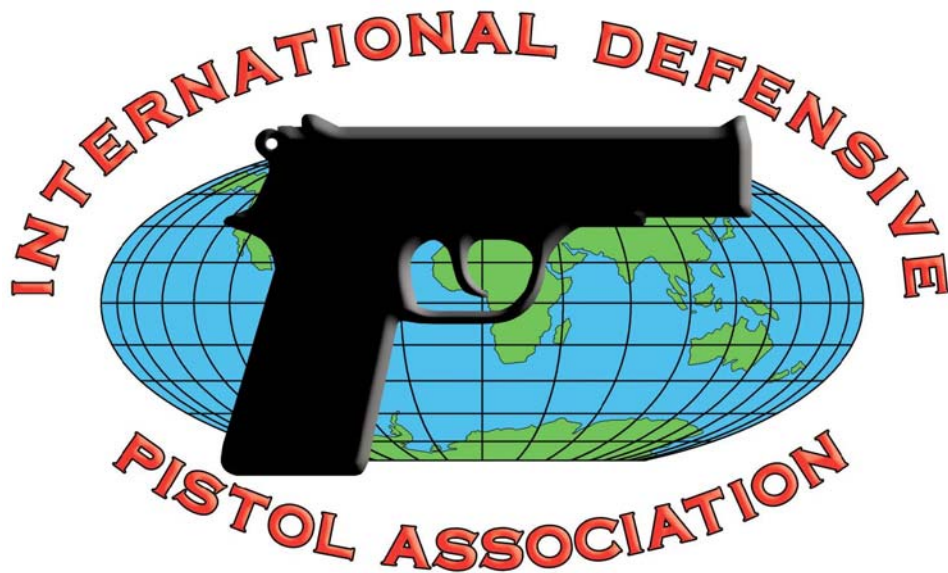


IDPA New Shooter Information

May 2008



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) Assume 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 will 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.

Note that IDPA competitions always take place on "cold" ranges, so your gun will never be loaded until you are told to load by a Safety Officer. You may handle your ammunition and load your magazines at any time, but the gun itself must always remain unloaded unless instructed otherwise.

Range Commands

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

"Load and Make Ready:" This is the command to load your gun and get ready to shoot. It is covered fully in the next section.

"Finger:" You will hear this if your finger is in the trigger guard while moving or reloading. Failure to comply immediately will result in a 3 second procedural penalty. Repeated offenses will earn a match disqualification.

"Muzzle:" If you hear this, immediately check yourself as your muzzle is getting near a muzzle safe point. Do not take muzzle safe points lightly.

"Stop:" If a shooter is being grossly unsafe, or if a safety issue has arisen on the range, the Safety Officer will give this command. Upon hearing this, the shooter is to immediately stop shooting and/or moving, point the muzzle in a safe direction, and await further range commands.

"Cover:" If a shooter is not using cover adequately (more than 50% of the upper body and 100% of the lower body behind the barricade, wall, etc.) while shooting and reloading, the Safety Officer will issue this command. Generally, the first call is a warning but failure to immediately comply will result in a 3 second procedural penalty.

"Unload and Show Clear:" This is the command to unload your gun at the end of the stage. This will be explained in great detail in a later section. Note that this occurs "off the clock," so a new shooter is encouraged to go slowly and carefully during this process.

The three most important commands to know and be able to recognize are **Muzzle, Finger, Stop**. You must be able to respond to these commands as soon as they are heard.

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 nit-pick.

Procedural: Procedural penalties are issued for . Examples are:

- Not engaging targets in proper sequence
- Not using Cover properly
- Not shooting while moving as required
- Not responding immediately to the initial Finger command
- Not reloading as required
- Not following other course of fire rules as described

Failure to Neutralize: Given when there is not at least one hit in either the -0 or -1 scoring zones. Adds 5 seconds to the competitor's score.

