



Breath Control and Shooting

Analyzing one of the biggest myths on Army ranges.

by Sgt. 1st Class John M. Buol Jr.

Myth – “Breath Control is a critical component of marksmanship fundamentals.”

Fact – Shot placement is determined by where the barrel points, as indicated by the aligned sights, when the bullet clears the crown.

Breath control or breathing has only one function in effective small arms training: If you’re on a range and hear “advice” such as “Watch your breathing” you should ignore everything that person says about marksmanship because he has just identified himself as someone who doesn’t understand the subject.

It is common, especially in military circles, to believe that breath control and/or breathing has some mystical effect on shooting and will magically cause shots to go high or low. Any movement, whether caused by breathing or any other factor, will show as motion in the sights. While the hold may wobble, the shot will be where the aligned sights indicate when the trigger breaks (assuming a good zero and ignoring trajectory, of course.)

Origins of the Myth

The obsolete and redacted Four Fundamentals model was really a short checklist describing a simplified Shot Process. The previous version of Trainfire (as taught before 1980) had over two dozen marksmanship concepts, including the Eight Steady Hold Factors describing shooting positions. Trainfire was changed due to a desire to strip down the teaching approach to the bare minimum of details. The qualification was reduced from eight qualification tables shot from multiple positions and field conditions found in FM 23-71 and FM 23-8 down to two



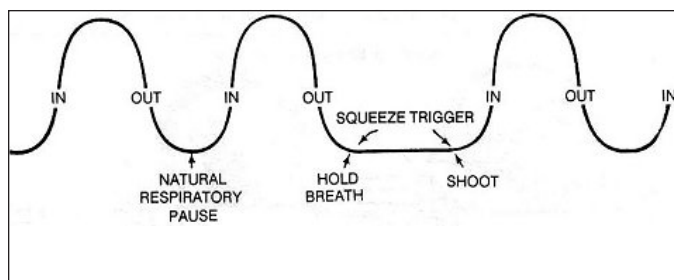
tables of fire all shot from prone or supported. The intention was not to learn good shooting; it was to create the minimum amount of skill to get new recruits being instructed by non-experts to hit more than 55% of the full-size targets somewhere during a simplified qualification course meeting the absolute bare necessities of military field marksmanship from the easiest, most stable positions possible.

Call For Articles

All articles, and ideas helpful to improving small arms training, qualification, and competition for Army Reserve Soldiers are welcome. Submit anything you’d like included in Army Reserve Marksman Contact: <http://ArmyReserveMarksman.info/public-affairs>

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Above: Being able copy and use a single, easy-to-understand picture makes it easy to “teach” PMI. This is a key reason why breath control (25% of the entire Four Fundamentals model) received undeserved emphasis by low-skill shooters pretending to be instructors.

The Four Fundamentals model was intended to be simple enough that low-skill shooter/coaches with no formal shooting experience (i.e., drill sergeants) could teach it to new recruits. The order of the checklist (Steady Position, Aiming, Breath Control, Trigger Squeeze) is important as it describes the sequence of use and prescribes a rudimentary Shot Process. That means every unit pretending they “did PMI” with a 5-15 minute blurb from a 3x5 index card where Soldiers were asked to “name the Four Fundamentals” (“uh... breathing and the other ones”) failed if they didn’t list them in the prescribed order of the checklist.

Four Fundamentals was intended as the elementary school equivalent of marksmanship, rather like arithmetic taught to first grade children. It was a start point that was supposed to be built upon but most Soldiers and units never have. Consider that about 90% of recruits will pass Initial Entry Training and none of that failing 10% are removed due to weapon qualification. Then consider this exact same novice-level qualification course and standard that recruits routinely pass remains the only standard enforced during a Soldier’s entire career. Drill sergeants, combat veterans, combat arms personnel, and Soldiers with years and decades of military experience are rarely required to demonstrate and held formally accountable for shooting skill or knowledge better than a new recruit passing Basic.

Now, take this elementary school approach to teaching that is never built upon and consider that breathing is 25% of the entire Four Fundamentals model, given equal weight as position, aiming, and trigger control. Add in that breathing provides a single, easy-to-understand diagram to copy, where other concepts useful to a developed Shot Process do not, and it’s easy to understand why non-experts pretending to be instructors harp on it.

In Practice

All breath control does is pause the shooter’s respiration while executing shot(s), thus helping to minimize movement. That’s it! Pause breathing while pressing the trigger and breathe normally at any other time. These are part of the Functional Element called Control.

The problem is novice shooters often tend to hold too long, over-staring the sights, holding their breath until blue in the face, and probably inducing recoil anticipation (flinch) just to be rid of the chambered round. Breath control alone does not and can not cause shots to go high or low. Even if it somehow could, the shooter can see that as aiming error with the sights.

Breath control “problems” are usually Aiming error

The breathing cycle (not at respiratory pause) causes movement up and down. Any shots triggered during this movement will be vertically strung, however, this is aiming error. If breath control was truly the cause of misplaced shots with no other influence, the shooter would have seen the error in the sight picture, with the sights being higher or lower than the intended point of aim. That the shooter didn’t see and state this as the problem on their own indicates other issues are at play.

A shooter anticipating recoil and flinching their eye closed on the Shot will likely fail to see aiming error when the shot breaks and remain incapable of consistent shot calls. A target-gazing shooter (especially if using iron sights) also may not notice this sight alignment and/or sight picture error going high or low. Both of these more-likely causes indicate problems having nothing to do with breathing. If the struggling shooter was made aware of their tendency to flinch, paid better attention to sight alignment/picture, and learned to call shots, this breathing “problem” would take care of itself.

This assumes the shooter can call shots. More importantly, it assumes the shooter understands what “call your shot” means. It also assumes the shooter can fire without flinching/recoil anticipation. All of these are often the real problem. Funny how every low-skill shooter in the Army emphasizes a non-issue like breath control and are oblivious to something like flinching which is usually the real cause.

A hapless soldier with shooting problems is probably flinching and might also have an inconsistent position, poor trigger control, and/or lack of good sight alignment. Then, some random yahoo with a range safety paddle pretending to be an instructor breezes by the targets and quips “watch your breathing” at the poor group without



Above: The old silhouette-shaped zero target used with Trainfire from 1980 to 2016 (and that continues to be wrongly used even though the official wear out date was FY2016) is much taller than wide. Aiming error causing dispersion up and down is much more likely than side to side.

first bothering to see what the real issues are.

