



## **Basic Pistol Shooting Techniques**

by

**Law Enforcement Services, LLC**

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The following information is provided by **Law Enforcement Services, LLC (L.E.S.)** as a training guide for basic pistol shooting techniques. **L.E.S.** does not assume any responsibility for the use or misuse of information contained in this article.

This training guide is divided into ten sections which are highlighted for easy reference. To become proficient with the handgun, these techniques must be practiced. Firearms training may be defined as continual application of proper techniques which over time become habit.

### **1. General Safety Rules**

Safe weapon handling begins with four steps whenever you touch a weapon:

1. Handle all weapons as if they are loaded.
2. Keep the weapon pointed in a safe direction.
3. Keep your finger(s) out of the trigger guard.
4. Immediately check to make certain the weapon is unloaded. Clear the weapon if necessary.

Revolvers are checked by simply opening the cylinder and making a visual observation of the cylinder and the chamber. Semiautomatics are checked by first removing the magazine, second locking the slide to the rear, and third looking and feeling into the chamber through the ejection port.

Safety also includes proper weapon and ammunition storage. Always store weapons and ammunition in separate locations. Weapons should be properly secured, such as in a locked gun safe or utilizing a trigger lock. Never store a loaded weapon. Transport all weapons in a closed container specifically designed to transport handguns. Again, keep ammunition and weapons separated during transportation.

#### **Range safety rules:**

1. Treat all weapons as if they are always loaded.
2. All weapons should be holstered until you are at the firing line ready to shoot.
3. If you do not have a holster then carry all semiautomatic weapons with magazines out and actions open until on the firing line and ready to load. Revolvers should be carried with the cylinder open.
4. While on the firing line keep the muzzle of the weapon pointed downrange at all times.
5. Never sweep the muzzle of the weapon across any portion of your body.
6. Do not load the weapon until directed by the range officer.
7. If you drop anything bench (or holster) the weapon before you pick it up.
8. A benched weapon should be decocked with safety engaged or the magazine should be out with the slide locked to the rear.
9. When you are finished shooting clear (empty) all weapons prior to leaving the firing line.
10. Always wear proper ear and eye protection while shooting.

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### **Loading and unloading a revolver:**

1. Step back with the right foot to keep the muzzle pointed down range.
2. Supporting the revolver with the left hand when opening the cylinder.
3. Place the center two fingers of the left hand through the frame of the weapon once the cylinder is open.
4. Support the weapon with the index and small finger of the left hand.
5. Dump all expended rounds with the left thumb pushing down on the ejection rod. (During this procedure the ejection rod should be vertical to the ground. If the weapon is canted sideways, expended casings may catch under the ejection star.)
5. Load the weapon with the thumb and index finger of the right hand while rotating the cylinder with the thumb of the left hand.
6. If you drop any ammunition, do not bend over with the weapon out of the holster.
7. When the cylinder is closed, step forward with the right foot keeping the muzzle pointed down range.

### **Loading and unloading a semi-automatic:**

1. Remove the magazine. (Clips are used on weapons where the ammunition is feed down through the chamber of the weapon. Magazines feed from the bottom of the weapon. Clips are also expendable. Magazines are reusable.)
2. Keep the muzzle of the weapon pointed down range.
3. Check the chamber and clear if necessary by utilizing one of two methods as follows:
  - A. Step back with the right foot if the non-shooting hand is used to move the slide to the rear with the hand on top of the slide. (This method allows the shooter to catch an unfired round. This method can also set up a double feed if a round is prevented from clearing the ejection port.)
  - B. Moving the slide to the rear by canting the weapon sideways, grasping the slide at the rear, and pulling straight back. (This method does not require the shooter to step back with the right foot and allows the shooter to maintain target acquisition. This method also prevents a round from being caught in the ejection port. This method does not allow a shooter to catching an unfired round; however, this is the best and safest procedure.)
4. Lock the slide to the rear. (Obviously, if the weapon has been fired until empty the slide will automatically lock-back after the last round has been fired.)
5. If you are down-loading the weapon, look and feel into the ejection port and chamber.
6. If you are loading the weapon, insert a new magazine by indexing the front of the magazine with the pointing finger of the non-shooting hand into the magazine well and then inserting the magazine until seated. (The palm of the non-shooting hand is used to seat the magazine firmly. Do not push forward on the magazine plate, located on the bottom of the magazine. Pushing forward on the magazine plate could cause the plate to come loose causing the magazine spring and all rounds to drop onto the ground.)
7. Release the slide lock. (This may be accomplished with the thumb of either hand.)
8. If your goal is to chamber a round (not attempting to clear the weapon) the easiest method is to cant the shooting arm directly in front of the body, grasp the rear of the slide with the thumb and index finger of the non-shooting hand, and thrust the weapon forward. Allow the slide to move forward on its own. Impeding forward movement of the slide could result in a failure to feed. (This procedure is fast, easy and maintains target acquisition.)

