



# **IDPA - New Shooter Orientation**

*Topics to help the shooter new to IDPA competition understand the safety aspects of IDPA and of the Northwest Missouri Defensive Pistol Club  
This is not an official IDPA document.*

# The Three Most Important Rules

- *Safety*
- *Have Fun*
- *When confused, refer to rule #1*

## **Safety Rules**

**1.) Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target**

**2.) Never let your muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.**

**3.) All guns are always loaded.**

**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 1 and 2. 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.

# Safety - Cold Range

- This is a “Cold Range”
  - All weapons are to be kept unloaded and holstered until the Safety Officer has instructed the shooter to “Load and Make Ready”
  - Weapons may be handled **ONLY** during the Course-of-Fire (CoF) or **UNLOADED** in the “Safe Area”

# Safety - Safe Area

## • *Purpose of the Safe Area*

- For removing weapons from your travel case and holstering them at the beginning of a match.
- For removing weapons from your holster and putting them back into their case at the end of the match.
- For checking equipment (holster, magazine pouches, etc.) for fit and function.
- You may load bullets in your mags in the safe area,

**But NO!!! mags or bullets shall be inserted in your pistol or revolver while in the “*Safe Area*”**

# **Safety - Cone of Fire**

- ***Cone of Fire Rule***

**IDPA uses “Muzzle Safe Points”, defined by the CoF. The Safety Officer will specify these points during the walk through.**

***Pointing of the competitors muzzle behind ANY of these predetermined points will result in immediate disqualification from the event. (IDPA Official Rule Book, Page 13, 10/27/99)***

# **Safety - Drawing**

- ***Drawing from the Holster***

**Drawing – Best, most safe practice demands a smooth draw, up and forward with minimal side-to-side or rearward movement. It's critical that no part of the shooter is covered by the muzzle at any time. Care should be taken to keep your support hand clear during the draw.**

# Safety - Holstering

- *Holstering*

Holstering – *“Nobody ever won a gunfight or match by holstering quickly”*.

**Take your time.**

**Use appropriate equipment and be sure to keep finger and clothing clear of trigger during holstering.**

# **Safety - Range Safety**

*• Who's Responsibility is Range Safety?*

***EVERYONES!!!!!!***

*At ANY point during the match, if anyone notices ANY unsafe act, they should yell "STOP!!"*

***EVERYONE should IMMEDIATELY stop what you're doing and inform a Range/Safety Officer or Match Director of the safety issue!***

# Safety - Commands

- *Safety Commands by R.S.O.*

- “Muzzle !!” If muzzle approaches muzzle safe points – this is a **ONLY** a warning to let the competitor know that they are getting close to the muzzle safety points and to be careful.
- “Finger !!” For finger in trigger guard violation – this is a warning to remind the shooter to keep their finger off the trigger while moving between shooting positions or where appropriate.

Muzzle and Finger are **NOT** penalties, but warnings to let the shooter know the R.S.O. has a safety concern. If the competitor corrects the problem immediately the course of fire should continue uninterrupted.

# Safety - Commands

## “STOP !!”

EVERYONE (Competitor, Scorer, & Spectators) should IMMEDIATELY stop what they're doing and stay where you are.

This can occur for TWO reasons:

1. Someone has seen what appears to be a safety issue.

AFTER calling for a “STOP!!”, bring it to the attention of the R.S.O. or a Match Director who will evaluate the situation and provide direction on how to proceed.

2. If a competitor does something grossly unsafe or does not heed previous warnings. \*

\* Requires match disqualification.

# Range Commands

- ***“Load and Make Ready”*** (When safe, draw, load and re-holster your handgun)
- ***“Shooter Ready”*** (Acknowledge Your Readiness)
- ***“Standby”*** (Prepare for the Start Signal)
- ***!! Start Signal !!*** (Draw and begin the CoF)
- ***“Unload and Show Clear”*** (S.O. Inspects Chamber, When S.O. Requests, Shooter Drops Hammer or Striker)
- ***“Holster”*** (Re-Holster Your Inspected and Cleared Sidearm)
- ***“Range is Safe” or “Range is Clear”*** (It is now safe to go down range to score and reset targets)
  - Do not begin any briefing or range commands with the next shooter until the range is clear of tapers and others
  - Standardization of these terms is important so that the shooter does not become confused.
  - If holster has a retention device, it must be engaged.