Hits on Non-Threats: A 5-second penalty for hitting a non-threat ("hostage") target. A penalty will be issued for each non-threat target hit, but multiple hits on the same non-threat target incur a single penalty only. 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-issued penalty given to shooters who do not follow the spirit or rationale of a stage. It can also be issued for using illegal equipment. If you shoot the course of fire as outlined and do not try to use inappropriate techniques or equipment to gain an advantage, this will never be a problem. Adds 20 seconds to the competitor's score.

If you wind up earning a Procedural, Non-Threat, or Failure to Neutralize penalty, do not get upset. This sport is all about learning and the only one who will remember at the next match is you. Learn from your mistakes and have fun!

Loading and Unloading

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 rack the slide to chamber a round. "Racking" the slide is to pull the slide back and then release it. Do not grasp the slide as it moves forward as it can create jamming problems. Set the safety if your pistol has that feature.

Most IDPA courses of fire require the gun be fully loaded (a full magazine plus one round in the chamber). To do this, it is best to load as stated above, then replace the magazine currently in the gun with a completely full magazine from your mag pouch. Pocket the partially empty magazine, then holster the gun. You may then refill the partially loaded magazine and replace it in your mag pouch. This is the safest way to load your semi-automatic handgun.

Revolver shooters need to draw the handgun, 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 (letting the cartridge fall to the ground) and allow the Safety Officer to visually check the chamber to see it is empty.

“Slide down, hammer forward”

Issued after the Safety Officer has checked your chamber. 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 disconnect safeties must insert an empty magazine into the gun and pull the trigger (allow Safety Officer to verify an empty mag before inserting into pistol). 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. The Safety Officer should have modified this command by simply saying “Cylinder closed.”

“Holster”

Holster the weapon, being careful not to sweep the muzzle past any body part (i.e. hand, legs, etc.).

“Range is Safe”

Do not move downrange until this command is issued. If you are waiting to shoot, do not move forward to tape or reset targets until the command is given.

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 your 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. Move slowly and smoothly by keeping your knees and placing one foot in front of the other (“heel to toe” or “toe to heel” if retreating). Remember to get a smooth trigger pull on every shot. Your sights will move about, but unless you jerk the trigger, you can still decent hits.

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 magazine with rounds still in it should be left behind. The speed load (ejecting and leaving a magazine while a round remains in the pistol's chamber) is not permitted, even if the magazine is empty.

Reloads must be initiated and performed while using cover appropriately (see the Range Command on "Cover" above). Remember the act of initiating a reload includes: removing a fresh magazine from its holder, removing a partial magazine, dropping an empty magazine, opening a cylinder, or removing a fresh speedloader/moonclip from its holder. A competitor may not leave cover until their reload is fully complete.

Emergency Reload: When the slide locks back, the shooter will eject the spent magazine, insert a fresh magazine, and release the slide. If this occurs while shooting on the move (if allowed by the course of fire), the competitor may immediately begin the reload process, but must continue moving towards cover.

Tactical Reload: The shooter removes a fresh magazine from its holder, and while holding the fresh magazine, the shooter uses the same hand to remove the magazine currently in the pistol. The fresh magazine is then inserted into the pistol and the spent magazine is stowed in the magazine holder or a pocket. The magazine must be stored before resuming shooting. Shooting before storing the magazine will earn a procedural penalty.

Reload with Retention: The shooter removes the spent magazine and places it in a pocket or mag pouch. The shooter then inserts a fresh magazine in the pistol and resumes shooting. The Tactical Reload and Reload with Retention are interchangeable and the decision about which to use belongs to the shooter. 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.

Scoring

Scoring in IDPA is relatively simple. After shooting a course of fire, the time is recorded. Hits on the target are scored as follows:

- All head and 8" center ring hits are awarded 0 points down
- Hits in the next ring count receive 1 point down each
- Hits in the last scoring ring are 3 points down each
- Misses are scored at 5 points down each

These points down are totaled and multiplied by .5 seconds. That amount of time, along with the time from any penalties the competitor received, is then added to the raw time to provide the score (given in seconds) for that stage. Fastest total time for the match wins.

