

# Shooter's Checklist version 2.0 - Part 1



For the last few months, I've been going down the rabbit hole of how I would typically teach our "Fundamentals of Marksmanship" class. Like any smartphone or ballistic device we use, there are constant upgrades to the software to make the user interface more enjoyable, add new bullets to the library, or clean up any bugs the previous version may have had. I would be doing a disservice to my students if I wasn't challenging myself to upgrade the way I communicated information.

If you've watched my [Shooter's Checklist](#) video on YouTube, that was pretty much only talking about how I prep my body position behind the rifle. It made sense to me, obviously because I've been doing it for

so many years, but I realized I cut out so many steps while trying to articulate how to really build a shooting position when talking to a newer shooter and the steps I take prior to taking a shot.

So if you've attended any of our In-Person courses this year, I've started to break this down into what we called "Big Blue Arrows" in the Marine Corps which is a shortened scheme of maneuver brief during our mission planning process. But if anyone has sat through a Mission Planning brief, you'd know that there is so much detail that goes into what each individual Marine is doing during an operation, all the way down to how their bootlaces need to be tied. No shit.

But we won't get that crazy with this. However, I'm going to use this platform to share with you guys what we've been teaching at our In-Person courses. This will be a mini-series of articles to talk about our new and hopefully improved Shooter's Checklist.

To re-iterate, with this list, in the series I'll go deep into the weeds of what the shooter should be focusing on when executing that specific task and the purpose behind it. So let's dive into the big blue arrows.

1. Ground the rifle
2. Body Position
3. Aiming Process
4. Firing Solution
5. Firing Controls
6. Followthrough and Recovery

7. Observe feedback

8. Bolt Manipulation

As you're looking at this, if you're an experienced shooter you might see that your list might be slightly different than this, which is fine! There are many ways to skin a cat. But if you're a new shooter with ZERO check list, this is a great start to establish a baseline. Think of it as a cooking recipe. You find one that you like for whatever dish you're trying to cook, it looks simple and gets you to the point. But as you cook that recipe over and over again, you'll start to tweak certain things about it to really bring that dish to way you like it.

With that... for our next article we're going to dive into Grounding the Rifle!

Thanks for reading guys and thanks for being here.

***Keep your face on the gun.***

-Phillip

# Step 1 - Grounding the Rifle

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This is pretty self explanatory. The very first thing when building our shooting position is to ground the rifle. This includes orienting the rifle in relationship to the target (as close as you can get it).

If you're building a prone position, this means making sure you've dropped your support bag and place the rifle down on it's bipod.

If you're building a supported shooting position (standing, kneeling, sitting), and you're using "rifle to bag connection at the balance point" technique, then you want to make sure you ground the rifle and bag at the balance point.

If you're shooting off a tripod, this means the rifle is either clamped in via ARCA or saddle or utilizing a tac table technique.

Most shooters that overlook this process try to build their position around a rifle that has not yet been grounded correctly. This in turn, creates a position that they're fighting throughout their shooting process which leads to poor stability and recoil control.

When I'm training and breaking down my process, this is the first I'm trying to perfect. If I don't nail my bag placement and balance point, I'm restarting (meaning if the rifle doesn't sit on the balance point with no shooter influence). If my bipod height was set incorrectly when moving into the prone position, then I will restart with the correct bipod height unless I'm specifically working that troubleshooting technique.

Once you begin to refine this small and overlooked step in your shooter's checklist, I promise you'll see huge results in your shooting.

Now that the rifle has been grounded... our next step is to **build our body position...**

# Step 2 - Body Position // Shooter's Checklist 2.0



Knowing what position you are going to get into is half the battle. The relationship between your body and rifle influences both stability and recoil control. Certain parts of our body may have larger influences than others in regards to both. I.E. the location of your lower body in relationship to your target has a greater effect on stability than your support elbow placement.