### **Shooting safety rules:**

1. Three positions for the weapon should be holstered (benched), low-ready, and high-ready.
2. Be certain of your target and the backstop beyond.
3. Keep your finger out of the trigger guard until your sights are on the target.
4. Never point a weapon at anything you are not willing to destroy.

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Dry-firing is an effective method to improve firearm skills. Again, several safety rules must be observed:

### **Dry firing:**

1. Check to make certain the weapon is empty.
2. If a weapon has to be down-loaded (as would be the case for a police officer or a person with a concealed carry permit), unload the weapon at one location, leave the ammunition at that location, and move to another location to practice dry-firing.
3. Never have ammunition in the practice area.
4. It is always a good idea to utilize snap-caps to prevent damage to the firing pin.
5. Warning signs include any interruptions or other people entering the dry-firing area.
6. Again, never point the weapon at anything you are not willing to destroy.
7. When you are finished dry-firing, move back to the area where the weapon is stored.

## **2. Mental Conditioning**

Mental conditioning is often neglected during many firearms training programs; however, proper shooting is 80% mental and 20% physical. For years I have heard competitive shooters say, "This is such a mind game." If a shooter has not developed proper mental conditioning, stress courses (or competition) only confuse the shooter and destroy their confidence.

Nearly a century ago a Russian physiologist named Pavlov studied brain functions. He found that, by repeated association, an artificial stimulus (such as a bell) could be substituted for a natural stimulus (food) to cause a physiological reaction (salivation). He called this conditioned reflex. Conditioned reflex applies very much to shooting a firearm. The firing of a handgun is associated with a load noise and a sharp recoil of the weapon. Over time a conditioned reflex (flinch) appears. This conditioned reflex leads to compensating behavior such as trigger jerking, framing the shot, bucking the weapon, dipping the front sight, etc. Overcoming a negative conditioned reflex is accomplished by positive mental conditioning.

When geese hatch they immediately identify with the first living animal they see. This phenomena has been labeled imprinting. Studies have shown that geese hatched in captivity often think that people are their parents. Since we are not born with a firearm in our hands, we must continually practice good techniques to imprint into our brain proper shooting techniques. Once proper shooting techniques have been imprinted and negative conditioned reflexes have been erased, then a shooter can move to high-speed low-drag stress courses. (For more information on mental conditioning tips refer to 8. Trigger Control.)

## **3. Physical Conditioning**

Most people understand that good physical conditioning is essential to a healthy lifestyle. Unfortunately, few people take the time to maintain a proper physical fitness program. This is evident by the high percentage of overweight and out-of-shape people in the world. Physical fitness means more than just building muscles. A well-rounded physical fitness program should include muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and flexibility. Several fitness experts agree that a good physical fitness program should include a minimum of one hour of training - three times a week. Such a program should include 10 minutes of stretching (flexibility), 20 minutes of aerobic (cardiovascular endurance), 20 minutes of weight training (muscular strengthening), and 10 minutes of cool down with stretching (flexibility).

Physical conditioning is also essential to achieve your maximum potential with a firearm. While competitive shooting is generally considered a mind game, good physical fitness is important. There is a saying in police arrest control techniques - the mind and body are one. Simply put this means that a body that is out of shape will distract from the brain's ability to concentrate.

