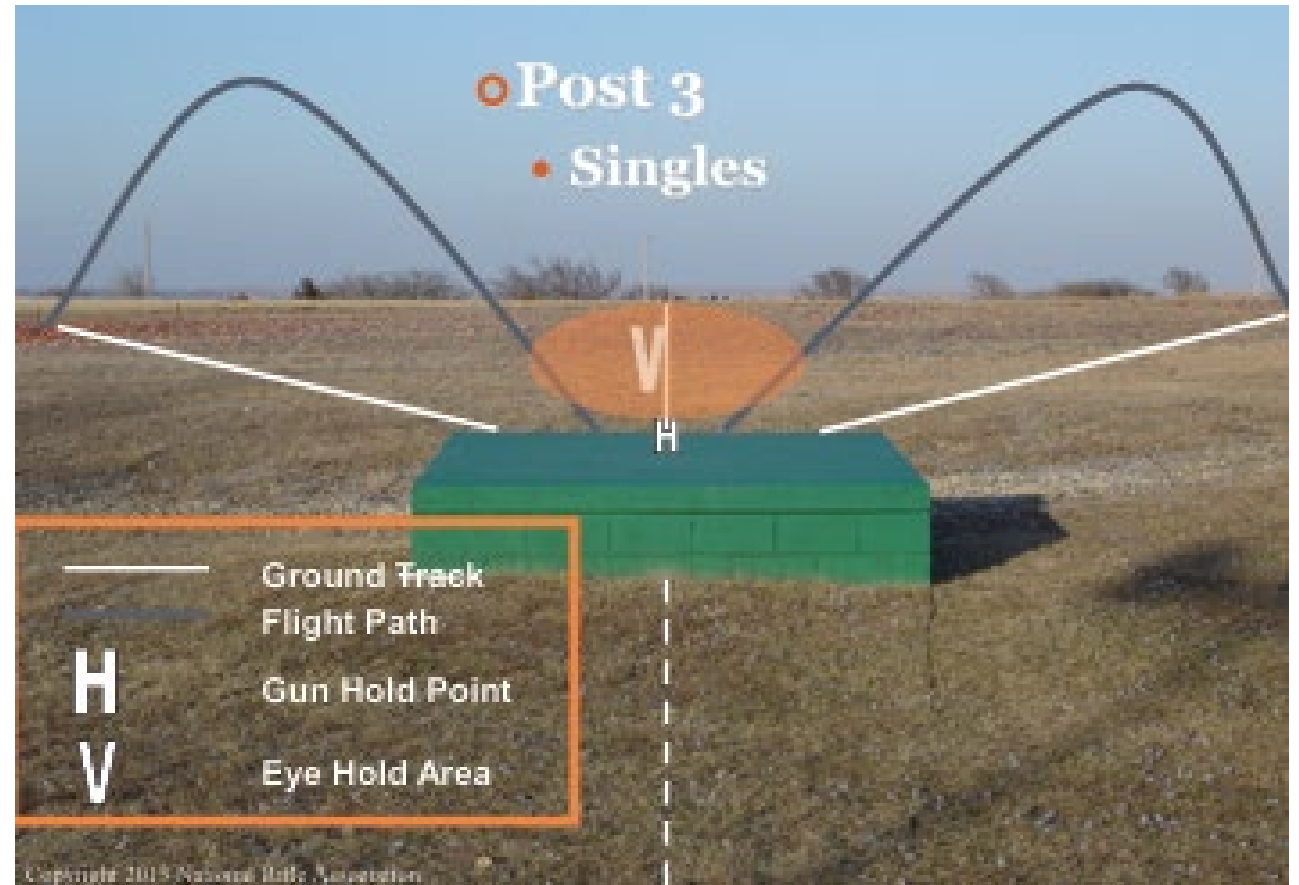


Post 3

BODY ORIENTATION — The athlete's body position should be oriented such that he/she can comfortably swing beyond either extreme target angle presented without excessive muscle strain. The athlete should position themselves so that their natural point of alignment (NPA) is in the middle of the trap field at the distance where they normally expect to fire. This will allow them to smoothly swing to any target and will permit a good follow-through. The athlete's position on Post 3 will be oriented slightly more to their right than the position used on Post 2.

GUN HOLD POINT — The recommended gun hold point for Post 3 is on the far roof-line, in the center of the roof.

EYE HOLD AREA — All emerging targets are seen within an area about four feet wide positioned two feet above the trap house roof, centered over the middle of the trap house.