Bullet holes (including the grease ring surrounding the bullet hole) that touch the perforation between two scoring zones will receive the better score. The total of the points are 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 shooter's score (given in seconds). Fastest time wins. In the case of a tie, the shooter with fewer points down wins.

Tips

This sport rewards speed, but punishes for lack of accuracy. 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 barricade or wall when using 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 when the tactical reload may be beneficial.

Remember to get a smooth trigger pull every time, even at the expense of the “perfect” sight picture. Slightly misaligned sights may cause you to be a couple of inches off your point of aim, but jerking the trigger can cause you to miss the target entirely.

Malfunctions

If your firearm fails to fire do not panic. Malfunctions happen, and competition is an excellent place to learn who to perform recovery procedures quickly.

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 upward into the gun to re-seat the magazine, rack the slide back to chamber a new round, and then pull the trigger to verify that the gun will now fire. This is known as the *Tap-Rack-Bang* method.

If a Tap-Rack-Bang does not work and you are not sure how to proceed, it is best to stop and request help from the Safety Officer. If requesting help, keep your muzzle downrange and follow the Safety Officer’s instructions.

A potentially dangerous malfunction is known as a squib. This is caused by a cartridge that has a primer but no powder in the case. When a squib round is fired, the bullet is pushed into the barrel where it stops. Firing a subsequent round may cause the barrel to rupture, resulting in extreme damage to the gun and possibly the shooter. A squib can be identified audibly by the “pop” or “pfft” noise and by the distinctly reduced recoil. If you even suspect that this has happened, stop immediately and request help from the Safety Officer. Remember to keep the muzzle downrange and follow the S.O.’s commands precisely.

If you experience any kind of malfunction a jam and are in doubt as to how to fix the problem, stop and ask the Safety Officer for help. Better a bad score than having to replace a damaged gun (or damaged hands or face).

Shooting Gear for the New IDPA shooter

To start out at most IDPA matches, all that is needed are the following:

- A safe handgun that is reasonable for self-defense
Holster that carries the gun inside or outside the waistband on your shooting-hand side (no shoulder, cross-draw, or tactical thigh-rig holsters)
- Three magazines, speedloaders or moonclips
- Two magazine pouches (or a one double magazine pouch) or three speedloader/ moonclip pouches
- Quality eye and ear protection (safety glasses and a set of muffs or ear plugs)
- Jacket or vest that can cover your holster and ammo carriers

It is important that you try the sport first, before going out and spending money on specialized equipment. Find out that you enjoy it, and what the experienced competitors use (and why they use it). Being in too much of a hurry to buy your equipment before you start competing may mean that you end having to buy a whole kit of different

gear several months later.

Most matches will require to shoot anywhere from 50 to 150 rounds of ammo, so make sure you bring enough. If you are not sure, check with your local club to see what they recommend.

Holsters and Ammunition Carriers

Holsters are generally made of leather, plastic, or nylon. The general requirement is that it is reasonable for use should you have the right to carry a concealed handgun, hold the weapon securely, and that it must carry the gun on your belt on the strong (“shooting hand”) side of your body. It must fully cover the trigger guard, and the approximate center of the gun cannot be lower than the belt (women are allowed to have the center of the gun a little lower).

Shoulder, cross-draw, ankle, or tactical thigh-rig holsters are *not* allowed because of either safety reasons or they are unrealistic for concealed carry.

Most strong-side Inside-the-Waistband (IWB) holsters are allowed. If you choose an Outside-the-Waistband (OWB) model, it must pull the gun tight enough into your body so that a person behind you cannot see daylight between you and your holster (including through the belt slot area).

