

CONSCIOUS BREATH CONTROL

Breath control is about focusing your mind on the physical sensations happening within your body at that moment.

To achieve the highest level of performance, elite shooters use very specific breathing routines. It is the very foundation of their technique.

Conscious controlling of your breathing has a great many positive benefits. It is an integral part of performing the "controlled sequence" of firing an accurate shot with a pistol, which I have entitled the "Work Cycle".

Not only does it provide a rhythm and structure to the "Work cycle", just as importantly it also ensures that your vision, muscles and circulation are oxygenated to their optimum level at critical moments in your "Work Cycle".

Correct implementation of a Yoga-type breathing technique also provides you with a degree of control over your stress levels during a competition. Focusing on breath control is an excellent method of retaining mental focus and prevents distracting 'negative' thoughts from entering your conscious state.

Yoga-type breathing

There must be at least four Yoga breaths taken during the course of a "Work Cycle" as well as others between shots. These breaths must utilize yoga-type breathing.

Using your diaphragm, *not chest*, air is inhaled smoothly and calmly through the nose and exhaled by blowing lightly, *not noisily*, out through the mouth. After each breath there should be a slight pause in your breathing rhythm.

It is a long established fact that this type of breathing induces a quiet calm to the practitioner. You can practice Yoga breathing whilst being transported to the range; ensure that you always have sufficient time to practice your breathing just before a competition.

This achieves two objectives: firstly you benefit from its calming effect and secondly, because you have practiced this type of breathing during your pistol shooting training, your sub-conscious state recognizes the physical action and is therefore comfortable in the knowledge that there is nothing to be anxious about.

SIGHT PICTURE

How many times have Pistol Shooters heard the phrase, watch the sights, and how many times have you been told you weren't looking at the sights? We are also shown pictures of an inverted 'E' with a black ball floating above it.

Ok, so we've all got the message that the sight picture is important but very rarely do you get an explanation as to what exactly you should be looking at.

All too often pistol shooters fixate on keeping the foresight as still as possible exactly under the target. I call it 'pea balancing'. This invariably leads to the pistol shooters other favourite vice, holding-on too long!

Try this for a change.

Firstly: Accept that there will inevitably be a certain amount of pistol movement whilst on aim. You are not a vice. You are a human being; a complex array of muscles, fibres and bones; you cannot be absolutely still. Live with it, accept it.

Secondly: Having aligned the pistol correctly in the aiming area, switch you attention away from the relationship between the tip of the foresight and the target. Focus on maintaining an even spacing between the two notches on either side of the foresight.

Thirdly: Keep pressing the trigger whilst aligning the notches. You must have taken-up the first pressure on the trigger, preferably whilst you were on hold above the target or at least whilst you were making the slow, controlled, descent down into the aiming area.

It works for newcomers to the NSRA National Pistol Squad and it will work for you. I instruct them to keep repeating this sentence:

**"The notches,
the notches
and nothing BUT the notches,
so help me Coach!"**

I also tell them to:-

**"Stop being a chicken hearted,
pea balancing
'trigger wimp',
control the notches
and keep pressing the trigger!"**

With practice you WILL see a significant improvement in your scores.