

## **Coaching the Beginner**

### **Introduction**

Coaching is an art. A good shot need not necessarily also be a good coach. It is important however that a coach is a good performer as his ability and reputation as a shot will give him standing in the eyes of his pupils.

The successful coach should:

- a. Be a competent shot
- b. Be enthusiastic
- c. Have a sound knowledge of shooting
- d. Understand the principles of instruction

### **The Beginner**

Initially every shoot by the beginner should be coach. He must be taught the basic skills and then be given confidence in himself by achieving some degree of progression and improvement. Good coaching combined with sound instruction will soon have the beginner confident enough in his own ability to shoot unaided though expert coaching is also of considerable value to the established shooter.

### **Coaching Knowledge**

To be able to determine why a firer is shooting badly and to put him right the coach must be able to identify the cause of his bad shots. The following paragraphs give some of the common causes of bad shooting.

***Firing Position.*** Positional faults are many and varied. The firer can fail to get himself properly aligned with the target. Changes in position during the shoot will affect the position of his shots. An incorrectly adjusted sling or handstop will produce faults in support. Varying the position of the forward hand or the degree of grip with either hand can result in displaced shots. Errors in the butt placement will often give elevation problems.

***Faults in Aiming.*** The coach cannot check the firer's aim when he is shooting. However he can deduce some information from the position of the shots on the target. By watching the firer he can also spot such faults as dwelling in the aim, alteration of eye relief, squinting and flinching.

***Breathing and Trigger Control.*** Failure to control the breathing or inducing strain by restraining it excessively is a common fault for which the coach should be alert. Incorrect location of the finger on the trigger causes bad shooting but is easily spotted if the coach watches the firer.

***Grouping.*** The coach must appreciate and instil into his pupil that grouping is the foundation of all shooting. Unless a firer can hold a tight group consistently he will never attain a high standard of shooting. A tight group is achieved by eliminating basic errors of position, holding, aiming and firing. The group is a measure of consistency in the firer.

## Misplaced Shots and Possible Causes.

The following notes show some of the possible causes of misplaced shots:

a. **High Shots**

- 1) Looking through the top of the aperture
- 2) Aim acquired by dropping the left hand
- 3) Butt too low in the shoulder
- 4) Failure to relax left arm

b. **High Right Shots**

- 1) Loose sling
- 2) Looking through right side of aperture
- 3) Left hand too far back
- 4) applying pressure across the trigger instead of straight back

c. **Right Shots**

- 1) Loose sling
- 2) Faulty positioning of left elbow
- 3) Left hand pushing right

d. **Low Right Shots**

- 1) Loose sling
- 2) Right elbow slipping
- 3) Sights canted to right
- 4) Trigger snatching

e. **Low Shots**

- 1) Loose sling
- 2) Aim corrected by raising left hand
- 3) Foresight low in the aperture
- 4) Finger too low on the trigger

f. **Low left shots**

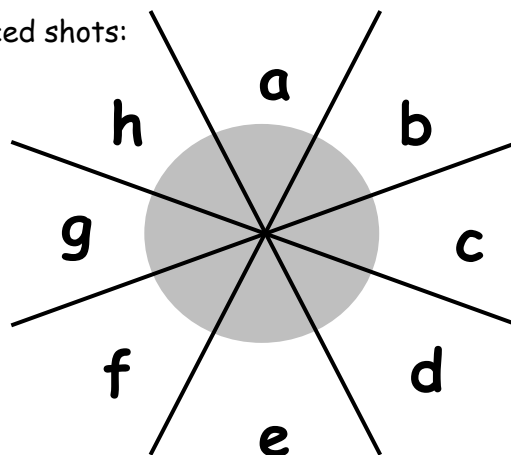
- 1) Sling too tight
- 2) Sights canted to left
- 3) Finger incorrectly positioned on trigger
- 4) Pushing with right shoulder

g. **Left Shots**

- 1) Left hand pulling left
- 2) Sling too tight

h. **High Left Shots**

- 1) Excessive pressure of cheek on butt



The list is not comprehensive. Where left and right are specified it is for a right handed shot. The opposite applies in the case of left handers. A large proportion of inaccurate shots result from faulty alignment or incorrect centring of the foresight in the rear aperture or from faulty trigger operation.

## Procedure

The paragraphs which follow give the procedure for coaching specifically the beginner. Coaching starts when he arrives on the range and continues until a post mortem on his shoot has been held, his firearm has been cleared and he leaves the firing point.

**Before Firing.** Before the beginner even takes up a firing position the coach should check:

- a. That he is properly dressed and equipped
- b. His rear aperture, foresight element and elevation set are correct
- c. He has prepared his firearm properly for firing. He should then get down, align himself on the correct target and set up his telescope. At this stage the coach checks:
- d. His sling, handstop and eye relief are properly adjusted
- e. He is in a comfortable firing position with his telescope in the right place and his ammunition and scorebook accessible without disturbing his position. He should then try dry-firing a couple of times. This should show up any obvious faults which can be corrected before he starts his shoot.

**During Firing.** The coach should have his own telescope but, apart from observing the position of the spotting discs and looking at the wind he should concentrate on watching the firer for any of the faults listed above. Do not talk to the firer while he is on aim, it will break his concentration. If it is necessary to correct a fault or change the wind, tell him to stop and come out of the aim. Then say what has to be said and let him start afresh. The firer should be encouraged to declare his shots and the coach should give him some indication as to his progress without necessarily spelling out the exact position and value of each shot. The emphasis should be on quiet encouragement and removal of any cause for anxiety. The coach should maintain a duplicate diagram, noting the firer's declarations.

**After Firing.** Every coached shoot should be discussed on conclusion, on the firing point if it is not a match, to bring out the lessons learned and highlight any apparent faults in technique.

### **Conclusion**

The Club Coach should be the source of advice to all members of his Club, particularly the inexperienced shots. As his reputation as a coach increases so will the number and variety of questions he is asked. He owes it, therefore, to his club to keep his knowledge fresh and up-to-date.

There are no fixed rules governing the art of coaching; only guiding principles. The successful coach must have a thorough knowledge of the subject, be enthusiastic, firm and understanding. His success is measured by the success of his pupils.