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### **4. General Position Rules**

Four general rules apply to correct shooting positions. They are skeletal support, muscular relaxation (for rifle shooting) or muscular isotension (for pistol shooting), total body kinesetics, and natural point of aim.

#### **Skeletal Support**

Skeletal support simply means that the shooting position must utilize the skeletal of the body to stabilize the shooter and the weapon. A good example of skeletal support is to study a three legged stool. Three legs arranged in a triangle are always stable regardless of the surface. I often see police officers stand heel-to-toe when firing in the barricade position during police pistol combat (PPC). Officers utilize the heel-to-toe position when testing for intoxication. This position is obviously less stable than standing with the feet at shoulder width apart and forming a triangle with the barricade. Therefore, a triangle stance (feet shoulder width apart and shooting hand pressed against the barricade) is more stable and employs skeletal support more efficiently.

#### **Muscular Isotension**

Muscular relaxation is employed when firing a rifle with a sling. A handgun does not utilize a sling; therefore, muscular isotension is utilized when firing a handgun. Muscular isotension simply means: (1) the more muscle groups which are employed, the more stable the position, and (2) all muscles work in tandem. For example, the triceps muscles straighten the arms and the biceps muscles bend the arms. The arm has more strength and is more stable when holding a handgun if both muscle groups work in unison.

#### **Total Body Kinesetics**

The study of the movement of the human body is called kinesetics. Total body kinesetics simply means that the entire body works together as an integral unit. If one portion of the body is not functioning properly, this can effect a completely separate portion of the body. The simplest way to understand total body kinesetics is to have a horsefly bit you on the neck when you are about to shoot. Unless properly trained, the brain immediately shifts to the pain rather than focusing on front sight, trigger squeeze, follow through, etc. Total body kinesetics means that if you are not employing every technique properly, you will not hit your intended target.

#### **Natural Point of Aim**

Once the shot has been fired, the weapon has recoiled, and the body has recovered from the recoil, the sights of the weapon should be again aligned on the target. If the sights are aligned to the right or left of the target, the shooter has failed to employ a natural point of aim. Natural point of aim is where the body wants to return naturally after the shot has fired. If the sights are not aligned - do not muscle the weapon back on target. Simply reposition your entire body so that following subsequent shots the sights will naturally align with the target.

Bullseye shooters utilize natural point of aim by closing their eyes, raising their shooting arm and finding the natural point where the muscles of the arm are not pulling right or left. The shooter then opens his eyes and looks where the sights are pointed. The shooter repositions his entire body by shifting his rear foot - right or left - until the sights are naturally aligned with the target.

#### **The Pyramid Concept**

Shooters should also incorporate what is known as the pyramid concept. A pyramid has a wide base and a narrow top. The top is directly centered over the base. While shooting maintain a stable (wide) stance and a balanced center of gravity. This is accomplished by remembering - nose over navel. Keep your nose centered over your navel and you will be more stable. In other words, do not cant or tip your head to the side. Do not thrust your head forward, thus requiring your posterior to counterbalance by thrusting rearward. By utilizing the pyramid concept a shooter brings the weapon up to his eye with his head vertical.

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### **5. Selecting the Correct Position**

No single position will work for every situation. Study the following three positions and adopt the position that best meets your needs.

#### **Isosceles**

An isosceles triangle has three equal sides. The isosceles position is accomplished by facing the target with feet spaced a little wider than shoulder width apart. The legs are slightly bent, the weight is on the balls of the feet, the back is straight, and the head is erect. The weapon is brought up-to-the-eye. Do not hunch forward with the head and shoulders. The arms are straight and the arms and body form an isosceles triangle when viewed from above. Total body kinesetics during isosceles simply means that the feet, hips, backbone, shoulders, neck, and head are all aligned in relationship to each other.

Advantages of the isosceles position are:

1. Easy to learn.
2. Fast recovery during rapid fire with standard loads.
3. Provides excellent protection if a ballistic vest is worn.
4. Good position for clearing rooms and buildings.
  - A. Provides a full 180 degree field-of-view.
  - B. Doorways can be entered from the right-side or the left-side with ease.
5. Good position for engaging multiple targets.
6. Good position for shooting on the move.