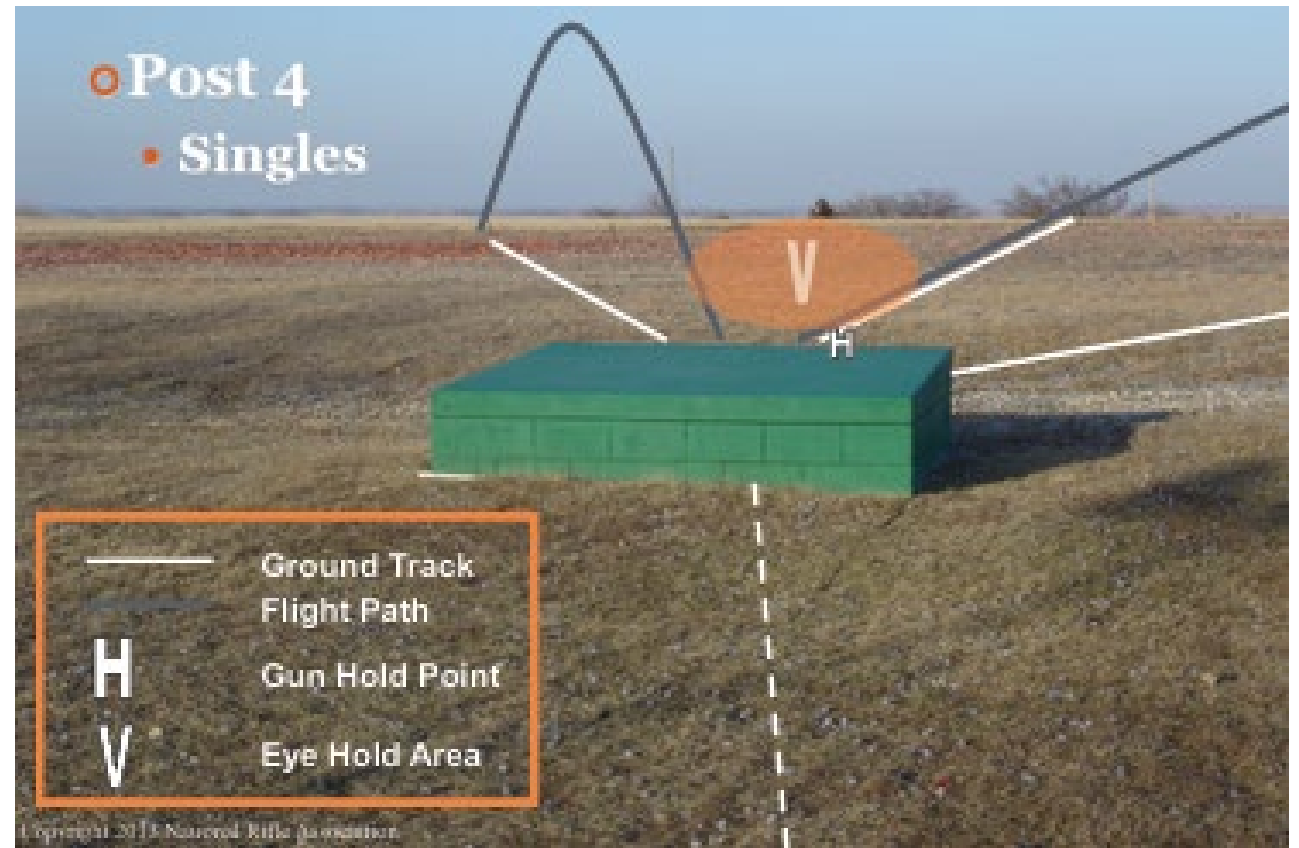


Post 4

BODY ORIENTATION — The athlete's body position should be oriented such that he/she can comfortably swing beyond either extreme target angle presented without excessive muscle strain. The athlete should position themselves so that their natural point of alignment (NPA) is in the middle of the trap field at the distance where they normally expect to fire. This will allow them to smoothly swing to any target and will permit a good follow-through. The athlete's position on Post 4 will be oriented slightly more to their right than the position used on Post 3.

GUN HOLD POINT — The recommended gun hold point for Post 4 is on the far roof-line, half-way between the center of the roof and the far-right corner.

EYE HOLD AREA — All emerging targets are seen within an area about four feet wide positioned two feet above the trap house roof, centered about one foot right of the middle of the trap house as shown above.

