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# Module: Your First Shots – A Beginner's Guide to the Range

**Objective:** To provide a clear, safe, and encouraging step-by-step guide for a first-time shooter's initial live-fire session, ensuring they understand safety protocols, range etiquette, and the fundamentals of firing their first shots accurately and confidently.

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## Part 1: Before You Go - Setting Up for Success

Preparation is key to a safe and enjoyable first experience.

### Mindset & Attitude

- **Be Humble and Teachable:** Leave your ego at home. Listen to your instructor or the Range Safety Officer (RSO). They are your most valuable resource.
- **Stay Calm and Focused:** A shooting range is a controlled environment that demands your full attention. Avoid distractions and focus on the task at hand.
- **Ask Questions:** If you are unsure about *anything*, ask. There are no stupid questions when it comes to firearm safety.

### What to Wear

- **Closed-Toe Shoes:** Essential for protecting your feet from hot brass casings.
- **High-Collared Shirt:** A crew neck shirt is recommended to prevent hot brass from falling down your shirt.
- **Comfortable Clothing:** Avoid overly loose or baggy clothes that could snag on equipment.

### Essential Gear: Eyes, Ears, and Ammo

- **Eye Protection:** Safety glasses with side shields are mandatory to protect your eyes from flying debris and ejected brass.
  - **Hearing Protection:** The noise at a gun range is loud enough to cause permanent hearing damage. Use both earplugs and over-ear muffs for maximum protection.
  - **Ammunition:** Ensure you have the correct ammunition for the firearm you will be using.
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## Part 2: At the Range - The First 15 Minutes

This is where you learn the rules of the road.

### 1. Check-In & Meet the RSO

- Upon arrival, check in at the front desk. Let them know you are a **new shooter**. They will guide you.
- You will be introduced to a Range Safety Officer (RSO). This person is in charge of safety on the range. **Their commands are not suggestions; they are law.**

## 2. The Range Safety Briefing

Listen carefully. The RSO will cover:

- **The 4 Universal Safety Rules:** These are the foundation of everything you will do.
  - **Range-Specific Rules:** How to handle firearms, where to point them when not firing (usually downrange), and how to transport them.
  - **Range Commands:** You **MUST** know these two commands:
    - **"CEASE FIRE!":** Immediately stop shooting, take your finger off the trigger, keep the muzzle pointed downrange, and wait for further instructions.
    - **"The range is going cold" / "The range is clear":** This means all firearms must be unloaded, actions open, and placed on the bench. You may not handle any firearms during this time.
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## Part 3: Your First Shots - A Step-by-Step Guide

This process should be supervised directly by an instructor or RSO.

### Recommended First Firearm

Start with a low-recoil firearm, such as a pistol or rifle chambered in **.22LR**. This allows you to focus on the fundamentals of shooting without being distracted by heavy recoil or a loud muzzle blast.

### The Fundamentals of a Good Shot

Your instructor will guide you, but focus on these four things:

1. **Stance:** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, with a slight forward lean. Be stable and balanced.
2. **Grip:** Hold the firearm firmly, high up on the backstrap, with both hands. Your grip should be firm enough to control recoil but not a "white-knuckle" death grip.
3. **Sight Alignment:** Focus your eye intently on the **front sight**. The rear sight and the target should be slightly blurry. Align the top of the front sight with the top of the rear sight, with equal light on both sides.
4. **Trigger Control:** This is the most critical fundamental. Press the trigger straight back, smoothly and slowly, without disturbing the sight alignment. The shot should be a surprise. Do not jerk or slap the trigger.

### Loading & Firing Your First 5 Rounds

1. **Preparation:** At the firing line, with the firearm pointed downrange, your instructor will help you load a magazine with just 3-5 rounds.
2. **Loading the Firearm:** On the RSO's command that the **"Range is hot"**, your instructor will guide you on how to insert the magazine and "charge" the firearm (load a round into the chamber).
3. **Acquire Your Grip & Stance:** Get into your comfortable and stable shooting stance.
4. **Extend** the firearm towards the target, keeping your finger **OFF** the trigger. Align your sights to the center of the target.

5. **FIRE:** When your sights are aligned, take a breath, let half of it out, and begin your slow, steady trigger press.
6. **Follow Through:** After the shot breaks, keep the trigger held to the rear for a second and keep your sights on the target. This is called "follow-through" and is crucial for accuracy.
7. **Reset:** Slowly release the trigger only until you feel a faint "click." This is the trigger resetting. You are now ready to press the trigger again for your next shot.
8. **Repeat:** Repeat steps 5-7 for the remaining rounds.

### **Unloading and Making Safe**

After you have fired your last round, the slide or bolt will likely lock to the rear.

1. Keep the firearm pointed downrange with your finger off the trigger.
2. Remove the magazine.
3. Visually and physically check that the chamber and magazine well are empty.
4. Your instructor will verify it is clear and will then instruct you on how to place it on the bench, action open, muzzle downrange.

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## **Part 4: After Your Session**

- **Review Your Target:** Look at your shot group with your instructor. Where the shots landed tells a story about your grip, sight alignment, and trigger control. This is a learning opportunity.
- **Clean Up:** Good shooters are good stewards of the range. Sweep up your spent brass casings and dispose of any trash.
- **Reflect:** Think about what you learned. Shooting is a perishable skill, but the first day is about building a safe and solid foundation. Congratulations on successfully and safely completing your first live-fire experience!