Since the Isosceles can be utilized while engaging multiple targets and shooting on the move, this position is often used during speed shooting events such as International Pistol Shooting Championships (IPSC).

Disadvantages of the isosceles position are:

1. Poor position for police officers during interviews or on routine traffic stops.
  - A. Leaves groin area unprotected.
  - B. Weapon side is more exposed.
  - C. Unable to maintain a view of traffic approaching from the rear.
  - D. Officer is off balance and unable to react quickly from an assault.
2. Unstable when firing magnum loads.
  - A. Recoil is absorbed by the shoulder joints.
  - B. Shooter's balance may be driven backward.

#### **Weaver**

Several years ago a police officer developed a position in an attempt to overcome the problems mentioned with the isosceles position during police traffic stops and interviews. This position is known as the Weaver position, named after the officer. The Weaver is accomplished by standing with the feet basically parallel to each other; however, both feet are angled 45 degrees from the target. Most police officers do not understand this basic position. Instead, they simply move the right foot back and angle it at 45 degrees. With the left foot pointed forward and the right foot angled at 45 degrees, I call this position the Charley Chaplin stance. During a position of interview, if the left foot is pointed directly forward an officer does not have good balance and his groin area is less protected. Therefore, the best way to teach the Weaver position is to start from a position of interview. Total body kinesetics again means that the feet, hips, backbone, and shoulders are all aligned. A common mistake is to twist the hips, backbone, or shoulders and thus a natural point of aim is lost. The head is the only portion of the body that is turned to face the target.

During the Weaver position, the right arm is straight and the left arm is bent 45 degrees to allow the weapon to align with the head. Another common mistake when utilizing the Weaver position is to cant the head to the right. The head should remain erect as the sight are brought up to the head, not the head canted to the sights.

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Advantages of the Weaver position are:

1. Excellent position during routine traffic stops and interviews.
  - A. Weapon side is away from violator.
  - B. Groin area is protected by left leg.
  - C. Officer is better balanced during an attack.
  - D. Officer can periodically glance backwards to check traffic.
2. Most police encounters are less than 7 yards.
3. Better balance when firing magnum loads. (Rear foot stabilizes officer.)

Disadvantages of the Weaver position are:

1. More difficult to learn. (Many officers incorrectly employ this technique.)
2. More difficult to draw and shoot rapidly, particularly at multiple targets.
3. More difficult to clear rooms or buildings, particularly when entering a room from the right side of the door.
4. Exposes the left side of the ballistic vest. (Many officers have been killed when the suspect's bullet passed through the opening in the side of the vest.)
5. If employed properly, the Weaver position still transfers much of the recoil from magnum loads to the right shoulder joint.
6. It is more difficult to shoot on the move utilizing the Weaver position.

### **Tactical**

Having taught firearms, served with SWAT teams, and competed for over 30 years, I have come to realize the limitations of the isosceles and the Weaver positions. I have therefore attempted to combine the good traits of both the isosceles and the Weaver into a position that I call the tactical position. During the tactical the body is facing the target with the feet basically parallel in relationship to each other; however, one foot is back. (Having one foot back absorbs recoil and prepares the individual to move - forward or backward.) The best way to describe this position is to simply walk with the weapon at a low ready position. Stop (one foot will always be forward and one foot will be back - it does not matter which foot is forward and which foot is back) and shoot.

This technique allows the shooter to advance or to retreat. When you stop to shoot, the legs should be slightly bent, the weight is forward on the balls of the feet and the back is straight and erect. Total body kinesetics requires alignment of feet, hips, backbone, shoulders, and neck. (Remember nose over naval.)

During the tactical both arms are slightly bent. Three advantages to bending the arms are: 1. provides muscle isotension (a bent arm is stronger than a straight arm), 2. allows elbow joint to move (energy is absorbed into the muscles and not the shoulder joint, and 3. a reduced recoil to the shoulder joint (particularly when firing magnum loads) thus increasing balance and recovery time.

