

THE STANDING POSITION

A. GENERAL. If you compile a list of the world's best three position shooters and also one of the best standing shooters, you will notice that the names, and for the most part the order, of the two lists will be identical. If there are any reliable constants in shooting one would be that, "matches are won in the standing position." Good prone and kneeling scores are mainly a function of position refinement, while standing is equally dependent upon position and technique. Once a person has developed a good prone or kneeling position his hold is near ten-ring and his score is a function of his hold. In standing, position refinement is perhaps only 60% of the total problem, leaving a major portion to concentration, trigger control, and mental discipline.

B. POSITION OF THE FEET. In building a stable standing position, a shooter faces approximately 90 degrees to the right of the target (Figure 31). His feet are about shoulder width apart (Figure 32). The shooter's feet are his only support areas. Therefore, he should take full advantage of the support that is available. Equal distribution of weight is desirable, but tests prove that this is almost impossible to maintain. Most shooters, depending upon their position, will have slightly more weight on one of their feet than they will the other. To place more than 65 percent of the supported weight on one foot is not recommended. Also, some shooters find that their comfortable and stable foot positions to be slightly less than shoulder width (Figure 33). Other shooters have had fine results with the feet spread wider apart (Figures 34 and 35). The feet should point straight ahead in relation to body position. One or both feet may be turned slightly outward. The legs should be straight. However, the knees should not be locked tight.

C. FUNCTION OF THE BACK BEND AND BODY TWIST.

1. General Provisions: Once the proper foundation is constructed, the center of gravity of the rifle-body structure must be positioned so as to take full advantage of it. This is accomplished through the employment of the back bend and body twist (Figures 36 and 37). The shooter places the rifle to his shoulder, muzzle elevated about 70 degrees, and bends backward at the waist, keeping the legs straight. Then he twists the torso from the small of his back and lowers the left elbow until it contacts the side of the body and the rifle is pointing at the target (Figure 38). If he properly maintains his bend and twist, the weight of the rifle will feel as though it is resting upon his chest (Figure 39). This combination of back bend and body twist is the most important feature of the standing position! Considerable discomfort is common to the individual that assumes this position the first few times. It can take as long as a month of daily practice to strengthen the muscles of the body to compensate for the fatigue generated in the areas of strain.

2. Achieving a State of Balance: The shooter's back is bent to the right and rearward to gain bone support. If the shooter should stand straight, the weight of the rifle would pull his body to his left front. He would experience strain in the muscles of his back in an effort to keep his body from falling forward. By bending back and to the right, he shifts the weight of his body to the right rear of his feet. At a certain point, the weight of his body to the right rear of his feet equals the weight of the rifle to the left front. The body-rifle structure then reaches a state of balance, with the center of gravity directly above a point between the feet (Figures 39, 40 and 41). The shooter is relieved of the strain to the muscles of the back that keep his body from falling toward the weight of the rifle.

3. Body-Rifle Weight Supported by Bone Structure: As a result of this back bend and body twist, the weight of the rifle and upper torso falls upon the bones of the lower spinal column. Hip and leg bones transmit this weight ultimately to the feet. Thus the weight of the rifle is almost completely supported by bones. The only work required of body muscles is to keep the body in a standing posture and prevent it from swaying from its point of balance.



Figure 31. Standing position (Shooter L).



Figure 32. (Shooter B).

