



THE BASICS OF DOWN THE LINE SHOOTING.



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1. Introduction

This information in this booklet has been designed as an introduction to “Down the Line” (DTL) Trap shooting, primarily for novices and those of you who are in the very early stages of their DTL ‘career’. The information herein is not the be all and end all, but it will guide you so that you will be able to adapt your own methods and be a safe and proficient shooter.

It is desirable and more importantly, to your benefit to obtain a copy of the latest ACTA rule book and have a read about the shooting process and the mandatory rules for a referee.

At this stage, having some knowledge of these ‘basic’ rules may help you understand what your coach tells you and also the discipline a little better.

If you are unsure of something, be it the rules, procedures, processes or anything to do with Clay Target Shooting in general, PLEASE ask. Your club Executive and management will have access to the resources to get you the answer.

2. Safe Handling

Safe handling of your gun is paramount at all times. This includes; preparing your gun for use i.e. getting it out of its box and putting it together, walking to the layout, using it safely on the layout, returning to the car after you have finished a round and putting it away at the end of the day.

Here are some tips for you:

- a. When assembling your gun, always make sure there are no obstructions in the barrels (something may have worked its way in them during travel)



Split Barrel due to obstruction

- b. When you are walking around, ALWAYS have your gun in an open position. (So, it can be seen that the breach is clear) Note: Images 1 & 2 are the safest method. Image 3 is not a correct way of carrying your gun.



Image 1 Safe way of carrying your gun



Image 2 Safe way of carrying your gun



Image 3 Incorrect way of carrying your gun

c. The gun must remain open until it is your turn to shoot. Rest the open gun down on your foot and finger outside the trigger guard, whilst waiting for your turn. Most shooters have their cartridges in the barrels ready (image 2) but it is up to you as long as you are standing on the pad.



Waiting For Your Turn 1



Waiting For Your Turn 2

d. As soon as you have taken your shot, the gun **MUST** be unloaded. When moving from station 5, you **MUST** remove both cartridges **BEFORE** stepping off the pad and walking to station one.

Just one thing; It's great when the ejectors in the gun fling the cartridges behind you **BUT**, get into the habit of catching the empties and put them in the bin provided at the pads, so that somebody doesn't have to clean up after you. It is good etiquette and good manners to the competitors in your squad and of course hosting club that you



3. Gun Mount, Gun Alignment and Pattern Spread

3a. Gun Mount



Eye Position and sight picture

In the picture above, note the eye position and alignment down the barrel of the shotgun and sight bead. Also, the head position is square not cocked over the stock.

Unlike a rifle that has a front and rear sight to align with, a shotgun only has a front and sometimes mid barrel bead and you rely on your eye position as the “rear sight” to ensure you are squarely aligned down the barrel. A square head position and un-obstructed eye position down the barrel allows for a clear target sight picture.

3b. Shotgun Alignment, Using Your Centre Beads

This is the ‘Figure 8’ coaches and experienced shooters talk about. You will use this every time you mount the gun to check your alignment before looking out to where you want to see the target. Having the correct or incorrect sight picture will produce a pattern spread as described next.



Figure of 8 with the sight beads

3c. Pattern Spread

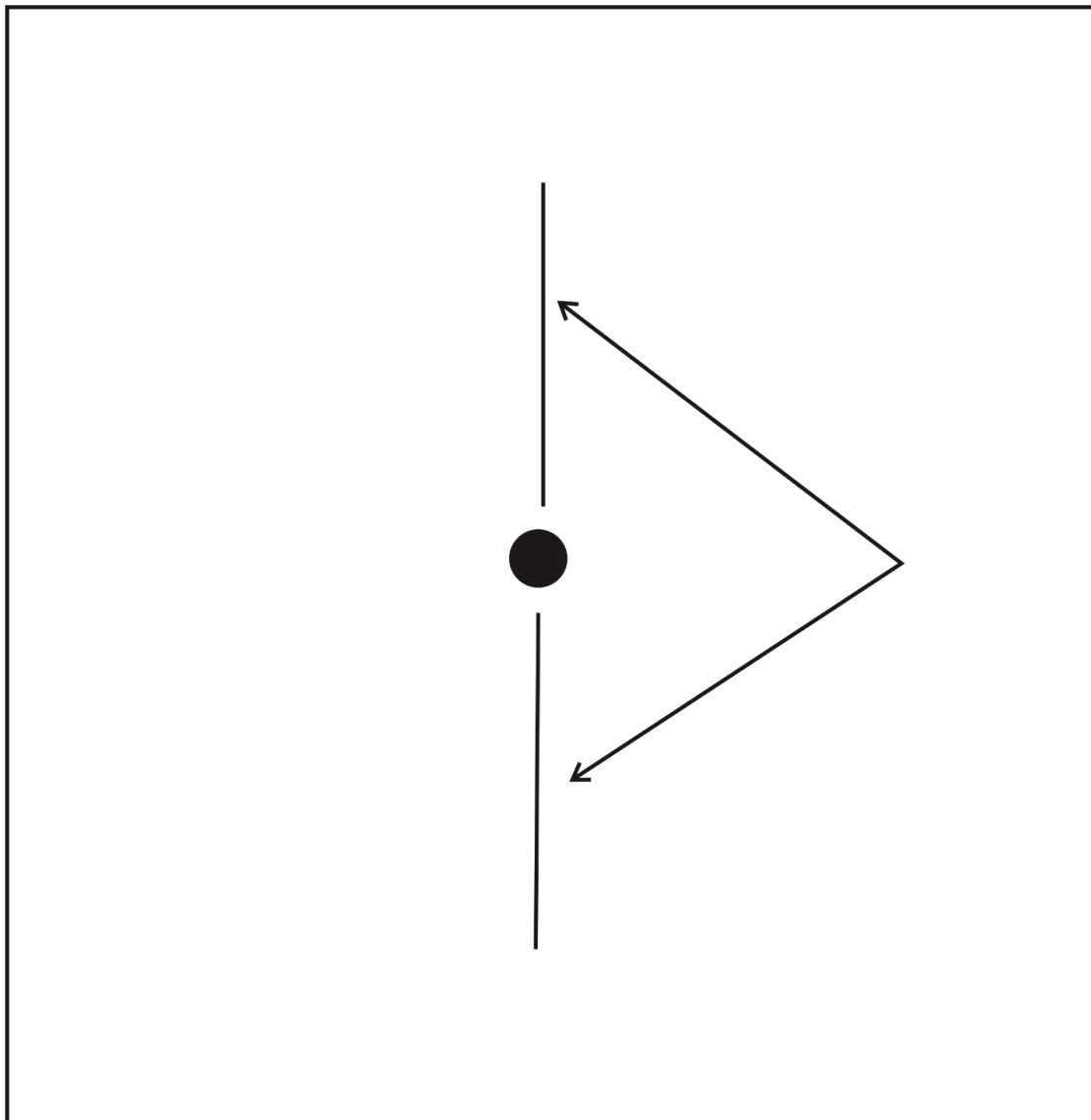
To see where your pattern is you could use a pattern board as follows.

