



SAGA Snippets

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What's Plinking?

by Jim Wilson
27 December 2023

Plinking can be a great way to introduce new and young shooters to the joys of the shooting sports. And, goodness knows, right now it would really be a good idea to introduce young shooters to the enjoyment of safe shooting sports. It's a way to bring on the next generation.

In any shooting session, but especially with young shooters, safety must always be the most important aspect of every trip to the range. Regardless of where we shoot, we should always make sure that the bullets will go into a suitable backstop. But we also need to be careful not to set a bad example by shooting at any sort of glass object or anything that is likely to cause a ricochet or injury to others.

Some of the best plinking targets consist of various biodegradable objects that do not cause a danger to others and can be absorbed back into the soil. Raiding the refrigerator for old fruits and vegetables provides a good source of targets—and they will splatter when hit, providing a bit more excitement for the kids. Letting the kids shoot some pieces of fruit with a .22 LR hollowpoint will reinforce the idea that their .22 is not a toy.

One of the best sources of targets that I have found for plinking are charcoal briquettes. I'll scatter them out on the ground at various ranges. These make a nice gray "smoke" when hit with a .22 bullet and leave

no doubt when the shot has been dead on.

Going online, parents can find all sorts of spinning targets that are suitable for plinking with rimfire firearms. And don't forget the various zombie targets that the kids like, too. I have found that using plinking targets that do something when they are hit really helps keep the kids' interest up and their attention focused on the task at hand. They learn safety and marksmanship much more quickly when the fun level is high.

Regardless of what kind of targets you use for plinking, be sure to clean things up before you leave the area. It is not good PR for the shooting sports if someone has to come along and clean up your mess. I have fun watching a group of parents taking their kids out for a day of plinking. It's supposed to be about the kids, right? It nearly always ends up with the adults grabbing the guns and trying to outdo each other. It just naturally takes us all back to our childhood. But you really ought to remember to let the kids shoot, too—once in a while—it's the right thing to do!

Extracted and shortened from:
<https://www.nrafamily.org/content/what-s-plinking/>

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Electronic vs Non-Electronic Hearing Protection

https://www.shootingillustrated.com/content/electronic-vs-non-electronic-hearing-protection/?utm_source=newsletter

by David Workman
28 February 2024



We gun owners are well aware of the importance of protecting our hearing while shooting. Exposure to gunfire without proper protection can lead to irreversible hearing damage, and we only have one set of ears. When it comes to safeguarding your hearing, there are two primary options: electronic and non-electronic hearing protection devices. Both have benefits and drawbacks, which warrant careful consideration before picking the best one - and by "best," I mean whatever fits the situation. For example, you might choose one over the other if you're shooting indoors vs. outdoors. That said, let's dive in.

Benefits of Electronic Hearing Protection

Active Noise Reduction: Electronic hearing protection devices use advanced technology to actively reduce loud noises while allowing softer sounds to pass through. This feature enables gun owners to hear range commands, conversation, and ambient noise while still being protected from the harmful effects of gunfire. The active noise reduction works by allowing sound in during cease-fires but instantly shutting off the microphones when guns start firing.

Directional Sound Amplification: Many electronic earmuffs have directional microphones that amplify sounds from specific directions. This can be particularly beneficial for hunters who must remain aware of their surroundings while tracking the game or if you're in a class and need to hear the instructor but don't want to keep taking your muffs on and off.

Communication Capabilities: Some electronic earplugs and earmuffs feature built-in communication systems, allowing you to stay connected with your shooting partners or instructors without compromising your hearing protection.

Comfort and Convenience: Electronic hearing protection devices are often designed with comfort in mind, featuring padded ear cups and adjustable headbands for a personalized fit. Many models offer convenient features like foldable designs for easy storage and transportation. In the old days, electronic protection was limited to muff-style only, but today you can choose inside-the-ear models that work just as well and don't interfere with rifle stocks.