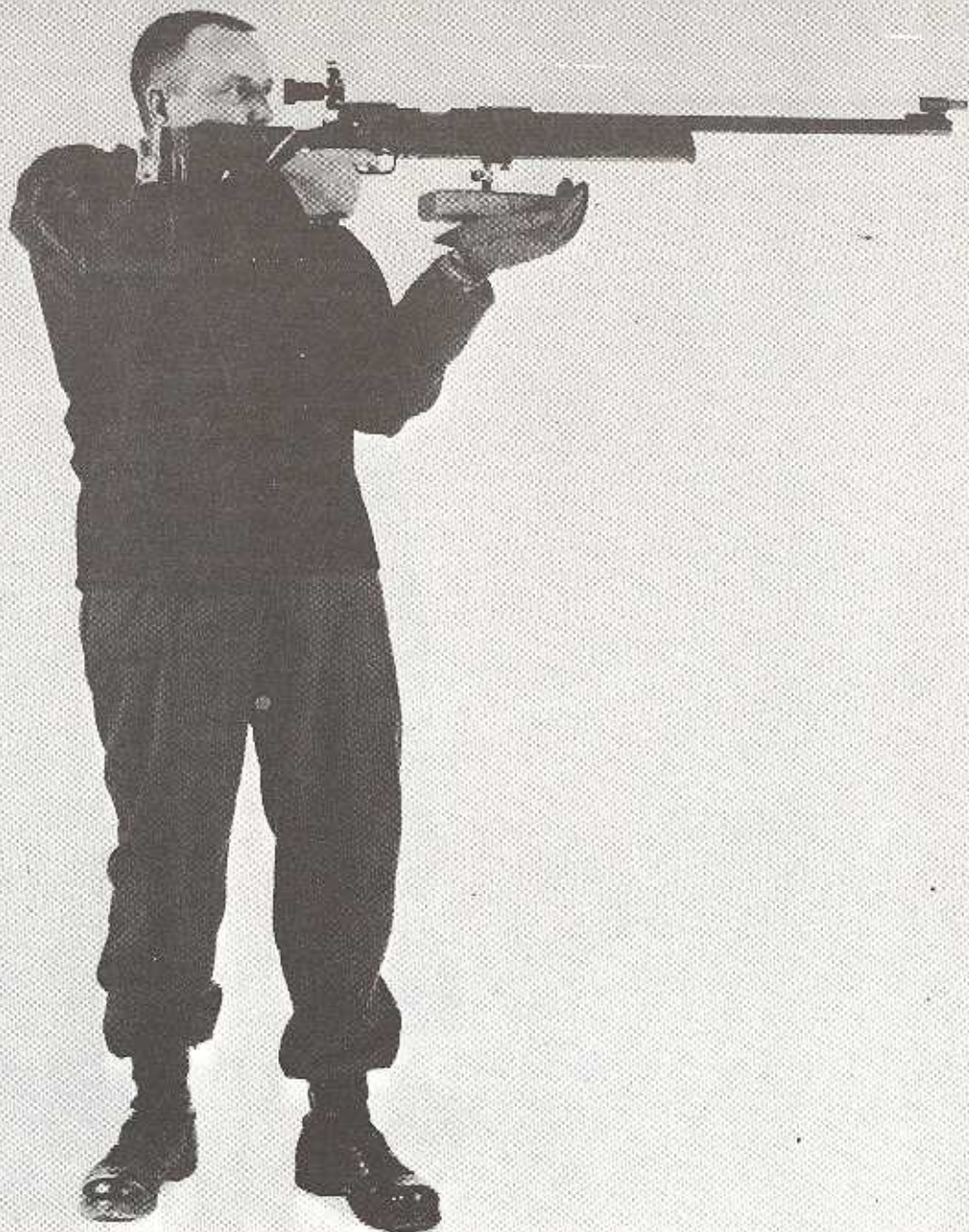


Figure 33. (Shooter D).



Figure 34. (Shooter L).



Figure 35. (Shooter K).



Figure 36. (Shooter A).



Figure 37. (Shooter I).