Pattern Board Set Up

1. White wash your pattern board using lime and water applying it with a brush
2. After painting the board make a centre dot on the board that is visible from 30 meters away.
3. Make a mark 30 Meters back from the Pattern board and position your feet as if you were shooting off the centre lane at straight away targets.

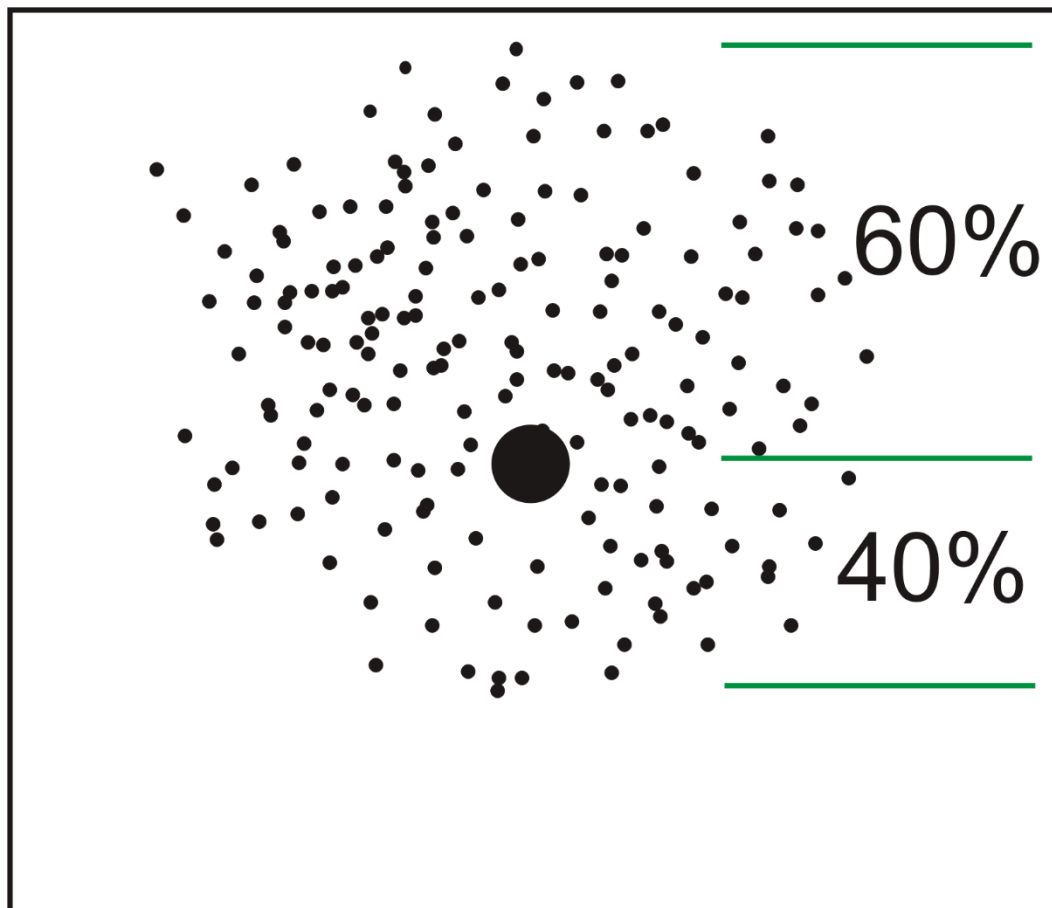
Sight your end bead on the dot and gently squeeze the trigger (some people have a tendency to move the gun when jerking the trigger). Fire three shots in concession to show an average.

