

What in the world are you shooting at?

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Want to learn how to shoot a handgun really well? The first thing you need to know is, these aren't things you're just going to be able to just *“do”*. They're going to require some work on your part.

So, the question is, how determined are you to learn to shoot really well? If the answer is *“not that determined”* then you shouldn't bother reading any more of this. This is for those that have a *real* desire to shoot well and are willing to do the necessary **work** to get there. You may have heard of some of these things before but I doubt you've heard them in quite the same way I'm going to tell you now.

Keep in mind that this follows your learning the basics and safety issues like **muzzle control**, keeping your **finger out of the trigger guard** until your ready to fire that shot, proper stance, grip, basic sight alignment, etc.

Here are the four main things to work on:

1. You have to teach yourself how to hold the gun still - I mean *really* still.
2. You have to learn to focus on your front sight while maintaining perfect sight alignment
3. You have to teach yourself to *squeeze* the trigger without ANY tightening of your grip
4. The mental part

1. Holding the gun still.

First you need to teach yourself to hold the gun - or maybe a 3 to 5 pound weight if you're practicing in the house [I bought an Airsoft Pellet pistol, a P226 SIG since that's my primary practice/target gun – it works] - at arms length using the proper stance - for about half a minute without getting the shakes or lowering the gun from fatigue. You can get there by starting out holding for 10 seconds, resting, then holding for 10 seconds etc for 10 repeats, then rest for 5 minutes. Then do it all again at least for 5 more series. Do this for the first 3 days or nights, then extend your hold to 20 seconds, but still keeping the 10 second rest - 10 times, 5 minutes rest then 5 more series of the same. Do this for 3 days or nights then increase the hold by another 10 seconds to 30 seconds, still retaining the 10 second rest period. If you follow this progression, you will get to the stage of being able to hold for 30 second periods without any great distress followed by the same 10 second break etc. All through these exercises you are trying not only to hold your arm out, but to hold it as still as you can.

2. Maintain Perfect Sight Alignment

When you can hold for half a minute without much discomfort or shaking, then you start to worry about sight alignment and front sight focus. If you can't get a clear focus on the front sight, go see an optometrist. Get him to make you a lens which allows you to focus clearly on

your front sight only. That means everything else short of that will be a little blurred - everything beyond that, *including what you're shooting at*, will also be blurred. If your glasses are made properly your eye will focus clearly on your front sight without any effort, if you don't need glasses, so much the better. Now practice your aim, align your sights, focus on the front sight but don't do anything with the trigger yet. You should be aiming and trying to hold sight alignment as perfect as you can while ignoring any other movement [like your finger on the trigger]. Practice this against a blank wall - no aiming marks [yet].

You need to practice doing this for at least a couple of weeks with the usual 10 second break in between holds. You have to force yourself to keep that perfect sight alignment. Instead of thinking about your hand and arm moving the gun so alignment is maintained, try to make yourself think it's your eye moving the sights into perfect alignment. Your arms are already there now. This helps get it into your brain, it has to become a sub-conscious act. It gets easier as you practice. Now after a couple of weeks, put an aiming mark on the wall, and practice holding that perfect sight alignment against the aiming mark, trying to keep the whole sight picture as still as you can. Imagine that it is your eye again, that's forcing the aligned sights onto the aiming mark. Do this in half-minute holds with 10 second breaks in between. Initially you will be all over the wall but by focusing hard on the front sight, you can actually condition yourself fairly quickly to minimize swaying and arm movement. Try saying to yourself "keep still" and keep telling yourself to hold still until you just do it. If you are focusing really hard on the front sight you can almost put yourself in a trance where holding everything still and suddenly becomes very easy. Do not practice pulling the trigger [yet]..

3. *Squeezing the Trigger Perfectly*

This is undoubtedly the hardest thing to learn and it will take time. The good thing about it is you can practice this anywhere, even without your gun. There is a natural tendency when you hold onto something for the various muscles in your hand and wrist to move when you move your trigger finger. Practice the proper grip on your gun while sitting down watching TV. You don't have to aim. Just get a firm grip [but not tight] on the gun and then relax your trigger finger (it can be done!) and practice moving your trigger finger back and forth on the trigger, while keeping a firm grip. While you are doing this you can feel and see if your other fingers or your whole grip is tightening up or moving in when you move that finger. Keep practicing this until you feel confident that your trigger finger is moving totally independently of your hand.

Now practice *squeezing* the trigger through, to release. Try to keep your trigger finger relaxed. This gets harder as the trigger weight gets heavier [called "stacking"; created by the trigger spring "stacking" coils together and increasing weight as the trigger is pulled]. Keep practicing! You should be able to *squeeze* the trigger right through release without anything happening to the other fingers or especially your grip. A good exercise here is to lay the gun in the web of your hand and grip the gun firmly between the thumb and palm, with the other fingers of your hand straight out, but at rest. *Squeeze* the trigger *slowly* until it snaps the hammer/striker, watching the other fingers. When you can snap the hammer/striker consistently without moving the other fingers, it's time to move on. Every now and then, go back to this exercise and check that you're able to keep from moving your other fingers. Start practicing *squeezing* the trigger while holding the gun really steadily, with sights aligned on that aiming mark you now have on

the wall. Keep your trigger finger relaxed. Keep your other fingers from moving with the trigger finger. Practice, practice, practice. This is the hardest thing to do in trigger control, so it requires the most practice.

4. The mental part

Now is the time to try to embed this process in the brain. Take your gun, check your grip, come to aim with your sights perfectly aligned and hold on the aiming mark. You should be remaining completely still and focused on that front sight. Now start *squeezing* the trigger as before and as you are *squeezing* it, stop thinking about it. Just stay aimed and focus hard on the front sight, maintaining that perfect alignment. Don't try to make the trigger snap! If after about 10 second's it hasn't released, take your finger off the trigger, lower the gun and relax. Now repeat the whole process. You should never, *ever*, consciously try to make the trigger release. That's a rookie mistake usually made in conjunction with jerking the trigger because you/they think the target is perfectly in alignment – it probably was before they jerked the trigger to hear the gun go bang. You may have to lower the gun a number of times before this works, but what you are trying for is, as you are focusing hard on the front sight, your trigger finger will eventually *squeeze* the trigger through to release sub-consciously. This is the real secret of the top shooters. The sub-conscious shot. You need to practice doing this every chance you get until it is just a natural action/reaction in your mind and with your hands. After you learn this, never consciously fire a shot. If the shot won't go off by itself, put the gun down and try again - it doesn't matter how long it takes. Anyone that's ever worked with me has heard – *every shot should be a surprise to you.*

As a natural progression of learning to shoot a handgun well, these four steps will make a big improvement on you scoring ability if you're willing to put the effort in.

Good Luck, Good and safe shooting.