



Skillz & Drillz

Let's expand more upon interaction with the pistol in a safe and consistent manner and touch upon some good basic drills to maintain and improve performance. This is from my perspective of competition shooting, so everything must be slick, ready and practised; you miss a beat, you fail, it's as simple as that! As always, safe gun handling is paramount

There are some great 'club-friendly' entry competitions from UKPSA for many firearms disciplines. They offer two postal leagues in the year (summer and winter). These are great foundations to work from and develop skills. They are free to the individual and the club.

SPEED FEED

Magazine changes, sounds easy; just pull it out and slap it in! But there's more if you want to shave seconds and get it right to ensure repeatable skills and a safe

orientation. I use two x 2-mag, open-topped pouches on my weak side, so four clips in all. They are positioned base up with the bullets pointing forwards and I take from the rear and move forward. This is my preferred orientation and one I can replicate 100%, to ensure smooth transitions.

Depending upon the make and model of LBP, some magazines seat 'flush' to the well. This means that if you palm it home with the heel of your hand, you may not always successfully engage it with the catch. This is the most common reason for a failure, particularly in a dynamic reload.

You can use your thumb or heel of your hand to make the insertion and ensure you feel the click. Or fit a base plate extension (bumper) which gives you a bit more length to push it in, plus can protect the mag when it falls free. Some of these accommodate extra rounds, so what's not to like about that? It's possible to bevel the mouth of the grip, to allow easier insertion, or buy a

bolt-on funnel that does the same thing, but you are going to need long bumpers if you do.

DROP IT

Releasing a spent mag and installing another is all performed strictly within our 6"x6" fumble zone, which is directly in-front of us at the mounted position. It will feel weird till you get used to it, but this is essential. Your natural movement will want to 'bend the wrist', and so also the firearm, at an angle to present the well to the magazine. However, when you do this, where is your pistol pointing? This is not safe!

All it needs though, is regular practise to remind your muscles where to be. Pretty soon you will find that you can perform this and all manoeuvres within the fumble zone by simply 'twisting' the wrist, so that the firearm presents the magazine well, without moving the barrel outside of the 0/90° fumble zone. You are practising to a level

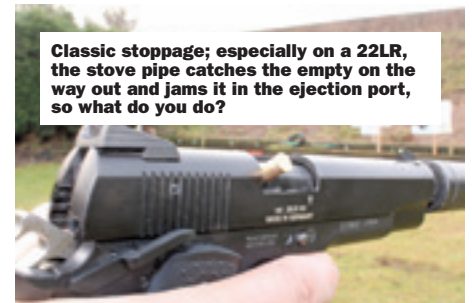


Shooter ready? You know what to do and practiced, so don't stuff it up

Eddie Putwain of Team Red Flag looks at the best way to handle a long-barrelled pistol in competition



Spare mags are essential, as are enough of them and how they are positioned



Classic stoppage; especially on a 22LR, the stove pipe catches the empty on the way out and jams it in the ejection port, so what do you do?



Don't just slap it in, feel it go home and lock, wrongly inserted mags are one of the biggest causes of problems



Feed chutes and bumpers all serve to aid slick mag changes

that you are not looking. You release the mag, it drops, whilst you go for the reload. No need to look, you know where it is and how to twist the gun, so that the magazine will enter the well. Shove it home, up to shooting position, sight alignment, safety, trigger and off you go again. Nice and smooth is the secret; my fastest competition reloads have always seemed slow in my head, but they have been smooth, and so actually fast, due to repetitive training and practise. If you don't do it right, speed counts for nothing!

CHAMBER

So, your magazine is in, and either the slide is locked back, or closed but in both cases no round is chambered. In the latter case, draw back the slide with the weak hand and release it; again, within the fumble zone, pointing 0/90°. This will feed and chamber the first round. Do not

help it forward, it needs a full stroke and the momentum to strip and seat the round.

If the slide is open, you have another option to make ready, either by using the slide catch on the side of the firearm, or by manually pulling it back again with the weak hand and releasing. This option is reliable but check if you can do this without affecting your grip. If you need to release your grip to reach the slide release, you then need to reset your hand before you shoot. I can assure you it has taken considerably longer to write this than do. The act takes seconds, but must be practised regularly to ensure a safe, consistent and smooth action each time.