This is worse than useless; it is actively detrimental. Not only have we ignored the likely cause, we've distracted attention toward a non-issue.

Also note the old silhouette-shaped 25-meter zero target officially in use from 1980 to 2016. It is much taller than wide and the same color as the front sight used to aim at it. Windage error is easy to detect on this target as the front sight appears close to the same width as the target, however, elevation error is more difficult to discern, making high/low aiming errors more likely.

Proper coaching is like detective work sifting for clues. Watch the shooter, ask what they did and saw (or thought they did and saw...), and then analyze the target. If breath control was truly the cause, the shooter can tell you based on where they saw their sights as they called each shot. Even if in the highly unlikely event the shooter failed to pause respiration, the fact they didn't see that error in the sights and failed to call it means they didn't call that shot, likely due to recoil anticipation. Fix that as it is the actual problem.

The real solution is to become aware of sight movement and calling the shot based on where the aligned sights were when the trigger broke. Too many military personnel incorrectly blame all high or low shots on

breathing, ignoring sight alignment errors, position errors, flinching, or anything else. They don't consider these things because they don't know that they should, often because the unskilled shooter pretending to be a small arms instructor also does not know. "Watch your breathing" is all they got.

From TC 3-22.9

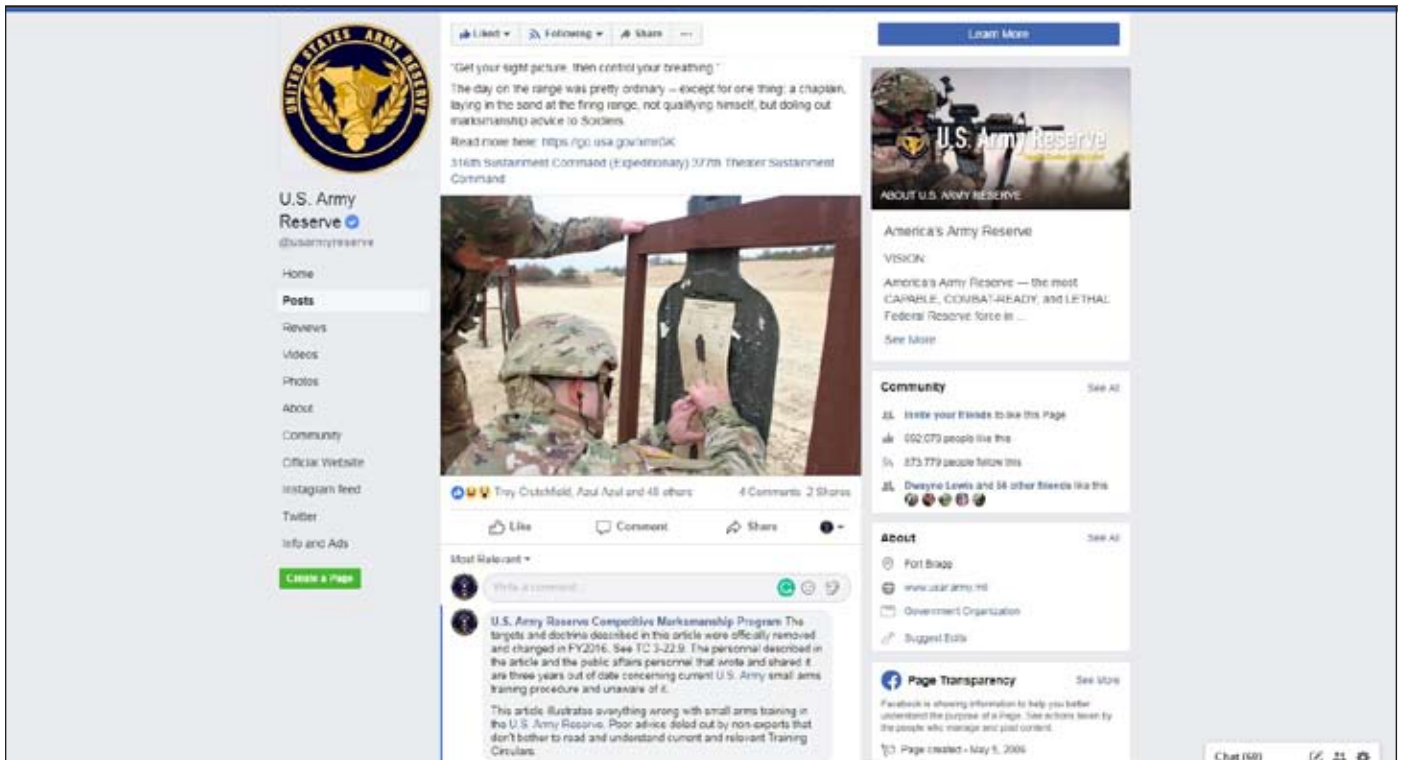
Chapter 8
8-4

BREATHING CONTROL

8-7. During the shot process, the shooter controls their breathing to reduce the amount of movement of the weapon. During training, the Soldier will learn a method of breathing control that best suits their shooting style and preference. Breathing control is the relationship of the respiratory process (free or under stress) and the decision to execute the shot with trigger squeeze.

8-8. Breathing induces unavoidable body movement that contribute to wobble or the arc of movement (AM) during the shot process. Soldiers cannot completely eliminate all motion during the shot process, but they can significantly reduce its effects through practice and technique. Firing on the natural pause is a common technique used during grouping and zeroing.

8-9. Vertical dispersion during grouping is most likely not caused by breathing but by failure to maintain proper aiming and trigger control. Refer to appendix E for proper target analysis techniques.



Appendix E
Page E-13

Bullets strung vertically do not necessarily mean a breathing issue, nor do bullets strung horizontally absolutely indicate a trigger squeeze problem. Coaches must learn to identify shooter errors during firing and use the bullet's impacts on target to confirm their observations. There are often several firing errors that can be the cause of certain misplacement of impacts. The coach has to realize that bullets only go where the barrel is pointed, so he has to determine what happened that caused the barrel to be pointed in those directions, and those causes can be many.