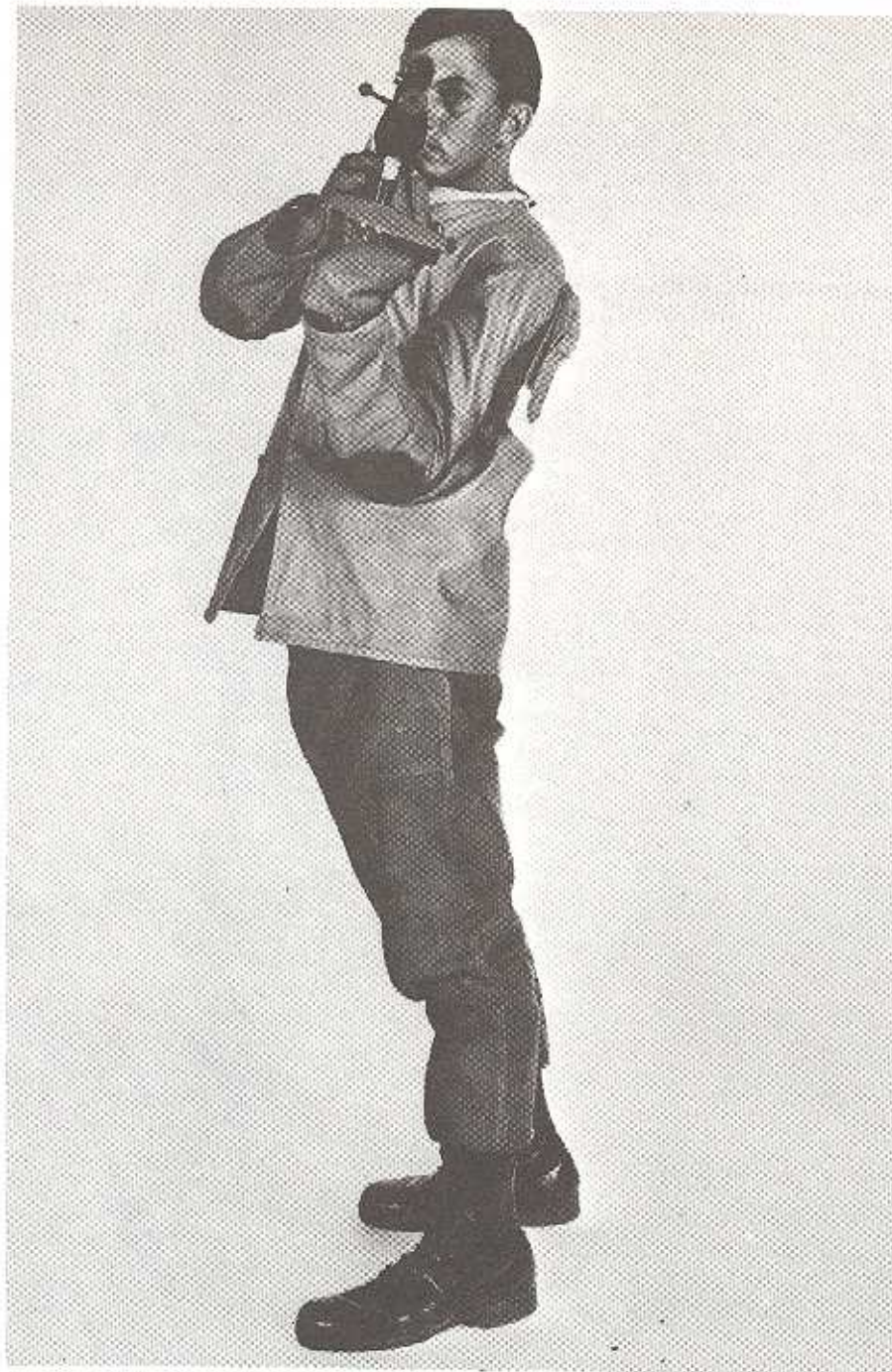


Figure 38. (Shooter M).

D. POSITION OF THE LEFT ARM.

1. The Upper Arm: The shooter's left upper arm rests against the left rib cage (Figure 42). Supported by the ribs, the bones of the left forearm form a bracket that supports the rifle. The butt hook under the right armpit prevents the rifle from falling forward from the weight of the barrel (Figure 43).
2. The Elbow: If the shooter lifted his left elbow away from his left side, he would be "holding" the rifle up with the muscles of his left arm and shoulder. He can lower his elbow to rest against the rib cage (Figure 44). In some cases the elbow may rest on the hip bone. Thus, the bones will provide a major portion of the support of the rifle for him.
3. The Forearm: The left forearm that supports the rifle is not completely rigid. But like the body, the left forearm can be placed in a point of balance. If the muscles of the left hand function properly, it can be held at this point of balance without moving. Also like the body, it can be held in balance with a very slight, almost relaxed, muscular tension. It is at this point of balance that the shooter should place his left forearm. He should avoid using the muscles of the left arm to steer the rifle into the 10-ring.

E. POSITION OF THE HEAD. The head should be in an upright position, with the eyes looking straight forward out of the sockets and through the sights (Figures 45, 46, 47 and 48). If the head is tilted, the organ of balance, located in the inner ear senses that part of the body is tilted and automatically sends out signals to correct the imbalance. Consequently, the body experiences a slight involuntary sway. In order to keep the head erect, it may be necessary to cant the rifles. However, it is essential that the angle of cant remain the same for each shot.