Drawbacks of Electronic Hearing Protection

Cost: Electronic hearing protection devices typically cost more. While the advanced features may justify the cost for some users, others may find it prohibitive, especially if they don't shoot very often.

Batteries: Electronic earmuffs and earplugs require batteries to power their noise reduction and amplification. Forgetting to replace or recharge the batteries can leave you with just a dead pair of muffs or plugs that stop noise but don't let you hear as well.

Benefits of Non-Electronic Hearing Protection

Cost-Effectiveness: Non-electronic hearing protection devices, such as foam earplugs and passive earmuffs, are generally more affordable. For instance, foamies are darn cheap and only a few dollars for a boxful. This makes them a practical choice for budget-conscious gun owners or those who prioritize simplicity over advanced features.

Reliable Protection: Non-electronic hearing protection devices offer consistent and reliable noise reduction without needing batteries or



Continued...Electronic vs Non-Electronic

electronic components, making them particularly useful in rugged outdoor environments where reliability is important.

Minimal Maintenance: Unlike electronic hearing protection devices, non-electronic options have fewer components that can malfunction or require maintenance. Simply replacing disposable earplugs or occasionally cleaning passive earmuffs is all you need to keep them working. And if they break, they're relatively cheap to replace.

Drawbacks of Non-Electronic Hearing Protection

Reduced Situational Awareness: Passive earmuffs and earplugs block out all noise indiscriminately, including important environmental sounds such as range commands, limiting your ability to communicate and stay aware of your surroundings.

Communication Challenges: Non-electronic hearing protection devices can make it difficult to communicate effectively, especially in noisy environments like shooting ranges. Taking off the hearing protection defeats the purpose of having it, so that's not an option, at least not a recommended one, so you'll have to find some other way to communicate that won't risk damaging your hearing.

Parting (Quiet) Shots

When it comes to choosing electronic or non-electronic hearing protection, there is no one-solution-fits-all. Each offers unique benefits and drawbacks, based on individual preferences, budget, and intended use. Ultimately, the best choice is one that balances the need for hearing protection with the specific demands of your lifestyle.



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To Crouch or Not to Crouch

by Sheriff Jim Wilson
18 March 2024

Sometime after 1900, it became the vogue for defensive shooters to crouch while firing their handgun. One of the first notable proponents of this technique was Captain William Fairbairn, a British military and police instructor. Fairbairn believed that a man would naturally crouch in the face of danger and so he incorporated that into his point-shooting instruction. One of his students was Rex Applegate, the American military instructor who taught for the OSS during World War II. Both men taught a moderate crouch and shooting with the arm fully extended.

During approximately the same time period, some American lawmen decided that if a little crouch was good, a lot of crouch must be excellent. Probably the best-known proponent of this technique was FBI agent Jelly Bryce. Bryce would drop into a low, dramatic crouch and would fire his revolver with his shooting arm bent, cranking off a round just as soon as his gun cleared the holster. When I went through our local police academy, our FBI firearms instructor was still teaching this technique for close-range gunfighting.

Bill Jordan, however, showed us that the crouch was not at all necessary for good point shooting. Jordan stood perfectly erect and only moved his arm and shoulder while doing some really fast work with his Smith & Wesson revolver.

California lawman, Jack Weaver, is the one who sort of brought it all around to complete the cycle. Weaver stood erect but took the extra split-second to bring the gun up in two hands and use the sights to get his shot off. The important lesson being that it is not the first shot that counts, but the first hit.

While point shooting has some limited application in defensive shooting, we know now that the crouch is just not necessary. The crouch is not necessarily an automatic response to danger, especially if one practices his shooting stance and technique on a regular basis. A crouch also inhibits a person's ability to move quickly, and we know that movement is an important part of the defensive response.

Through this whole evolutionary period we have figured out that the best stance is to stand facing the threat, with knees slightly bent, and our weight on the balls of our feet. Whether we shoot with bent elbows or straight arms doesn't seem to matter as long as we're getting the hits that we need as quickly as possible. As the years have gone by, the whole crouching thing has certainly fallen by the wayside. However, I'm still going to give points to Jelly Bryce for the most dramatic looking style; after all, he got his picture in "Life" magazine and the rest of us didn't.