*E-43. The key to proper coaching is becoming a shooting DETECTIVE. The coach needs to observe the shooter, question the shooter, look at the evidence down range, question the shooter again, make assumptions based upon the evidence available, and then act upon his assumptions. The coach and shooter must have a free and open dialog with each other in a relaxed atmosphere. Remember if a Soldier learns to shoot poorly they will only be capable of shooting poorly. **ARM***

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Call Your Shots!

Calling your shots is essential in developing a solid Shot Process. Here's how to do it.

by Sgt. 1st Class John M. Buol Jr.

Most Soldiers remain oblivious to a concept that is the most important step in developing their Shot Process: Shot Calling

The Army's previous training doctrine distilled basic shooting procedures into a simplified checklist for beginning shooters called the Four Fundamentals. The idea was to eliminate details and only use the fewest components deemed absolutely necessary. The Four Fundamentals checklist was Steady Position, Aiming, Breath Control, and Trigger Squeeze.

The primary failure of this approach was it dumbed down the Shot Process by ignoring concepts that are very useful and critical for anyone wanting to shoot better than merely passing routine qualification. It also gave equal weight to a comparatively unimportant concept like breath control to the point that it has wrongly been considered to be as important as factors that really are important.

The Shot Process

Regardless of the weapon system, the goal of shooting remains constant: well-aimed shots. To achieve this end state there are two truths. Shooters must properly point the weapon on target and fire the weapon without disturbing alignment. The Shot Process is the basic outline of the engagement sequence needed to land a hit. Learning how to pay attention to detail requires learning which details are worth paying attention to. The Shot Process formulates an approach to learning and using those elements that are actually important and necessary.

Every well-delivered shot uses this. The sequence does not change, although the application of each element varies based on the conditions of the engagement. Grouping, for example, is simply moving through the Shot Process several times in succession. Rapid fire speeds this up. Multiple targets in quick succession adds the need to transition, moving between them. Regardless, the the concept of the process remains the same.

The Shot Process has three distinct phases: Pre-shot, Shot, and Post-shot. Pre-shot items include position, natural point of aim, initial sight alignment/picture, and hold stability. Shot items include refinement of the aim and

trigger control causing discharge. Post-shot includes followthrough, recoil management, and evaluation.

The Shot Process allows focus on one cognitive task at a time. As a shooter becomes more skillful, they need to mentally organize the shot process tasks and actions identified as important. For a novice and new recruit, a simplified approach such as the old Four Fundamentals is an adequate start; get in position, take aim, and pull the trigger.

When a Soldier decides to become a skilled marksman, additional elements and points of emphasis are added to their Shot Process as needed to obtain improved results. Learning how to pay attention to detail demands learning which details are worth paying attention to. Developing a Shot Process refines which details are important and which are not. Those particular details will vary based on the context as well.

In competitive shooting circles, it is common for the developing marksman to write out a personal Shot Process that expands to several pages of description. Such detail creates a disciplined mental checklist which becomes a subconsciously-controlled task through practice. The focus for a skilled shooter becomes a simple anchor allowing them to focus their attention on their external environment while executing their Shot Process as a subconsciously-programmed response. These leads a skilled shooter's Shot Process to becoming get in position, take aim, and pull the trigger; the difference now compared to the novice is they learned the important details and distilled them to a repeatable subconsciously-controlled action.

Evaluate and Learn

Developing a Shot Process, working through which Functional Elements are most important to your specific application, requires evaluating what you're doing and learning from it. Failure to do so makes it impossible to refine the Shot Process and improve.

Imagine trying to learn how to bowl with a sheet in front of the pins. The ball works and hits the same but you can't see where it goes and have no idea which pins (if any) are hit on any throw. Shooting blind removes essential feedback, making learning nearly impossible.

Most low-skill shooters are shooting blind and don't re-



Above: *Trying to learn how to bowl or shoot blind is difficult.*

alize it. Consider the effect blinking your eyes closed every time a shot is fired, thus being blind to how the sights move in recoil. Just like a sheet blocking the pins, an inadvertent eye blink obscures what is happening at the exact moment the shot is released.

Look at the blades of a spinning fan. If you casually observe, the fan blades appear as a blur, however, if you pick out a specific blade and visually trace its motion, it will appear to temporarily “freeze” and you can see it clearly. However, the blades did not stop moving; the “paused” appearance is due to your tracking their motion and paying attention.

The movement that occurs during Shot (actual discharge) happens within perhaps a tenth of a second. Calling your shot demands keeping your aiming eye open to make clear witness of that motion and its relationship to

Below: *Look at the blades of a spinning fan. If you casually observe, the fan blades appear as a blur due to moving. However, if you visually trace the motion, the blade will appear to temporarily “freeze” and you can see it clearly. However, the blades did stop moving; the “paused” appearance is due to your tracking their motion and paying attention.*



the target as it moves. Don’t think of a just taking a snap shot, as in “sight picture”; think of recording a video, as in “sight movie”.

The exact spot you observe the sights lift from during recoil as you watch this “sight movie” is the spot you must call from. Not “center mass” or any other place you wish to hit, but that actual spot. Blinking your eyes or failing to accurately trace that motion means that critical information is lost; you failed to take a sight picture, much less record a movie.

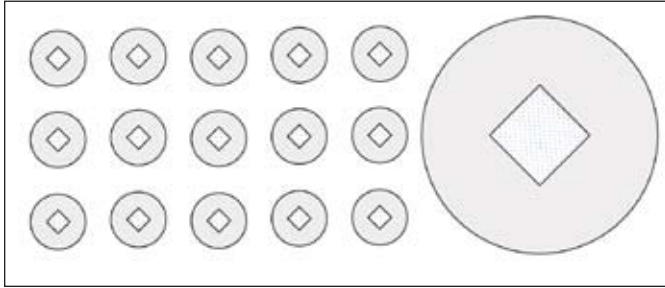
If the observation window is so short and specific, how can a shooter be certain they really saw it? By predicting where the bullet went before looking at the target. Fire a shot, predict the location, and then look at the target. The process of Slow Fire in National Match Course competition is a formal and ideal way to do this. Shooters use an optic and can spot each shot after it’s fired, recording the result in a score or data book. Shoot, call, plot, scope. Learn from what you saw and repeat. This is the essence of developing a Shot Process.