# Loading and Unloading

## “Load and make ready!”

For new shooters, the first time they make ready for a stage can be stressful. It should not be. 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 the gun be fully loaded. To fully load the gun it is best to replace the magazine currently in the gun with a fresh magazine. This gives tactical reload practice at the same time. Reholster the gun and then top off the magazine and replace it in your pouch. This is the safest way to load your self loading handgun.

Another safe way to “top off” your handgun is the administrative reload. To do this you load the gun, set the safety (if applicable) and holster. Reach over the gun and eject the magazine (without drawing the pistol) and remove the magazine. Top off the magazine and re-insert it into the pistol. This works well for multiple start strings, especially the classifier.

Revolver shooters need to draw the pistol, load the chambers, close the cylinder and holster.

## **“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, 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 say “slide down, hammer forward.” Let go of the slide, point the gun at the backstop (not the ground at your feet), and pull the trigger, dropping the hammer. Shooters with double action automatics that have magazine safeties may use the decocker. 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 mostly 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.

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 primer but no powder in the cartridge. What usually happens 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. A course of fire can stipulate “tactical sequence”. Tactical sequence is a method of target engagement. When engaging targets using tactical sequence, the shooter engages each target with 1 round, before engaging the target again. This is sometimes called “boarding house rules”, as the mantra is “everyone gets firsts before they get seconds. If you were engaging 3 targets with 2 rounds each in tactical sequence, the cadence would be 1 shot on T1, 1 shot on T2, 2 shots on T3 (as all targets got their first shot) 1 shot on T2, and 1 shot on T1.

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. The speed load (even if the magazine is empty) is not permitted. You need not argue a case for it.

Reloads must be initiated and finished behind cover. Remember the act of initiating a reload includes: removing a fresh magazine, removing a partial magazine, dropping an empty magazine, opening a cylinder, or removing a fresh speedloader/moonclip.

**Emergency Reload:** When the slide locks back the shooter is to seek cover, eject the spent magazine, insert a fresh magazine and release the slide.

**Tactical Reload:** The shooter is behind cover and removes a fresh magazine, and with the fresh magazine in hand the shooter removes and retains the spent magazine, inserts the fresh magazine, and places the spent magazine in a pocket. The 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 spent 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 speedloader, speed strip, or loose cartridges.

**Revolver Tactical Reload:** Open cylinder, eject shells into hand, pocket both brass and fresh cartridges, reload using speedloader, speed strip, or loose cartridges. (A true tactical reload would find the shooter pocketing only the loaded cartridges and discarding the brass but since IDPA is an against the clock sport, not many shooters do it)

# 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 head 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 multiplied by 0.5 seconds 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.

# 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 3.)Not shooting while moving as required 4.)Not reloading as required 5.)Not following other Course of fire rules as required

**Failure to Neutralize:** is given when there is not at least one hit in either the -0 or -1 scoring zones.

**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, or failure to neutralize 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!

# Helpful Hints

- *Take your time. Move slowly and safely through the Course-of-Fire. Focus on safety and effective movement and shooting before trying to become competitive.*
- *Remember Course-of-Fire Details. Pay attention during the walk-through. Ask the S.O. to review any aspects before starting any stage.*

- *This sport rewards accuracy over time. Take the time to place your shots properly. Remember you will lose 1/2 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.*

• *R.S.O. is there to help as the “Safety and Range Officer” Not a “Range Nazi”.*

• *If you disagree with the R.S.O., discuss it in a courteous and professional manner.*

*The R.S.O. has final say in ALL Safety and Scoring Issues\**

*\* It is highly unlikely that a Match Director will overturn an R.S.O.’s Scoring Decision.*

**Good Luck and Have Fun shooting your first IDPA Match!**