



## DRY-FIRE TRAINING

BY DAVE LANGE

It was breezy the first time I shot at Camp Perry, just enough to give the average shooter chicken finger and lower the scores. Some service shooters did very well and seemed unaffected by the wind. Being new, I believed the explanation that they do well in the wind because they practice in the wind. It took me a few years to learn the real reason—because they DRY-FIRE. Whether it's windy, raining, sunny or cold, they pull the trigger the same way every time because they dry-fire.

Dry-firing trains your subconscious in all of the basics. When you dry-fire, check your stance, maintain a constant grip, focus on the dot or front sight, maintain sight alignment and breathe

properly, just as you would during live fire.

If you can identify a weakness, concentrate on improving just that one skill while dry-firing. For instance, if you are pumping your grip when you shoot sustained fire, concentrate on just maintaining a consistent grip while dry-firing.

Once you've learned the basics, continue to hone your skills through repetition, dry-firing at least once a day, five days a week. Dry-fire sessions only need to be ten or fifteen minutes long—longer, if they remain productive. Don't teach yourself bad habits by dry-firing longer than you physically or mentally should. Remember, PERFECT practice makes perfect. My dry-fire training is 15 minutes in the morning, when I get home from work and before I go to bed.

There are a few training tools on the market that can enhance your dry-fire training and make it even more fun, such as the Rika Trainer ([www.pilkguns.com](http://www.pilkguns.com)). The Rika has many features, but even the basic model provides scores and valuable shot analysis.

When I dry-fire, I start with the muzzle about an inch from a blank wall. Not having a target and being close to the wall puts me in a natural point of aim and prevents my eyes from focusing far away. I run a mental program before every shot or string of shots, so I do the same when I dry-fire. I do not pull my trigger without first running a mental program, ever! In my mental program, I visualize my red dot

in the center of the bull. While I focus on the red dot and squeeze the trigger, I imagine the shot breaking and the bullet going straight through the center of the red dot. Then I imagine a target with a hole in the center of the X-ring and think, "...and you've got an X." I use the same technique for iron sights except I focus on the front sight instead of the red dot. The whole idea is to focus on the sights and break the shot without disturbing the sight alignment or moving the dot.

After about five or ten minutes of dry-firing against a blank wall, I dry-fire at a reduced target across the room. I have found that dry-firing against a blank wall trains me to keep my sights aligned and my eyes focused on the sights. Dry-firing at a reduced target helps steady my hold.

When a shooter asks me what to do about a specific problem, the first thing I do is ask them if they dry-fire. I can't tell you how many shooters say, "No, I tried that and it doesn't work for me." Dry-firing does work as long as you commit to it for as long as you want your shooting and scores to improve. ©

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