F. POSITION OF THE RIGHT ARM.

1. The Butt Hook: The butt hook should be comfortably under the right armpit, preventing the rifle from pivoting forward from the weight of the barrel. The hook is dropped to a level that will bring the stock up to the shooter's face and the eye will be looking naturally through the sight (Figure 49).
2. Degree of Tension: The right arm may be slightly tensed or completely relaxed. A few shooters lift the arm to some degree whereas others merely let it drop naturally to their side.
3. The Hand: The right hand should be comfortable and under no strain whatsoever. It should provide a straight trigger pull that is directly in line with the bore of the barrel. The trigger finger should not touch the stock in such a manner that pressure applied to the trigger also applies pressure to the stock (Figure 50).

G. FUNCTION OF THE PALM REST. The palm rest is used to bring the rifle stock up to the level of the face. Some shooters are able to accomplish this without the use of a palm rest. They simply support the rifle with the left hand. Others use only a small block of wood (Figure 51). The important point is that the correct position of the body is assumed and the rifle is fitted to the body, not the body to the rifle! The palm rest is positioned on the heel of the hand, and the left wrist is comfortable. The beginning shooter will find that correctly adjusting the palm rest and butt hook may prove to be a bewildering task. Part of this difficulty arises because he does not yet "know" his position. He has not used the standing position enough to be able to sense minor changes in body posture. Consequently, he will not know whether he has assumed the same position each time he fires. As a result, from time to time it will appear that the rifle is not adjusted.

H. THE AREA OF AIM.

1. General: The standing position is not limited to one point of balance and area of aim. Notice that the shooter can move the center of gravity of the body-rifle structure by a small movement of the left elbow and the rifle (Figure 52). He can then make a slight shift in the posture of the body and find a new point of balance. The rifle will then point in a slightly different direction than it did in the first point-of-balance position. It must be emphasized that the shift in the position can never be very great, or the entire bone support structure will lose its efficiency. But a small shift can safely produce a small change in the direction of aim if no strain is incurred in the body.



Figure 39. (Shooter C).



Figure 40. (Shooter J).



Figure 41. (Shooter K).



Figure 42. (Shooter B).



Figure 43. (Shooter B).



Figure 44. (Shooter F).



Figure 45. (Shooter I).



Figure 46. (Shooter E).



Figure 47. (Shooter A).



Figure 48. (Shooter L).



Figure 49. (Shooter I).



Figure 50. (Shooter F).



Figure 51. (Shooter C).

2. Natural Area of Aim: The standing position, then, does not have one single point of aim that is natural to the position (Figures 53 and 54). There is rather an area of aim that is natural of this position. The shooter must adjust his rifle positioning and the placement of his feet so that when he assumes the position, the target is within the area of natural aim. If he uses the muscles to force the rifle onto the target when the target is outside of the area of aim, he thus defeats the principle advantage of the position.

1. ADVANCED POSITION REFINEMENT.

1. Several years ago the ISU rules changed concerning shooting clothing. Its major effect on the shooters became evident when they had to change from their heavy (10 millimeter) shooting coat to a light (2.5 millimeter) coat. The scores immediately dropped and have only recently risen to their former level.

2. Why Light Coat Scores Were Lower: In the heavy coat the shooter experienced a feeling of being "strapped in" to a stiff, well supporting coat. Transmission of heartbeat was all but eliminated. In standing one could actually lean up against the coat and let it reduce the movement. Not only did the coat reduce the hold greatly, but it also tended to maintain the hold after the shot was fired causing an almost "automatic follow through." When this tight heavy coat was replaced with a loosely fitting thin coat, all of these advantages were lost leaving the shooter with a poorer hold, a more unstable follow through and much anxiety over his drop in scores. Since our first exposure to this problem, many remedies have been tried, and although we are continuing to refine our knowledge in this area, we feel we do have some useful hints for the previously neglected light coat shooter.