Keep shooting the board until you are shooting the centre of the board, the height of pattern doesn't matter yet as long as you're shooting the centre line (as arrowed) of the board, meaning your figure 8 is starting to work.



Pattern Board with Centre Line

3d. Perfect Pattern 60/40



Perfect Pattern 60 / 40

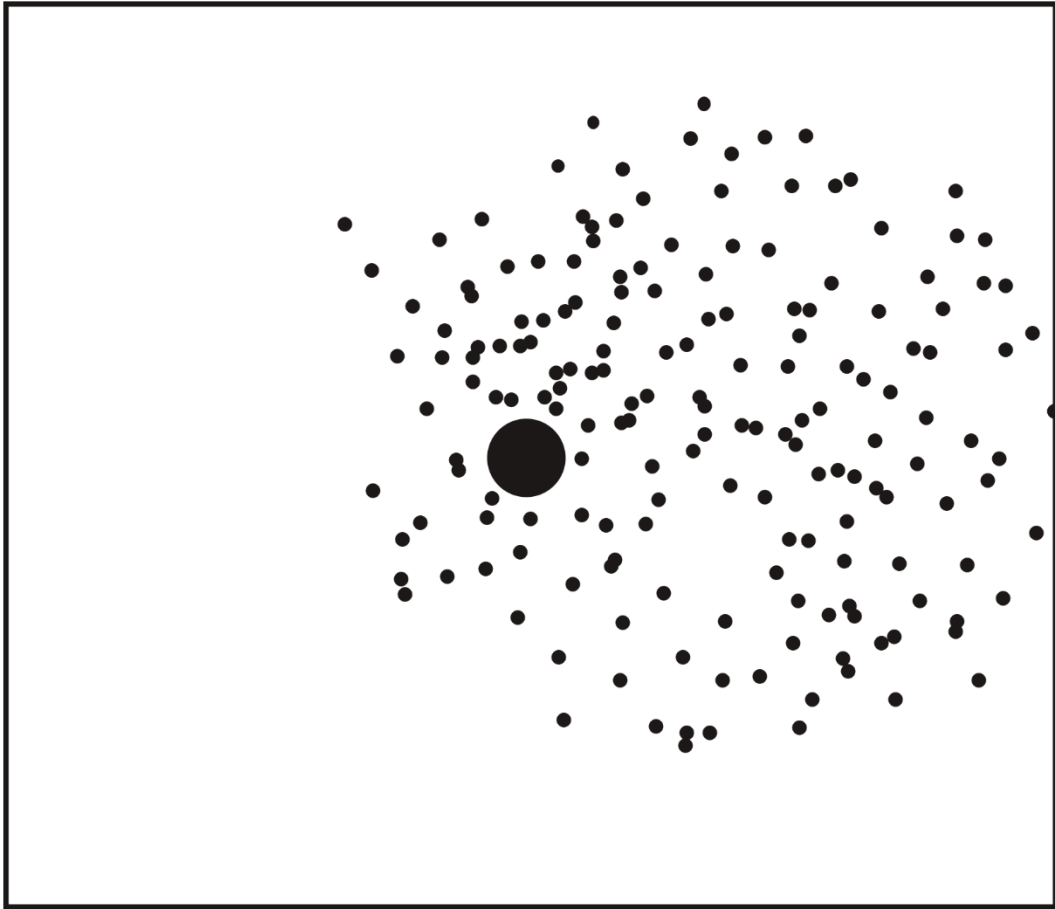


Straight and correct figure 8 alignment along the barrel

With the correct “figure of 8” the pattern will be an ideal 60/40% distribution. The 60% above the target caters for the rising target when the trigger is pulled. The target rises into the centre of the pattern where most of the shot is. This is the desired patterning you should be consistently targeting.

The following diagrams show some common mistakes shooters make with shot patterning.