Police officers, competitive shooters and the military often employ the tactical position. In other words it has taken police officers and the military 200 years to simply learn to walk (run) and shoot.

Advantages to the tactical are:

1. Easy to learn.
2. Easy to shoot and move.
3. Increased balance and more mobility.
4. Better muscle isotension. (Rapid recovery when firing magnum loads.)
5. Greater protection for officers with ballistic vests (compared to Weaver.)
6. Easily adapted to building searches. (Right or left door entries.)

Disadvantages to the tactical are:

1. Does not employ techniques utilized during a position of interview.
2. Position of interview techniques should employ protecting the groin, keeping the gun side away and keeping the weapon out of reach of the suspect, once the weapon is drawn.

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### 6. Grip

Proper grip is very important when shooting a handgun. As a handgun is fired the weapon begins to recoil before the bullet has exited the barrel. Therefore, it is essential that the grip remain consistent, shot-after-shot. Often I see shooters readjust their grip after each shot. The first shot will seat the weapon firmly into the hand. Readjusting the grip will loosen and change the grip. Grasp the weapon with the web of the hand pressed firmly into the back strap of the grip and once the first shot is fired, do not readjust the grip.

The shooting hand should provide approximately 30% of the grip with the supporting hand providing the remaining 70%. This is necessary so that the trigger finger will move independently of the other fingers. In other words, the shooting hand should not clutch the weapon every time the trigger is pulled.

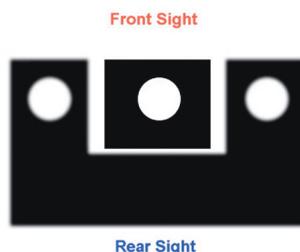
When gripping the weapon, cover as much of the grips of the weapon as possible, filling as many gaps as possible. The wrist of the support hand is angled slightly forward so that the thumb of the support hand is point toward the target. If opened the fingers of the support hand would be angled at a 45° angle toward the ground. Utilizing this position the thumb of the support hand will be ahead of the strong hand thumb by approximately one inch. The natural curvature of the thumbs should align symmetrically. The thumbs should not be interlocked. Furthermore, the thumbs should not interfere with the operation of the trigger, the safety, the slide latch, the movement of the slide, or the magazine release.

Do not place the index finger of the support hand on the front of the trigger guard. Many firearms have a serrated area on the front of the trigger guard. This modification is for stability when firing from a position of cover and supporting the weapon such as around the corner of a building or the hood of a car. It is not designed for finger placement. If the index finger of the support hand is placed on this serrated area, the finger usually slips off during firing of magnum rounds, thus a large percentage of the grip from the support hand is lost. Remember, the support hand must provide 70% of the grip.

The trigger finger should be placed on the trigger utilizing the first pad of the finger. Inserting the finger too far onto the trigger will cause the weapon to cant to the side during firing. (The one exception to this rule is while firing a double action only (DAO) weapon. For example, while firing a revolver double action the finger is generally placed on the trigger at the first joint of the finger.) By placing the pad of the finger on the trigger - the trigger will move straight to the rear. Shooters should study their firearms in relationship to their grip and finger placement on the trigger for a total understanding of kinesetics. In other words - what position of the trigger finger will cause the least movement to the alignment of the sights during firing. (For more information about the trigger finger refer to: 8. Trigger Control.)

### 7. Sighting

The two most common terms used regarding sighting techniques are sight alignment and sight picture. Sight alignment simply means that the front sight is equally aligned with the rear sight. In other words, the distance on both sides of the front sight is equal and the top of the front sight is level with the top of the rear sight. The following diagrams represent sight alignment:

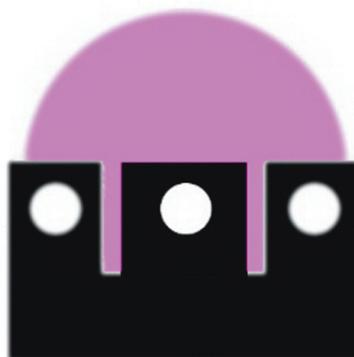


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Sight alignment and sight picture mean that while looking through the rear sight, and aligning the front sight with the rear sight, the sights are then properly aligned on the target. The diagram to the right represents both proper sight alignment and proper sight picture:



### Sight alignment and sight picture.

The sighting system diagramed is a 3-dot partridge sight. Sight alignment and sight picture are generally the same for both the partridge and 3-dot sights. Some 3-dot sights require the shooter to cover the target with the front sight (center dot).