Three considerations to have when building any shooting position is comfort, stability and recoil management and how all three of them compliment each other in some way. However, being comfortable should always be of the highest priority because if you are not comfortable, you're not thinking about anything else.

As we dive into this list, as some of you have seen or heard before, it's important to remember that this list is meant to give you a systematic approach to building your firing position and once you commit it to memory will serve as a diagnostic toolbox to fine tune your position and ultimately build neural pathways that will reduce cognitive load and free up mental capacity so that you can allocate your attention to other tasks (i.e. wind changes).

### **1. Square hips and shoulders to the target.**



This will greatly reduce your "infinity sign" wobble. Notice how it says to the target and not your rifle. It's important to always maintain situational awareness of your target and not focusing on building your shooting position. Once you bring your rifle to your body, your rifle will naturally point to the target as long as your body is set up correctly.

## 2. Rifle to shoulder connection

As high and medial as possible. Don't forget to "build a bridge." How we connect our rifle to our shoulder, affects step 3. The goal is to bring the rifle as close to the Y axis of the shooting eye as possible.

## 3. Cheek/jaw weld

Completely dependent of your face geometry and your application to shooting. As a competitive shooter, I've gravitated to a jaw weld versus a cheek weld because in neutral/erect shooting positions such as a standing or double kneeling, it has less of an affect in regards to downward pressure of the buttstock causing inherent wobble.

## 4. Grip of the Firing Hand



Without diving into a rabbit hole, we're going to keep this abbreviated. I've actually contemplated on turning this into "Hold" of the Firing Hand because when we hear the word "Grip" we think we



actually have to grip around the whole grip area. What we teach is that the firing hand is responsible for 4 things.

1. Trigger finger placement.
2. Control of the rifle.
3. Cant of the rifle.
4. Rearward pressure.

I set up my grip/hold around my 90 degree trigger finger placement. However my hand falls after my 90 degrees is set up, is how I hold the grip area.

As far as pressure, the best analogy I can make is to imagine that you are holding an empty soda can. If you death grip the can, it will just crush in and the can won't be able to return back to its original properties. We want to avoid that. Only enough pressure to maybe indent the can slightly and hold it within your fingertips and when you release the can, it will return back to its originally settings.

## **5. Placement of the shooting elbow**



When you're in the prone, the shooting elbow needs to be aligned with the non-shooting elbow, perpendicular to the line of the bore and parallel to your shoulders. When you start getting into positions off your belly, being cognizant of where your shooting elbow is important. If you can ground it somewhere (put it on a bag that is filling a negative space, putting it on your knee, etc.) you'll see the immediate improvement in your stability.



## **6. Placement of the non-shooting elbow**

Very similar responsibilities as the placement of the shooting elbow.

## **7. Position of the support hand.**

When you're in the prone, this is what you're using to control your rear bag. The support hand controls the fine tune adjustments of your aiming process and when utilized correctly can help with recoil control. Depending on the type of support hand placement you are using for positional shooting, this also controls the micro-adjustments of your aiming process and helps control the rifle from recoiling up.

## **8. Lower body position.**

This is typically the first and last thing I'm checking, especially in regards to my natural point of aim. In the prone, moving your hips back or forward will help with your Y axis adjustments, and obviously moving your hips left or right will translate to your X axis adjustments. When you're off your belly, this is the pitch of your legs (wide or narrow base) that helps ensure you are maintaining your center of gravity over your hips.

The devil is in the details. I could probably write a book about these 8 factors common to all shooting positions! One thing I want to re-iterate is that regardless if I'm building a prone or a kneeling position, my position building process is the same. Square up, rifle to shoulder connection (build a bridge), grip, etc.

When you train, remember to try to isolate every single body part and how it affects your position in regards to comfort, stability or recoil control. Just because you have good stability doesn't necessarily mean that the position will also have good recoil control so it's important to find that balance.

As soon as my body position is set up I can now start my **aiming process.**