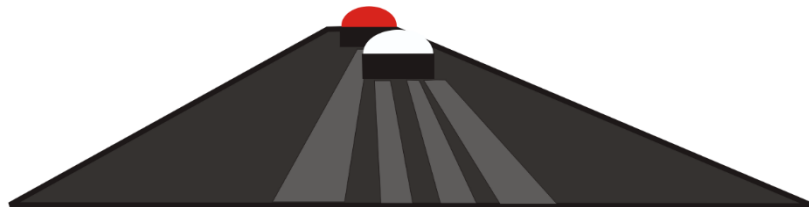
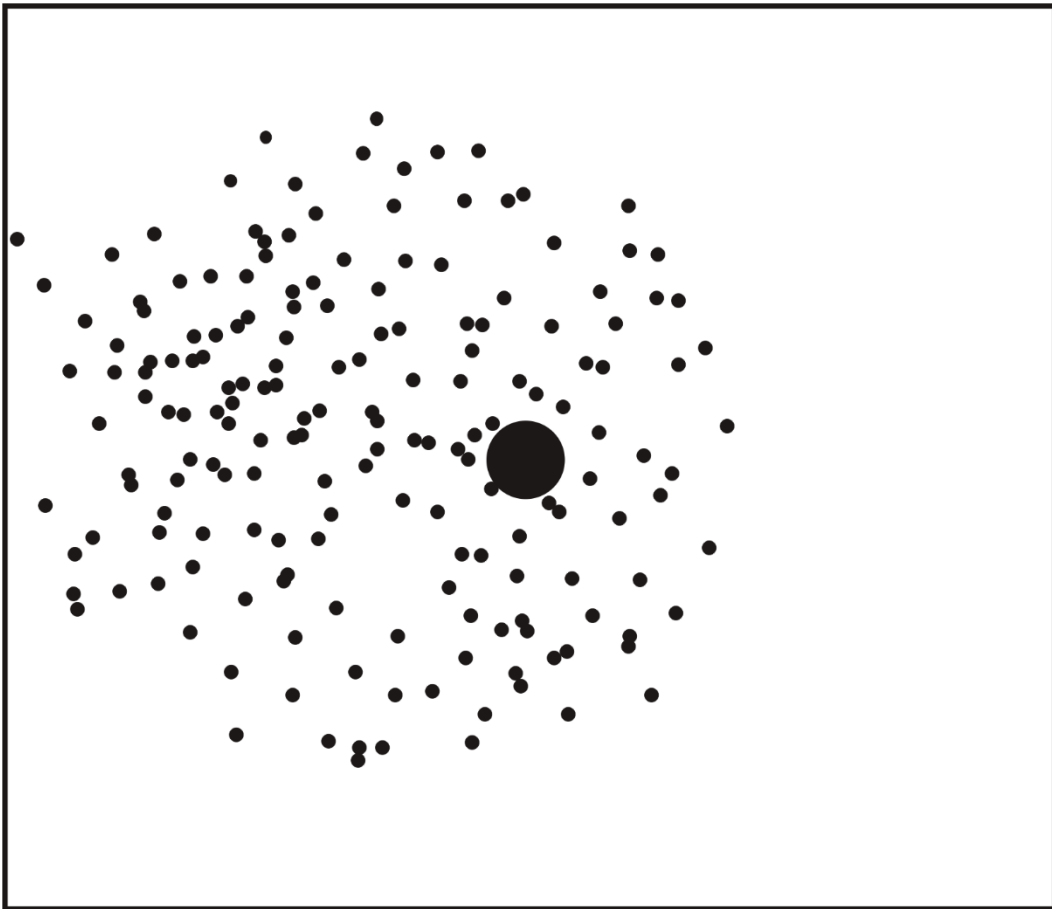
3e. Out of Alignment – Centre Bead LEFT



Centre Bead Slightly left

If the board looks like this you are not looking directly along the barrel, your figure "8" would look like the above image with the centre bead slightly to the left.

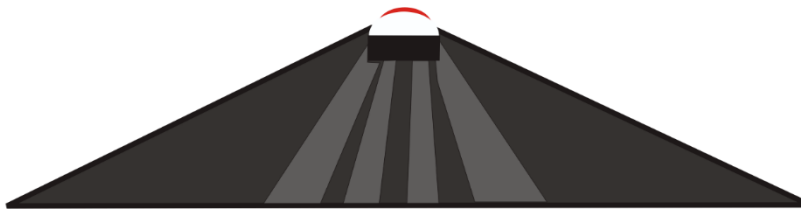
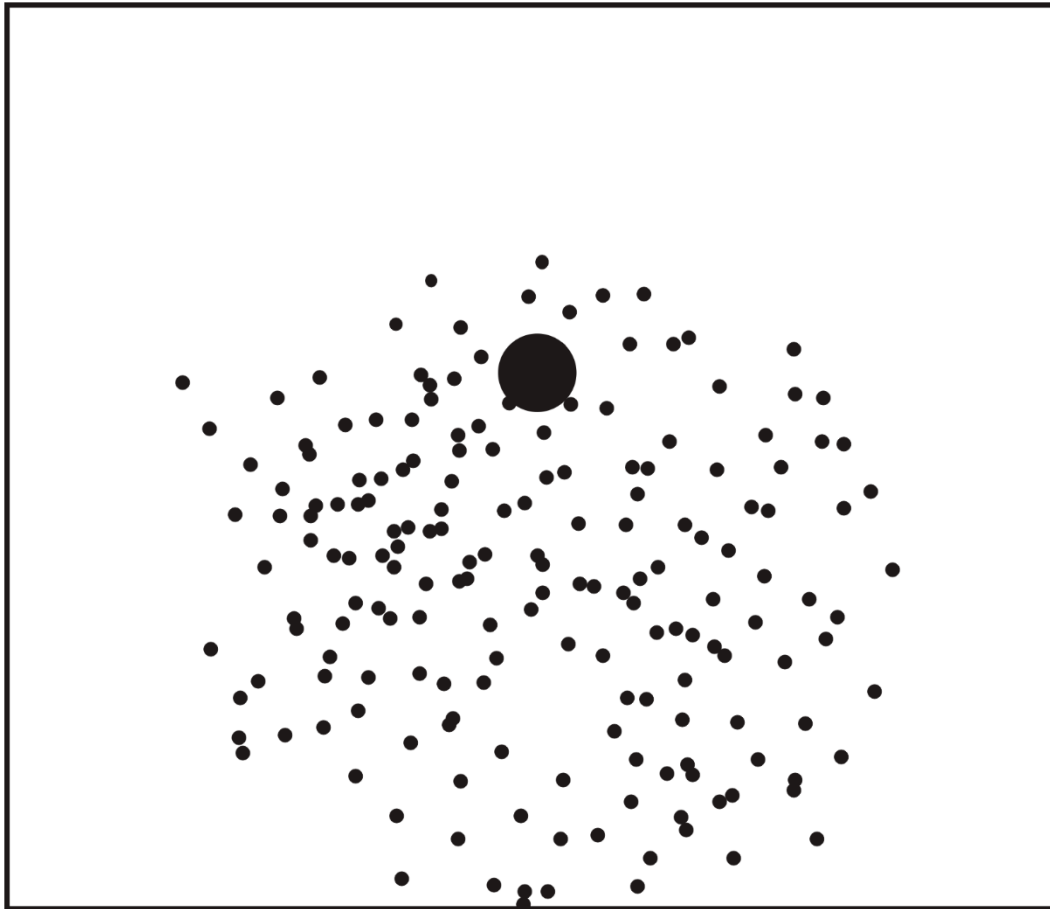
3f. Out of Alignment – Centre Bead RIGHT



