

Your First Match

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Welcome to IDPA Shooting!

IDPA shooting is a fun and safe way to learn defensive pistol skills and sharpen your gun handling and shooting abilities. IDPA's safety rules are easy to learn and follow. Please read this material to familiarize yourself before your range safety orientation and test.

Safety Rules

- 1.) All guns are always loaded.
- 2.) Never let your muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.
- 3.) Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target
- 4.) Know your target and what is behind it.

If these simple rules are always followed, most firearms accidents would never happen. Pay considerable attention to rules 2 and 3. When shooting IDPA your finger should never be inside of the trigger guard until you are on target and ready to shoot. Always get your finger out of the trigger guard before moving. Always be aware of your muzzle's direction and keep it safely downrange. Muzzle Safe Points are the limits that a shooter's muzzle can travel without being unsafe. Be sure to know where these limits are and always keep within them. Certain IDPA courses of fire may test your skills of keeping the muzzle in a safe direction. Be mindful of your muzzle and trigger finger, and you will always shoot safely.

Range Commands

It is important to learn the IDPA range commands and the proper response.

Range Commands are these:

1. Load and Make Ready
2. Are you ready?
3. Stand by
4. "Beep" (signal to start)
5. If you are finished, unload and show clear

6. If clear, slide forward, pull the trigger
7. Holster
8. Range is clear

In the past IDPA used some additional range commands. You may still occasionally hear them in local matches. They are explained below.

Load and Make Ready: This is the command to load up and get ready to shoot. It is covered deeply in the next section

Are you ready? This commands asks the shooter if he or she is ready to start. It may be answered by an audible, a nod or a hand signal. If there is no signal, the Safety Officer will take that as indication that the shooter is ready to start.

Stand by! This signals the shooter that the start signal is 1 to 4 seconds away.

Beep! This is the sound made by the timer and upon hearing this the shooter may start shooting the stage.

If you are finished, unload and show clear. On hearing this command, the shooter is to remove the magazine from his firearm and stow it, rack the last round from the gun and allow it to fall to the floor, and finally, show the SO that the firearm has no ammo in it by showing the breech open.

If clear, slide forward, pull the trigger. On hearing this command, the shooter is to allow the slide to go forward, point the firearm at the rear berm and pull the trigger to assure everyone that there is no live ammo left in the firearm.

Holster. On hearing this command, the shooter is to holster his firearm. The firearm must be left holstered.

Range is Clear. This signal indicates that the shooting is finished, firearm is holstered and clear and it is safe to go down range to score the targets and paste the holes.

Other Commands You Might Hear

Stop: If a shooter is being grossly unsafe or is disqualified the Safety Officer will give this command. Upon hearing this the shooter is to stop shooting, point the muzzle in a safe direction, and await further range commands.

The most important command to know and be able to recognize is: Stop. You must respond to this commands as soon as it is heard.

Loading and Unloading “Load and make ready!”

For new shooters, the first time they make ready for a stage can be stressful. We’d like to reduce that stress. When the Safety Officer gives the command to “load and make ready” slowly draw your unloaded pistol, (finger off the trigger) insert a loaded magazine, and “slingshot” load the gun. “Slingshot” is to pull the slide back and then release it. Do not follow the slide back as it can create jamming problems. Set the safety if your pistol has that option.

Most IDPA courses of fire require starting with the gun be fully loaded. Check the IDPA rule book equipment section to determine what “fully loaded” or division capacity means for your particular firearm. At the start of a stage, the shooter’s firearm will be unloaded with magazine out. Upon the load and make ready command, the shooter may retrieve a magazine with the appropriate number of rounds in it, insert it into the firearm and rack the slide to put a cartridge into the chamber. If the firearm has a safety, it must be engaged at this time. The stage design will determine if the firearm is holstered or prepared for the stage in some other way.

Some stages will require the shooter to start with a specified number of rounds in the magazine(s). The stage brief will explain this.