<https://www.shootingillustrated.com/content/to-crouch-or-not-to-crouch/>



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Getting Serious: Stepping Up Your Marksmanship

<https://www.shootingillustrated.com/content/getting-serious-stepping-up-your-marksmanship-skills/>

by Chris Cypert
21 March 2024

There are many levels to shooting proficiency and defensive preparedness. It can be difficult to accurately tell where we are on that journey, especially if we are new to it. To help us evaluate ourselves, let's draw an imaginary line between a "casual shooter" who shoots guns recreationally and the shooter who is beginning to get serious about defensive pistolcraft. Below we'll examine some indicators that one is crossing from the casual-shooter category into "serious-shooter" category. If you don't check all these boxes, don't sweat it, as they aren't written on a stone tablet. These are just some general ideas of how to progress as a defensively minded armed citizen that you can use as progress markers on your journey.

Upgrading Ranges

Most people start out their shooting journey by going to the range nearest their house. Most find themselves at an indoor range attached to a gun shop or a local gun club range, and the rules are not always conducive to practicing defensive-pistol skills. For example, two very common rules at commercial and gun club ranges is "no drawing from the holster" and "no rapid fire," typically meaning no more than one round fired per second (or even slower).

For new handgun shooters just starting out, these rules are no big deal. Our initial focus needs to be on observing the basic safety rules of gunhandling, practicing proper grip, sight, and trigger management and learning to shoot precisely and accurately with a degree of consistency. All of this can be practiced at range with restrictive rules.

Eventually, however, we are going to be consistent in our safe gunhandling and funda-

mentals of marksmanship while standing still with gun in hand and under no time pressure, and we need to move on to additional defensive-shooting tasks. This will require finding ranges that allow drawing from the holster, shooting quickly while maintaining accuracy and even allowing movement and use of cover.

Many ranges that allow this may require you to be trained or vetted by their staff before you can do so, which is prudent and well worth it to progress in our defensive pistolcraft journey. If you've already taken this step, congratulations on your progress! If you are at the range shooting accurately during slow, deliberate strings of fire, and are looking for the next step, then finding a range that will help you to begin drawing from the holster and shooting more quickly is a great place to start.

Take Measure of Yourself

Another mile-marker on the journey to serious self-defense-minded shooter is to begin objectively measuring your performance on the range. The first manner in which to do this can begin the day you buy your first gun, and that is to measure your accuracy. There are a myriad of specific ways to do this, but all involve using some type of standardized targets at standardized distances and tracking your progress over time. There are a variety of targets, and we can measure accuracy improvements by shooting at increasingly distant targets, or at increasingly small ones.

For example, you could take a B-8 Repair Center target and put it at 3-5 yards and shoot 10 rounds into it deliberately until you're able to keep all rounds inside a particular scoring zone. For newer shooters it may be just trying to get all the rounds on the target and then move on to getting them inside the black portion of the scoring area. As you progress your goal might be put all rounds inside the 10-ring. Once accomplished, you can either opt for a smaller target, such as trying to keep all the rounds in the X-ring or a 2-inch circle, or you may opt to just move the whole target back to 7-10 yards and practice at



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that distance until you can meet a certain accuracy standard. One could also use the A-zone on an IPSC target, or the Down Zero zone on an IDPA target. The target itself is less important than a standardized target size and distance to measure our progress.

Another form of measurement is to measure the speed of your shooting. This requires a shot timer of some kind. There are free shot timer apps available for popular smart phones, but the best timers are standalone units that are a sound investment in your shooting journey. These shot timers allow you to measure the speed of your draw to first hit on a particular target size at a particular distance or measure your "split times," or time between shots in a string of fire. When using a shot timer, we still maintain accuracy standards and prefer a slightly more deliberate hit to a lightning-fast miss. That said, to get faster we have to practice going faster, and shot timers are an indispensable tool in the serious shooter's range bag to measure our progress.