Centre bead slightly right

If it looks like this again you are not looking along the centre of the barrel and your figure “8” would look like the image as above

3g. Out of Alignment – Centre Bead covering front Bead



Bead Covering Bead

If your pattern looks like this, your sight picture is very flat (Bead covering Bead). To correct this, you need to widen the figure “8” view

3h. Out of Alignment – Centre Bead too LOW

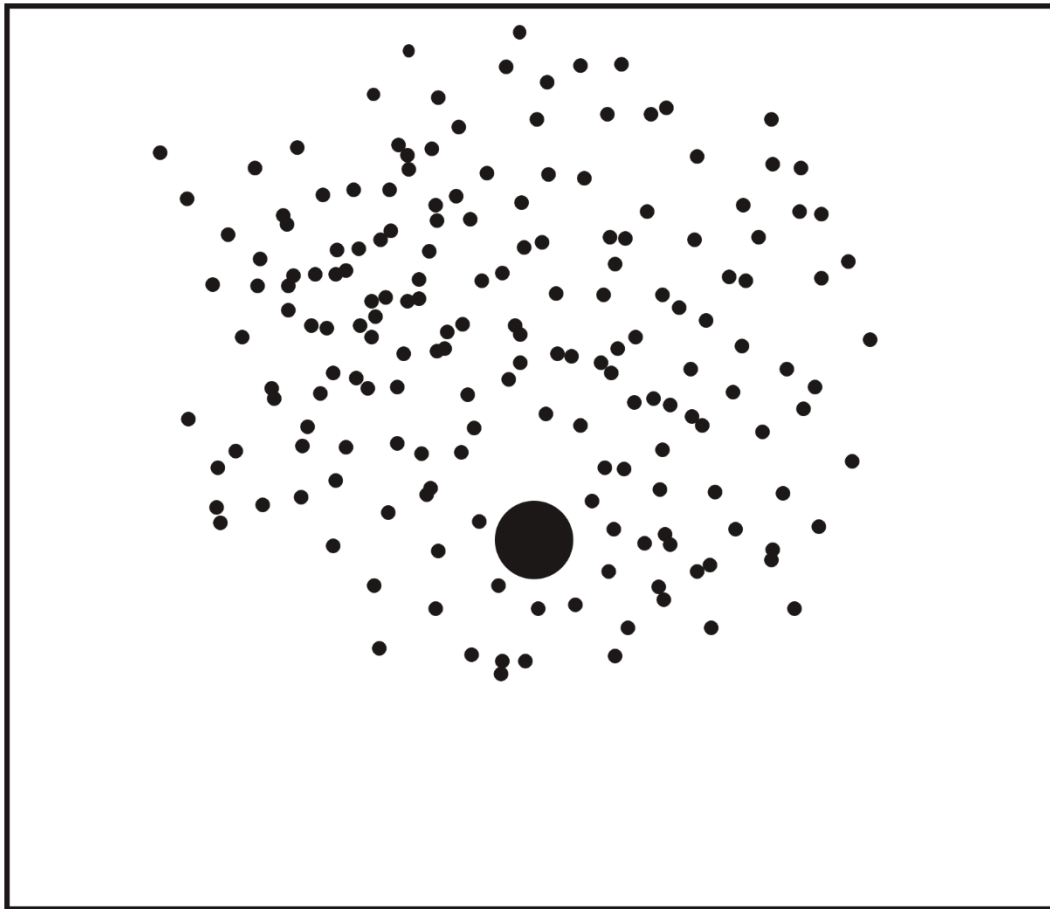
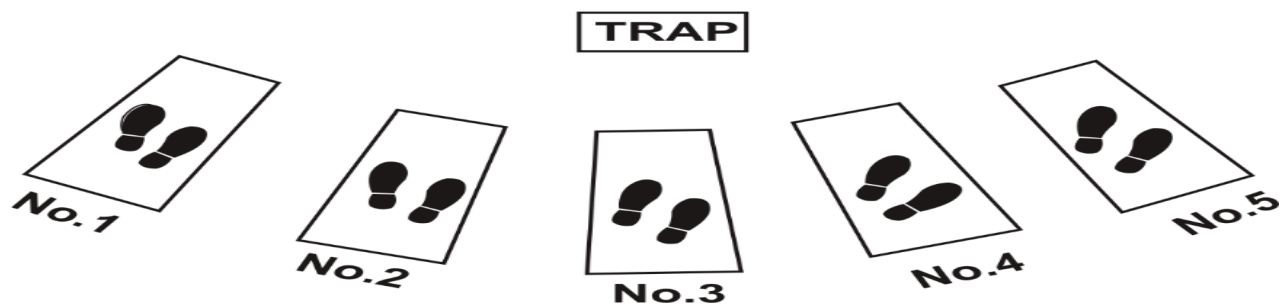
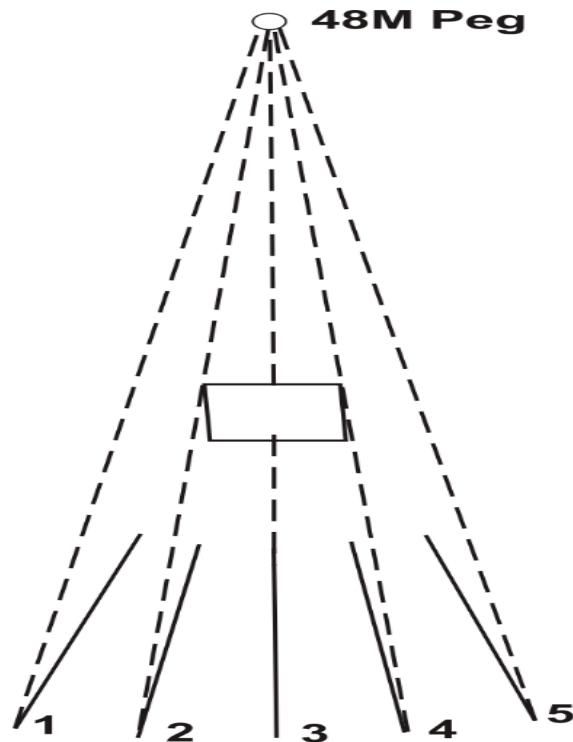