Revolver shooters need to draw the pistol on the “load and make ready” command, load the chambers, close the cylinder and holster or otherwise prepare the firearm for the start of the stage.

Note: How many rounds a fully loaded magazine may contain depends upon the particular division that the shooter’s firearm falls into. Check the IDPA rulebook to understand in which division your firearm resides.

“Unload and show clear!”

After a course of fire has been completed, the Safety Officer will ask you to “unload and show clear.” For self loading pistols you should remove the magazine, stow it and then pull the slide fully back, (let the cartridge fall to the ground) and allow the Safety Officer to visually check the chamber to see it is empty. The Safety Officer will then say “slide forward, pull the trigger.” Let go of the slide, point the gun at the backstop (not the ground at your feet and not over the backstop), and pull the trigger, dropping the hammer. You may then holster the unloaded pistol. Revolver shooters need to open the cylinder, empty the gun, and show the empty cylinder to the Safety Officer. Close the cylinder and holster.

Movement

Movement with a drawn pistol is easy if you follow the basics. First, always move only when your finger is outside the trigger guard. Second, be mindful of the muzzle at all times. You must

keep the muzzle in a safe direction (which will be downrange) at all times. Third, take your time. You will see experienced shooters moving very quickly, but they started out moving slowly as should you. Take your time, move and shoot carefully. Speed will come with practice.

Be sure to listen to the safety Officer for any special instructions related to a particular course of fire.

Shooting while moving is a bit more advanced. Again, do not put your finger into the trigger guard until your sights are on the target. Keep your knees bent, as this will help act as a “shock absorber” and stop the gun from bobbing up and down. Walk heel to toe, (or toe to heel when retreating) and remember to get a smooth trigger pull on every shot. Your sights will move about, but unless you jerk the trigger, you will get decent hits.

Malfunctions

If your firearm fails to fire do not panic. Keep the muzzle downrange. Most of the time the problem is due to a bad round or improperly seated magazine. In this case: Tap the bottom of the magazine, Rack the slide back to chamber a new round, and Bang (fire if needed). This is called the Tap-Rack-Bang method.

Professional training will help you diagnose and quickly cure malfunctions and a small pamphlet cannot give you all the information you need. If a Tap-Rack-Bang does not work it is best to stop and get help from the Safety Officer.

Another malfunction with a dangerous potential is the squib load, caused by a cartridge that has a primer but no powder in the cartridge. What usually happens on firing is a “pfft” noise with no recoil. If this happens, stop and get help from the Safety Officer. Remember to keep the muzzle downrange.

If you experience a jam and are in doubt as to how to fix the problem, stop and ask the Safety Officer for help. Better a bad time than a blown up gun.

Engaging Targets

Typically, when the course of fire mandates a number of rounds per target, the shooter engages the target that many times. Unless the particular course of fire is a **limited** course of fire, the shooter is free to shoot until he or she is satisfied with the hits. In most courses of fire, the shooter is shooting from positions of cover. These are defined by fault lines which are 2x2

pieces of wood or sometimes are PVC pipe. The shooter must stay behind the fault line. A shooter whose foot touches the ground over the fault line while engaging a target will be assessed a procedural penalty of 3 seconds.

When targets are engaged in the open, they must be engaged in tactical priority. The premise is the targets are engaged in the order of the threat posed. In this case, that would be near to far. If targets are less than 2 yards apart, they are equal threat and can be engaged in any order.

Reloading

In IDPA there are two kinds of reloads; the emergency or slide-lock reload, and the tactical reload/reload with retention. There are no provisions for the USPSA type speed reload.

In most IDPA stages the shooter will have the option to either reload when the slide locks back, or to tactical reload/reload with retention. Both of these reloads are to be done behind cover. The general principle is that no loaded magazine is to be left behind.