3. Because these new developments are most critical in the standing position, we will center our discussion here. The major problem in light coat shooting is improving the hold by decreasing the body movement by means other than coat support. The only way this can be done is by refining the position in the light of reduced support from the coat. External rifle adjustments are so much a function of individual body conformation that a suggestion in this area is likely to be meaningless to most shooters. However, one adjustment trend has shown up among many of the top light coat standing shooters. The rifle is adjusted so that the palm rest is nearer the trigger guard and the stock is longer. This puts the hands closer together, reducing the tendency to make corrections with the hands and arms. The long stock, created by lengthening the butt plate, also gives the shooter a better hand position to control the trigger (Figure 55).

4. We have found that the only way to reduce movement without having to rely on the jacket is by stretching the muscles. It is best to stretch a muscle only enough to restrict its movement. Too much tension causes spasms - too little tension invites involuntary movement. One way to do this is by twisting the muscle, thereby constricting its movement. We have been doing this for many years kneeling by turning the left toe toward the right knee; this twists the muscles in the left leg, thus reducing movement. In standing, we are doing the same thing when we twist the upper body at the back which helps to immobilize the spine to reduce sway. By turning the upper body to the left the upper thigh muscles, especially of the right leg, become stretched; therefore, the more you turn to the left in relation to the placement of the feet, the more tension the thighs are under. At a specific point somewhere in this movement, the hold is the smallest. This is where the shooter stops and uses this position for maximum control.

5. The left elbow is placed under the rifle allowing the arm to become "locked" between the weight of the rifle and the hip. When this is done, the left arm and hand can be relaxed and do not forcefully hold up the rifle. One should remember that to relax a muscle not in use serves the same purpose as stretching one that is being used. Control is maintained.

6. By leaning forward a bit at the shoulders, the right half of the back becomes stretched. Once this area is stretched, the chance of having a shot drop low by tensing the back muscles is greatly reduced. Many of the best standing shooters lean their heads forward a bit on the stock (Figure 50). This serves to lock the head at a point on the stock. One should not tilt the head from side to side, however, as position balance may be lost.

7. Once the position is stable, the problem of follow through can be attacked. Since the light coat does not aid in follow through, the shooter must continue to hold through the recoil. This is not new to most shooters, but if all of your shooting has been in the heavy coat, it is doubtful if you have ever experienced true follow through. It is achieved through concentration and automation of techniques.



Figure 52. (Shooter K).



Figure 53. (Shooter I).



Figure 54. (Shooter L).



Figure 55. (Shooter B).

8. Technique automation is the act of completing a portion of the act of firing without having to consciously think about it. The beginning shooter must think about breathing, sight picture, and follow through in order to actually execute them. The experienced shooter does not actively think about sight alignment, sight picture, trigger control, position, breathing, or even follow through. They come naturally upon request and his mind is free to perfect his concentration thereby aiding all of the above. Most heavy coat shooters will find they will have to concentrate on follow through at first until it becomes automatic.

9. Lastly, there is the problem of poor scores. The light coat has been the downfall of many good shooters because they could not cope with the added hardship. When their hold deteriorated, so did their concentration and shooting became work instead of fun.

10. To the champion, shooting is constant pain and work. If he is not working hard enough to ache, he is not reaching his full potential and he will simply not be able to win. This desire is amplified with the light coat and that is why the same people that were winning in the heavy coats will win in light ones. The techniques discussed here are not meant to replace only those that have been previously stated, but to amplify them in light of the constantly changing shooting environment.

J. USING THE STANDARD RIFLE.

1. General Provisions: The positions shown on previous pages are not changed when shooting with a standard rifle. The standard rifle is broadly defined as a straight stock rifle without a hook butt or palm rest. However, the greatest care must be taken to meet the requirements of the basic standing position.

2. Requirements: In the standing position, the stock will generally be placed very high in the shoulder and the right arm will be raised somewhat. The grip of the right hand will be firm (Figure 56).

3. Supporting Rifle with the Left Hand: There are several methods of supporting the standard rifle with the left hand.

- a. Probably the best expedient is to double the fist (Figure 58).
- b. Another method is to place the rifle in the fork of the index and middle fingers (Figures 56 and 57).
- c. Some shooters support the rifle on the finger tips. This is not ideal because there are too many joints involved and if any one of the fingers moves the hold could be disturbed.
- d. Wearing a glove on the left hand should improve any method that is chosen.



Figure 56. (Shooter D).



Figure 57. (Shooter B).



Figure 58. (Shooter B).



Figure 59. (Shooter B).