Figure "8" too wide

If your pattern looks like this your figure "8" view is too wide and to correct this you need to close the figure "8" view

Feet Positioning



Most targets are missed by two feet!..... Those that you are standing on!

A very good method of correctly positioning your feet for each track is to ignore the trap house and take up your normal balanced shooting position, so that you gun points naturally at the centre distance peg. Bring the muzzle back to the relevant point of aim (described in the next paragraph) on the trap house, your feet position should look like those above. This will position you to cover the most difficult target from each track, allowing you to shoot the targets with your body, NOT the arms, this is most important.

Points of Aim

(Sometimes referred to as the hold point)

In addition to you adopting the correct stance and feet positions and to further assist with angling targets, points of aim relative to the particular lane and trap house should be used.

Points of aim should be on or slightly below the leading edge of the trap house, so that the instant the target appears, you will be able identify the line of target flight.

Points of aim beyond the leading edge of the trap house may cause you to 'jump' the target, rather than follow its line of flight. As you gain experience you will alter the points of aim to suit your individual technique.

The diagram below illustrates the points of aim for each lane.

Lane One: The point of aim should be the top left-hand corner of the trap house to cater for the left swinging target.

Lane Two: The point of aim is between the left corner of the trap house and the centre point of the leading edge.

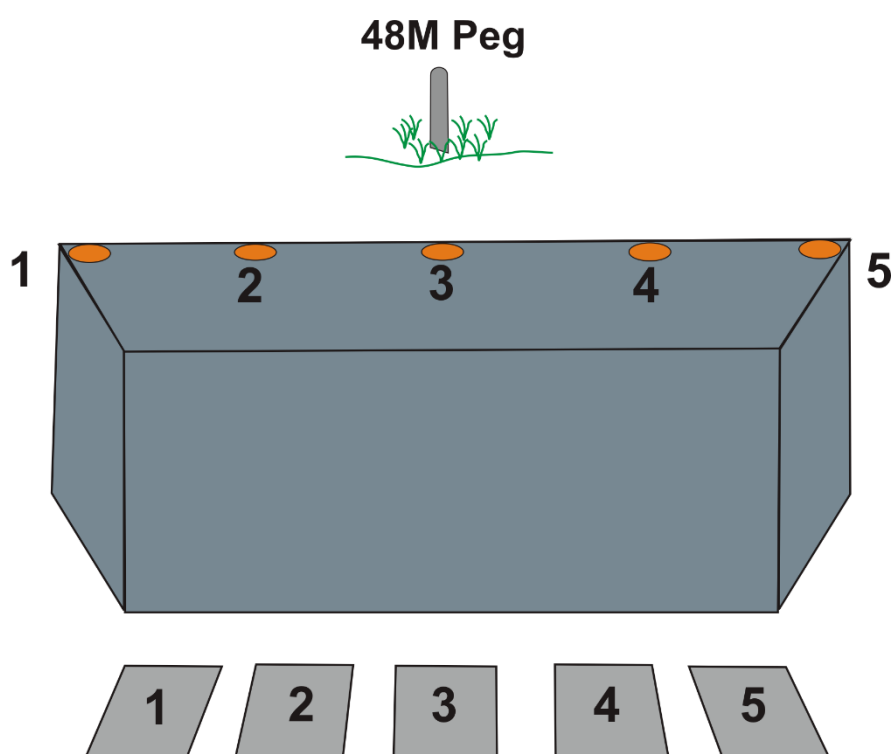
Lane Three: The aim point is the centre of the leading edge of the trap house.

Lane Four: The point of aim is between centre point and the top right-hand corner of the leading edge of the trap house.