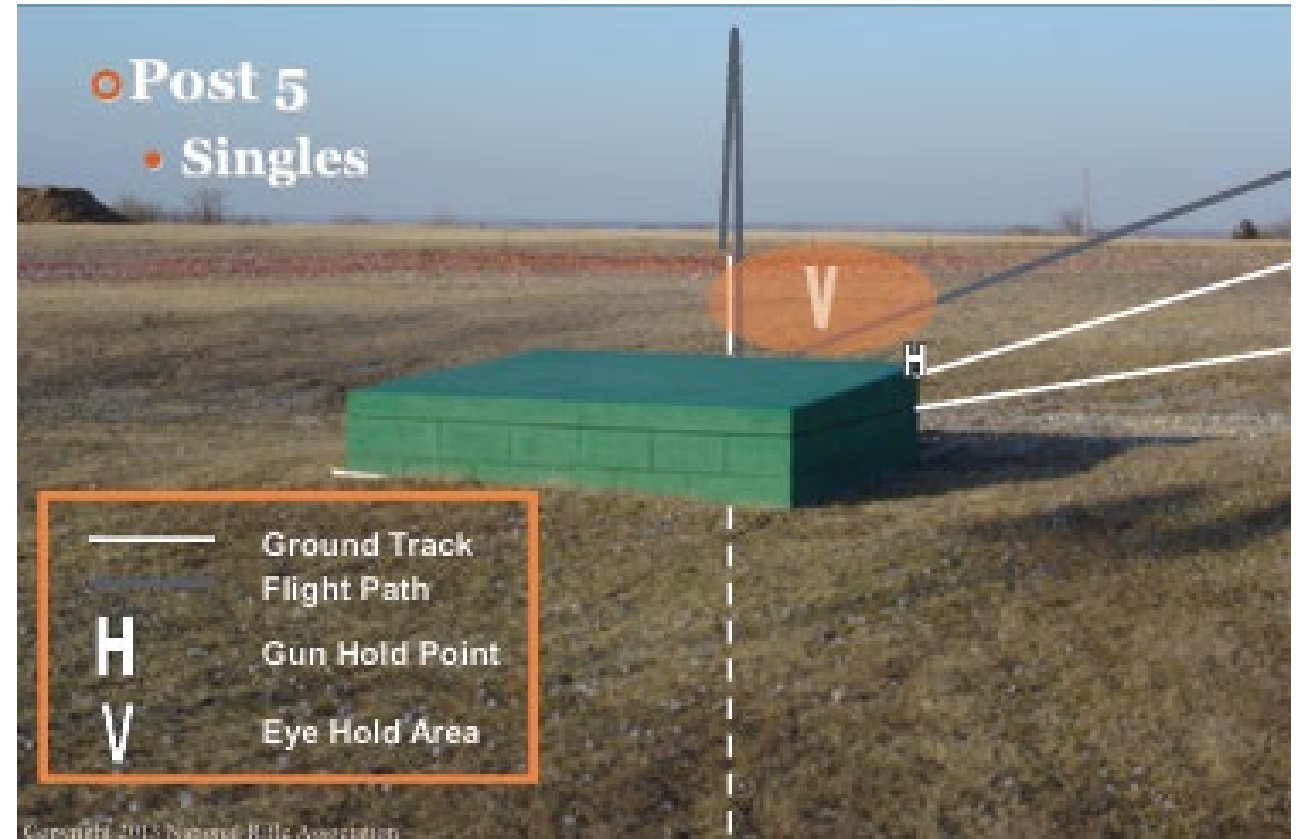


Post 5

BODY ORIENTATION — The athlete's body position should be oriented such that he/she can comfortably swing beyond either extreme target angle presented without excessive muscle strain. The athlete should position themselves so that their natural point of alignment (NPA) is in the middle of the trap field at the distance where they normally expect to fire. This will allow them to smoothly swing to any target and will permit a good follow-through. The athlete's position on Post 5 will be oriented slightly more to their right than the position used on Post 4 to accommodate the possible maximum right angle target.

GUN HOLD POINT — The recommended gun hold point for Post 5 is on the far-right corner of the trap house roof.

EYE HLD AREA — All emerging targets are seen within an area about four feet wide positioned two feet above the trap house roof, centered above the right half of the trap house as shown above.



Pattern a Shotgun for Trap

What is Pattern Shooting?

- Pattern shooting is the process of firing multiple shots from a shotgun and examining the spread of the pattern on a target or a wall. The goal of pattern shooting is to determine the shotgun's performance, including its spread, density, and overall accuracy. Pattern shooting is essential for trap shooters, as it helps them to adjust their shotgun's settings, choose the right ammunition, and develop a consistent shooting technique.

Why Pattern a Shotgun for Trap?

- Pattern shooting is crucial for trap shooters for several reasons:
- **Accuracy:** Pattern shooting helps you to determine the shotgun's accuracy and consistency. By examining the pattern, you can identify any issues with the shotgun's sight alignment, trigger pull, or ammunition.
- **Shotgun adjustment:** Pattern shooting helps you to adjust the shotgun's settings, such as the choke, to optimize its performance.
- **Shooting technique:** Pattern shooting helps you to develop a consistent shooting technique, including proper stance, grip, and alignment.

Pattern shooting is an essential part of trap shooting, allowing you to test your shotgun's performance, choose the right ammunition, and develop a consistent shooting technique. Remember to always follow safety guidelines and use proper equipment and techniques when pattern shooting.