Call Radius

A shooter must allow an acceptable area surrounding the called spot, the maximum distance from that spot that a well-aimed shot could land. Note, this radius surrounding that spot can be no smaller than the mechanical precision of the firearm used. A rifle that fires groups measuring two MOA (Minute Of Angle) from machine rest cannot have a call radius smaller than one MOA as even perfectly-fired and called shots could deviate that much.

A skilled shooter capable of shooting up to their weapon may have a Call Radius the same as the weapon’s precision capability but most Soldiers won’t be this good. Shooter





Above: Example of a simple plot sheet to formally track shot calls based on the current zero target.

error and inconsistency will likely have the greatest influence on Call Radius.

Consider the threshold standard of shooting a five-round group inside six MOA. An M16A2 shooting M855 ammunition will likely group 2-3 MOA (1-1.5 MOA radius) and more recent issue arms are likely better. Allowing a 3 MOA radius (6 MOA diameter) allows for some shooter error.

As a start point, a Soldier should strive for a Call Radius of 3 MOA. That is, after firing a shot and before looking at the target, the bullet hit should be no more than 3 MOA away from the called spot. Slow fire from a braced position on a good target, such as the current-issue A8 bullseye zero target, should not have significant point of aim deviations. During slow fire, zeroing, and similar shooting, shots that

won't break center should be stopped in the Pre-Shot and the Shot Process started all over.

Shots outside the Call Radius are either due to shooter error (failed to Call the shot), zero error (a sight correction will immediately fix), or conditions when shooting at distance (wind pushing the bullet, etc.)

Use a plot sheet or data book to track this. Each small target records the call for a single shot. The actual shot location is marked with a number of the fired shot in the big target. The fact most Soldiers have never done this as an exercise is one big reason why most Soldiers are poor shooters.

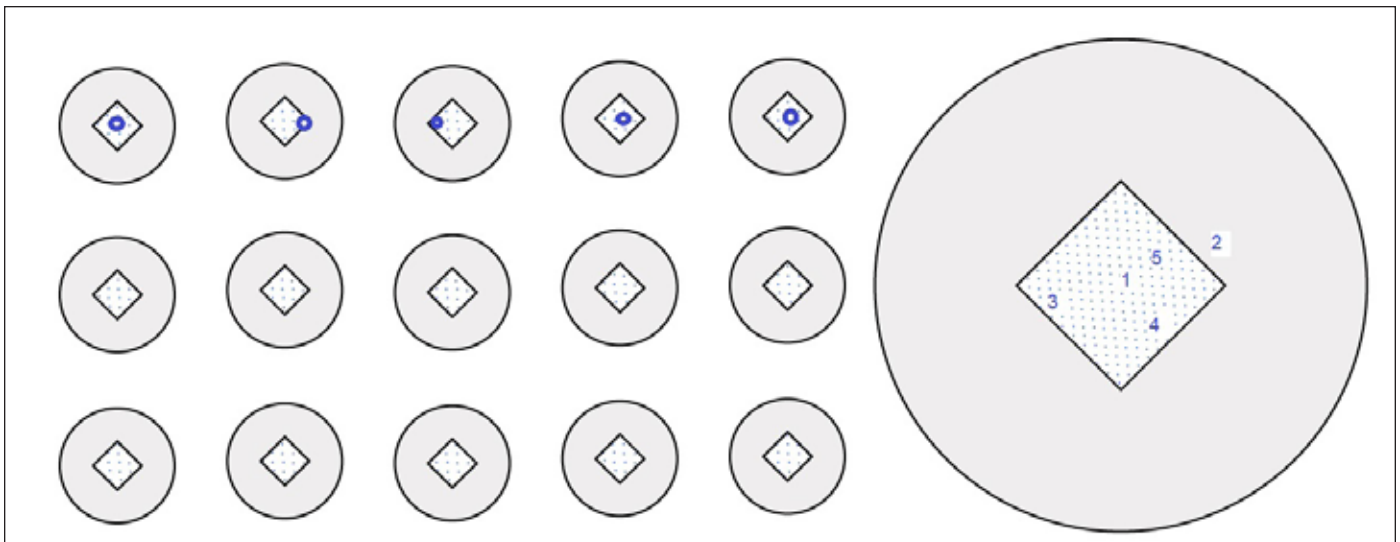
Calling your shot is crucial to Shot Process development. Only shooters that put in some effort to learn how will improve their shooting. [ARM](https://www.usar.army.mil/ARM)

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Below: Plot sheet tracking five shots. Shots 1-5 were first called and plotted on the top row in order before looking at the target, and then a number written down in the big target with the shot's actual location after observing the target. Given the white diamond is 4 MOA, these shots were called within a Call Radius of about 1 MOA. A 3 MOA Call Radius is a good initial goal. Have all shooters on the range use an optic to check the target for each shot to make this efficient. At 25 meters, even cheap mini-binoculars available at any PX can see bullet holes in the target.



Solving Dunning-Kruger Effect

by Sgt. 1st Class John M. Buol Jr.

Dunning–Kruger Effect is a cognitive bias in which people of low ability or skill maintain illusory superiority and mistakenly assess their ability, skill, and/or experience as greater than it is. The cognitive bias of illusory superiority comes from the inability of low-ability people to recognize their lack of ability. Without the self-awareness of meta-cognition (an awareness and understanding of one’s own thought processes), low-ability people cannot objectively evaluate their actual competence or incompetence.

Dunning–Kruger Effect impacts all humans and everyone (including you and me) is potentially susceptible. It has been recognized by many people over the course of human history. Dr. David Dunning and his graduate student Justin Kruger established a variety of test methodologies to measure this phenomenon and published a formal research paper about their found results.

David McRaney is the host of the excellent **You Are Not So Smart** podcast. He recounts when he first realized the Dunning-Kruger Effect impacted him:

“I remember the first time in my life that I really recognized that [Dunning-Kruger Effect] was true.

In college, I staged a fighting game tournament where I set up all these video game systems and I invited people from around the country to the university to play. We had a group of friends – it was like, 8 to 10 people in our hometown who played this game – and we thought that we were amazing at it. We thought that we were the best in the world and I had no problem inviting the champions at this game from around the country to come to play against us.

