

DRY FIRE AND LIMITED LIVE FIRE TRAINING....

I have started to prepare for another Tactical Pistol/Rifle Instructor course. In the course, I know I may have to shoot the standards if requested and most certainly live-fire demonstrate drills.

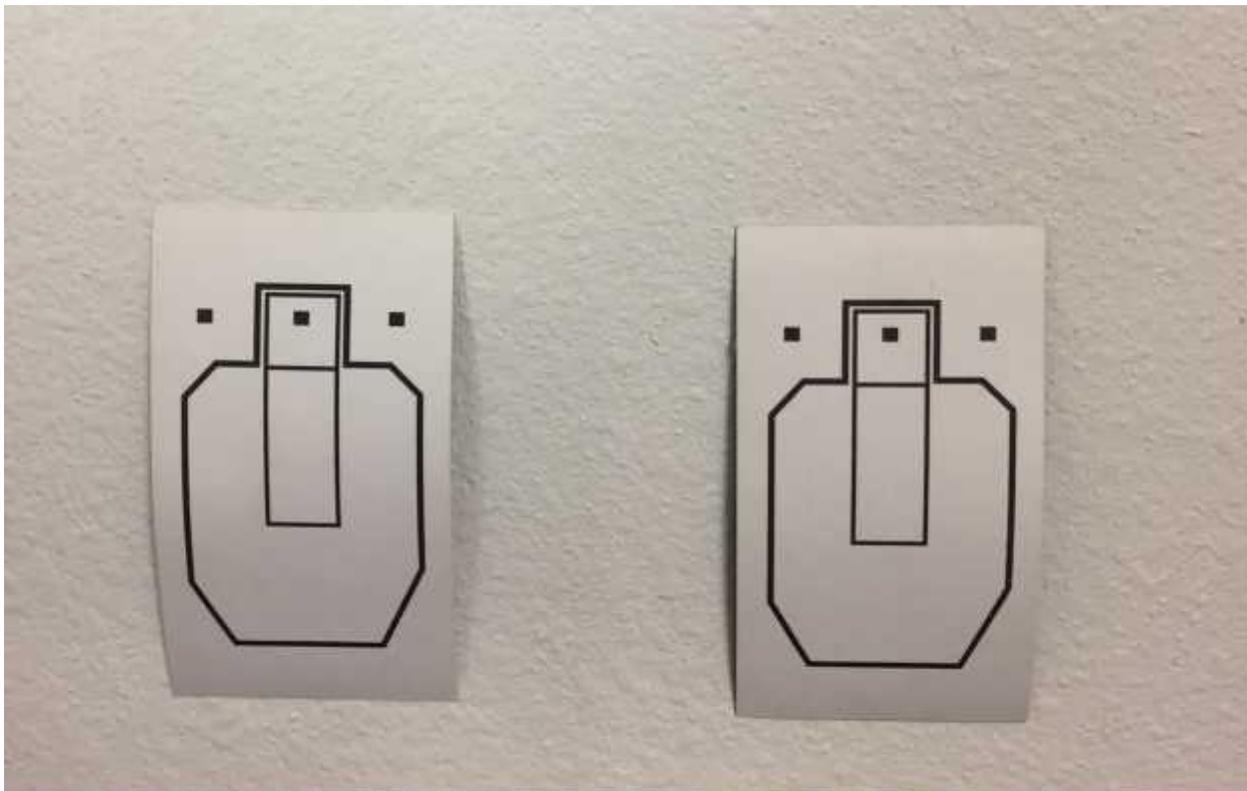
As I prepare, I want to conserve ammo and be efficient in my practice to maintain my skills.

How do I prepare? Through dry fire and limited live fire...

DRY FIRE

I start by dry firing both my pistol and my rifle. I was told by an instructor once that the big dogs in shooting, dry fire 70% to 30% live fire. This stuck in my head. I try and adhere to it. This means I dry fire both at home and on a flat range.

I joke that it took me 14 years to figure out that I should put a target on the back of a business card. This is what I use for dry-fire. I get 8-12" away from it and dry practice.



PISTOL

Practice what? Everything I want to do live:

-) Establish Natural Point of Aim
-) Presentation

-) Picking up your front sight
-) Trigger prep/execution
-) Second sight picture
-) Trigger prep for follow up shots

I push the gun out, close my eyes and take a couple of breaths. I then open my eyes and see where the sights rest. If they are not on target, I adjust my feet (I preach both arms locked).

I focus on my push out or draw stroke and how I index, find my master firing grip.

I run my front slightly high on a pistol and drop it into my rear sight.