Lane Five: The point of aim is the top right-hand corner of trap house to cater for the right-hand swinging targets

These points of aim, together with correct feet positioning, give you a distinct advantage when shooting acutely angled targets.

All of the above points should be adopted and practised not only by novice shooters but by experienced shooters alike who may find that this extra attention to detail will improve their shooting performance and consistency relative to a particular target.



Lane Position

The following images demonstrate the stance and hold point for each of the stands during set up, prior to calling for the target. ● Indicates the hold point

Stand 1



Stand 2



Stand 3



Stand 4



Stand 5



After you have mounted your gun and have aligned it on the trap house, without moving your gun mount position, take your eye focus off the barrel and trap house and focus out to the distance past the front of the trap house about level with the field markers.

By doing this it will allow your eyes to focus on the target as it will be the first thing your eyes see. Providing you are still in your locked in gun mount/aligned position you will be able to swing your gun to the target quickly and accurately.

Basic Practice

There is a lot of information to take in and I suggest that you work on one or maybe two items at a time.

Ask a club member to have the trap set to throw straight away targets, shoot off the centre lane until you are breaking clays hard and consistently.

Stand 1



Station 3



Station 5

With the trap still set on straight away targets, move through from lanes 1 to 5, this helps to check your use of the “figure 8” alignment and general feet position, gun swing & barrel alignment.

Annex A – Extract from Rules

It is not expected that you understand all the rules immediately but it is a good idea to get to know the basics. I suggest you go and watch a referee and scorer and see how the procedures, rules and etiquette are put into place.

When you start competing you will be required to assist a referee with the scoring, in this case tell the referee you are new to the sport and they will help you.

Please obtain a copy of the Rule book (ACTA website or club secretary) and familiarise yourself with the basic rules regarding safety and procedure for DTL shooting.

The following are extracts from the ACTA Rule book dated May 2021.

1.1 SAFETY

(a) All guns must be immediately opened upon removal from a gun rack or car to determine that they are indeed empty.

(b) All guns carried on or about the shooting ground must be held in a position of safety, with the breech open and unloaded at all times. Gun sleeves and slings are not permitted in any ACTA discipline.

(c) Shooting on the grounds at any place other than the firing point at legitimate targets only is prohibited except where a pattern plate is installed, and then only with permission of Club Management.

(d) Firing the gun in any position other than orthodox, i.e. to the shoulder, is prohibited (with the exception of a physical disability). Any shooter firing a gun from any position other than orthodox will be immediately suspended by the Club Management and reported in writing to the Executive Committee – a minimum penalty of three months suspension shall apply.

(e) All guns must remain fully open until the result of the previous target has been called. The shooter must immediately open the gun upon having fired at the target. They must not move, attempt to turn around or move back up their shooting lane until their gun has been opened.

(f) Shooters experiencing a misfire or malfunction must remain with their gun pointed in the direction of the trap house until the referee arrives to adjudicate. See Rule 1.19.14, & 5.5(f)

(g) When competing, the shooter will not insert a cartridge in their gun until they are on the shooting station. All cartridges must be removed from a gun upon the red signal at any trap house, or if any official approaches the trap house on that layout.

(h) The competitor's gun must remain fully open until all persons on the shooting tracks have withdrawn to a handicap mark at least equal to their own.

(i) Release trigger guns shall not be left in gun racks or in positions where they can be handled, but shall be constantly under the control and supervision of the user and shall be labelled as per Rule 1.4(b)(iii).

(j) All reloads must comply with shotshell component manufacturer's recommended specifications. Shooters exceeding the recommended data shall be deemed to be in breach of the safety regulations.

(k) Any shooter knowingly breaching any safety rule other than 1.1(d) will be immediately suspended by the Club Management for one (1) calendar month pending an investigation into their actions by the relevant State Association and the ACTA must be notified of all breaches and responses.

(l) Any shooter committing an unsportsmanlike or unsafe act on the shooting ground shall be liable to suspension or disqualification.

(m) Any shooter deliberately firing at any fauna on any shooting ground shall be immediately suspended by the Club Management and shall remain suspended until the incident is dealt with by their State Association.

(n) Mobile Phones or like devices must not be audible during competition.

(o) Hearing and eye protection is strongly recommended for all ACTA disciplines whilst present at the firing point or trap area.

(p) A gun must not be used that will accept more than one gauge of cartridge at the same time and a gun must not be loaded with different gauge ammunition.

(q) A release trigger is not to be set until the gun is mounted to the shoulder. Failure to comply will incur a warning in the first instance and disqualification from the event for a second offence.

Annex B- Tips for Trap Shooting

1. INSPECT YOUR GUN AND CLOTHING.

Make sure no gun settings have not changed, check for loose components or any impact damage, e.g. comb, butt plate (recoil pad), barrels etc. Is the gun clean? There are many occasions when a gun has malfunctioned because the gun wasn't clean, Ingression of dust and water into the trigger housing can severely interfere with the internal workings. The shoulder pad on your shooting jacket can imperceptibly alter the length of pull over time thus creating shoulder crouching and a misaligned swing. Wear the same shoes for competition as you do in practice, wearing different shoes can alter your stance by adding or detracting height that will alter your gun aim point and defeat learned muscle memory. Inspect your shooting glasses, prescriptions lenses should be kept up to date on a yearly basis.