You may note that most competitors use plastic holsters (sometimes referred to as “Kydex”). This is because they provide a smoother surface allowing for faster draws and easier reholstering. They can range in price from \$25 to \$75, while leather holsters can range from \$40 to \$250. Fobus makes an inexpensive but effective plastic holster, while companies such as Blade-Tech and Comp-Tac make superb, but more-expensive, models. Quality leather holsters can be purchased from Bianchi, Safariland, and DeSantis. Nylon holsters are generally the least expensive but their soft texture provide the least structural rigidity. Uncle Mike’s Sidekick line can often be found for many models under \$25.

Note that there are a few low-cost plastic/Kydex models that initially appear appropriate, but are actually illegal in the sport. This is because their belt slot area is so wide that it inappropriately sets the gun away from the body. Be sure to perform the “daylight” test mentioned above to make sure the holster is legal.

You will only need two magazine pouches if you shoot a semi-automatic pistol or three if you shoot a revolver. The pouches must hold your reloads securely and cover at least half the body of the magazine or speedloader. Pouches are usually available in the same materials as holsters, and from the same manufacturers.

Magazines

During a course of fire, a competitor may have no more than three magazines on them (one in and two on their belt). It is beneficial to bring more with you to a match, since it will expedite preparation for a stage, or allow for quickly topping off your ammo during stages that have multiple strings of fire. But to compete in IDPA, you do *not need* more than three mags.

You are typically better off buying factory magazines, since they are usually superior to aftermarket models. Spend your money wisely and purchase quality magazines, even if you have to make do with fewer magazines in the short term. High-capacity magazines (10+ rounds) are legal for IDPA but you can only load 10 rounds in them.

Speedloaders/Moonclips

Revolver shooters may have no more than three speedloaders/moonclips on their belt during a course of fire. Having a fourth one to load the gun after the “Load and Make Ready” command is beneficial, but not required since you can choose to load the rounds by hand.

There are a variety of devices available to reload your revolver. HKS and Safariland are in common makers of speedloaders. A good source for moonclips is Brownells and T.K. Custom.

Ammunition

Purchase basic ammunition for matches. The accuracy and power of Match or Defensive-type ammunition is wasted on the type of shooting done at IDPA matches.

Most shooters will shoot jacketed ammunition. Its advantages are reduced smoke and clean up, and is often more reliable in common guns. Lead bullets can work well, and are usually more economical. Reloaded ammunition is allowed, but be sure that you are careful with your reloading procedures to avoid the creation of squib rounds (bullet and primer, but no powder). Also make sure that you are familiar with the velocity of your loads, since there are minimum power factors

Sight and Hearing Protection

Your eyes can be damaged by burning power residue thrown back during weapon discharge, or by bullet jacket remnants that ricochet off of steel targets. Shock-resistant eye protection (ANSI Z87.1-certified) is critical because even the smallest damage to your eye can be permanent. You can find inexpensive glasses for as little as \$10 at Wal-Mart or Big5 Sporting Goods, or higher-quality, optically superior models are available from Rudy Project or Oakley.

Hearing protection is important because hearing loss is results from the exposure of peak sound levels as well as the average sound level around you. A single competition’s worth of gunfire can cause hearing loss, and frequent competitions will rapidly affect the rate of loss. Foam earplugs may be adequate, but are inconvenient to repeatedly insert and remove for conversations during the course of the day. External ear protectors are the most popular because of their effectiveness and convenience. Passive hearing protectors can be purchased for as little as \$15, while sophisticated electronic hearing protectors (which suppress loud noises while amplifying softer sounds like a person’s voice) can be purchased for as much as several hundred dollars.

Regardless of the conveniences you select in your hearing protection, it is critical to choose a solution that provides an adequate Noise Reduction Rating (NRR). Normal conversation takes place between 70 and 80 decibels, and a .45acp handgun can generate 165 decibels. Your goal should be to choose an item that provides an adequate NRR rating for your needs.

Miscellaneous

Don't forget the sun screen, band-aids, bug spray, a bag to hold your gear, and a good hat. It is also advisable to bring water or sports drink, as well as energy bars since matches can last up to six or more hours.