Everyone has a dominant or a master eye. In order to determine your master eye simply point your finger at an object on the wall. Now close your right eye. If your finger is not longer pointing at the object, you are right eye dominant. However, if your finger is still aligned with the object on the wall open your right eye and close your left eye. If your finger is not longer aligned then you are left eye dominant. When shooting always use your dominant or master eye. With proper mental conditioning you will be able to keep both eyes open during shooting. Until your brain has been so conditioned, it is proper to close your non-dominant eye.

The human eye can only focus on one point at a single time. When sighting a firearm the focus should be on the front sight. The rear sight will be slightly blurred and the target will be a blur. This is often difficult to do, particularly in high-stress situations. Police officers are trained to watch a suspect's hands for weapons. They are then trained to shift their focus to the front sight prior to shooting. A common mistake is to shift the focus back to the target as the shot breaks. This lack of follow-through may result in a lack of concentration at the moment the weapon is fired, resulting in a bad shot.

When shooting a handgun the head should be erect and the sights should be brought up to the eye. (See shooting positions for more information.) This technique is particularly important if you wear corrective lenses. Tilting your head forward or canting your head sideways while looking through a pair of glasses will change the sight picture and the strike of the bullet. You do not read a newspaper by tipping and canting your head, so why fire a handgun by tipping or canting your head!

## **8. Trigger Control**

Trigger control can be defined as a smooth rearward movement of the trigger followed by a surprise shot and follow-through. While this definition is simple, the application of trigger control is not. To begin with the trigger finger must move independent of the other fingers. Second, the pad of the first joint of the index finger must be placed on the trigger. (See grip for more information.) Third, the trigger must be pulled directly to the rear. Fourth, the movement must be smooth which is accomplished by applying a constant, steady pressure on the trigger. Terms such as milking, squeezing or pressing the trigger have been used to describe this technique. Fifth, the shot should break as a surprise. In other words, the brain has been conditioned to not anticipate the shot and to not react (flinch) when the shot breaks. Finally, after the weapon has fired mental conditioning continues as the shooter follows-through. The muscles of the shooter do not tighten or tense in reaction to the shot. There is not dipping of the front sight and no lurching forward of the body. Anticipating the shot (lack of mental conditioning) is the single largest problem to overcome when first learning to shoot a firearm and in particular a handgun.

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Trigger control does not mean that the trigger is staged. Staging the trigger, pulling half way back and then stopping, will lead to another problem - a framed shot. A framed shot is when the shooter stops the rear movement of the trigger until the sights are aligned. The shooter then tells his brain "now" and pulls the trigger. A "now shot" or a "framed shot" will result in a bad shot. When you tell your brain now, you are conditioning your brain to react and like Pavlov's dog, your muscles will tense and you will flinch. Flinching, bucking the weapon, or dipping the front sight as the shot breaks are all conditioned reflexes as a result of repeated practice of improper techniques such as staging the trigger. To overcome these negative conditioned reflexes a shooter must recondition his brain with good trigger control techniques.

### **Trigger control techniques:**

One trigger control technique is to continue a smooth constant pressure on the trigger while focusing on the front sight and maintaining proper sight alignment. To help accomplish these tasks a simple drill is to tell yourself "front sight press" as you continue consistent steady pressure and the shot breaks as a surprise. With a long trigger pull this exercise would look more like:

"f-r-o-n-t s-i-g-h-t p-r-e-s-s".