Every single one of us lost our matches immediately. Like, we didn’t even place. We didn’t even come close. We were absolutely destroyed. And I remember all of us sort of shaking our heads and rubbing our temples and thinking, “How could we not just be not okay but actually suck? I mean, how is that possible?”

I bet that sort of thing happens a lot amongst people who are sort of at the amateur level and feel that they have achieved something.”

Every human is susceptible to Dunning-Kruger Effect. The challenge is to be willing to find the means to overcome it. Because this is a cognitive bias – a mistake in reasoning, evaluating, and/or remembering – nobody can reliably do

it on their own. As McRaney’s example illustrates, it was only after he and his friends organized a tournament, invited everyone that was interested and thought they were good, and measured the results did he finally snap out of his delusion of competence.

Dr. David Dunning confirms this is the path to solving Dunning-Kruger Effect.

“Why don’t people know themselves?”

You begin to realize that there are just some really big barriers to knowing yourself. That’s if you make it a private task that only you are engaged in. If you don’t talk to [and engage with] other people.

If you talk to other people, they can be sources of invaluable insight into yourself. Some of these insights may be unpleasant. Also, just watching what other people do and benchmarking what you do versus what they do can be a source of insight. It takes a village, if you will, for a person to know themselves.

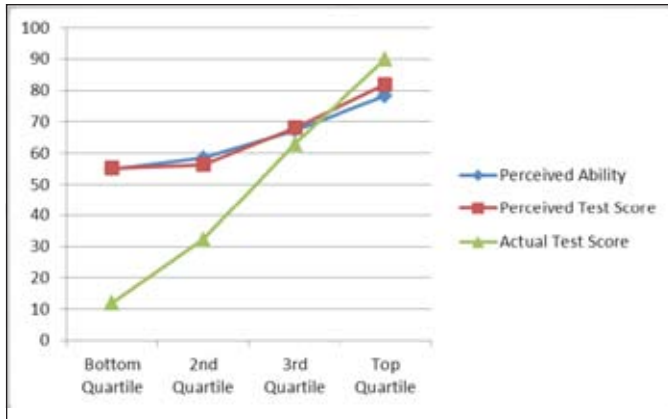
We engaged in a number of studies where we exposed people to others who are performing very poorly to performing extremely well and what we find is that the collective is pretty good at knowing who’s bad.

A last hint is to ask, “Are you vaguely embarrassed by things you did 5 or 10 years ago?” And if you are, that means you’re improving. I mean, if you think about the self you were 10 years ago and you’re not embarrassed by something that you did, you might be off the task.

Full interview with Dr. David Dunning:
You Are Not So Smart: YANSS Podcast 036 –
Why We Are Unaware that We Lack the Skill to Tell How Unskilled and Unaware We Are

<https://youarenotsmart.com/2014/11/10/yanss-podcast-036-why-we-are-unaware-that-we-lack-the-skill-to-tell-how-how-unskilled-and-unaware-we-are/>

It is wrong to believe the D-K Effect applies only to people who are “incompetent” or “dumb”. **D-K Effect applies to everyone** with respect to any area of knowledge. Too many people who bring it up seem to think that D-K Effect applies only to dumb people or that it says dumb people think they are smarter. Neither of these are true. Further – if you think D-K only applies to other people (which itself, ironically, is part of the D-K Effect) then you



Above: As measured ability/knowledge improves, so does the awareness and self estimate of that ability/knowledge. The top 20% will tend to underestimate their measured ability/knowledge as their deep knowledge allows insight into what they do not yet know, mid-range performers have a solid grasp of what they understand, and the bottom 20% has the worst overestimate of ability because they simply do not possess enough knowledge to make an accurate estimate. This is not something "dumb" people do. Every human is susceptible to this!

miss the core lesson and opportunity for self-improvement and critical thinking.

Solution

Go shoot a match or compete in something outside your unit or immediate group of friends once in a while. As Dr. David Dunning points out, if you don't, you're almost certainly a victim of Dunning-Kruger Effect and are not able to even realize it.

The key thing is to avoid "training incest", a concept I learned in an article by Sgt. Chuck Humes. "Training incest" occurs when personnel only shoot the same Army or unit standard. They don't truly know themselves because they forever remain in the same, stagnate circle and never learn anything beyond.

Ask yourself: Is my current level of training as good as, better than or inferior to what's being utilized across the country? Everyone would like to believe that the training provided to him or her is state of the art. After all, your life and the lives of those you protect depend upon it. But the million-dollar question that everyone should ask themselves in regards to assessing the quality of their own training is: "How do I know?" What have you compared it to? Unless you're exposed to outside training to compare your own to, how can you possibly know if the training you are receiving is as good as you've been led to believe?

When law enforcement agencies or military units remain secluded from other outside resources, it creates a form of unconscious incompetence best described as "training incest." There is a reason you shouldn't marry your sibling and have children. It's the same reason agencies and units need to be exposed to extramural "training genes" (i.e., outside principles, concepts, techniques, methodologies and training drills) and not blindly repeat what their drill sergeant told them.

When an agency or unit retains and secludes the same in-house training "genes" passed down from generation to generation of training personnel, you end up with training that's the human equivalent of the supporting cast of Deliverance. With no new ideas, concepts or tactics ever entering the picture, you'll get less-than-optimal results. Isolated training will pass on the same techniques and principles they were taught. Doing so in a robotic fashion that rarely, if ever, reaches the training standard, likely due to nobody even reading the in-house standard.

The Army has demonstrated this since 2016 when the Training Circulars replaced the old FM doctrine and units continued to bleat the redacted standard because Soldiers and units are never checked to see if they understand Department of Army standards, never mind good ideas from elsewhere.

By sharing our collective knowledge, we can keep the training "gene pool" from stagnating. Many Soldiers remain stuck in a fishbowl of inbred, stagnated training and have never thought about it. Stop secluding yourself from the greater training gene pool.

The Ladder of Success available to every Soldier and unit in the Army Reserve is:

1. Rung 1: Learn Current Standards. Read, understand, and implement the current standards (Training Circulars). Download and read for free. Army Reserve Marksman newsletter is another free resource.