Reloads must be initiated and finished behind cover unless the shooter is caught in the open with an unloaded firearm. Remember the act of initiating a reload includes: removing a fresh magazine from the shooter's person, removing and dropping the empty magazine. If the shooter is shooting a revolver, then the process is: opening the cylinder, removing and dropping the empty cartridges or moon clip, inserting fresh ammo and closing the cylinder.

Emergency Reload: When the slide locks back and the magazine is empty, the shooter ejects the spent magazine, inserts a fresh magazine and releases the slide. This typically happens behind cover unless the shooter is caught in the open with an empty magazine in the firearm.

Tactical Reload: The shooter is behind cover and removes a partially full magazine, and with the fresh magazine in hand the shooter removes and retains the partially full magazine, inserts the fresh magazine, and places the partially full magazine in a pocket. The partially full magazine must be stored before resuming shooting. Shooting before storing the magazine will earn a procedural.

Reload with Retention: The shooter is behind cover and removes the partially full magazine and places it in a pocket. The shooter then inserts a fresh magazine in the pistol and resumes shooting. The Tactical Reload and Reload with Retention are "interchangeable." In other words, if a course of fire stipulates a Tactical Reload, you may perform a Reload with Retention instead.

Reloading Revolvers: Revolvers can be emergency reloaded or tactical reloaded.

Revolver Emergency Load: Open cylinder, eject shells to ground, reload using speed loader,

Moon clip, or loose cartridges.

Revolver Tactical Reload: Open cylinder, eject shells into hand, pocket both brass and fresh cartridges, reload using speed loader, moon clip, or loose cartridges.

Penalties

For the most part, a new shooter who shoots carefully and deliberately will avoid most penalties. Penalties are given out for various rule infractions, but in IDPA penalties are used only when truly necessary. Safety Officers are here to help you have a fun and safe time, not to nitpick.

Procedural: Procedural penalties are given for quite a few things. Examples are:

- 1.) The first non-dangerous finger violation
- 2.) Not using cover properly, for example, having a foot touching over a fault line
- 3.) Not reloading as required
- 4.) Not following other Course of fire rules as required

Hits on Non-Threats: are a five-second penalty no matter how many hits per target. Rounds that pass through a non threat and hit a threat target are counted on both targets.

Failure to Do Right: This is a seldom given penalty only dished out to shooters not following the spirit or rationale of any stage. If you shoot the Course of fire as outlined and do not try to “game” out the stage, this will never be a problem.

If you wind up earning a procedural, non threat penalty, do not get upset. This sport is all about learning and the only one who will remember next month is you. Learn from your mistakes and have fun!

Scoring

Scoring in IDPA is easy. After shooting a course of fire the time is recorded. Hits are counted and any misses are noted at -5 points each. The scoring rings are looked over; all center ring head hits and 8” center ring hits are -0 points. Hits on the next ring count as -1 point each. Hits on the last scoring ring are -3 points each. Hits on the edge of the target count as misses (the grease ring of a bullet hole must touch or intersect the non-scoring perforation around the edge of the target in order to count as a hit). Hits that touch the perforation between two scoring zones, will be scored as the better score (we look at the grease ring of the bullet hole not the tears). All the points are totaled and recorded. All penalties (which are all in the form of a time

penalty) are calculated and recorded. The sum of the stage time, points down, and penalties is the shooters score given in seconds. Lowest Score wins.

Tips

This sport rewards accuracy over time. Take the time to place your shots properly. Remember you will lose 1 second for each point down. This adds up more quickly than you would think.

Do not crowd the cover. Staying back from the cover will not only make you less of a target (in the real world) but will help you move from target to target easier.

Reloads with Retention are generally, faster and easier than Tactical Reloads. Practice both kinds of reloads though, as there are times the tactical reload is quicker.

Remember to get a solid trigger pull, but get a smooth trigger pull every time, even at the expense of the “perfect” sight picture. A slightly misaligned sight will still get the -0, a jerked trigger will likely be a -3 or a miss.

Good Luck and Have Fun shooting your first IDPA Match!