SHOW CLEAR AND STOPPAGES

Once you have expended all rounds, the slide will automatically lock open showing a clear chamber. The RO will announce 'show clear'. Press the mag release to drop the mag, shout clear and allow the RO to check

that the gun is empty. Conversely, you may, for whatever reason, end with rounds in the mag and therefore a hot pistol. Here, remove the magazine, pull back the slide and lock it rearwards for inspection. This action will eject the live round in the chamber, it's easy enough to roll the pistol over and cup your hand over the ejection port to catch it as it comes out. However, if you can't do this without moving it out of the safety/fumble zone, then let it fall and pick it up later.

Stoppages. The most common causes are either failure to feed fully or partially, a duff round that has not gone off or is under-powered, lack of extraction and stovepipes. This last usually means an empty case caught halfway out of the ejection port, as the slide goes forward. Regardless, normal protocols apply. On seeing you have stopped:

Stand still, pointing 0/90° at the backstop. Call out 'stoppage' for RO.



Empty; new mag in then press the slide release lever while maintaining your firing position and grip



If the slide is closed just rack it to chamber the first round



XXXXXXXX
xaption x
XXXX XXX



XXXXXXXX
xaption x
XXXX XXX

Wait the required 30 seconds minimum, just in case the round is cooking off (hang fire).

Then, if the RO is happy, release the mag, lock the slide open and clear the firearm. Remember, all within the fumble zone, all pointing 0/90°. Personally, I like to hear a nice loud cry of CLEAR from the shooter, followed by a reciprocal call from the RO once the chamber is confirmed empty, it's simply good drills.

SHOOTING AND LOADING DRILLS

Following UKPSA/IPSC competition rules, you will use the following starting positions: Condition 1 – Loaded, round in the chamber safety on.

Condition 2 – Loaded, but NO round in the breech.

Condition 3 – Unloaded.

Simply pick a simple drill and then vary the starting condition to practise.

Here's a drill we use. Five mags, four in pouches, one loaded in the pistol, 'condition 1'. Position two UKPSA mini targets 10 metres next to each other. On the start signal, bring the gun up, safety off; 2-shots on each target. Drop the mag, perform a dynamic reload, repeat, again and again. Have the RO put a different number of rounds in the mags, so some will require bolt release, or unexpected mag changes

and as the shooter you don't know till it's your turn. You could even get 22LR snap caps to simulate a duff cartridge!

At Team Red Flag, we do this most weeks as a warm up. Firstly, to ensure safety drills are up to scratch, and secondly to 'remind' our head to get out of the way and let the body do the work, in a safe manner. This is only achievable with lots and lots of practise. Also, you can switch it up with changing the start position.

In competition, it can be as simple as standing facing the target with the firearm in your hand. At the other end of the spectrum, it can be that the gun is not in your hand, but on a table, covered by a tea towel,

unloaded, whilst you are sitting on a chair pretending to read a newspaper waiting for the beep! Competition course designers are inherently evil; so, it's as well to practise. The more you compete, the more stages you become familiar with and develop your skills!

GET FAMILIAR

Get to know your pistols 'point of aim' at different distances. Typically, at 20, 15, 10 yards; where do you need to aim? Again, shake up the drills with targets at different distances, and then run them in small stages, and repeat, repeat, and repeat!

So, you have got all of this 'down pat' as an experienced and disciplined pistol Jedi. Well-practised in each discipline, thousands of rounds have been spent, and mag changes smoother than an oiled otter. Gun is clean, mags are secure. You have read the range orders and have the course engraved in your brain. Confidently striding out to the start point, are you ready? You are ready, standby, BEEP, click, damn! So, practice those skillz & drillz!

UKPSA offer a great Pistol Safety Course to make shooters competition proficient, and ensure good safety disciplines – check it out on their website.

www.teamredflag.co.uk
www.ukpsa.co.uk



The UKPSA are the guys to go to for any form of Practical shooting