

## Your First Match

### What to Expect?

Nervous about your first match? Most people are! Hey - Relax and enjoy it! This sport is **fun!** You'll find that both experienced shooters and Range Officers are friendly and helpful with new shooters. We all enjoy Practical Shooting, and want to get you started right! Matches are as much social gatherings as shooting contests.

### Forget speed!

Walk through the match - it's the smart move. Don't try to imitate the "hosers" that zip through a course in flying cleats and a shower of brass. Forget speed - think safe and smooth! Forget the time, and concentrate on getting all "A" hits.

### Above all, concentrate on controlling your gun!

Concentrate on learning safe gun handling practices - speed will come with practice and experience. **Always, always, always pay attention to your muzzle direction and to where your trigger finger is!**

### You can actually get started with very little equipment:

A pistol, holster, ammo carriers, and about 100 - 150 rounds of ammunition are all you need. Eye and hearing protection are mandatory. You can start with three magazines (or speed loaders), but most shooters carry four or more.

### Your gun must be serviceable and safe.

Start with a gun you might select for personal protection - a few matches with it will tell you a lot! Remember - it needs to make minor (.38/9mm) to compete for place and/or prizes. Got a Glock? A 1911? A revolver? Great! You do not need a \$2,000+ race gun to be competitive? In fact, our divisions that use largely stock guns (Limited, Limited 10, Production, and Revolver) have outstripped the "Open" race gun division by a wide margin. Our sport favors new shooters with "entry-level" equipment.

## SAFETY

**Practical Shooting is "Safety in Action:" *Safety* is *THE* watchword of the entire USPSA program!** Practical Shooters instinctively practice safe gun handling under pressure, and they demand the same of others: **SAFETY COMES FIRST AND FOREMOST - ALWAYS!**

All USPSA clubs employ a "cold" range: This means that **all guns must be unloaded, and holstered (or cased/bagged) at all times.** Guns are not to be removed from holsters or cases, unless and until so directed by a Range Officer, or in a designated safety area. Guns must be empty (inclusive of magazines, snap caps, and/or empty cases), with actions closed and hammers down, when holstered or cased. **Gear up only in the specially marked Safety Areas. Do NOT handle ammunition in a Safety Area!**

**Always arrive at the range with your empty gun secured in a suitable bag or case .**

**Firearm safety is ultimately a matter of personal responsibility and self control,** two key qualities stressed in Practical Shooting. **The shooter is always responsible for his or her actions and safe gun handling.**

The Four Laws of Gun Control -

1. I will treat every firearm as a loaded one!
2. I will never point a firearm at anything I am not willing to destroy!
3. I will be sure of my target and what is behind it before firing!
4. I will keep my finger off the trigger until my muzzle is pointed downrange!

Violations these laws will lead to disqualification from matches. You will find other shooters intolerant of sloppy gun handling - they expect to compete under safe conditions. That is why we demand that you accept full responsibility for your actions; it's **your** gun, **you're** shooting it, and **you** have full control of the "disaster factors."

## The Fundamental Safety Rules You Need to Know

SAFETY AREAS – Other than on the line under RO direction, you may handle your gun only in a designated Safety Area. Any gun handling anywhere else on the range premises is considered unsafe gun handling, and will incur a match disqualification.

**MATCH DISQUALIFICATIONS** – A Match Disqualification (MDQ) will be incurred for any of the following safety infractions :

- Any accidental discharge
- Breaking 180° (pointing the gun uprange), whether the firearm is loaded or not
- Dropping a handgun, loaded or not, during the course, or during loading and unloading
- Sweeping any part of your body – or anyone else's – with the muzzle of a gun
- Allowing the muzzle of a handgun to point rearwards beyond a radius of 3 feet when drawing or reholstering
- Leaving a finger in the trigger guard during malfunction/jam clearing, loading, unloading, or reloading, or during movement. (This is considered unsafe gun handling.)
- Having a loaded handgun or removing it from the holster, other than when specifically ordered to do so by a Range Officer

## The Range Commands

On each stage, a shooting order will be established. If you're not "on deck," you'll be helping to tape targets or retrieve brass. When you're "on deck," you will follow the next shooter. Use this time to prepare yourself to shoot. Finish your preparations and come to the line ready to shoot when it's your turn! When you are called, step into the shooting box (or initial shooting position), stand, and await the Range Officer's commands: **DO NOT touch your gun until you're told to!**

The Range Officer will then issue these commands:

- **Do you understand the course of fire?**  
Optional - most R.O.'s ask this. Now's your chance to ask any last-minute questions.
- **Make ready!**  
This is your "OK" to load and holster your gun. Remember to put the safety on if you have one!
- **Are you ready?**  
If you are NOT ready, shout "NOT READY!" Otherwise, the R.O. will proceed with "the countdown."
- **Stand by!**  
This means the audible start signal is imminent. Within seconds, you'll hear a "beep," signaling you to commence shooting. Once you have completed the course of fire, just stop and wait. You will hear -
- **If you are finished, unload and show clear.**  
With your finger out of the trigger guard and the muzzle pointed safely downrange, drop the magazine, empty the chamber, and hold your slide back (revolvers, open and empty the cylinder); allow the R.O. to examine the now-empty gun (chamber and mag well). When the RO is satisfied, he will say –
- **Slide Forward, Hammer down.**  
With the muzzle pointed safely downrange, close the slide (or cylinder), and DROP the hammer - this means pull the trigger as though you were firing a round. If the gun goes BANG!, you will be disqualified.
- **And holster.**  
Holster your empty gun.
- **The range is clear!**  
This signals the tapers and pickers - and you - to go forward. Stay with the Range Officer and check your targets. Stay at least three feet from your targets, and don't touch them.