Goal Setting

One of the surest hallmarks of a serious shooter is setting goals to pursue and mark our progress. Once we have a range where we can practice defensive skills, and the tools to measure our performance, we need to assess where we are and where we want to be. If you already have goals in your shooting performance, then you're on your way to improvement. If not, then figure out where you are and begin setting some goals. The important aspect of goal setting is that goals be measurable. For some, they simply need to start by setting general dry-practice and live-fire practice goals. An example would be to dry-practice at home once a week, or twice a month, and go to the range for a structured practice session once every two or three months. Maybe that goal is more or less frequent than the example, but the point is to set a goal that is a realistic improvement over your current routine.

Beyond that, specific performance goals are needed. Break down specific aspects of shooting, or choose standardized drills and begin practicing them and recording how you're doing. Then set achievable goals toward which to aspire.

One staple drill is the Draw-To-First-Hit Drill. At seven yards and with the handgun holstered and the hands in a natural position, at the beep of the timer draw and shoot one round into the target (ideally an 8-inch circle of an IDPA target or the A-zone of an IPSC target). I would encourage any citizen that plans on carrying a handgun for self-defense in public strive to achieve a consistent sub-2 second draw to first hit in this drill. However, if you attempt this drill and it takes you 4 seconds to score a good hit, don't lose heart. Just set a short-term goal of getting down to a 3.5 second time, and then 3 seconds, and so on.

In the classic Bill Drill, which is the same set up as the previous drill except that you draw and shoot six rounds into the target, a good initial goal would be sub-5 seconds, which is a sub-2 second draw to first hit with 0.6 second splits for the follow up shots. Again, if you're nowhere close to 5 seconds to get all your hits, then simply set intermediate goals and keep grinding closer to where you want to be. Goal setting is the mark of the serious shooter.

Conclusion

Ultimately, serious shooters intent on being well-prepared armed citizens have many habits in common and these are among the most universal. We need to find a range where we can practice defensive shooting skills. We need to measure our performance in an objective manner. We need to set goals to guide our practice and track our progress. These are the hallmarks of serious, defensively minded armed-citizens.

10 Ways to Instill Safe Gun Handling

By Wendy LaFever
15 March 2024

Mentoring someone who is brand-new to firearms can be one of the great joys in life. You get to show someone the proper and safe way to handle guns; you can change their entire perception of gun ownership (and gun owners); and you get to watch the smile dawn on their face as they realize that yes, they can do this too. But it's also a terrific responsibility. Someone who's introduced to firearms in the wrong way can be forever hesitant to pick one up again...or, worse, they may walk away from the experience with a negative view of what guns and shooting are all about. So it's crucial to make sure that a new shooter's experience is a positive one. Here are 10 tips to help make sure that it is.

1. Safety, safety, safety

Someone who has never actually shot a gun before is likely to have learned everything they do know from entertainment media, and as we all know, much of that is wrong. In particular, unsafe gun handling practices are regularly depicted in movies and on TV. So long before you ever put a real gun in your "student's" hands, sit down with them and explain just how important the rules are.

2. Practice safety ahead of time

Get a "blue gun" (or, failing that, a squirt gun) and let your new shooter practice how to hold it with their finger outside the trigger guard. Show them how they need to move around the gun when it's on a table, so they'll know not to stand in front of it when on the range. If you have a laser pen (or, better still, a laser that you can mount on the blue gun), let them practice with that. Walk them through the situations they might encounter on the range, so they won't panic if something unexpected happens.

3. Model safety yourself

When you finally get your newbie to the range, make sure that you practice what you preach. Many experienced shooters can become complacent...it's just human nature. So ensure that when you're loading and



unloading your guns from their cases, loading the guns themselves, and handling the firearms, that you are always following the rules yourself. To the letter. No excuses.