2. VISUALISE

Before you shoot, take a moment of visualising calling for the target, swinging smoothly, seeing a perfect sight picture and the target exploding with authority. Visualisation is a powerful technique that professionals in all sports disciplines use to reach perfection. It is instructing the mind what the desired result is to be; a command to perform to maximum ability. If you miss a target? Replay the shot by visualisation of a perfect shot, so you won't miss the next target.

3. WATCH THE SQUAD PRIOR

Watch the squad targets prior to you on the first trap you shoot, track them smoothly with your eyes before you shoot. This will stimulate your eye muscles to focus your vision and prevent lazy eye syndrome. It will successfully import target patterns to your subconscious mind, increasing performance.

4. LOOK AT THE TARGETS

Look at your targets before you shoot them! In competition shooting events, walk to your assigned trap to detect targets travelling in variations from trap to trap. Trap one could be perfect whereas trap two could be throwing higher or lower targets or more to left or right of the normal. This is caused by incorrect trap alignment or settings. The settings can be changed to throw a legal target, but alignment cannot be changed.

5. OBSERVE THE TRAP HOUSES

Observe concentricity of the trap house in relation to the station posts. The trap house should be centred as observed from station 3. This is one of trap shooting secrets professional shooters are fully aware of but many shooters are not. It results in shooting traps perfect and then blunder on the misaligned traps into losing a score. To the discerning eye, and with experience you'll discover the trap house and stations are slightly out of alignment, they may be shifted to the left or right. Adjust your stance, otherwise the target will appear at a strange angle and you will miss the target. If the trap house is shifted to the left, adjust your feet to the left so you are standing square to the trap house. Do not shift your gun or upper body placement left or right to compensate, shift your stance so your swing will remain in perfect alignment. This one tip alone will serve to gain you high scores.

6. BE AWARE OF PRACTICE TRAPS

Before shooting competition beware of the practice trap! Amazingly, these traps are not always set to competition settings and may throw soft slow targets and targets with a solid face (pick-ups, hard sun-baked clays). The traps can be out of alignment too. It is a good idea to warm up at a practice trap before commencement of the event, but only if you are aware that the events trap you are scheduled to shoot may throw fast targets and targets with shallow razorblade angles.

7. BE CONFIDENT

Have a sense of authority within when you step on your station. Be confident and assured that your visualisation will come to pass. If in doubt, visualise the target exploding right now. Stand firmly with your confidence and control holding the gun with absolute authority. When it is your turn to shoot, shoulder the gun and intimate authority so you and the gun feel as one unit. It is important to feel the gun as being a part of you, not just an object in hand. You and the gun are now one and it cannot do anything without your command.

8. SOLIDIFY YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GUN

To solidify this one-on-one connection with the gun, control cheek pressure to the comb. This pressure must be felt to obtain shot consistency. If you apply too much or too little cheek pressure the eye/rib alignment will be altered resulting in hit and miss shooting above or below the target. Cheek placement must also be consistent. If your cheek is placed a tad to the left or right, the gun will shoot away from the target you are seeing.

9. SQUAD RHYTHM

Pay attention to the rhythm of the squad. Is it slow, fast? Mentally you must maintain your own pace set up, and not alter your timing. But be aware that an irregular squads timing can sneak into your set up forcing you to hurry. A fast squad should be avoided, but if you can't, then maintain your own internal and external timing, forget about anyone else and just start your timing when the shooter prior to you calls for their target. A slow squad can only be managed when you are aware of the problem.

10. DON'T BE INFLUENCED

Pay attention of where the shooters on your squad are breaking the targets. If they are breaking targets quickly, at strange or irregular distances, be careful. The squad can have a powerful influence on a shooter that is not totally focussed on unnatural timing factors. The important thing is to remain focused on your own setup and visualisation of the target breaking. Awareness is concentration.

11. DO NOT RESPOND OR NEGATIVELY FOCUS ON DISTRACTIONS

Gun malfunctions, broken targets, background noise is all part and parcel of the game. The moment you allow yourself to become distracted your score will suffer. Learn to block them out by allowing them to become just normal sounds and events.

11. CONTROL BREATHING

Take a relaxed deep breath prior to calling. Incorporate this into your setup routine. Oxygen supplies a burst of energy to the eyes which allows you to see a target sooner with increased clarity. It also helps to calm the mind and body. Controlled breathing will help whenever you become tense.

12. EYES WIDE OPEN

Raise your eyebrows just before or when you call for the target. If you look in a mirror you may see that your eyelid covering the iris of your eye. This happens to a severe degree when the forehead tenses and compresses downwards when you are under stress, like in a shoot off.

Twenty percent of light gathering can be lost and vision reduction will make the targets appear dimmer and flying faster with a trailing comet like tail. Eyes wide open when you call will see an improvement in your performance whenever you are under tension will improve your performance.

14. CONTROL EMOTIONS

The target you are shooting is only a target you have obliterated many times before, don't assume it has no more value than the previous targets you have shot. This means, no counting targets, no mental imaginations of winning or losing if you could only hit this target.

Learn to reset your mind if you miss a target, don't attempt to dwell on the factors behind the miss and avoid making adjustments in your procedures. Over correcting leads to experimenting and more targets unnecessarily lost. Flush the mind of emotions and shoot like the machine you learnt in practice.

Everyone misses targets, its part and parcel of the sport, accept it and don't swell on the missed target, because if you do there is a 95% chance you will miss the next target.

GOOD SHOOTING AND GOOD LUCK!