

Long Range Shooting Tip, the fundamentals of the Prone Position

By Jim See

Today I'm going to discuss tips for shooting long range in the prone position while using a bipod and rear support bag. Long Range shooting with precision and accuracy requires the shooter to understand the shooting fundamentals and how to properly execute them. When following the following process the shooter ensures him/her self of the best possible outcome available.

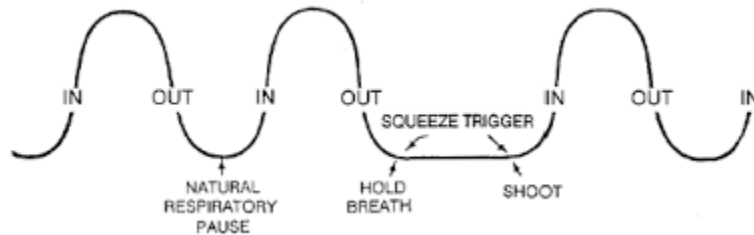
Fundamentals of accuracy, with a precision rifle in the prone position

Body Positioning: To best manage recoil and have the most effective position for following our bullet down range and spotting our impact it is important for the body to be in a straight line, or parallel to the rifle. This allows our body to absorb the most recoil with-out significant movement. We must also stay relaxed and not overly tense up, or attempt to "muscle" the rifle into a position. A relaxed hold will produce less movement of the reticle on target. A solid rear bag technique, which supports the back of the rifle, is imperative to accurate fire and follow through.



Sight picture: The sight picture encompasses many aspects of a proper position, to include; magnification setting suited to the recoil impulse, distance, and target size, parallax adjusted properly, checking the level and having the rifle level. Alignment of our reticle on target and proper use of our scopes windage sub tensions. Remember the principle of “aim small miss small”. Do not get in the habit of pulling the trigger anywhere on the target. Rather pick one very small spot on the target to hold on, that will ensure a solid hit.

Breathing: The proper breathing technique while using the prone position is to keep breathing. If you hold your breath for any length of time you will starve yourself of oxygen. We want to continue to breathe as we fine tune our aim and fire on a slightly extended natural respiratory pause, which is usually after you exhale and before you inhale your next breath.



Trigger manipulation: The proper trigger squeeze starts with the proper finger placement on the center of the first pad of your index finger. It is followed by a slow and steady squeeze straight to the rear. Avoid putting side pressure on the trigger or locating the trigger in the first groove of your finger. Once the trigger fires, keep the trigger pressed back until you watch the bullet land through your optic. This would be proper follow through. Avoid lifting your head to “see” where the bullet goes, that is not proper follow through.

Recoil management: Recoil management goes hand in hand with follow through. We maintain our eye in the optic, shoulder on the butt stock, our off hand on the rear bag and our firing hand on the grip. We keep our eye focused on the target and watch for the bullet trace or the bullet impact on or near the target. Do not interrupt this process by opening your bolt immediately after the shot. Follow through with the shot see what happens and then manipulate the bolt. Now this process becomes more difficult when; we have our magnification turned up too high, when using optics with poor resolution, when using light weight rifles, or

when using heavy recoiling rifles. These are all things that we must consider when building a long range rifle and selecting a particular cartridge.

Bolt manipulation: Proper bolt manipulation starts with proper follow through and proper recoil management. We then remain in position on the rifle and looking through the glass. We use our strong side hand to manipulate the bolt to the rear and then forward again, locking it into battery. During this process we never take our eye off the intended target.

Practice makes perfect

The best way to practice these skills is with a very purposeful and slow cadence while shooting at 100 yards. The goal is to reduce the effect of a cross wind on the bullet, while being able to see the results of each shot on paper. As your skill improves increase the distance as minor flaws in your position and follow through will be more noticeable on the target. Don't confuse this with poor quality ammunition which can also open up your groups.

There are certain drills one can do to practice getting into the proper prone position quickly. One of my favorites is this 100 yard target, and the instructions included on it.

Sniper's Hide Dot Drill (SCP modified)

Cold Bore +1 / 30 seconds



3 rounds, magazine change, 2 rounds / 30 seconds



5 rounds support side / 30 seconds



Start standing behind grounded rifle

15 seconds

12 seconds

10 seconds

8 seconds

6 seconds



Start with rifle in hand

30 seconds

25 seconds

20 seconds

15 seconds

10 seconds



Increasing the distance

As you advance your skills, slowly increase the distances you shoot targets. There is not much value in going from 100 yards to 1000 yards if all you do is miss the 1000 yard target. Advance slowly and within your learning curve. Some of you may take months to become proficient at 1000 yard shooting while others may become proficient in just a few weeks.

Along the way you are going to have to build other skills to reliably hit the targets you engage at distance. These skills are dependent largely on the conditions you shoot in. Your ability to understand, wind, mirage conditions and temperature changes will become key to your long term success.

Bio; Jim See has been shooting competitively and building custom rifles since 2008, he owns Elite Accuracy LLC and continues to shoot precision rifle matches, instructs in competition training classes and build custom rifles.