I take my Glock trigger to the bump and focus on not increasing my grip pressure while moving through the “bump” and not disturbing my sights.

When my trigger breaks, I focus on where my front sight “prints” on target. This is also how I check to see which back strap on a Gen 4 Glock best fits my hand. Whichever one gives me the most secure grip and least amount of movement during my dry fire is the one I use.

I then consciously realign the sights and re-pressure the trigger to simulate a live round. This sets you up for follow up shots. This is one of the steps I see most students failing to perform.

My only dislike is the initial Glock trigger. It takes 2,000-3,000 rounds of live or dry fire to smooth it out whereas the Sigs and S & W’s are smooth and break clean out of the box. On the Glock, this “bump” can cause a new shooter to tighten his grip up during the firing process.

Why not put a Ghost in my Glock? The average patrolmen/woman cannot. I teach them it can be mastered with practice. It is also about credibility as an instructor.

RIFLE

-) Establish Natural Point of Aim
-) Presentation
-) Picking up your front sight
-) Trigger prep/execution
-) Second sight picture
-) Trigger prep for follow up shots

Rifle is much the same as pistol. I raise the rifle on target, close my eyes and take a couple of breaths. I then open my eyes and see where the sights rest. If they are not on target, I adjust my feet.

Once I establish my “hinge” point on my shoulder, I do not lose it. I then lower the rifle to where the muzzle is below my beltline. My finger is straight and my thumb is resting on my mechanical safety.

On the beep or stimulus. I drive the rifle up predominantly with my non-firing hand while sweeping the safety with my thumb. At the same time, my finger goes into the trigger guard and makes light contact with trigger.

When my front sight hits my stop point (where my eye is looking), I break the shot. To aid in stopping the rifle, I use my nose on the charging handle and my cheek contact with the stock. I do not move my head when I lower my rifle.

The trigger prep and sight picture are the same as pistol.

As for follow through, I do it as per my school. If you follow through, cover and scan, you are building muscle memory.

AMMO CONSERVATION AT THE RANGE

When I left Special Ops, I lost training time and money. I now had to make 50 rounds last and keep my skills up. I would dry fire 5 times and shoot one live round. I would do it for the box of ammo. I could get 1.5 hours or more out of the box.

You can do this with any drill, except the multiple round drills. Dry fire will get you a first round hit.

For recoil management, you must shoot. Multiple live shots will ensure your stance and skeletal alignment is correct. You can get lazy and lean back during dry fire. Multiple shot drills will force you to handle the recoil and reestablish an aggressive stance. I use the five in the body, one in the head for this. This drill establishes my starting stance.

RIFLE AMMO CONSERVATION

You can also do five and one with the rifle. Another drill is the 100 to seven drill and instead of shooting 5 rounds per position, you shoot one.

Start at 100, drop to prone, shoot 1 and it is important to watch where your front sight went after the first shot. Did it come back on target? If it did not, you did not set up a Natural Point of Aim. This is critical to setting up multiple shots. If you find yourself dragging your sights back on target, you are muscling the gun.

After one shot at 100, you can walk to 75 and do the same for kneeling. Take it to 50, then 25 and I go to seven and do a head shot to ensure I hold off for line of sight, line of bore.

If you want to build some cardio, run during the drill and run back to 100. Take a short break and hit it again.

In this drill you are building:

) 100 Prone

-) 75/50 Kneeling
-) 25 Standing
-) 7 Offset/Surgical
-) Cardio if you so choose

Building proper shooting positions will help it come instinctively under stress. You will have a shooting plan that you execute and if you miss a step, your brain will stop you and not let you go on until you fix/perform it.

Next, when setting up rifle shooting positions and making the first shot, I use a timer to start and record the shot. I want to go from standing to prone and make the first shot in 7-8 seconds in order to make my overall time of 20 seconds. If I am not efficient and take too much time, I will have to rush my follow up shots to make the time.

Another solution to diagnosis what drills I may be weak on is to shoot my standards cold. The drills I fail are the first ones I will practice. It is just that simple.

Finally, breathing and how you breathe and shoot is critical. I go from empty to one-half full and back to empty when I shoot. Trying to shoot on a full chest of air is uncomfortable and will not help your shots. I practice shooting on a dead chest.

Conclusion:

Dry fire and limited live fire will keep your skills up.

About the Author

Paul R. Howe is a 20-year veteran and former Special Operations soldier and instructor. Paul currently owns Combat Shooting and Tactics (CSAT) where he consults and trains law enforcement, government agencies and civilians technical and tactical shooting techniques. See www.combatshootingandtactics.com for details.