Rung 2: Postal Matches. Starting at the local, unit level conduct Postal Matches. This can be done during routine qualification and does not require additional resources. It develops local interest and provides an initial extramural exposure outside your unit.

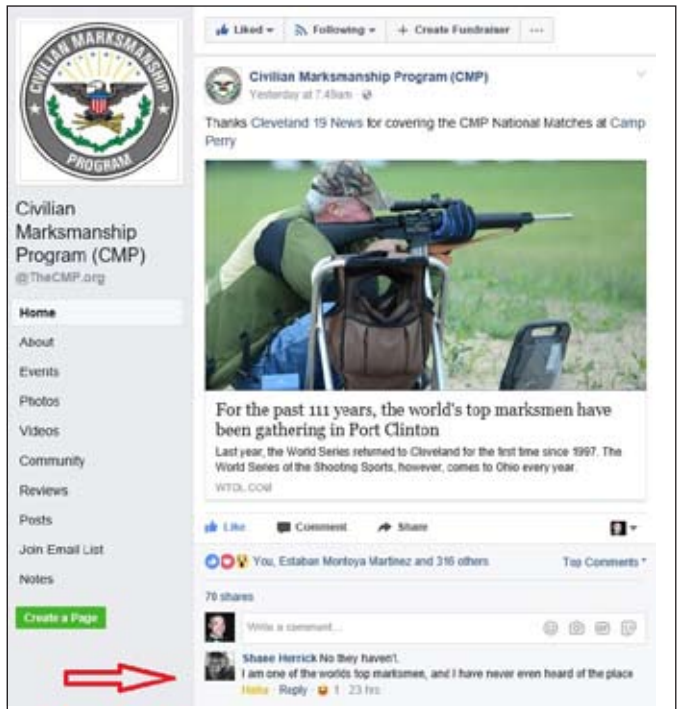
Rung 3: Excellence In Competition (Unit level). Conduct a local Excellence-In-Competition event for your unit. This expands on the second step. It requires doing more than mere qualification, it can be fit in any unit's range training efforts.



Above: March 11, 2019 post by DS Academy official social media, three years after the doctrine was changed..

Rung 4: Beyond Unit Level. Attend outside shooting events or matches. These can be local events, military sponsored competitions, Small Arms Firing School at the National Matches, or any number of classes. Army regulation (AR 350-66) authorizes commanders This can be done as an RST in lieu of drill/BA, RMA, AT, ADT, or any other order. AR 190-11 authorizes using unit weapons.

All of these can be done by every unit in the Army Reserve. The only limitation is units and commanders unwilling to use the resources that regulation authorizes them to use. **ARM**



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Public Affairs Change

by Sgt. 1st Class John M. Buol Jr.

I have been fulfilling the role of Public Affairs for the Marksmanship Program in an unpaid, unassigned, voluntary role. Despite AR 140-1 officially directing this as a Regulation requirement, neither USARC, OCAR, the Marksmanship Program, nor the Team fund managers are willing or able to support this.

AR 360-1 (Paragraph 2-4 and 8-3) now requires OPSEC Level II training. Because I am fulfilling this officially directed position with no support, I am not able to attend this in-residence course, and am now “unqualified” to continue meeting the requirement even as a volunteer.

Going forward, all Marksmanship Program Public Affairs are now hosted at:

<https://armyreservemarksman.info>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/USARvideo> 

Event Types

The types of events used by the Army Reserve.

To be a shooter, you need to go shoot. The Army Reserve Marksmanship Program needs shooter-instructors, personnel that are able and willing to share what they know and can perform well.

The best event is the one you attend. Shoot whatever you can. Pick something reasonably local (or conduct your own) that you like and go!

Military Sponsored Events

U S A R M a r k s m a n s h i p P r o g r a m
<https://www.usar.army.mil/ARM>

<https://ArmyReserveMarksman.info>

National Guard Marksmanship Training Center
<https://ngmtc.wordpress.com>

USAMU.com

World-wide Chief, Army Reserve Postal Matches

Per AR 140-1, these events are authorized for all Soldiers. The courses are simple and can be held during unit qualification on common Army ranges using issue targets already supplied. No additional resources or time need to be allocated. The idea is to provide an easy, first step into shooting beyond routine qualification. Training Circulars direct Validation exercises prior to Qualification and these courses readily serve that need. CAR Postal Match conducted during normal Qualification process serves as TC-mandated Validation, satisfying Training Table requirements.

Service Conditions (Combat)

Modern day combat matches have their beginning with the Commonwealth nations. The British Army Rifle Association (ARA) was formed in 1893 and is a public organization officially recognized by the British Army. In 1908 events featuring figure targets were introduced and Service, or combat, Shooting became its own discipline. The British Army Combat Shooting Team (BACST) is a branch of the ARA and forms teams to compete around the world.

These matches are not only great training but provide

the best road for members of the armed forces to get involved in higher level marksmanship. Within the National Guard each state has a Small Arms Readiness Training Section (SARTS) tasked to put on events to choose teams to attend the Winston P. Wilson (WPW) Nationals at Camp Robinson, near Little Rock, Arkansas, held during the Fall of each year. The top Guard shooters comprise the All Guard team. The Army Reserve doesn't currently have a feeder system like this but the USAR shooting program has had a Combat Team since the early 1990's. The Active components, through the Army Marksmanship Unit and Marine Corps have fielded teams as well.

These local events culminate in international events held throughout NATO. Within the United States the biggest on-going international military combat match is AF-SAM (Armed Forces Skill at Arms Meeting) held in conjunction with WPW, typically hosting teams from seven or eight other countries.

Combat competition shooting has evolved over the years and some of these courses have been integrated into Commonwealth marksmanship qualifications. The targets we use in competition look the same but feature score rings. Figure 11 targets are full sized silhouettes depicting an aggressive bayonet-wielding foe. For rifle, the center point is surrounded by a six-inch V-ring, ten-inch five ring, and 18-inch four ring. A hit anywhere else on the target scores three points. The pistol version has smaller score rings, with a four-inch five ring, six-inch four ring, eight-inch three ring (no V-ring) with the rest of the target being two points.