Another helpful technique is to control small motor muscles. For example, concentrate on not blinking when the round is fired. One method to determine if you are blinking is to watch for the ejected casing when firing a semi-automatic weapon. An ejected casing is only visible for a few hundredths of a second, about the same time it takes to blink. Shooters who never see an ejected casing are blinking. Blinking is a negative conditioned reflex. Reprogramming the brain to control the small muscles used during blinking also programs the brain to control larger muscle groups. If you are not blinking you are not flinching. When the round is fired a properly conditioned shooter will feel the spray of burnt gunpowder on his face, see the slide of the weapon move rearward, see the ejected casing as it is hurled from the ejection port, and see the smoke curl around the barrel. At this point the shooter will then become one-with-the-weapon, will harmonize with the weapon, and will have mastered mental conditioning and trigger control.

Once trigger control is learned the weapon can be fired rapidly with accuracy. However, until mental conditioning of the brain has been programmed as second nature, speed should be avoided. If you begin to develop bad habits (brain has been programmed with negative conditioned reflexes) always go back to the basics (reprogram the brain with positive conditioned reflexes).

## **9. Breathing**

Proper breathing increases accuracy with any firearm, particularly rifles when in the prone position. Many firearms instructors teach students to take a breath of air and let half of it out, and then hold your breath until the weapon fires. There are two problems with this technique for rifle shooting. First, when a breath is held the chest muscles are tight and proper rifle positions require muscular relaxation. Second, it is difficult to release the exact same amount of air each time which often results in a vertical disbursement of the shots.

Handguns are not as critical unless positions such as prone are utilized. Regardless of the technique (full breath, 1/2 breath, or no breath) the technique utilized should be consistent shot-after-shot. Furthermore, it is very difficult to maintain accuracy when you are breathing. During IPSC competition where competitors are running and shooting, this can be a problem. Also during periods of high stress, the brain must be oxygenated or your vision will blur and your heart-rate will increase. Competitive shooters often oxygenate their blood prior to timed events by breathing rapidly just prior to shooting. This technique eliminates the need to breath during shooting.

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### 10. Combat Mindset

Spending hours practicing proper pistol shooting techniques also develops what I call a combat mindset. Learning these techniques builds confidence, increases marksmanship skills, and helps to build tactics in a variety of situations. All of these traits are learned and are active characteristics. Combat minds set is a development of the unconscious mind, by imprinting conditioned responses, which over time help a person to react under stress. Every animal when faced with a life threatening incident goes into a fight or flight syndrome. Levels of awareness in law enforcement have been characterized by the colors white, yellow, orange, and red as follows:

White - relaxed, unaware of surroundings. (off-duty, watching television)

Yellow - relaxed but alert. (during routine patrol)

Orange - recognizing a danger sign and moving to an increase level of awareness. (traffic stop)

Red - danger, life threatening incident, fight or flight. (deadly force incident)

During a life-threatening incident it is possible to go from fight or flight to freeze. This condition would be synonymous to the color black, where the mind shuts down and the body fails to react. No other type of training can more effectively condition the brain to continue to function under stress than learning proper shooting techniques. If you can continue to think and function when rounds are exploding and bullets are flying - you have developed a combat mindset.

#### **About the Instructor**

Les Langford is a 30-year veteran of the Utah Highway Patrol. Les has taught firearms proficiency for over 28 years. He has been a member of the Utah Highway Patrol Pistol Team since 1979, and the Governor's Twenty since 1980. Les is a former U. S. Marine and Vietnam veteran. He has competed on the national and international level and has won over 150 shooting awards. He served on the Utah Department of Public Safety - Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) for several years. He has trained with the United States Marine Corp. - Sniper Team, Prince George County (Maryland) - Emergency Services Team, Israeli Army - ATLAS (Anti-Terror Logistics and Systems), and London Metropolitan Police - Tactical Division. He has attended armorer schools for Smith and Wesson, Remington, Beretta, and the M-14 rifle.

Les graduated from Weber State College in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science in Police Science - Cum Laude and in 1980 he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology - Magna Cum Laude. Les has authored over 100 articles relating to police work, which have been published nationwide. He has also written three books, including a history of the Utah Highway Patrol, which was published for Utah's Centennial in 1996, a radar and lidar student manual published in 1998, and a time-distance student manual published in 2006.

Les is owner of Law Enforcement Services, LLC - providing professional training and quality training manuals.

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