4. Choose a quiet day at the range

One of the things that tends to be the most surprising to a new shooter is just how loud gunfire can be, particularly in an enclosed space. Most new shooters are shocked by the way that you can feel the noise as much as you can hear it, and it can be quite intimidating. If you already have a range that you attend regularly, you're probably already familiar with when it tends to be busy and when it isn't. But nevertheless, it couldn't hurt to put in a call to the range officer and make sure that the day you've chosen to bring your mentee in is going to be a quiet one.

5. Speaking of which...

Double up on ear protection. Make sure your new shooter has both soft foam plugs and earmuffs, and ensure that those plugs and muffs fit them correctly before you get there. If at all possible, take them to the store ahead of time and let them try them on. Then buy them their own ear protection. And while you're at it, make sure that they have safety glasses that wrap all the way around their eye area. There's nothing that will turn a new shooter off like having someone else's hot brass casing lodge itself in between their shooting glasses and their face.

6. Manage their expectations

How many times have you seen this in the movies: Someone needs to learn how to shoot. Their friend puts a pistol in their hands. They grip it effortlessly, and with grim determi-



Continued...10 Ways to Instill Safe Gun Handling

nation begin to send rounds downrange. A few seconds later, they proudly pull back a target with a perfect 1-inch hole in the center. Sigh.

Now, it's true that there is such a thing as a "natural." However, most of us need plenty of time and practice to master the gestalt of hand-eye coordination, proper grip, trigger squeeze, sight picture and all of the other things that go into shooting accurately. Before you get to the range, make sure your newbie knows that they may barely get their shots on paper their first time out. Reassure them that it's quite normal, and that all you or anyone else really cares about is that they handle the firearm safely.

7. Start small

If your new shooter is interested in learning because they want a firearm for personal protection, it may be quite tempting to start them out with a gun designed specifically for that. A snub-nosed lightweight .357 revolver, perhaps, or a 12-gauge shotgun with an 18-inch barrel. Please resist this temptation, at least the first time out. Many guns designed for personal protection offer thumping recoil and (since most personal-defense situations happen at very close range) not the greatest accuracy in the world. It's possible your new shooter may later want to try something bigger, so by all means, bring the larger calibers along. But start with something in a .22... preferably something with a long barrel and good sights, so they can experience some success before they tackle the more challenging guns.

Speaking of making it easy to succeed, instead of bringing bullseye targets, why not use paper plates instead (if your range allows it)? Any hit on the plate will count as a "win," and your newbie won't be stressing about the fact that they didn't put their first shots right on the bullseye.

8. Stay calm

It's entirely possible that, caught up in the excitement and trying to concentrate on a bunch of new things at once, your mentee

might make a mistake. Perhaps he or she leaves the gun pointed downrange after the RO has called a ceasefire. Or hands you the gun without verifying that the chamber is empty. What's important is that you remain calm, and simply tell them in a conversational tone what to do next. If you must take over the situation yourself, by all means do so, but don't do anything to panic them.

9. It's not about you

Another thing that can be very tempting for an experienced shooter is to show off just a bit. Hey, we're all human. Do resist the temptation to take the gun from your new shooter's hands and show them just how many bullets you can put through the same hole in that target. Remember, this is for them. Praise them for the hits that they do make, and positively reinforce every time they do something safely and correctly.

10. Follow up

You're all done shooting, the guns have been put away, and now it's time to go home. The lesson isn't over, though. Ask them how they felt about the experience, and listen to their answers. If they still have questions, answer as honestly as you can. If you don't know the answers, find someone who does. Perhaps they may be interested in receiving further instruction in a classroom environment from an NRA-certified instructor. (It might be a good idea for you to go with them, too: A little refresher course never hurt anyone, and having someone they know with them will help them feel more comfortable.)

Most importantly, invite them along the next time you go to the range, too. Until they make some friends in the shooting community, they may be hesitant to go back to the range by themselves.

*Extracted and shortened from:
https://www.nrafamily.org/content/10-ways-to-instill-safe-gun-handling/?utm_source=newsletter*