Figure 12 targets, also used on rifle courses, has the same size score rings as the rifle Figure 11 but the target encompasses only the head and shoulders. Other targets include the Figure 14 (Sniper window target or "Hun's Head"), Precision Target (same target size as the Figure 12, but with more outer score rings and mounted on a KD screen) and steel targets for Fire Team Assault (falling plates) matches.

Military Combat Competition provides a unique, practical shooting challenge. Organized competition finds your best performers and here they must shoot issue guns, gear and ammo. The training benefit is obvious and the best small arms instructors within the Army have consistently been top Combat competitors.

Civilian Hosted

Service Rifle, Service Pistol
 Civilian Marksmanship Program
thecmp.org/competitions

NRA
competitions.nra.org

Service Rifle

Service Rifle is conventional position rifle shooting (Standing, Sitting, and Prone), both for speed and precision, from 200 to 600 yards. As the name implies, the rifles used are issue service rifles with iron sights, accurized and modified slightly. The National Match Course is based on original rifle training courses and consists of the following:

10 shots Standing on the SR target at 200 yards in ten minutes.

10 shots Sitting on the SR target at 200 yards in sixty seconds. Shooters begin standing up and must reload during the string with eight rounds after shooting two shots.

10 shots Prone on the SR-3 target at 300 yards in seventy seconds. Shooters begin standing up and must reload during the string with eight rounds after shooting two shots.

20 shots Prone on the MR target at 600 yards in twenty minutes.

Snipers and Designated Marksman needing further marksmanship refinement MUST take up Service Rifle. You will learn a whole new level of accurate shooting. The best Sniper and SDM instructors have a Service Rifle background because the marksmanship skills learned there are superior.

Service Pistol

Service Pistol is conventional outdoor pistol shooting from 25 to 50 yards. All shooting is unsupported and with one hand only. As a marksmanship challenge and test of pure fundamental shooting skills Service Pistol has no peer. Competitors must train to deliver machine rest accuracy with everything from .22s to hard-recoiling .45s using optics and iron sights. Many of the events also require the use of service pistols with iron sights, accurized and modified slightly. The National Match Course is based on original pistol training courses and consists of the following:

Slow Fire. 10 shots Standing (One Hand) on the B-6 target at 50 yards in ten minutes.

Timed Fire. 10 shots Standing (One Hand) on the B-8 target at 25 yards. Shooters fire two strings of five rounds

in twenty seconds each.

Rapid Fire. 10 shots Standing (One Hand) on the B-8 target at 25 yards. Shooters fire two strings of five rounds in ten seconds each.

Other Events

IDPA.com
 USPSA.com
 3GunNation.com
 IPSC.org
 WA1500.org
 NationalRifleLeague.org
 PrecisionRifleSeries.com
 IHMSA.org

<http://funshoot.com>
<https://firearmusernetwork.com>
<http://huntershooter.com>



Trigger Pin?

by Sgt. 1st Class John M. Buol Jr.

From a fellow Team shooter:

“I just gave the Army Training Circulars about small arms training a thorough read through. Bottom line, the TCs are very much like the same stuff we’ve been teaching all along. Very little I can arguably disagree with.”

Not really happy about their take on trigger follow through. They almost encourage the “hot release”, repeatedly instructing to not hold back the trigger, stating: “the longer the trigger is held to the rear the longer the Soldier prevents the pistol from functioning and delays reengagement.”

I believe a shooter can’t shoot accurately any faster than he/she can recover from recoil, so there’s no need to get the trigger reset while the sights are off the target. Thoughts?”

We’re in agreement. The new TCs are an overall improvement. Now just a matter of getting personnel to read them...

Concerning the “hot release” vs. trigger pin or hold/reset, this issue is a classic example of a useful attempt at a corrective by knowledgeable people being misinterpreted by parrots and creating problems.

Pinning the trigger is taught as a method to encourage followthrough. Feeling/hearing a click is a way to help someone with poor followthrough or recoil anticipation, pre-ignition push, flinch, or other unintended movement disrupting alignment. Used well, it’s a corrective that can help establish control in trigger manipulation.

Apparently, in some law enforcement circles pinning the trigger to the rear after each shot and over emphasis on a slow reset became a version of “watch your breathing” in that cadre overemphasized it to the point of it overshadowing trigger control during the shot. I’ve seen videos of struggling LEO shooters being barked at by an “instructor” to emphasize a slow, deliberate trigger reset followed by a sharp, rearward jerk to make the shot go because that’s what someone emphasized to them as “important.” This also needlessly slows shot-to-shot speed.

“Reset... reset... reset... FIRE!” The sequence places way too much emphasis and time spent on a smooth reset and no emphasis on smoothly controlling the trigger dur-

ing the shot release. Ya know, when it actually matters...

It’s easy to see how a novice instructor working with shooters having no experience (a situation most common in law enforcement and military) can take a corrective completely out of context.

This is rather like someone long ago thought “trigger squeeze” was a useful way to convey the idea of smoothly-controlled trigger pressure and “trigger jerk” a way to describe unintended movement during shot release. The first is sometimes misinterpreted as squeezing with the whole hand as you’d normally do when, say, squeezing a lemon. The second is often misinterpreted by implying the “jerk” is mostly or solely due to the index finger on the trigger and not an unintended reaction from the rest of the shooter’s body.

Any of a number of correctives might be useful if they’re coming from someone knowledgeable enough to make the distinction. These same correctives can be potentially detrimental when overemphasized by personnel that don’t really understand what it is or why they’re emphasizing it. The error is “training” this reset as a required technique instead of using it to briefly emphasize followthrough for someone that isn’t otherwise getting it. **ARM**

Army Reserve Postal Matches

All units are eligible to be a part of the World-wide Chief, Army Reserve Postal Matches and all Soldiers and encouraged to participate. Host during the conduct of routine qualification at no expense to the unit or to Soldiers.

Learn more at

<https://www.usar.army.mil/ARM>

<https://ArmyReserveMarksman.info/postal-match>

Have a Plan

SEAL Team Six, Training Walkthroughs and Competition Shooting

by Sgt. 1st Class John M. Buol Jr.

We're sometimes told by people with no proven, demonstrated, higher-level skill and zero competition experience that competitive shooting is bad. Often, the crux of their misinformed opinion is that many competitive venues allow competitors to view the course of fire beforehand. The claim is this isn't realistic apparently because knowledge of the encounter and preplanning isn't realistic.

Seal Team Six and their successful raid on Osama Bin Laden is well known. Consider some of the preparations made to accomplish this mission.

The team performed rehearsals of the raid in two locations in the US: At Harvey Point Defense Testing Activity facility in North Carolina where a 1:1 version of Bin Laden's compound was built, and a second, similar mock up in Nevada.

According to the book *No Easy Day*, the mock-ups of bin Laden's hideaway were built from plywood and shipping containers and were remarkably detailed: "The construction crews at the base had planted trees, dug a ditch around the compound, and even put in mounded dirt to simulate the potato fields that surrounded the compound in Pakistan."

The location in Nevada was also used because at 4,000 feet elevation it could better simulate the effects the altitude would have on helicopters during the mission.

The members of SEAL Team Six left for Afghanistan for more practice at another one-acre, full-scale replica of the compound built on a restricted area of Bagram known as Camp Alpha.

So that's training and walkthroughs in full size replicas at three different locations. The SEALs didn't blindly enter an unknown area and then "tactical" or "ninja" their way through the mission. That would have been stupid and probably suicidal. Instead, after extensive intelligence gathering, accurate mock ups were constructed and the team performed training in them to know the layout before doing it for real.

Consider this next time someone claims practical shooting like IPSC, USPSA, IDPA, SensibleShooter and the

like are useless because you don't get walkthroughs in real life. SEAL Team Six did many stage walkthroughs prior to that mission in three different mockups! They, being much smarter than typical tactard timmies, did as many stage walkthroughs as possible.

Have A Plan

<https://www.police1.com/swat/articles/10-years-after-911-seal-team-six-and-police-swat-tactics-of-cqb-CUFRAB-VmDes74VAs/>

An article comparing tactics used by SEAL Team Six and police SWAT teams found them to be very similar. A focus on fundamental skills and pre-planning for the encounter are considered vital. Here is SWAT operator and author Sgt. Glenn French's take on this:

What strikes me about the operation to take out bin Laden is that SEAL Team Six focused on fundamental CQB operations. The intelligence gathered from various sources was used to formulate an assault plan, the plan was rehearsed, and the plan was executed as designed.

Reportedly, twenty three soldiers started the operation and twenty three boarded the Blackhawks to return home. The terrorist didn't fare so well. Obviously they didn't have a plan, nor did they rehearse and execute their tactics as well as the American warriors. If they did, the outcome might have been different.

Knowledge of the area, formulating a plan based around this intelligence, and practice for the specific encounter is considered vital. This is the exact same approach used in many competitive venues. A match description and/or rule book are your Operations Order. Yes, there are rules in a gunfight as the common acronym ROE (Rules Of Engagement) explicitly spells out. Course of fire or stage descriptions and walkthroughs serve as intelligence gathering. The encounter is planned, then executed.

Despite Walter Mitty fantasies, most tactical cognoscenti aren't planning team raids into hostile structures. Well, not any team raids that are going to actually occur. Consider home defense, a common reason many American gun owners possess firearms. You should be very familiar with the layout of the structure you reside in. A modicum of planning readily reveals where hostiles will be. Unless

you're assaulted by minions of Cthulhu spawning in your bedchamber, these will come through obvious portals like doors or windows. Some sort of audible alarm to trigger you awake needs to be arranged.

So, we have a course of fire with a stage layout known in advance, knowledge of where the targets will be, a plan of action before beginning, and an audible start signal to begin. Wait... that sounds an awful lot like many competitive events!

Here's an idea. Volunteer to help design and set up some practical shooting matches, such as SensibleShooter, USP-SA, IDPA, etc. at your local range. Start with this:

Stage: "Defend This House"

Start Position: "Lying on the bed with head on the marked X, handgun is loaded and secured in GunVault SpeedVault."

Stage Procedure: "At signal, retrieve pistol, move to position A and engage..."

Of course, the layout just happens to mirror your residence. Consider that people attend tactical classes and never address issues like this that are specific their actual needs. Despite costing hundreds of dollars per person per day, these line dances routinely fail to address specific concerns unique to the paying student. Even if the class and instructor is good, you're still left sorting that out on your own. Like, say, by setting it up as a course of fire to try with live fire.

Have a plan. Many real world situations are best handled by having a sensible plan in place and knowing how to execute it. It is useful to be good at establishing a plan and measuring your ability to execute.

How to Implement

Military tactical training is often very similar to practical shooting competition stages. The idea is to train in an abbreviated tactical environment, one that allows many small scenarios and iterations so students can trade off tasks and leadership roles. Working with future military leaders in ROTC, a squad-sized class might run through 7-10 mini "missions" daily, each one a different scenario designed to teach and train a certain task. Receive an Operations Order, run through Troop Leading Procedures, execute and complete the mission in about an hour rather than taking weeks.

This very abbreviated format allows many lessons learned daily. This culminates into larger missions. No point in wasting time and resources on something elaborate until basics are practiced and reinforced. Might as

well screw up, and learn from, many short, inexpensive tasks before wasting time doing the same in something elaborate. Ranger school and other leadership courses follow a similar format.

This is also what is done at practical competition. The rulebook and stage brief is your operations order. Stage walkthrough is mission prep. Make a plan and prepare to execute. Shooting the stage for score is mission execution, with a numerical result showing how well you did. Shooters with a higher score either used a better plan and/or performed with greater skill. While not a team or leadership test, this format moves the cycle down from hour-long iterations to minutes. The actual mission (shooting stage) also serves as the training mockup instead taking the time and expense of duplicating it in a different location elsewhere.

Ultimately, it boils down to an ability to train basic skills, receive a mission, prepare for it and execute, then take in the lessons learned and develop further. The result (score) provides empirical and objective feedback of actual measured skill rather than a bogus, feel-good "assessment" of how tactical we think we are.

Shooting competitions are a fast, inexpensive way to work through this learning cycle and let motivated individuals do it on their own. [ARM](http://www.army.mil)

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Call For Articles

All articles, and ideas helpful to improving small arms training, qualification, and competition for Army Reserve Soldiers are welcome. Submit anything you'd like included in Army Reserve Marksman Contact: <http://ArmyReserveMarksman.info/public-affairs>

